



BADAKHSHAN: A FAMILIAR NAME, AN UNFAMILIAR LAND

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ABSTRACT

On the two sides of the Oxus, known today as the Panj (Peyanj) River, on the present maps of Asia, there are two large provinces both called Badakhshan, one in Afghanistan, one in Tajikistan. The historical Badakhshan seems to have lost its integrity as a result of political divisions. But is that the case? Has the two large provinces always been referred to as Badakhshan? If the name of Badakhshan has been extended to refer to another land, when was this extension made? Where are the borders of the historical Badakhshan? If part of the land known today as Badakhshan was not part of the historical Badakhshan, what was it named then? The purpose of this paper is to provide answers to the above questions using field studies, and reference books, historical maps and travelogues.

Key Words: Badakhshan, Pamir, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Russia.

BEDAŞAN: TANIDIK BİR İSİM, YABANCI BİR MEMLEKET

ÖZET

Asya'nın günümüzdeki haritalarında bugün Panj (Peyanj) nehri olarak bilinen Amu Derya'nın iki tarafında, biri Afganistan, diğeri de Tacikistan sınırları dâhilinde her ikisine de Bedaşan denilen iki büyük vilayet vardır. Ancak bu tarihî Bedaşan, siyasî bölünmelerin bir sonucu olarak kendi bütünlüğünü kaybetmiş görünüyor. Öyleyse bu durum nasıl ortaya çıkmıştır? Bu iki büyük vilayet daima Bedaşan olarak mı anılmıştır? Bedaşan adı, başka bir araziye kastetmek niyetiyle genişletilerek kullanılmış mıdır? Böyle bir genişletme mevcut ise, bu ne zaman olmuştur? Tarihi Bedaşan'ın sınırları nerededir? Bugün Bedaşan olarak bilinen arazi parçası tarihi Bedaşan'ın parçası değilse, o zaman buranın adı nedir? Bu yazının amacı, saha çalışmaları yaparak ve kitaplar, tarihi haritalar ve gezi notları kullanarak yukarıdaki sorulara cevap vermeye çalışmaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Bedaşan, Pamir, Tacikistan, Afganistan, Rusya

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1. Introduction

On the two sides of the Oxus, known today as the Panj (Peyanj) river, on the present political maps of Asia, there are two large provinces (a total of 111,000 sq km). Both called Badakhshan, one in Afghanistan, one in Tajikistan. Both are mountainous provinces located in high altitudes in a part of Asia which is of unique strategic importance. The great powers of Asia: China, India and Pakistan, get close to each other especially in the east through the narrow corridor of Vakhkhan. Here is divided between the two provinces, creating, like a shock-absorber, a small distance between them, the mountains functioning as a powerful strategic shield. Badakhshan has always been of commercial significance; in the past it was situated along the Silk Road and today it is still a significance trade zone due to its proximity to China, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Tajikistan and India. The two provinces are separated by the Panj River. At first sight, it seems reasonable that the river separates two distinct climate zones, but why are the two zones are called Badakhshan? Are the two provinces ecologically and geographically homogenous?

2. Geographical situation

A cursory geographical survey indicates the fact that Badakhshan province in Afghanistan has an almost homogenous climate whereas Badakhshan province in Tajikistan is not geographically homogenous; in fact, it consists of two distinct areas which are not even connected through a natural passage. The criterion for provincial divisions, if it is not politically motivated, normally depends on climatic homogeneity or access roads to the capital or the shared ethnic, linguistic, or religious characteristics of communities. This has not been the case with Gorno-Badakhshan province in Tajikistan.

To explain this, it is necessary to first describe the geographical situation of this part of the central Asia. The region under study is situated in the north of the Himalayas, where two mountain ranges separate: the Pamir Mountains in the north and the Hindu Kush mountains in the south. The two mountain ranges merge in the east, but to the west, they gradually separate and slope away. The two mountains are separated by a narrow and low valley where the Panj River flows. The slopes of both mountains also form small and big rivers, creating narrow valleys, reach the Panj River and, toward the west, they continue to flow to reach The Oxus¹.

The region extending from the western and southwestern slopes of the Pamir mountains to the northern and northwestern slopes of the Hindu-Kush mountains constitutes an almost homogenous climate zone, which includes

¹ W. Ludwig Adamec, *Historical and Political Gazetteer of Afghanistan: Badakhshan and the Northeastern Afghanistan* (Graz: Austria, Akademische Druck-u-Verlangsstalt, 1972), p. 1-2.

high mountains, abundant rivers, deep and narrow valleys, permanent ice-caps in the heights. The weather is cold and mountainous and the valleys are green and fertile due to the excess of rain. This region includes almost all parts of Badakhshan province in Afghanistan and a small part of the Badakhshan province in Tajikistan, which is, in fact, a coastal strip to the right of the Panj River².

The Panj River, while it serves as the political border between Afghanistan and Tajikistan, does not separate two different climate zones. To provide a scientific explanation, it is a fact that deep rivers usually form the natural borders between various geographical zones, but the Panj River is not deep and one may cross it easily. The present writer has seen this river and has noticed that, in certain places, the big rocks in the river make it possible to cross the river without even touching water. Naturally, such a river couldn't have served as a border; it is more reasonable to assume that the river functioned as a link between the people who lived on the two sides. This is true about many rivers in the world, with the two sides of the river being the habitat of one nation with one civilization.

Further evidence to show the linking function of the river is that it served as the only access to the land to the right of the river. Up until the Russian conquest, there was almost no other access for the whole months of the year except the river itself³. Also, similar place names used on the two sides of the river further indicate this link: Vakhkhan, Ishkashim, Shughnan, Rushan and Darvaz.

Thus the coastal strips on the two sides of the river formed a unified zone which the border divisions destroyed. But what about the other areas of the Badakhshan province in Tajikistan? Were they also separated from the main Badakhshan? This does not seem to be the case because, unlike the Panj river, the Pamir mountains and its northern and eastern slopes, constituting three fourth of the Badakhshan province in Tajikistan, make a totally different climate zone. The Pamir, having a very high plateau which is called the roof of the world, is cold and dry, and is not appropriate for farming.⁴ These climatic differences have resulted in differences in vegetation and animal variety in the two regions. Toward the plateau, there is not much vegetation due to cold

² Frank Bliss, *Social and Economic Change in the Pamirs: Gorno-Badakhshan, Tajikistan*, tr. By N. Pacult and Sonia Guss, London, Routledge, 2006, pp. 18-25.

³ Ibid, p.22.

⁴ George St. George, *Soviet Deserts and Mountains* (Amsterdam, Time-Life Books, 1979), pp. 122-137.

winds which scatter rainy clouds⁵, whereas in the western slopes, they are engaged in agriculture and even gardening.

The plateau is the habitat of the yak, but there is no sign of the animal in the western part of the region. For this reason, the very few people living on the plateau are engaged in animal husbandry,⁶ and the much larger population living in the mountainous areas are engaged in gardening and the related industries. Ethnically, the people living in the two regions are different too. On the plateau, almost all the local population belong to various Gerghiz tribes, speaking Gherghizi, but in the mountainous areas, the most people are Aryans, speaking the Eastern Iranian languages of Scythians and Tajiki.⁷ Almost all the population of the plateau are Sunni Muslims, of Hanafi sect, whereas the majority of the population in the mountainous areas is Shiite Muslims, of Ismaili sect.⁸

The Pamir Mountains separate these two different zones. In some places, the mountains are so high and dense that they leave no natural passage. The natural passage connecting the plateau to Murghab went through Ush road (Gherghizestan) in the north east and the natural passage to the mountainous part to the right of the Panj River was possible by crossing the river in the south. In 1895, with the separation of the northern parts of the Oxus from Afghanistan and its annexation to Turkistan in Russia, this passage was limited and during the Soviet rule it was totally blocked. In 1934, however, they made a motorized road which connected Ush to the plateau (Morghab) and then to its southwestern part (Kharugh, centre of Badakhshan province in Tajikistan). Later in 1940, they made another road connecting the west to Kharugh. The purpose was to connect this large province to the center of Tajikistan.⁹

3. Historical survey

The two Badakhshan provinces do not seem to have had a common history either. The Pamir plateau shows traces of human life in the antiquity,

⁵ Ogonazar Aknazarov, Iskandar Dadabaev, and Dimitry Melnichkov, 'Ecotourism in the Pamir Region: Problems and Perspectives' *Mountain Research and Development*, no. 22 (2002), pp. 188-190.

⁶ Hermann Kreutzmann, 'Ethnic minorities and marginality in the Pamirian Knot: survival of Wakhi and Kirghiz in a harsh environment and global contexts', *The Geographical Journal*, Vol.169, No. 3, September 2003, p.219.

⁷ W. Barthold, A. Bennigsen and H. Carrere-D'Encausse, 'Badakhshan', *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd ed (1986), vol. I, p. 853.

⁸ C. E. Bosworth, 'Pamir', *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd ed (1995), vol. VIII, p. 245; Ralph H. Magnus and Eden Naby, *Afghanistan: Mullah, Marx and Mujahid* (USA, Western, 2000), pp. 84-5.

⁹ Barthold, 'Badakhshan', p. 854.

specially Arian Scythians.¹⁰ Pamir, literally “land of Arians”, takes its name from the Aryan tribes, for *Pam*, in Arian languages, means land and *ir* means Arian.¹¹ Pamir has been the settlement of the Gherghiz for not a long time, whereas the Tajiks living in the southern part of the plateau boast a several-thousand year civilization.¹²

The oldest sources referring to Badakhshan are the reports of Chinese Buddhist monks who traveled to this land in the 7th and 8th centuries. The reports indicate that Badakhshan was the name of a city as well as a province, corresponding to the present Badakhshan in Afghanistan. For example, the reports state that the distance between Badakhshan and In-po-kin, identified as the present Yumgan, is 200 *li* (about two days of walking), and the distance between In-po-kin and Kiu-lang-na, the present Kuran, is 300 *li*, three days of walking.¹³ Since today Kuran and Yumgan are located in the south of Badakhshan province, the old city of Badakhshan must have been close to these two cities. On the other hand, the reports say that Badakhshan was 2000 *li* (20 days of walking) in circumference.¹⁴ Thus Badakhshan used to refer to an area much smaller than the present territory of the two Badakhshan provinces. This is confirmed by Muslim geographers of the later centuries, for almost all of them, in their geographical description of this part of Asia, have recognized The Oxus as the border of Khurasan and Transoxiana, considering Badakhshan as belonging to Khurasan. Yaqubi, for example, writing in 891, has described Badakhshan as one of the 74 *Minbars* (centers) of Balkh, with Balkh belonging to Khurasan.¹⁵ Also, Istakhri, writing in 951, has confirmed Yaqubi, and mentioned Badakhshan, as the center of a province of the same name, located in the west of the Jiriyab River¹⁶.

There is no consensus among researchers over which of the present rivers used to be called the Jiriyab River¹⁷. So it is not easy to know where “the

¹⁰ K. Enoki, G. A. Koshelenko and Z. Haidary, ‘The Yueh-Chih and their Migrations’, *History of Civilizations of Central Asia*, ed. By Janos Harmatta (Delhi, Moilal Banarsidass, 1999), vol. II, p. 183.

¹¹ A. Shakhomarov, *Pamir* (Dushanbeh, no publication name, 1997), pp. 15-16.

¹² Adamec, *Badakhshan*, p. 6.

¹³ Si-Yu-Ki, *Buddhist Records of the Western World*, tr. By Samuel Beal (London, Routledge, 2000), pp. 291-2.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 29.

¹⁵ Ibn Wazih Yaqubi, *al-Boldan*, ed. by M. A. Sanawi (Beirut, Dar-el Kotob el-‘Ilmiyyah , 2002), pp. 117-118.

¹⁶ Ibrahim Istakhri, *al-Masalik wa-l Mamalik*, ed. by M. J. ‘Abdul’al al- Husseini & M. S. Gharbal (Beirut, Dar-el Qalam, 1961), p. 279.

¹⁷ J. Marquart, *Eranshahr*, ed. By Fuat Sezgin (Frankfurt, Reprint of the edition of 1901 Berlin, Goethe University, 1994), p. 233; W. Barthold, *Turkestan Down to the Mongol Invasion*, ed. By

west of the Jiryab River” is. It is not easy to interpret Istakhri’s maps either because, first, he has recorded the word Badakhshan as “Vakhshab”, and, second, he has drawn the Oxus with no bends or turns whereas, in this region, the river turns a three-fourth of a circle¹⁸. However, a closer look at his map, and at that of Istakhri, reveals the mistake he made in identifying directions. “Al-Junub”, (the south), is in fact the east, and “Al-Shumal”, (the north), is the west. “Al-Maghrib”, (the west), is the south in modern day maps, so “Al-Mashreq”, (the east) must be the north. Now we understand that by “the west of the Jiryab River”, Istakhri meant the south of the river and that Ibn Howqal has referred to the river as being the upper section of the Oxus, which is the present day Panj River. This mistake in identifying directions was not made only by Istakhri and Ibn Howqal; a number of Arab and Iranian geographers, who probably followed them, made the same mistake in identifying the limits of these regions¹⁹. That was probably why they were accused by orientalis of being vague²⁰.

What is relevant to our discussion here is that Istakhri and Ibn Howqal have referred to Badakhshan as being located in the south of the Panj river, within 13 days of walking distance from Balkh: two days of walking from Balkh to Khulm, two days of walking from Khulm to Virvaleese, two days of walking from Virvaleese to Taiqan (Present province of Taliqan in Afghanistan), and seven days of walking from Taiqan to Badakhshan²¹. These distances are exactly confirmed by many Muslim geographers who have written after them²². Thus the road to Badakhshan passed through Balkh, which is exactly the present route from Balkh (Mazar Sharif) to Badakhshan in Afghanistan. Other Muslim geographers have confirmed the above distances with slight changes,

Fuat Sezgin (Frankfurt, Reprint of the edition 1928 London, Goethe University, 1995), p. 65; B. Spuler, ‘Amu-Darya’, *EI2* (1986), vol. I, p. 454.

¹⁸ Istakhri, *al-Masalik*, opposite of p. 145.

¹⁹ Anonymous, *Hudud ul-Alam*, ed. By M. Sutudeh (Tehran, Zaban wa Farhang Iran, 1983), p. 101; Abu Abdulllah Idrisi, *Nuzhat-ul-Mushfaq Fi Ifitraq al-Afaq* (Cairo, Maktabat al-Thaqafat al-Diniyyah, 1994), V. 1, pp. 483, 484; Safi al-Din Baghdadi, *Marasid-al-Itla’ fi Ma’rifat-al-Amkanat wa al-Buqa’* ([Tehran], lithography, 1936), p. 263.

²⁰ X. De Planhol, ‘Badakhshan’, *EI* (1988), vol. III, pp. 356.

²¹ Istakhri, *al-Masalik*, p. 160, 158; Ab-al Qasim Ibn Howqal, *Surat ul-arz* (Beirut, Dar al-Maktabat al-Hayat, n.d.), p. 380.

²² Sham al-Din Mohammad Maqdasi, *Absan al-Taqasim fi Ma’rifat al-Aqalim* (Leiden, Brill, 1962), p. 346; Abul Qasim Jeyhani (attributed), *Ashkal ul-Alam*, tr. By Ali Ibn ‘Bad-al Salam Katib, ed. By F. Mansouri (Mashhad, Beh Nashr, 1989), pp. 173-4; Idrisi, *Nuzhat*, pp. 484 and 486; Yaqut Hamavi, *Mu’jam ul-Buldan* (Beirut, Dar-e Sadir, 1977), p. 360; Baghdadi, *Marasid*, p. 65; ‘Imad al-Din Isma’il Ab al-Fida, *Taqwim al-Buldan* (Paris, Dar al-Taba’t al-Sultanyya, 1840), p. 471.

sometimes offering more evidence which confirms that the name Badakhshan referred to its southern parts²³.

Thus it is clear that all Muslim geographers have explicitly or implicitly placed Badakhshan in the Khurasan province and this province in the south of Oxus. The only exception is Hamdullah Mustufi, who has considered it as one of the cities of Transoxiana²⁴. This mistake was due to the fact that Mustufi and his forefathers were treasure secretaries of the Ilkhans government and that their geographical information was based mostly on the information they had of the lands that paid tributes to the government. At the time of Mustufi, that was the 15th century, Transoxiana had already been separated from Iran and was governed by Jaghatai Ulus, whose territory included Badakhshan as well²⁵. Mustufi, who had never traveled to those regions himself and who did not receive tributes from Badakhshan and Transoxiana, must have wrongly thought that Badakhshan, being part of the territory of Jaghtai Ulus, was located in Transoxiana. His statement, therefore, standing in opposition to those of all his predecessors, should not be given much weight, specially because other people writing after him, for example Itimad-al Saltaneh, who died in 1895, reported Badakhshan as being located in the south of the Oxus²⁶. The travelogue attributed to Marco Polo gives evidence to the effect that the length of Badakhshan took 12 walking days to cross²⁷. This is in line with the Chinese monks' report that said the circumference of Badakhshan took twenty walking days to cross. Clavijo, the Spanish ambassador who visited Transoxiana in the early 15th century, wrote in his travelogue that the capital of Badakhshan lied toward the small India²⁸.

Local historians have not written about the geographical situation of Badakhshan. That is probably because they thought their readers knew about

²³ Ali Masoudi, *Kitab at-Tanbih wa'l Ishraf* (Leiden, Brill, 1967), p. 64-5; Anonymous, *Hudud al-Alam*, p. 105; Maqdasi, *Absan*, pp. 291 and 303; Anonymous, *Tarikh-e Sistan*, ed. By M. T. Bahar (Tehran, Khavar, 1935), p. 27; Idrisi, *Nuzhat*, Vol. I, pp. 466, 486-7; Zakaria Qazvini, *Atbar-ul Belad Wa Akhbar-ul Ibad* (Beirut, Dar-e Sadir, 1960), pp. 306, 489-90; Ab al-fida, *Taqwim*, p.471.

²⁴ Hamd-Allah Mustufi, *Nuzhat-ul Qulub*, ed. By G. Le Strange (Tehran, Dunya-ye Ketab,1984), p. 261.

²⁵ Ghiyath al-Din Khawnd Mir, *Habib-ul Seyar*, ed. By M. Dabir Seyaqi (Tehran, Khayyam, 1983), V. 3, pp. 77.

²⁶ M. H. Itimad-al Saltaneh, *Mirat-ul Buldan*, ed. By A. H. Navaii and Mir Hashim Muhaddith (Tehran, Tehran University, 1989), V. 5: 2344.

²⁷ L. F. Benedetto, *The Travel of Marco polo*, tr. By Aldo Ricci (New Delhi & Madras, Asian Educational Services, 2001), p. 56.

²⁸ Ruy Gonzales de Clavijo, *Clavijo Embassy to Tamerlane: 1403-1406*, tr. By G. Le Strange (London, Rutledge & Sons, 1928), V. I, p. 247.

that, so they did not feel the need to do so. However, from the information gleaned from their historical writings, it is easily understood that by Badakhshan they meant a region in the south of the Oxus. To take one example, in the *Tarikh-e Badakhshan*, the writer writes thus:

“...dispatched Baba Khan to Amu Darya [the Oxus], instructing him not to allow the commander Abdul Rahman (who was in Transoxiana at the time) to cross the Amu Darya so that he will have to go to Kabul through a different route. One day before Baba Khan reaches Amu Darya, Abd al-Rahman crossed the water and set out toward Badakhahan... .”²⁹

Now we can claim with more certainty that the historical Badakhshan was located on the left side of the Panj River, and that, most probably, the old city of Badakhshan was located somewhere about the present Feyzabad. There is a detailed description of the formation in 1600 of Feyzabad near the historical city of Badakhshan³⁰. Also, Badakhshan the province must have been, in the course of history, almost the size of the present Badakhshan province in Afghanistan. But what about the coastal strips on the two sides of the Panj River? Were they part of the historical Badakhshan as well? From what was stated before, the answer is in the affirmative, because of the similarities in the climate and connecting roads and of the inseparable bonds among the people who shared the same language, religion, ethnicity and history.

But what were the historical names of the other parts of the province Gorno Badakhshan in Tajikistan, which cover the greater part of the province? Chinese monks³¹, many Muslim geographers³², certain tourists³³ and historical maps have also mentioned the name Pamir in reference to this area³⁴. The local writers divided Pamir into two districts: the small Pamir (Pamir-e Khord: Wakhkhan), which was on the Chinese border and on the farthest east of the two provinces, and the great Pamir (Pamir-e Kalan), which included the north and north east slopes of the Pamir Mountains.³⁵ Even today, many of

²⁹ Sang Mohammad Badakhshi, *Tarikh-e Badakhshan*, ed. By M. Sutudeh (Tehran, Jahangiri, 1989), pp. 89-90.

³⁰ Ka'ib-e Hazareh, *Saraj-ul Tavarikh* (Tehran, Balkh, 1993), V. I, pp. 38-9.

³¹ Si-Yu-Ki, *Buddhist*, vol. II, p. 297.

³² Yaqubi mentioned there as 'Bamer': *al-Boldan*, p. 120; Istakhri & Ibn Howqal both called there 'Famer'; Bamer or Famer are both arabized of the Persian Pamir: Istakhri, *al-Masalik*, p. 161; Ibn Howqal, *Surat ul-arz*, p. 381.

³³ Benedetto, *Travel*, p. 61.

³⁴ *Ibid*, p. 56.

³⁵ Burhan-al ddin Kushkaki, *Rahnamay-e Qatghan wa Badakhshan*, ed. By M. Sutudeh (Tehran, Jahangiri, 1988), pp. 184, 11, 10, 198, 187.

Badakhshan people in Tajikistan refer to their province as Pumir and call themselves Pumiri.

Thus there arise many other questions concerning the application of the name Badakhshan to this region: When and why was this region called Badakhshan? Wasn't the name Pamir more appropriate, especially because the Pamir plateau and mountains were located in the province Gorno Badakhshan in Tajikistan? Why did they annex two totally distinct provinces to form a province as large as almost half of the country? The answer these questions, we should take a glance at the political rivalries among the interested countries in this region in the last decades of the 19th century.

4. Political rivalries

In the last decades of the 19th century, Russia and England became interested in this region. Both countries tried to dominate the region through their puppet governments; that is, the Afghan king Amir Abd al-Rahman and the Khan of Bukhara, who sent rulers to this region³⁶. The rivalry between the two countries resulted in the elimination of small local governments. But until the foreign forces entered the region, these rulers were not able to resist the local people who fought for independence. Russia sought to access the Indian Kashmir through Pamir³⁷. To do so, it occupied Pamir in 1876, using the negligence of the neighboring countries, and made its presence official in Pamir by establishing a watch post in Murghab in 1885. Then announcing the dispatch of Chinese border troops to Pamir as the conspiracy of England³⁸, it occupied Pamir officially, annexing it to Farghaneh, which had occupied before³⁹.

The rapid advance of Russians in the central Asia and their movement toward the south forced England to negotiate with them. The two countries signed an agreement in 1895, according to which the historical Badakhshan belonged to the Emir of Kabul and the land to the right of the Panj River; that is, a small part of the present Gorno Badakhshan province, was taken from Afghans, and the Panj River was defined as the boundary between Afghanistan and the Russian annexations⁴⁰. Russia annexed these new lands to the territory

³⁶ Mohammad Hasan Kavousi Araqi, *Murasilat Dar Bab-e Asiy-e Markazi wa Qafqaz* (Tehran, Vizarat Umur-e Kharijeh, 1994), p. 4; W. P. and Zeldia K. Coates, *Soviets in Central Asia* (New York, Green Wood, 1951), pp. 174-5.

³⁷ Alexis Krausse, *Russia in Asia: A Record and a Study: 1558-1899* (London, Grant Richards, 1900), p. 243; Svat Soucek, *A History of Inner Asia* (Cambridge, Cambridge University, 2000), p. 199.

³⁸ Krausse, *Russia*, p. 305.

³⁹ Barthold, 'Badakhshan', p. 853.

⁴⁰ Soucek, *History*, p. 199.

of the Khan of Bukhara, Abd al-Vahid Ibn Mozaffar al-Din, but Pamir remained in its possession until the October Revolution in 1917⁴¹, when the Bukhara Emirate was abolished. However, the political situation in the regions belonging to the Bukhara Emir, being far away from the capital, did not change immediately; it remained a scene of battle among the emir of Bukhara, the white Russians and Basmachis. It was not until 1925 when the Bolsheviks finally managed to seize power in Pamir by defeating the rival groups⁴². During the Soviet period, this region was called the Gorno (mountainous) Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (province) or the GBAO. Four years later, when the Tajikistan republic was created, the GBAO was attached to it⁴³. Thus the GBAO was created before the creation of Tajikistan republic, so the creation of the GBAO and its name has nothing to do with the inner divisions of Tajikistan.

To understand the reason for the creation and renaming of this province, one should pay attention to the objectives and the foreign policies of the Bolsheviks in those days. On the one hand, they had disputes with China over Pamir⁴⁴, and with Afghanistan over the lands to the right of the Panj River, both countries supported by England⁴⁵. On the other hand, they were not prepared to turn their back on this region because it allowed them to win strategic superiority over China, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. It should also be remembered that they had been attacked from this region in the first eight years of the revolution. For this reason, having driven the foreign forces away from the region and suppressing domestic opposition, the Soviets gave the single name Badakhshan to the Pamir plateau and the lands to the right of the Panj River. The purpose was both to answer the claim of China over Pamir and to create a desire among the people of Badakhshan for a reunion with their relatives living on the other side of the river in Badakhshan province in Afghanistan, a goal the Russians finally achieved in 1980. The pretext of this attack was the shared language and religion of the people who lived in two Badakhshan provinces in two countries⁴⁶. The Bolsheviks had adopted this policy five years before that in Arran. In 1920, when they drove away the Turks

⁴¹ Coates, *Soviets*, p. 175.

⁴² Donald J. Raleigh, 'Civil War of 1917-1922', *Encyclopedia of Russian History*, ed. In chief by James R. Millar (New York, MacMillan, 2004), V. I, p. 270.

⁴³ Coates, *Soviets*, p. 175.

⁴⁴ Alexei D. Voskressenski, *Russia and China, a Theory of Inter-State Relations* (London, and New York, 2004), p. 114-115.

⁴⁵ Immanuel C. Y. Hsu, 'Late Ch'ing Foreign Relations: 1866-1906', *The Cambridge History of China* (Cambridge, Cambridge University, 1980), vol. II, pp. 2, 71.

⁴⁶ Magnus, *Afghanistan*, p. 86-7.

from Baku, they renamed Baku as “Azarbaijan Socialist Republic”⁴⁷. In this they followed the example of Ottoman Turks, who had done this two years before the Bolsheviks. As solidarity with the Baku Musavat Party, they established “Azarbaijan Republic” in Arran with the aim of promoting Pan-Turkism⁴⁸.

5. Conclusion

On the present maps of Asia, there are two large provinces, with both called Badakhshan. One belongs to Afghanistan, another to Tajikistan; the Panj River separates them from each other. This region specially in the east has a unique strategic importance. The great powers of central, east and south of Asia: Tajikistan, Afghanistan, China, India and Pakistan, get close to each other through the narrow corridor of Wakhkhan. Here also has always been of commercial significance, in the past.

At first sight, it seems reasonable that a river separates two distinct zones, but a cursory survey indicates the fact that, unlike the Badakhshan province in Afghanistan, another province in Tajikistan is not geographically homogenous. In fact, the Tajiki one consists of two distinct climate zones: a vast region in the north and north-east of Pamir Mountains, and another in the south of them, a narrow coastal strip in the right bank of Panj River. The climate differences have resulted in differences in vegetation, animal variety and human living. Ethnically, the people living in the two regions are different too, as well as their language, religion and culture. There are not even an old road or a natural passage to connect the two districts in Badakhshan province of Tajikistan. Whereas, the coastal strips on the two sides of the river, far from the border divisions, formed a unified zone. The similar place names used on the two sides of the river, the same ethnicity of inhabitants (Arian), the same languages (Sckitian), the same religion (Ismaili) and the same history, indicate this link. So there are not any homogenous between the two parts of this province.

A vast range of historical sources, such as Chinese Buddhist records, Muslim geographer writings, European traveler notes, local histories and historical maps, all refer to Badakhshan, as a city as well as a province, corresponding to the present Badakhshan in Afghanistan. Now we can claim with more certainty that the historical Badakhshan was located on the left side

⁴⁷ G. Wheeler, 'Russia And The Middle East'. *The Political Quarterly*, vol. 28 (1957), pp. 127-135: doi: 10.1111/j.1467-923X.1957.tb01859.x

⁴⁸ Enayatollah Reza, *Arran: az Duran Bastan ta Aghaz 'abd-e Mogul* (Tehran, Markaz-e Asnad wa Tarikh-e Diplomacy, 2002), pp. 594-5; Parviz Varjavand, *Iran wa Qafqaz* (Tehran, Qatreh, 2000), pp.74-76.

of Panj River. But the history of Tajiki Badakhshan is still obscured. Historical sources and maps refer to the coastal strips on the both side of the Panj River as a union region and parts of Badakhshan province. While the same sources, refer to the greater district of the Tajiki Badakhshan province as Pamir and often divide it in to two parts: Pamir-e Khurd (small) and Pamir-e Kalan (great).

To answer the question about why Pamir was called Badakhshan, one should take a glance at the political rivalries among the interested countries in this region in the last decades of the 19th century, when Russia and England became there. At first both countries tried to dominate the region through their puppet governments: the king of Afghanistan and the Amir of Bukhara. After Russia occupied Pamir in 1876 and advanced rapidly toward the south, the two countries signed an agreement in 1895. According that, the most part of the historical Badakhshan remained in to the hand of Afghanistan, but the land in the right side of the Panj River separated from others and annexed to the territory of the Khan of Bukhara, and the Panj River was defined as a border line; while Pamir was remained in Russia possession, herself.

This situation, more or less, continued until the 1925, when the Bolsheviks finally seized power in Pamir. Through these years, Pamir had her name and was not annexed to the right bank of the Panj River. During the Soviet period, the annexation was occurred and this region called the Gorno (mountainous) Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (province): GBAO. Four years later, when the Tajikistan Republic was created, the GBAO was attached to it. It indicates the forming of this province had nothing to do with the inner divisions of Tajikistan.

The reason(s) for the creation and renaming of the province, one should search in to foreign policies of the Bolsheviks in those days. They had dispute with China over Pamir and with Afghanistan over the lands to the right of the Panj River: both countries supported by England. So that, the Soviet gave the name of Badakhshan to both lands to keep China away from their claims and to create a desire among the people of Badakhshan for a reunion with their relatives living on the other side of the river. Five years before that the Soviet had adapted this policy in Arran, the today Republic of Azerbaijan.

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