

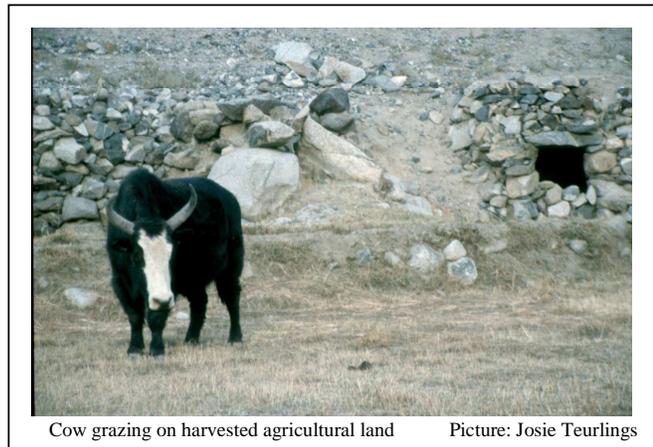
Grazing behaviour, habitat use and diet selection of domestic animals on the high pastures in Basho valley, Baltistan

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Abstract

In Baltistan the struggle for subsistence by mountain farmers is based on agriculture and animal husbandry. Seasonal migration is one strategy for utilizing the natural resources of the higher pastures. Earlier, the strategy for utilising the natural resource management was sustainable, but increase of population, irrigation which give more cultivated land and external innovations are rapidly effecting changes throughout the region.

This thesis is a study of the grazing dynamics of high pastures in Basho valley, Baltistan. The introduction part describes the valley, seasonal migrations patterns and use of high pastures and reflect generations of adaptation to this environment. The last part is an in-dept study of behaviour, habitat use and diet selection of grazing domestic animals.



Sultanabad is situated at 3.200 m and cultivation is limited. People therefore depend on the livestock and the moving to summer settlements (*broq*) during the entire growth season for utilisation of the pastures. *The lower broqs* have multipurpose function, mainly by increasing the area of land under cultivation and for grazing young and weak animals, sheep, goat and lactating cattle in the surrounding pastures *The higher broq* are mainly production units making it possible to utilise the more remote higher pastures for milk and meat production. Alpine natural recourse management and animals in Basho is probably similar to many other watersheds, but in a strict scientific sense it was not selected to be a representative of a certain larger area.

Much time spent on grazing and little variation between species of plants selected for the diet indicate shortage of forage in the pastures of Basho. Since quality of the forage seems good, quantity must be the limiting factor.

The best possible use of habitat types and grazing time is essential to utilise the pastures, and such factors are highly dependent on the decision of the herder. Weather might effect small ruminants and especially the sheep both in activity, behaviour and diet choice.

The distances between small ruminants are heavily influenced by the herder, but also of the species grazing together. Unless there is little overlap in diet selection, multiple specie grazing system will increase the output from pasturing.

Movements both to the khlasses at higher altitude during the season and the vertical movements during one day are adapted strategies to forage availability in Basho valley through the growth season.