

# Yak Herding Strategies on High Altitude Rangelands of Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan

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## Introduction

- Yaks utilise harsh high mountain areas of northern Pakistan (Fig. 1).
  - They are traditionally reared by subsistence-level agricultural households in Gilgit-Baltistan.
  - Yak herding practices are influenced by the availability of labour and tourist frequentation.
- We analysed yak herding strategies on communal high-altitude rangelands.

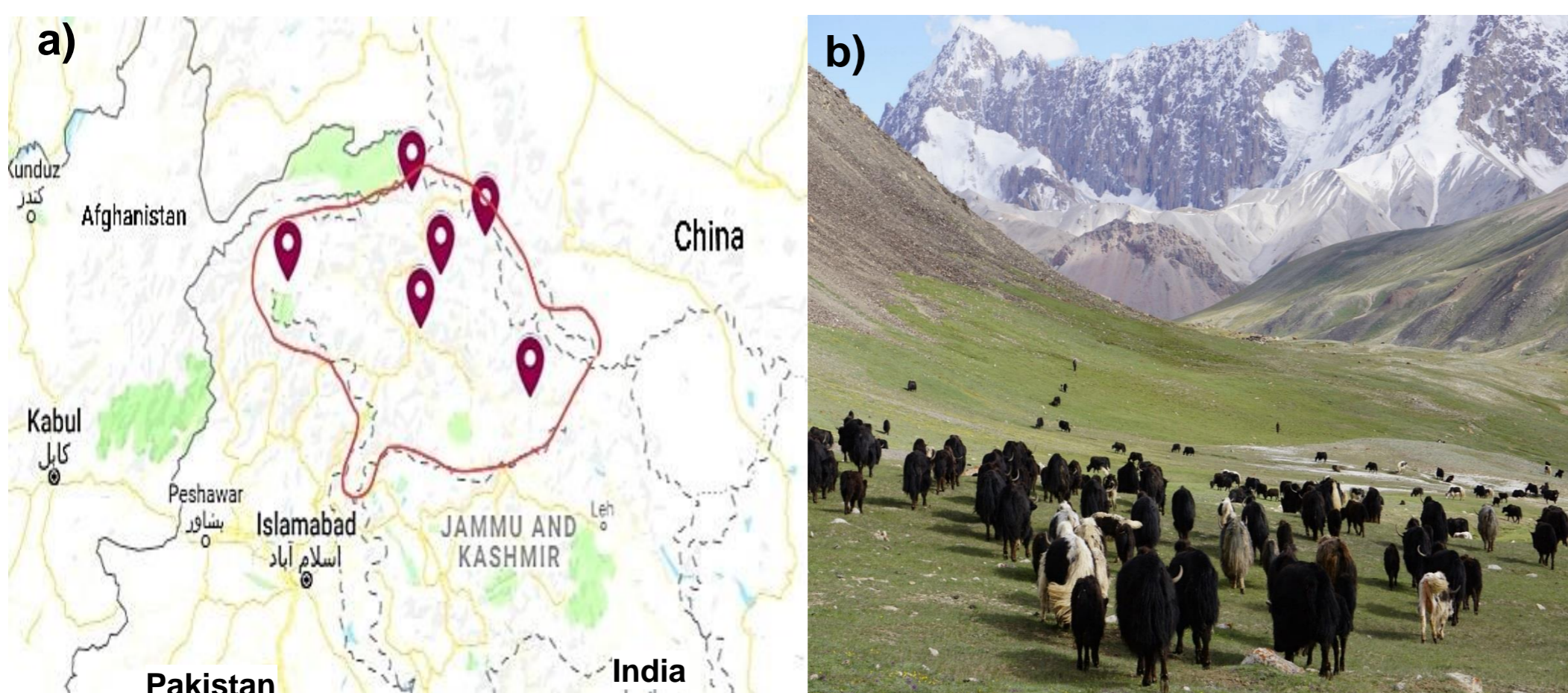


Fig. 1: (a) Study area and (b) yak herd at summer pasture

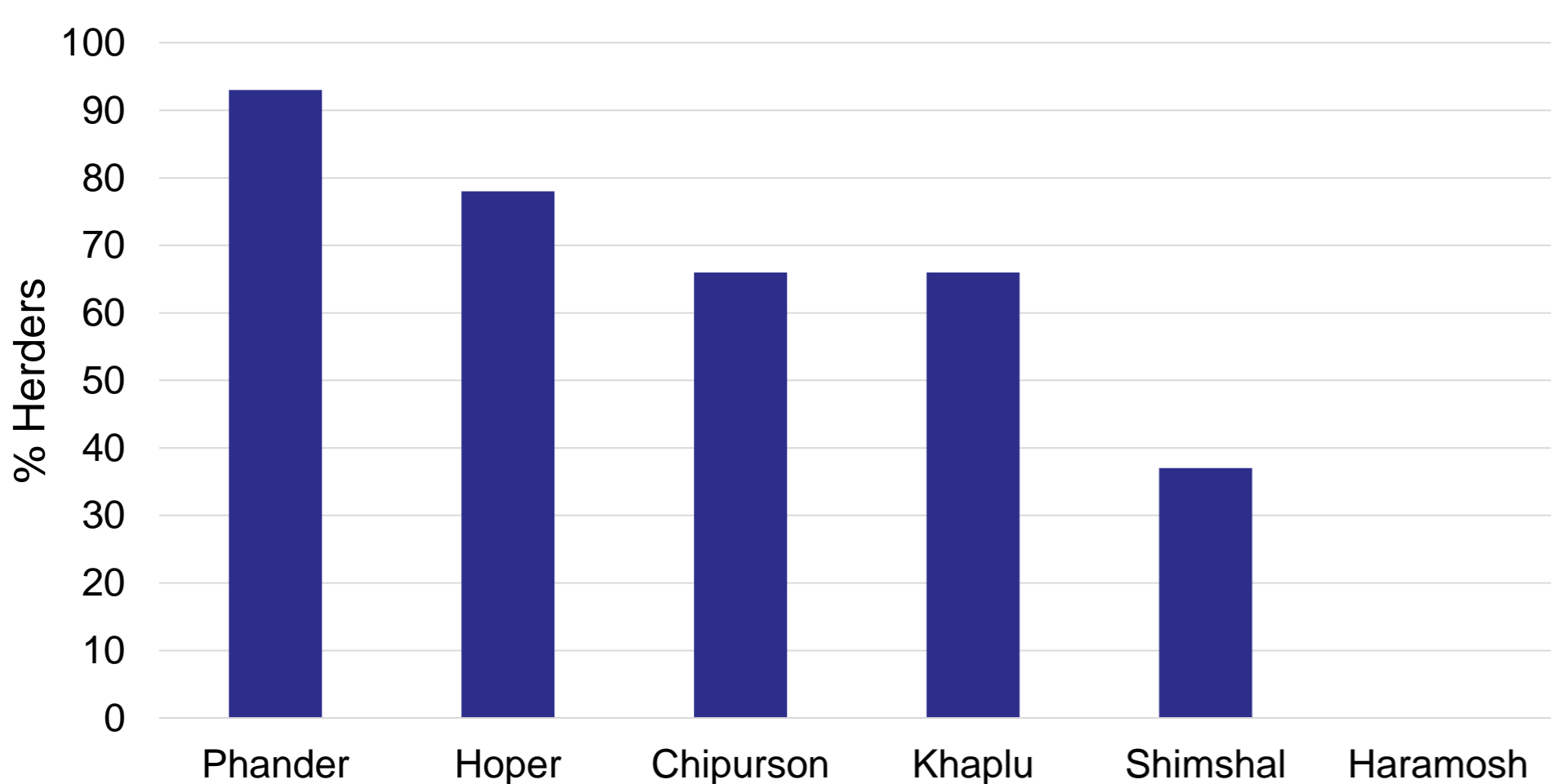


Fig. 2: Practice of individual herding across the six study valleys.

## Material and Methods

- Survey on herding practices conducted during 05/2018 – 11/2018.
- Individual interviews with 90 households in 3 valleys, 10 group discussions in another 3 valleys (Fig. 1a).

## Conclusions

- Different herding practices lead to spatially very patchy and concentrated utilization of rangelands.
- Yak keeping families' livelihood challenged by heterogeneous herding strategies and unsupervised grazing.

## Results

- Herds comprise of  $9.7 \pm 10.0$  yaks, and herders' experience in yak keeping is  $25.1 \pm 11.1$  years.
- Herding mode changes with season even within families.
- Individual herding of the family herd dominates the system (Fig. 2).

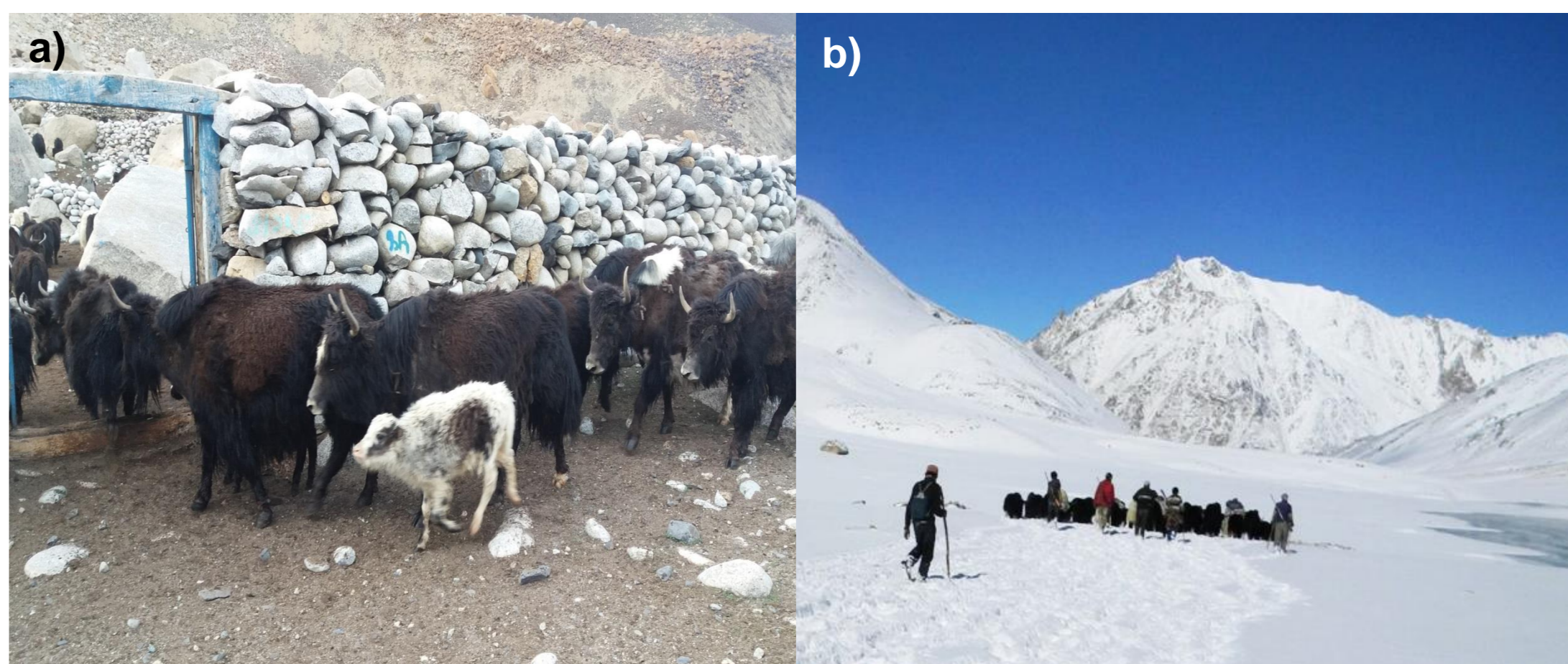


Fig. 3: (a) Female yak herd brought back for milking. (b) Collective herding of yaks by groups of herders in Shimshal valley during winter.

- Family herding practiced where milking is common (Fig. 3a), namely Phander (64%) and Shimshal (42%) from summer season to mid-autumn.
- Year-round collective yak herding by a group of herders (Fig. 3b) widespread in Shimshal (70%) only.
- Employed herding for short time is common in Chipurson (53%) and Phander (20%).
- Year-round unsupervised grazing predominant in Haramosh (100%) but restricted to autumn in Chipurson (67%).