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Hermann Buhl's success and the heroic, tough and tenacious efforts of his compatriots who had failed in 1932, 1934, 1937, 1938 and 1939 gave credit to scientific expeditions as well, and to the efforts of the scholars integrated in the ranks of mountaineers. Their predecessors had collected the most valuable good for the future – not recognized in the materialistic modern times – high esteem, respect and friendship.

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The area around the Nanga Parbat. A focus of Pakistani-German collaboration.

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Expedition 1954 was followed by a similar enterprise in 1959 which was used by the linguist H. Berger for his most successful studies. In 1955 the Second German-Hindukush Expedition had appeared in the same area headed by Prof. Dr. A. Friedrich. Apart from him and two other anthropologists, a linguist was a member of this team: G. Buddruss.

In 1958 an Austrian climbing expedition which conquered Mount Haramosh, included an academic team: two of the three scholars involved were appointed professors in German universities subsequently.

All these undertakings were supported by the authorities of Pakistan with great liberality. Some of their local assistants had previously collaborated during the early attempts, already before World War II. That proved to be a solid base, mutual confidence and friendship prevailed and were never called in question.

Further climbing expeditions tried their good luck in the following years. Assaults on the Nanga Parbat became almost a yearly routine. The scientific goals, however, were pursued by individual travels.

In these years, especially after 1978, the situation in regard of transport and communication changed completely. Until then connections by road between Gilgit or Skardu and the lowlands of Pakistan had only been possible in midsummer when the high passes, endangered by avalanches for many months, were free from snow, or the rest of the year air traffic with somewhat risky flights ("subject to weather") had been the only link to civilization. (Recently a Fokker Friendship disappeared without leaving any trace. Apparently the crash happened on the flanks of the Nanga Parbat.)

The first road built along the Indus Valley and therefore open throughout the year was narrow and steep at several places, with series of bends, fit only for jeeps and lorries with daring drivers. With the completion of the Karakorum Highway

a connection was opened to the system of Inner Asiatic routes of the People's Republic of China. This broad asphalt road runs through Indus-Kohistan, a former tribal area, where the local population had opposed even the former, more modest track. They could only be convinced to tolerate the intruders when helicopters appeared on the scene with their deafening noises frightfully echoing from the mountain walls.

In the Gilgit and Hunza Valleys no problems of this kind had to be faced by the road builders, but there torrents and suddenly advancing glaciers blocked the track or created temporary lakes. Nevertheless, the Khunjerab pass (4.700 m), the boundary to China, can be reached without too much delay.

The toll of lives by the Army Corps of Engineers and the Chinese counterparts who constructed most of the bridges was very high. Every foreigner must admire the concept and its realization against so many odds. Starting from the Karakorum Highway additional roads were built to make the adjacent valleys accessible. Today a "latitudinal ride" is possible through the northern regions of Pakistan between Chitral in the west and Khapalu in the east — a chance for touristic activities still unrecognized by the authorities.

There was no doubt that the culture of the so-called Northern Areas now definitely linked to the lowlands of Pakistan would be exposed to a number of challenges. Quick and irreversible changes were imminent. Based on the experiences which I had gained as one of the participants of the Second German Hindukush Expedition in 1955, the Haramosh Expedition in 1958 and during many individual journeys (1964, 1971, 1973, 1975, 1978) I applied together with the well-known prehistorian and palaeographer Prof. Dr. A.H. Dani to the Government of Pakistan to provide a project for a comprehensive documentation of the stock of traditional cultural evidence, which should be done by Pakistani and German scholars in a joint venture as fast as possible. The Government of Pakistan accepted this pro-

ject, the final decision came from the President himself.

The Pak-German Study Group for Anthropological Research in the Northern Areas could start fieldwork in 1980. The project was successful far beyond expectation. In 1980 the previously discovered petroglyphs situated at Haldeikish between the high-mountain oases of Hunza and Nager in the innermost Karakorum were studied by Prof. Dani and M.S. Qamar (now Assistant Director, Department of Archaeology and Museums) together with the German team headed by Dr. Thewalt. Prof. Dani published his readings of the pertinent inscriptions by using the photographs delivered to him by his German partners. They indicate that a caravan route, a sort of predecessor to the modern Karakorum Highway, had existed already 2000 years ago, difficult to pass, yet short and hence most useful as a connection between the lowlands, now Pakistan, and the Tarim Basin, now Sinkiang.

In 1979, in close collaboration with Mr. Ismail Khan, the former Deputy Commissioner of the Diamiar District (then residing at Chilas), I succeeded in locating the Buddhist rock-carvings and inscriptions which had been observed and very selectively studied by Sir Aurel Stein during World War II. The famous scholar had made his discovery on the base of the information provided by one of the last British Assistant Political Agents at Chilas. He had then been eighty years old and expired only one year later when he visited Kabul for the first time. The material collected by him was handed over to the experienced Hindu epigraphists in the Archaeological Survey of India. After the dissolution of the British Empire Chilas remained inaccessible to them, neither was their report available in Pakistan, therefore no further investigations at that spot took place and the chance of great discoveries had been lost for many years.

In this way my colleagues and I had the privilege to become Aurel Stein's immediate successors. The site was badly damaged

by the Karakorum Highway which had been planned without any consideration for monuments of the past. On numberless rocks incredible discoveries were waiting for us. There are some spots where every step, every turn of the head reveals some unknown rockcarvings. This host of obscure but sometimes artistically perfect figures and the enigmatic scripts was uncanny to the local population who explained them as creations of the fairies made when they descended from their celestial heights.

The number and the importance of the carvings have warranted expeditions since then every year in an area extremely hot in summer and almost bare of vegetation. The fastest and most effective way of documentation is by colour photographs. The graffiti made as bruising appear brightly shining on the rock covered by desert varnish in dark shades.

More than 30,000 petroglyphs have been recorded so far, a great part of them can be interpreted with the help of no less than 2,000 inscriptions in several languages – Sanskrit, Gandhari, Sogdian, Tibetan and Chinese. Iconographical considerations contribute to the interpretation, many different styles are represented, even on one and the same rock. There is evidence that not so far from glaciers of the Nanga Parbat in an area accessible only over high passes or dangerous tracks through the gorges, human activities and sentiments have been documented in a sort of open-air gallery since at least 5,000 years.

The first intruders were hunters and cattlebreeders, other northern tribes attracted by the wonders of the southern plains crossed the mountain belt by the same routes. About 2,000 years ago traders of Indian origin settled near Chilas possibly attracted by the gold which was screened on the banks of the Indus then as well as today. Traders far from their homelands needed protection and the warriors in the service of the statelets may have contributed to the expansion of the Buddhist faith in a similar way as the soldiers of the Roman Empire spread the Mithraic cult and Christianity.

Some centuries later settlements and temporary camps were founded near the entrance of the last gorges of the Indus. Here Sogdian merchants, apparently Zoroastrians, who arrived after a long journey from Samarkand through the Pamirs exchanged their goods against riches from Gandhara and Kashmir offered by their Buddhist partners.

In the centres of the local cults monasteries were founded by the Buddhists, especially in the area of Chilas. They became pilgrimage sites and current legends were rendered by rockcarvings, the stories that Buddha had "ransomed a dove with a piece of his own flesh", or had "given his arm to a hungry tigress unable to feed her cubs" were especially popular here.

We must reckon with the possibility that the area became a refuge for foreign monks and artists who had escaped the persecution and the cruelties inflicted on them by Hunnic invaders; the devastations in the plains have been vividly described by Chinese pilgrims. Such emigrants were useful as administrators and scribes in the services of a local nobility of Iranian or Turkish extraction.

The opposition against this foreign dominance was exploited by the emissaries of a Hindu religious group devoted to the sun-god Surya. Its centre was the renowned temple of Multan. Whereas this sect was rather complacent there, it became most aggressive after the intrusion into the mountains where it incorporated a number of local beliefs. The temporary dominance is documented in a vast number of petroglyphs concentrated in clusters around Chilas. Later on there was a Buddhist revival as well, but tensions persisted and allowed an early wave of heterodox Islam.

In this way we can make use of the petroglyphs for a reconstruction of the political and religious developments compatible with the information offered by Chinese, Indian and Islamic sources. Prof. Dani has presented his personal, stimulating views in a book dedicated to his German colleagues who shared with

him the dangers and strains of the fieldwork in the rocks of the Indus Valley. Under the auspices and with the support of the Heidelberg Academy for the Humanities and Sciences these German scholars started the critical edition of the material. Experts not only from Germany but from several countries have contributed to this work, including a Chinese scholar.

Since I had been the enthusiastic leader of this research unit for a while, a certain bias of my report may be excused. The results of other disciplines would have deserved an exposition in greater detail as well:

The geographer Prof. Groetzbach studied the ecological conditions and the recent acculturation in Bagrot, a valley not far from Gilgit. Dr. Snoy had visited this valley in 1955 and described it in a book which has only one shortcoming — it was never translated into English or Urdu.

Prof. Haserodt, another geographer, acquired and examined the data necessary for solving a crucial problem which had not even been correctly understood by most of the learned predecessors: travellers in the past started to cross the main northern ranges of the Hindukush and Karakorum shortly before the passes were closed due to snowfall. In contrast to modern visitors, who take the existence of bridges for granted, these early travellers were well aware that the crossing of rivers, even of small rivulets was extremely dangerous when the glaciers were melting. The maximum quantity of water transported by the Hunza River in the height of summer is twenty or thirty times as much than the minimum quantity in winter when fording on foot is quite possible. This situation is in total contrast to that in the south where most of the deadly accidents were due to avalanches and therefore the height of summer was the right time to cross the passes.

The achievements of the anthropologists are equally convincing. Prof. Stellrecht succeeded to explore the traditional ideological concepts of the Hunza people and as one of the side-effects

of her effective and well-timed visits presented the convincing explanation for the renowned longevity and good health of these people. The customs of a not so distant time had remained well concealed as long as the old elite was still in power, but now they were told by the ladies to the learned visitor of their own sex. The youngsters used to undergo a systematic training. Even in extreme heights they had to sleep in the open and to cross frozen rivers in winter, sometimes they even had to swim below the ice. Formerly this training had been necessary for predatory expeditions to Eastern Turkestan — but the "selective effect" is an advantage up to the present days.

In the same area, very useful studies in cultural geography were made by Dr. Kreutzmann. The population and the traditions of Nager, until recently a mountain statelet just on the other side of the river and almost forgotten in the shadow of the versatile Hunzas, was studied with diligence and empathy by Dr. Frembgen. In the Astor valley Dr. Nayyar, who had been my student in Heidelberg, explored so far unknown beliefs and rituals. Apparently so many European travellers who passed through this area during their lengthy journey from Srinagar to Gilgit and back never heard of them.

With regard to the linguistic achievements it should be mentioned that the modern poetry partly preserves the Great Tradition. Recently a coherent system of script was evolved which is applicable to most of the local languages. In Baltistan Prof. Sagaster and Dr. Söhnen initiated a new phase of research of the local language closely related to Tibetan. Here enormous chances opened up. Dr. Nayyar followed the hints I took from the early summaries and recorded the vocabulary of a so far unknown Indo-European language.

On the base of our discoveries a conference on the Karakorum Culture was held in Gilgit in 1983 confirming the sincere interest of scholars from all over the world working in this field. An exhibition of colour-posters was arranged by me and dis-

played in many European towns including Paris and London attracting the general public in great numbers. Even to them it became evident that the graffiti observed on the rocks in the Indus Valley disclose prospects for hitherto unknown fields of the history of Central Asia and the economic and social background for the establishment of the "Silk Routes".

Recently a great programme for economic progress and cultural integration was launched by the well-paid experts of the Agha Khan Foundation. However, there is no doubt that the performance, which the German scholars could achieve, assisted by friends and counterparts from Pakistan, is not less appreciated by the local population.

Map of the area around the Nanga Parbat, vide the German version.

Bibliography vide the German version.