Catalogue of the Passes of Pakistan

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CLUB DES CENT COLS

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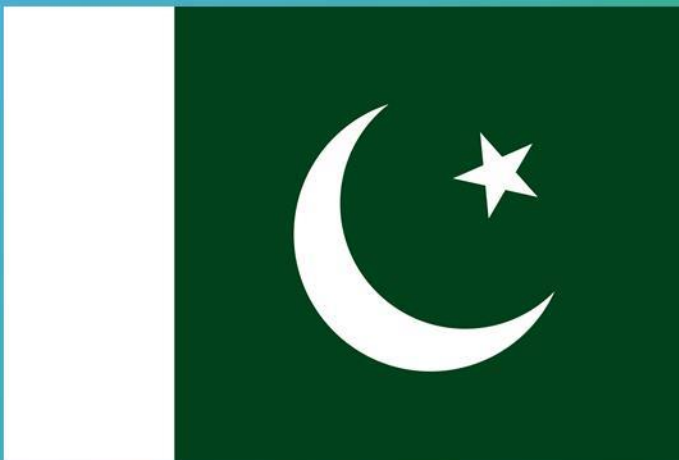
Editions des Cent Cols

1. This catalogue

This catalogue constitutes a first list of the passes of Pakistan in accordance with the Rules of the Game of the Club des Cent Cols. The passes have been compiled from local (Survey of Pakistan - heir to British cartography) and foreign (American, Russian and British) sources. In all, the catalogue includes more than 2,200 passes in the mountainous areas of this country with its highly varied terrain.

2. History of Pakistan

For the period of history before its independence in 1947, you can refer to the first part of the history of the Indian subcontinent in the catalogue entry for India.

Pakistan had to wait until 1956 to become a republic and even then was often ruled by military rather than democratically elected leaders.

The period 1965-1971 saw two wars with India and the war of independence of East Pakistan, which later became Bangladesh.

Until 2008 there were alternating periods of democracy and military coups. The lives of former presidents and prime ministers have not been entirely peaceful either - Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was controversially executed in 1979 and his daughter Benazir assassinated in 2007.

In 2023, the country has its advantages (a population of almost 250 million; possession of the nuclear bomb; strong economic growth and a wealth of natural resources in its territory of almost 900,000 km2). But tense relations with India - particularly in Kashmir - and the fight against terrorism continue to hamper its development. The country also has to overcome the effects of climate change, a still-high poverty rate and grossly inadequate health spending.

3. Geography of Pakistan

Pakistan is divided into three very different regions - the high mountains of the north, which include the Karakoram, Hindu Kush and Pamirs ranges; the mountains and plateau of Baluchistan; and the entire Indus plain. The passes are concentrated in the first two regions and the majority of the population in the third.

The climate in the populated area varies from temperate to tropical, with most of the rainfall occurring during the monsoon season (June to September).
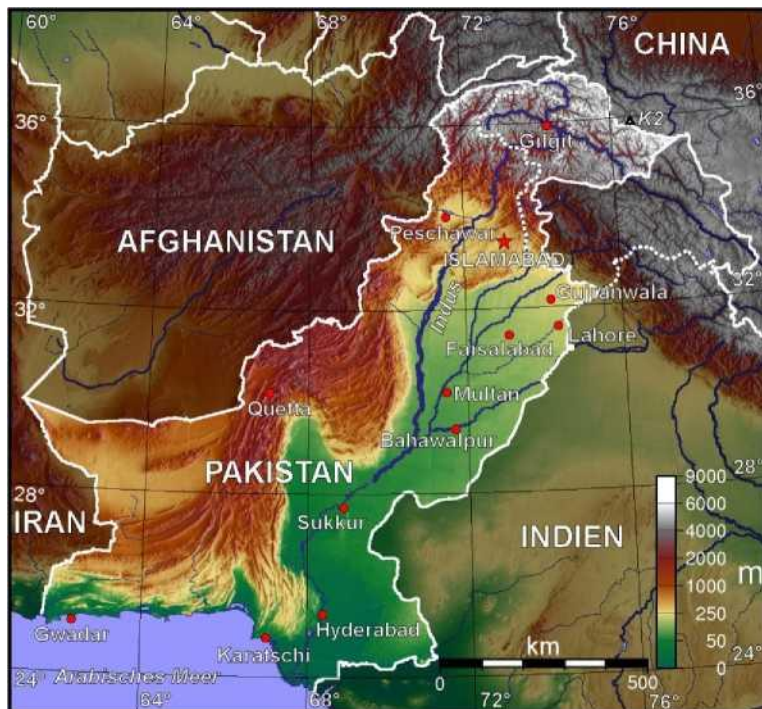
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4. Administrative Organization

The country is made up of 1 federal capital territory, 4 provinces and 2 administered zones.

Code	Subdivision name (en)	Subdivision name (ur) (BGN/PCGN 2007)	Subdivision category
PK-IS	Islamabad	*Islāmābād*	federal capital territory
PK-BA	Balochistan	*Balōchistān*	province
PK-KP	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	*Khaībar Pakhtūnkhwā*	province
PK-PB	Punjab	*Panjāb*	province
PK-SD	Sindh	*Sindh*	province
PK-JK	Azad Jammu and Kashmir (local variant is AJ&K)	*Āzād Jammūñ o Kashmīr*	Pakistan administered area

Code	Subdivision name (en)	Subdivision name (ur) (BGN/PCGN 2007)	Subdivision category
PK-GB	Gilgit-Baltistan	*Gilgit-Baltistān*	Pakistan administered area

This coding is used in the first components of the codes in this catalogue

5. Definition of a "col" (Pass)

The Cent Cols Club Rules of the Game have been scrupulously respected in the preparation of this Catalogue:
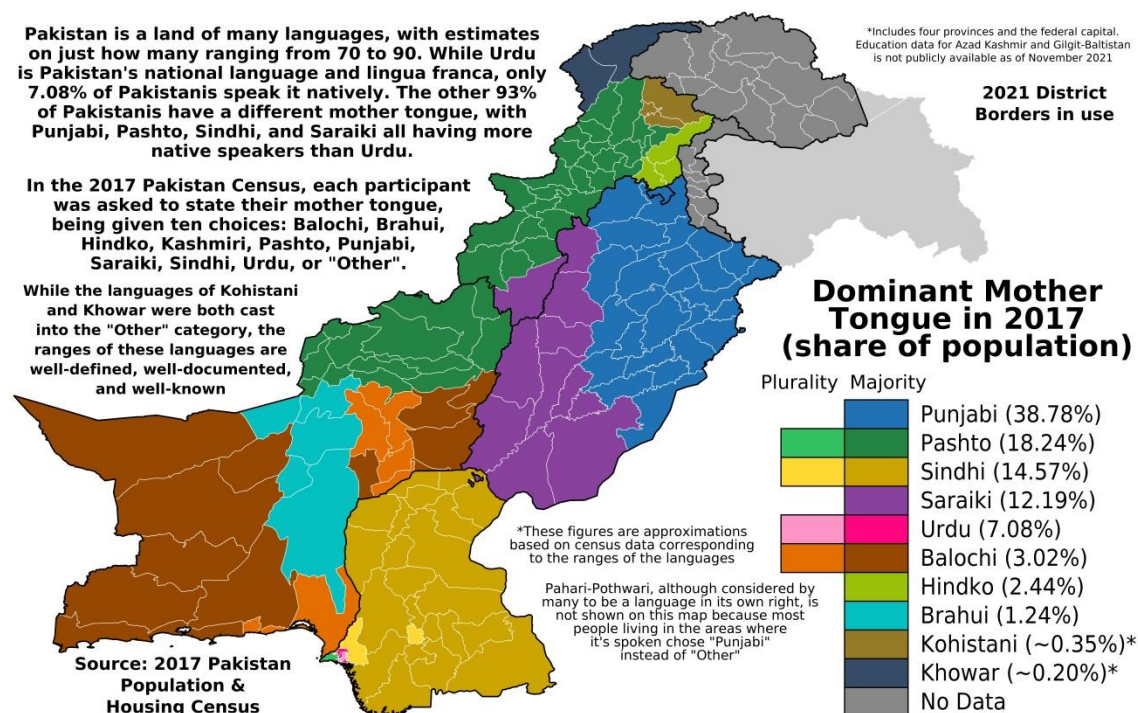"The passes listed in this Catalogue are those bearing this name, or any other local, regional or national equivalent, appearing (or having appeared) on cartographic or documentary sources deemed reliable by the Club. "(Rules of the Game)
"Because of the multitude of terrain configurations encountered, the minimum definition of the topographical character of a pass adopted by the Club is as follows: a privileged point of passage, imposed by the relief, situated on a watershed, and other than a summit."(Document appended to the Rules of the Game)

The descriptors and place names used in this catalogue reflect (as in other countries) the meaning of the different languages and their application in the field.

6. The languages and scripts of Pakistan

Pakistan is a country with many native and spoken languages. Urdu, the national language, is only spoken as a mother tongue by around 8% of the population, but serves as a lingua franca between the other languages.

Pakistan is a land of many languages, with estimates on just how many ranging from 70 to 90. While Urdu is Pakistan's national language and lingua franca, only 7.08% of Pakistanis speak it natively. The other 93% of Pakistanis have a different mother tongue, with Punjabi, Pashto, Sindhi, and Saraiki all having more native speakers than Urdu.

In the 2017 Pakistan Census, each participant was asked to state their mother tongue, being given ten choices: Balochi, Brahui, Hindko, Kashmiri, Pashto, Punjabi, Saraiki, Sindhi, Urdu, or "Other".

While the languages of Kohistani and Khowar were both cast into the "Other" category, the ranges of these languages are well-defined, well-documented, and well-known

*Includes four provinces and the federal capital. Education data for Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan is not publicly available as of November 2021

2021 District Borders in use

Dominant Mother Tongue in 2017 (share of population)

Plurality Majority

Punjabi (38.78%)
Pashto (18.24%)
Sindhi (14.57%)
Saraiki (12.19%)
Urdu (7.08%)
Balochi (3.02%)
Hindko (2.44%)
Brahui (1.24%)
Kohistani (~0.35%)*
Khowar (~0.20%)*
No Data

*These figures are approximations based on census data corresponding to the ranges of the languages

Pahari-Pothwari, although considered by many to be a language in its own right, is not shown on this map because most people living in the areas where it's spoken chose "Punjabi" instead of "Other"

Source: 2017 Pakistan Population & Housing Census

Pashto, Baluchi and Brahui provide the majority of terms for passes. These three languages, Urdu and Kashmiri, are written in different variants of Perso-Arabic script. Tibetan or Ladhaki terms found in the northern mountains are written in Tibetan script.

7. Terms/Descriptors that are accepted as designating a Pass in Pakistan.

Term			
Local term	**Linguistic family**	**Written script Dari/Pachto/Ladakh**	**Meaning**
An	Dari		Pass
Band	Baluchi		Pass
Bidrang	Baluchi		Pass
Dawan, Davan	Turkish		Pass
Gali	Kashmiri	گلی	Mountain pass
Ghakhai	Pashto		Pass
Ghar	Baluchi		Pass
Kandag	Baluchi		Pass
Kandao, Kandow	Pashto	کنډو	Pass, notch
Khand,Kand	Baluchi		Pass
Kotal, Kotal-e, Kowtal-e	Dari	کوتل	Pass, neck
La	Ladakhi, Tibetan	ལ	Pass
Lak, Laki	Brahui		Pass
Maghzai	Pashto		Pass, neck
Narai	Pashto	نری	Pass
Tak	Baluchi		Pass
Tang, Tang-e	Dari	تنگی	Pass, breach
Wad	Baluchi		Pass
Foreign terms			
Gap	English		Pass, breach
Pass	English		Pass, passage
Pereval	Russian		Pass
Saddle	English		Pass, saddle
Shankou	Chinese		Pass

8. Sources used

The Survey of India (SOI) carried out by the British at the beginning of the 20th century remains the primary source for subsequent cartographic work. After independence in 1947, responsibility was handed over to the Survey of Pakistan (SP).

We have consulted a complete collection of pre-independence 126k SOI maps and a few copies of

post-independence 50k and 63k SP maps.

The US and Soviet militaries, who undoubtedly had access to all of the more detailed maps, also provided fruitful sources via the USBGN database and Russian 200k maps.

We found a small number of additional passes on commercial and trekking maps (Terra Quest, Leomann, Olizane, GiziMap, Reise Know-How).

9. Geographical Coordinate Systems

Some of the well-known sources listed above use very familiar coordinate systems: Pulkovo 1942, Indian Triangulation System... We then converted the maps to WGS (geographic).

10. Catalogue User Manual

For all the universal headings in our catalogues, see the "Catalogue user manual" document, which can be downloaded from the introductory page of the catalogues section of the Cent Cols website.

https://www.centcols.org/catalogues-des-cols/

11. Authors

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Please send any comments, suggestions, corrections or proposals for new passes or additional information to:

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Cover photo

Image by Tayyab Bashir from Pixabay