

Special Issue: The Pamirs, II

Preface

Teiji WATANABE¹

This is the second special issue on studies being conducted as part of the Pamir research project. This issue as well as the first special issue, which featured seven papers published in *Geographical Studies* (2009), is a contribution towards the ‘Sustainable Land Management in the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai Mountains (PALM)’, which is a project led by the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and the United Nations University (UNU) (<http://www.ehs.unu.edu/palm/article/read/publications>). We hope that this issue will also contribute to the International Year of Mountains (IYM) + 10.

The Pamir research project, which is conducted by Japanese scholars, is composed of two major parts: a project conducted in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan (head: Prof. T. Watanabe), and another in the northern Pakistan and the northeastern Afghanistan (head: Prof. K. Mizushima). These areas of concern correspond to broad Pamir or Great Pamir, and the core region of Central Asia according to UNESCO’s definition (Limin and Zhang, 2012, p334).

Since the publication of the previous special issue in *Geographical Studies* (2009) many aspects of the situations in the Pamirs have greatly changed. One of the main examples is the social impact of the landslide that occurred in Attabad in January 2010. These changes also include tourism and agriculture, which have been impacted by the landslide as well as some other factors. However, local residents have quickly

begun to adapt to such abrupt changes, and Mizushima addresses this issue.

The Tajik Pamir area has been also suffered from frequent occurrences of glacier-related hazards, although the types of the hazards in the Tajik Pamir are different from those in the Himalaya (Komatsu and Watanabe, this issue). Further studies on the hazards in this area are strongly suggested.

In addition to the inadequate size of the protected Sarychat-Ertash State Nature Reserve, the Kumtor gold mine creates a challenging issue in the Kyrgyz Tien Shan Mountains, where there is rich wildlife unlike the Pamir-Alai Mountains (Izumiyama et al., 2009). Our studies on wildlife in the Kyrgyz Tien Shan Mountains are going on, and sociological studies are being planned; the results of which will be published elsewhere. This special issue contains a follow-up (Arase et al., this issue) to the previous studies on vegetation even as further studies are been conducted (Arase et al., 2011, 2012).

Most local residents in the Alai Valley of the Kyrgyz Pamir do not recognize the possibilities in ecotourism development, which we discovered at the workshops held in Sary-Tash village in August and October 2013. In fact, many residents are satisfied with the current local economy, which coincides with the results obtained from a questionnaire study conducted previously (Watanabe et al., 2009). Watanabe et al (this issue) addresses the interpretation of place names in the Alai Valley by local tour guides.

¹ Faculty of Environmental Earth Science, Hokkaido University, Japan

Shirasaka et al. (this issue) demonstrate the transformation of transhumance in the Alai Valley by discussing the three phases of this practice. Liu and Watanabe (this issue) examine the current grazing intensity and the status of pasture slopes between the Sary-Tash and Taldy-Suu villages. Furthermore, Arase et al. (this issue) discuss the degeneration of vegetation on grazing slopes in the same area.

The entire Pamirian region is a good example of rapid changes in environment, socio-economic, and political areas of life. Naturally, there will be additional changes in the near future; therefore, we need to continue studying this region.

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