

## INTRODUCTION

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The mountain valleys south of the main range of the Hindukush and east of the Anjuman Pass belong to the most inaccessible areas of the world. They are generally much narrower at their mouths than higher up. At these embouchures it is often difficult to find a pathway beside the torrent which issues between overhanging rocks. In addition to this, the enormous rush of water during the summer months from numerous and extensive glaciers impedes communication, the bridges being shaky and easily destroyed.

To this description taken almost verbally from the first pages of Biddulph's famous book it may be added that even most of the passes across the main ridges and connecting the individual valleys are steep, difficult and open only during the short weeks of midsummer. In presenting these most outstanding geographical features the fact - not often duly recognized by the historians - can be explained why this area never formed an integral part of any of the Great Empires of Asia, and why even the most experienced conquerors, like Timur, fought here with little or no success. Only in the 19th century foreign control was established everywhere.

On the other hand, however, these valleys are near to two of the most important migration routes used by the Indo-Iranian invaders: the Oxus/Wakhan corridor in the north, and the Kabul valley in the south. Moreover, the tendency to establish time-saving connections between Central Asia and India had the consequence that some strenuous and only temporarily passable routes were used for commercial exchange and for pilgrimage.

The dominant ethnic element in these valleys are speakers of the Kafir and Dardic languages, belonging to the Indo-Iranian stock and sharing such religious traditions as we know them from the Avestan and Vedic texts. Among these mountain peoples, however, the common heritage has been re-modelled in a very peculiar way, accepting and repelling influences of foreign traditions in accord with experiences gained in their unique tremendous geographical setting.

The process of transforming and its fascinating results with its full implications for scholarship became known in Europe towards the end of the 19th century. However at this very moment the conquest by the Afghans of the last politically independant valleys and the

forcible conversion of their population to Islam seemed to destroy all hope for further investigation. Kafiristan, i.e., the Land of the Unbelievers, became Nuristan, i.e., Land of Light, and was virtually closed to all foreigners for a long time. So one got used to considering the valleys on the southern flank of the Afghan Hindukush as a lost paradise for ethnology, and to being content with the splendid material collected by Robertson, the last European visitor who in the nineties had seen this area in its full bloom - a bloom including, it is true, cruel warfare, but also sumptuous feasts of merit.

Gradually, later on in the 20th century it became evident that the over-pessimistic comments about the irreversible effects of conquest and religious conversion have been, in some respect, premature. Over the decades it became apparent that worthwhile studies could still be, and have been, undertaken in this region with notable success. A survey of their nature and their bearing on the present state of scholarship in this field seems in place here.

1. It appeared that in Nuristan proper some persons of old age remembering traditions of the pagan religion were still alive up to the fifties of the 20th century. Some of them although derided by the younger generation had, in fact, remained faithful to the creed of their ancestors. G.Buddruss had the good chance of interviewing men who were earnestly waiting for Imra's return. G.Morgenstierne, L.Edelberg and others had similar experiences with an astonishingly large number of "last Kafirs". This means that we now can work on a much broader basis of data including many mythical texts. Of course the fact that this "frozen" material had been transformed before its salvage documentation should not be ignored.

2. In a remarkably delayed process, the existence of a truly pagan people in the Hindukush, side by side with the already converted Kafirs, was perceived by ethnographers: the Kalash. They formerly populated and dominated the whole of southern Chitral, but are now restricted to three secluded valleys. Only after World War II the Kalash were thoroughly studied ethnographically. It could be shown that their religious system bears similarities to, but is not identical with, those of former Kafiristan. It, too, will be destroyed soon, and this not only through the missionary zeal of its neighbours but as much through the influence of tourism and modern development.

3. Besides the Kalash other Dardic peoples in this region who have been converted more or less completely to the Islamic Faith have preserved so many pre-Islamic traditions that an earlier religious stratum with a specific regional differentiation could be recognized

underneath the Islamic layer. As confirmed by ruined stupas, rock inscriptions and by other monuments of the past, this region had been for a long time under Buddhist domination, but this domination had been shaken off in a sort of nativistic reaction, a process which had perhaps a more than casual affinity with the rise of the reformed Bon religion in Tibet.

4. The important progress in the linguistic field achieved by Morgenstierne and others taking up his line should not be unnoted, as this will form the foundation for all further research, even in ethnographic studies.

Despite the progress in so many fields the publicity of studies undertaken in this area has been relatively restrained. The number of scholars working on relevant problems had increased considerably, but there had been no common platform for them. Moreover, the publication of the results obtained during the last decades could not keep a pace with the fast progress of investigations underway. Communication between scholars has been restricted to a mostly regional level; the most active group were our Scandinavian colleagues who were so fortunate to be led by G.Morgenstierne. The University of Århus had built up a centre for relevant ethnographic study. Here is a museum full of important objects from the Hindukush, surprisingly well fitted into the general frame of the other collections, mainly from the Nordic past.

Thus it was quite natural that our Scandinavian colleagues should take the decisive initiative for redeeming the many "Hindukushologists" from their "splendid isolation". Under Professor Morgenstierne as the chairman an Executive Committee, consisting of H.Siiger, K.Ferdinand and L.Edelberg, the last one acting as secretary, sent out invitations to the first Hindu-Kush Cultural Conference to be held at Moesgård between the 10th and 18th of November, 1970.

The list of scholars invited is given at the end of this volume; almost all participants gave one or even more lectures, and, it may be added, each took lively part in the discussions. All of us still remember the happy days of Moesgård, and we will remain thankful for the generous and cordial reception which was given to us in this charming country. It was a particularly rewarding experience to meet, among the participants, friends from Afghanistan and Pakistan, men of year-long experience in the studies we share, and others from these countries who had become experts over more recent years. They all helped us to formulate the resolution which was passed at the end of the Conference and concerned the

future of Nuristan and the adjacent areas. It was understood that nothing could be done effectively without the agreement and the active help of the Governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan. It was equally accepted that in the future a great part of research work and documentation would pass over into the hands of people at the universities and museums of both countries directly concerned.

The final resolution was sent as a letter to the Secretary General of the UNESCO. The letter is included in this volume.

Shortly after the Conference L. Edelberg began with the preparation for presenting the scholarly results. Participants were asked to submit their papers as abstracts or their final versions and to put at editor's disposal photographs in order to form a substantively illustrated volume. It was considered whether or not to include the contents of the discussions during the sessions.

Most of the participants followed his advice and gave their consent to the procedure proposed.

After some time participants were informed that partly due to financial restrictions such a representative editing as originally planned would not be feasible. Instead each member could ask at his own cost for xerox copies of the papers available at Moesgaard for his personal use and should feel free to publish his contribution elsewhere.

The present editor understands this position perfectly well. The Conference had been so extremely rewarding because it gave a snapshot of the situation of research on one and the same complex in several countries of quite different standards. Thus some articles were of a rather general character, others were original contributions to particular problems. Some of them were raw material, but indispensable for farther research. Some remained still short summaries without footnotes, others had been enlarged to substantial articles with the full scientific apparatus.

Except for the trained linguists, most of the authors were highly individualistic in rendering proper names. All articles were in English, but also in the handling of this language individualistic attitudes could be observed. The discussions, too, were on an uneven level, sometimes, for a full understanding, a personal knowledge of the speaker would have been necessary; sometimes parts of the discussion made no more sense because the text of the paper had been changed for the purpose of publication.

Despite all these adverse circumstances, should it be permitted that the material gathered during the course of the Conference would not be put to the disposal of the whole community of scholars?

Even participants would be deprived of the possibility to refer to a published text, as the hope of having each individual article published independantly evidently was nil. Too many scholars who had the chance to work in Nuristan and the adjacent areas are still "breeding" their unpublished field notes. And what is perhaps even worse, there are many manuscripts only privately circulated among privileged friends. I too feel guilty in this respect. Finally our Scandinavian friends had succeeded in inducing at least some of us to put some of our results out on the table. Should we now be allowed to bury our hoarded informations again safely in the secrecy of our institutes?

This would have been all the more deplorable as the actual value of the Conference proceedings turned out to be even higher than could be realized at first sight. Once the papers would be arranged according to regions and their problems, the actual scholarly progress in the various lines of research would become quite readily intelligible.

In this situation I proposed to my Scandinavian colleagues to publish the papers in Germany, and this offer was accepted. As L. Edelberg's initiative had started the whole project, he should act as co-editor guaranteeing a certain degree of continuity.

However, the scope of this volume does not fully correspond to the concept our Scandinavian friends had in mind. Partly, this is due to the regrettable fact that here, too, financial resources are more and more restricted. I got the help of the South Asia Institute in Heidelberg which agreed to accept this book in one of its series, though this institute is committed to many other projects of publication. But we can make a virtue of necessity.

1. Of course, one cannot deny the fact that the content of this volume is not at all homogeneous. As I have mentioned we have in many cases preliminary reports showing us the momentary standard of progressing studies. Therefore a quick and inexpensive way of publication is adequate. This was made possible by using modern photomechanic techniques and preventing the inclusion of too many illustrations. As it appeared, however, that in the case of Edelberg's papers these would be difficult to understand without any illustrations, the rule here was broken and plates were added with the financial help from Danish institutions.

The fact should not be obscured that the authors have a quite different scientific background. Some of the best informed used therefore a rather naive system of transcription. I do not think it appropriate to "correct" them like an academic tutor. In cases

where identity with wellknown terms is evident, this is noted in the index. In almost all cases the English text is preserved for the same obvious reason.

3. During the Conference Mrs. Janet Pott gave a short summary of the highly valuable material collected by a Chitrali prince, Shahzada Hussam-ul-Mulk. Following the author mythological texts from the Katis settling in Urtsun were included in a chapter simply called "Kalash mythology". I went back to the original text prepared by the author for publication with the help of Miss Audrey Boorne, but dropped the parts outside the scope of this volume (Khowar Folk Stories and Proverbs). The rest was divided into three separate papers corresponding to the ethnic groups among whom the informations were collected. Mrs. Pott has written a short appendix giving the biographic data of this admirable man who has laid the foundations on which all further study of Chitrali folklore will rest.

4. No complete rendering of the papers delivered at Moesgård was endeavoured beyond the number of contributions already gathered by L. Edelberg. Some articles which were difficult to understand without the slides or the tape-recordings we could hear in Moesgård were suppressed. In the end, after some hesitation, I could not accept the publication of any parts of the discussion.

I cannot expect that all will be happy and content with this solution, but I hope that those of us who have still to publish their material will be stimulated to do so - by a glimpse on the preliminary reports of others disclosing so many unsettled problems.