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III

NORTHERN AREAS OF PAKISTAN

— An Ethnographic Sketch —

By Professor Karl Jettmar

The "Northern Areas" might also be called the "Trans-Himalayan Districts of Pakistan". Their southern boundary is formed by the western most part of the main range of the great Himalaya. Their Northern boundary corresponds to the (easternmost) Hindukush and to the western Karakorum. From Chitral they are separated by mountains recently called Hinduraj.[1] The eastern limit is the divide between Baltistan and Purig, corresponding roughly to the ceasefire-line between Pakistan and Indian-held territory. The ceasefire-line crosses the valleys of Indus and Shayok and follows the ranges bordering the Deosai plateau in the east.

The main division inside the Northern Areas are mountains called the "Nanga Parbat-Haramosh spur" by geologists. This barrier is intersected in the north by the Indus river breaking through the Rondu gorge, and in the south by the Astor river draining a fan of valleys east of the Nanga Parbat.

The present political and administrative organization of the Northern Areas corresponds by and large to its geographical situation. East of the Rondu gorge there is the district of Baltistan with two subdivisions. In 1972 Skardu subdivision had a reported population of 89,000, Khaplu 78,000.

The western region contains two districts, north and south of the Gilgit range. The northern one — Gilgit proper — includes the valleys drained by the Gilgit river and the land along the Indus between the Shengus pass formerly intersecting the paths through the Rondu gorge and the basin of Bunji. The southern district — Diamar — with its centre at Chilas, starts from Tangir/Darel (the opposite

bank of the Indus belongs to Indus-Kohistan as far as the mouth of the Basha valley) and extends eastwards even to Astor, i.e., east of the Nanga Parbat-Haramosh spur. The population numbers for the Gilgit District were, according to the 1972 census: 158,000 (Gilgit Subdivision 51,000, Hunza/Nagar 52,000, "Political Districts" 55,000), and 90,000 for the Diamar District: Chilas 29,000 Darel/ Tangir 25,000, Astor 36,000.

This implies that the Northern Areas had a total population of some 415,000 people in 1972. In many subdivisions the increase had been about 30% since 1962. The effects of this excessive growth will be discussed shortly.

That such a patchwork of valleys nevertheless forms an integrated whole in many respects is due to several recent innovations in this region, especially the establishment of government schools favouring Urdu as a Lingua franca. The main factor however is the construction of roads. Not only the Karakorum Highway is of extreme importance, but also the link-road through the Rondu gorge between Gilgit and Skardu. Many bridges were built over previously impassable stretches of river, while jeep-roads are now creeping into remote side-valleys, some still under construction. Air traffic connecting Gilgit and Skardu with Islamabad is still important. The traditional suspension bridges formed of ropes of twisted birch (or willow) twigs have almost entirely disappeared, as have the famous "skinrafts" of inflated cow or goat hides.

The linguistic situation is described in Fussman's contribution (see chapter II). He includes Chitral and Indus-Kohistan within his survey but falls short with respect to Balti. However not less than 150,000 of the inhabitants of Baltistan still speak this archaic Tibetan language. Burushaski is the mothertongue of a population of about 40,000 in Hunza and Yasin. I am not in a position to quote reliable numbers for the speakers of Khowar, Gujari, Wakhi and Domaaki, nor for the languages of the plains spoken by those who came to this region in service or as merchants, etc. Kohistani is spoken by many gold-washers and others who originally entered as craftsmen or bondsmen.

Almost one half of the population speaks Shina. There are many dialects of Shina, some of them preserving a substratum of what appears to be another, unrecorded Dardic language. Shina was certainly brought in by a late wave of southern immigrants, may be entering in the service of a central political power. Later it was spread far to the east by settlers living in many colonies up to Ladakh.

Environment and Economy: Common Features

Some general statements can be made on the area as a whole.

In the Northern Areas we are behind the Great Himalaya range, so there is significantly less rainfall than further south, e.g., in Indus-Kohistan. But the main peculiarity is that rainfall scarcely occurs in the valleys but almost exclusively in high altitudes feeding snowfields and glaciers. So practically nowhere in this region may agriculture rely upon direct precipication (i.e., lalmi cultivation). At the bottom of the valleys, such as along the Indus, the air is extremely dry and the heat continues to be reflected from the barren rocks long after sunset. Therefore irrigation is necessary everywhere, but on the other hand, double cropping becomes possible, sometimes giving higher annual yields per acre than one finds in lowland districts.

The rivers have cut their beds deep into rocks and sediments. The water volume changes enormously between its maximum in summer and its minimum between October and April, a respective ratio of 20:1 being quite normal. That means that it is impossible to build canals branching off the main rivers themselves, or to till the soil near their banks. Only the water of streams and rivulets coming forth from side-valleys may be used.

However at the mouths of the side-valleys there are alluvial fans with much gravel and boulders, as sometimes sudden rainfall may result in a terrible flood. So it is preferred to bring the water by canals to better protected tracts at the fringe of the fan and to build settlements there.

This is only one of the constraints imposed by nature. Another is the scarcity of manure as fertilizer. The best source is from cattle, but since all suitable land in the lower tracts (and of the side-valleys and near their mouths) is used for fields, high meadows became a necessary extension of the pastures. If they are of poor quality, or little far away, human excrement must be collected together with the silt deposited in the canals by water coming from glaciers. This can be seen in Hunza and in Baltistan; but it is no full substitute for cattle-dung as fertilizer.

To collect winter-fodder for cattle was very laborious, but it was possible to keep goats in large numbers in the zone of the evergreen holm-oak *(Quercus ilex)* south of the Gilgit range.

The result is that no agriculture was feasible without herding before the import of artificial fertilizer. An integrated and well balanced combination of agro-pastoral resources was necessary.

So even immigrating groups of herdsmen or other specialists tried their best to get their own land. Otherwise they were extorted

and even blackmailed by the farmers in springtime. Before the first harvest, there was always a scarcity of grain, and no distributary market to cover their needs. Specialists — Gujars, Doms, Maruts (i.e., gold-washers)—were considered as socially inferior to the farmers. They needed a direct link to the political centre, or a sort of *jajmani* system of personal contract with farmers for a stable existence (but without the religious implications of inter-caste relations found in Hindu regions).

Wheat, barley, millet, buckwheat and legumes were the principal crops, today supplemented and partly replaced by maize and potatoes. Equally important were fruits: apricots and grapes occurring even at relatively high altitudes, while in lower places there are mulberries. They could be preserved, mostly dried, and formed an important part of the consumption in winter. Walnuts were also plentiful in many areas.

We find therefore a considerable surplus in some places, but very few items for export: e.g., *ghi*, dried apricots, or animals. This may explain the formerly widespread practice of selling slaves in return for luxury imports. Gold-dust was used for the same purpose, and was provided by a sort of villeinage in some areas.

The Many Forms of Islam

Since the Hindus, namely soldiers, clerks, and shopkeepers who came with the Dogras left the country after Partition, the population is now entirely Muslim. But Islam had been introduced in gradual phases from different sides (see chapter VI) therefore three or, more exactly, four separate denominations are represented here.

In the History of Chitral a prince is mentioned called Taj Moghal who came from the West, from Badakhshan, and conquered the whole area up to Punial, Yasin, and Hunza. Even the ruler of Gilgit had to bow his neck under the superior force of the intruder. The sole intention of this campaign was to spread the Ismaili faith over all the mountain valleys. A second attack with the same aim was less successful.

It is not possible so far to identify this invader with any historically documented individual, but the story is in accordance with what we know from other sources. Badakhshan was an area where Mongols were in good terms with the indigenous population. So the situation was quite different from that in Western Iran. In the time of Qublai Khan (1260—1294 A.D.) the malik of Badakhshan, Pahlvan, certainly one of the local Iranians, held an influential position, Maybe "Taj" is the corruption of the Chinese title "taishi" used for powerful feudal lords in the Mongol hierarchy.

This is consistent with the information contained in the "History of Jammu and Kashmir" written by Hashmatullah Khan. He says that under the rule of Tor Khan (1290—1335 A.D.) Gilgit was attacked by "Taj Moghal" to enforce conversion to the Ismailia faith. Tor Khan embraced this creed and made efforts towards its diffusion. So the believers were called Mughli, later Maulai — surely a popular etymology.

It is said that most of the areas west of Gilgit (not only North Chitral but aslo Kuh and Ghizar, Yasin, Punial, and even Hunza) remained faithful to this sect, their pirs and Khalifas being found in these regions up to the present day. But on the other hand, the introduction of the Maulai faith to Hunza was attributed to the Tham (ruler) Silum (Salim) Khan III, who himself lived in Badakhshan for a while as a political refugee and met there the important religious leader Shah Ardabil. That would mean an introduction, or re-introduction, of the Ismailia as late as the beginning of the last century, since Silum III died between 1824—1826.

Even in other areas, the continuity is somewhat controversial as we shall see later.

Maybe Taj Moghal was less successful in Gilgit, because there had been earlier Islamic preachings before. According to local tradition, the propagation of Islam was effected by six venerable men in the time of Azar or Shamsher in the first half of the 12th century A.D., implying the end of Buddhism.

The local historians are convinced that the dynasty became Sunni in faith through this wave of conversion. Their spiritual and political advisors (and judges) also came from the great Sunni centres in Central Asia.

Only under the dominant influence of Baltistan (where the Maqpon rulers reached the height of their power under Ali Sher Khan Anchan) did one of the Rajas of Gilgit, Mirza Khan, adopt the Shia faith. This was the beginning of a religious division between the local population, causing troubles to the present day. For an understanding of this situation we must shift our attention to Baltistan.

The eminent men of religion who promoted Islam there all came from Kashmir or via Kashmir from Iran.

It is doubtful whether Amir Kabir Syed Ali Hamadani, the supposed founder of Islam in Balti tradition, actually lived in Baltistan — or whether we have to do with a pious legend, created by his disciples and delegates. (See Chapter VI for another view).

The vicegerent and representative of his son was Hazrat Syed Mohammad Nur Bakhsh, who died in 1464 A.D. He was successful in propagating the faith not so much in Skardu but in Shigar and in Kiris/Khaplu.

According to Hashmatullah Khan, Hazrat Nur Bakhsh was himself quite in accord with the main tenets of the Shia, but later on his name and reputation were used by other religious teachers, e.g., Mir Shamsuddin Iraqi, to spread their own somewhat different beliefs and practices.

So in the northern and northeastern regions of Baltistan (and Purig i.e. Poryag or Kargil) there exists a religious community called Nur Bakhshi, slightly diverging from the Shia prevalent in the central, southern and western parts of Baltistan.

Due to the events reported above, this Shia territory also includes areas west of the Rondu gorge, namely. Haramosh, Bagrot, some quarters of Gilgit, and Nagar. Apparently Hunza was under Shia influence for a while, but today only the villages Ganesh remains a Shia enclave. The difference in the prevalent religious beliefs bolsters the natural antagonism between the brother-states Hunza and Nagar.

As mentioned above, already many centuries before there were Sunni pockets in the area, not only in Gilgit but also in Tangir and Darel. There the valleys were influenced from south Chitral.

The emergence of a political system based on the Pashtun interpretation of Sunni Islam.

The main thrust came from the south. When the Yusufzai and other Pakhtun tribes advanced to Buner, lower Swat and in the Panjkora valley, they were under the leadership of saintly but intrepid personalities, strictly Sunni in their religion, but adding to the normal preaching what we might call a social and political component. In the conquered areas they introduced a system of reallotment of the land called Wesh, still partially preserved in some remote places up to the present day.

A description of Wesh distribution given by the Norwegian ethnographer Fredrik Barth may be quoted here:2

"The descent group owns the rights to land in common, and the problem is to achieve an equitable distribution between its component members. Since no two plots of land are really identical, a semipermanent division can never be fully satisfactory. Instead, the land is subdivided into blocks corresponding to the segments of the descent group, and each segment occupies each in alternate or rotating fashion. Thus each segment will, by the completion of the cycle, have occupied all the different areas an equal length of time, and full equality is ensured. Within each segment, land may be subdivided into lots according to the size of the household, or, as among the Pathans, according to the adult males traditional share of the total. Thus, a person does not own particular fields, but a specified fraction of the common land of his lineage segment. and at the end of each standard period, he moves

with his segment to a new locality allotted to it, where he again is allotted fields corresponding to his share of the total, to be utilized in the next period. In the same way, not land but a specified share of the common lands is passed on as inheritance from father to son."

Observing this system in its practical use, we see that local adaptations were made according to the specific conditions of the environment and also to less easily modifiable traits of the social order.

Areas like Swat have large and coherent tracts of arable land, while the Kinship System of the Pakhtuns is highly flexible and offers many opportunities for strategic manipulation. The main problem was to stabilize the demarcation between the blocks of re-allotment. It was solved by handling the buffer-zones over to saintly families.

In the mountains settled by Dardic 'tribals', valleys recently conquered by their neighbours are very rare: we find early settlers and intruders living side by side. The patches of arable land here do not necessarily correspond to that needed for the subsistance of one kinship group. So the population as a whole was divided into large sections called *dala*, and smaller units called *tal*. The core of each *tal* is normally a descent group, *zat*, but frequently combined with others so as to amount totals of equal strength. Every adult man received his share, and even girls got a *tago* portion and were allowed when married to add it to the land of their new families. There was no exchange of land and no resettling in another area. The basic settlements (with additional houses in higher levels of the valley) remained stable. So considerable variations from the Pakhtun model exemplified in Swat are evident here.

The basic settlements were concentrated in fortified villages with an open ground, a *biyak*, for meetings where political decisions were discussed and finally accepted. In smaller valleys there was only one nucleated centre of this kind, comprising a township.

Such a system neither needs, nor indeed allows, a permanent ruler, but requires only a group of elected representatives and officials for its administration. The communities remained democratic, and we might reasonably call them republics. Indus-Kohistan certainly belonged to this kind of polity — quite in opposition to the northern belt stretching from Chitral to Baltistan and even beyond, where there were centralized monarchies as a rule, and almost without exception.

The areas now included in the Diamar District may be considered as a zone of transition or oscillation. Monarchical systems also existed there, when foreign rulers gained limited control, but such centralized states could only be maintained for some time, followed

by frequent relapses into republican freedom.

Political and Social Systems

We know that in the north there were monarchies, but they represent different types; and the social organization at village level and below was clearly inter-woven with the overall administrative framework.

In the Belt of the Centralized States. Gilgit

In *Gilgit* the Trakhan dynasty ruled over several centuries; guesses as to the time of their first ascent differ considerably: between the 12th[3] to the 14th[4] century A.D. But certainly there existed a state here with the same geographical centre since the 10th, or even 9th century A.D., as mentioned in the Saka Itinerary, in the Persian geographical work *Hudud al-'Alam* and Biruni's well-informed writings. The kings of the precedent dynasty can almost certainly be identified with the "Darada-Shahis" mentioned in books of the *Rajatarangini.*

The population was organized into four castes — Shins, Yashkuns, Kamins, and Doms — since a very early time, maybe according to a model taken from a neighbouring area where Hinduism was still prevalent.

But the system of values and symbols associated with these classes remained somewhat different from the caste stratification of Hinduism. The Shins considered themselves as ritually cleaner than all others, and treated the goat as their proper and sacred animal while the cow was abhored. We learn in Fussman's contribution that Shina, the language prevalent in almost all areas under the sway of the Gilgit princes, has "some relationship" to Tirahi, so it can be almost certainly located as an offshoot of one of the Southern Dardic languages. This fact supports local traditions as well as conclusions drawn from the actual spread of the Shin caste over the valleys, indicating that the Shins came from the south — say Pakhli or Ursa (Hazara). There, at the fringe of the mountains, domestic goats are plentiful and can be sustained in winter by forage from the leaves of the evergreen holm-oak. In this way the partiality of the Shins for this animal becomes intelligible. Maybe the Shins migrated northwards like the Gujars, but became powerful when they were needed as military guards, possibly by the Trakhans who were foreigners themselves (but had arrived from the east, from Baltistan).

The Doms, mostly acting as ministrels for the rulers or village-communities, are certainly late comers from the south. In a mar-

ginal area they have preserved a language of their own.

So the Yashkuns (landowners) and the Kamins (formerly craftsmen but now mostly somewhat poorer farmers) remain as probable descendants of an aboriginal population. Since occupational groups with similar names occur in the Panjab, the *Kamins* or *Krammins* ("potters") perhaps include also a foreign element.

Within the higher castes there existed patrilineal exogamous lineages with the tendency to accept women of lower social standing as wives, but hardly from the despised Doms. In the village council the lineages were represented by "*jushteros*" or elders. For coordination and regulation of the agricultural work, and as a sort of village police, a group of supervisors was appointed; and in Indus-Kohistan the name of this group — *zeitu* — was used as the official term for village magistrates.

The subsistence unit was the extended family, whereby brothers divided their separate tasks among themselves (tilling the soil, for example, being the responsibility of the strongest men). Polyandry was practised at least in some areas. In families without male offspring, one of the daughters could inherit house and land, her husband being included into her natal lineage.

Beyond and beside this block of regular castes, other caste-like groups of families were added: *Ronos* (families of foreign origin who produced the wazirs) and Saiyids in high positions; Gujars, Kohistanis or Kashmiris in rather depressed ones.

An intimate link between families of different rank was created by milk — fostership. A child of superior rank thereby grew up within a family of his future subjects. This arrangement was useful for both parties, but especially so for dignitaries of high standing who thus acquired fictitious relatives of absolute loyalty.

The king was interrelated with his people in two ways.

On the one hand there existed a regular administration. From Biddulph's report we inevitably get the impression that its main scope was to provide the ruler, called *Ra*, and his courtiers with provision and manual service in an archaic, irregular, and not too effective system. No taxes in cash were collected since there was no coined money. Gold dust in fixed quantities was mainly used for transactions with foreigners.

The officials had the right to retain a part of the products they collected in the name of the *Ra* — and to release some men from public or military service in order to use them for their private interests.

The titles used for the different ranks of the administrators and their helpers indicate borrowings during different periods from

several different regions (including Iranian, Turkish and Indian administrative titles); but so far no systematic analysis is available.

From other sources we know that the provinces administered by wazirs had in turn to send a labour force to the capital, well furnished with rations. There may still be found families remembering that they had hereditary rights and tasks for the court — sometimes going back to the time of the previous pagan dynasty!

Other villagers were needed as agricultural labourers for the state tilling the fields which belonged to the ruler spread over the entire country.

There was no standing army, but every free man had to join the ranks in war-time — if not of an exempted category. The villages were fortified and defended by their inhabitants.

In this system the *Ra* was not considered as commander-in-chief. The raison d'etre of his office becomes clear when we refer to his role during the "semi-religious festivals" surviving "in spite of Mohammedanism", "mostly connected with agriculture" — as aptly described by Biddulph. But in his days such traditions were already broken after the pernicious wars preceding the setting up of British rule in Gilgit (and the physical extermination of a large part of the local population).

Biddulph's notes cannot be conveniently reproduced here, but the *Ra* was in fact the spiritual guarantor of fertility: for crops, the fruit-trees, the cattle and the humans as well. He had a close connection with a female deity embodied in the great war drum. One of the primordial kings, Shiri Bager Tham, was subsequently taken as a supernatural being, identified with the holy Chili-tree '*Juniperus excelsa* . The altar for these ceremonies was a stone near the entrance of the villages. According to Shin practice, offerings of goats played an important role in the cult performances.

The charisma connected with such activities allowed the ruler to act as mediator and judge in serious cases like murder or treason.

There is no doubt that the somewhat strained relation between the rulers and official Islam allowed some encouragement for the preservation of other, not strictly orthodox, customs and habits. Shamans of an almost Siberian type, often acting as the 'voice of public opinion' inhaled the smoke of burning juniper branches in order to induce trance. Witches were riding wooden boxes instead of the brooms used by their European sisters. They were believed to devour the souls of their neighbours and even their own sons during black masses. In such secret meetings they are assisted by a henchman, feigning reluctance, who had to slaughter the alter ego of the victim — in the shape of a goat. On the other hand, the witches themselves were haunted by another type of spiritual specialist who

might occasionally succeed in saving the endangered person otherwise destined to die after a few days.

Other customs simply survived because they took place in a region not regularly visited by members of the Islamic clergy. They were therefore less early regulated by foreign concepts.

Hunting lore was most important in this respect. The ibex living in high altitudes and taking refuge in rocky slopes of extreme difficulty was hard to hunt for men equipped with bows or primitive guns. The markhor was standing some-what lower. Both animals were considered to be clean and sacred like their habitat with its fragrant trees and flowers, its shining glaciers and clean waters. They were protected and tended by fairy-like supernatural beings called *rachi* or *peri*. Ibex and markhor, forming the most noble game, were known collectively as *mayaro*.

Before going to hunt the experienced man had to purify himself and to sleep alone. Then his protective *rachi* would appear to him in dream with a gift indicating sure success. A man of noble origin and an excellent officer, climber and pilot, was proud to be a good Muslim; but without such a nightly visit of his *rachi* guardian he would miss in shooting — so he told me!

After the kill, the carcase of a hunted animal had to be treated with great reverence. Pieces of the liver were thrown away as an offering to the *peri*.

Mayaro may only be killed, according to local belief, when they have been slaughtered previously by their supernatural owners — the *peris*. After a common meal, the bones are said to be collected by the fairies and reassembled — resulting in a sort of re-incarnation — but without the spiritual essence. Only such 'secondary animals' are disposable for humans.

The customs and beliefs presented here in a short anthology[5] have many roots in the spiritual traditions of Asia. Some certainly were transmitted rather late, during Islamic times; and historical linguistics may tell us the likely origin of some of these ideas by etymological investigation.

It is indeed fascinating to see how human imagination has been shaped by the natural environment of their region, by the grandiose theatre of the mountains. So the experiences of hunters and shepherds, their feelings and speculations, brought widely divergent ideas into a coherent and structured world-view. The highest mountain summits inaccessible to men were considered as the abode of clean spirits, mostly females. On the peaks of Diamar (Nanga Parbat), Haramosh, Dubani and Rakaposhi they have their castles.

Europeans are said to have some relations with them and are therefore eager to reach such heights — but they are often punished for their audacious efforts by avalanches and storm-clouds.

Below the mountain tops girded by glaciers is the zone of crags and rocky slopes inhabited by the *mayaro* and visited by hunters, sometimes meeting their *rachis* there. Just a little below are meadows where the herdsmen tend their flocks. The agricultural zone is more or less neutral. Still further down lies the demoniac sphere with dangerous invisible beings, male and female, near the mouths of the rivers. The dirty cows are confined to the middle and lower strata, as indeed are women.

But the resulting model of altitudinal zones of spirituality does not cover the full spectrum of conflicting concepts. The material collected by the Chief Clerk in the Political Office in Gilgit, Ghulam Muhammad, on the 'Seat of Chastity' and the 'Settling of Disputes' cannot be reconciled entirely with this ritual framework. But it is certainly accurate and has been supported by later inquiries. The same is true in regard to his chapters 'Marriage', 'Omens', Eclipses', and 'The Creation of the World'. Much remains enigmatic, and only recently we learnt how important ceremonial axes of a special type were used as emblems of the bridgeroom.

It must be assumed that in former times there was a considerable sexual liberty, a tendency to decide conflicts by a show of competitive prodigality (i.e., 'Feast of Merit'). Intra-village killing was banned, blood-feuds being strictly prohibited in the regularly administrated areas as well.

That the burial customs were quite un-Islamic is well-known. Cremation was practised in some areas, the ashes being buried in wooden boxes or earthen jars.

Particular Traditions in the Former Dependencies of the Trakhane Dynasty

The *Haramosh valley* hidden between the Indus and a mountain range to be crossed by a very difficult pass west of the mighty massif with the same name, was visited by anthropologists in 1955[6] and 1958[7]. Here the spiritual background of the practice attributed to the witches became evident: The human soul may be incarnated as an ibex roaming in the lofty heights and in this shape chased by demoniac beings. Their successful killing of the animal could imply an impending death within the community. Conversely, the real ibex is conceived to have a spiritual counterpart or 'alter ego' in a living human.

Besides this, I heard that the women of the village once had meetings in honour of a female deity where a goat was slaughtered by a male priest, the "buck of the women flock". The deity protected also shamans and hunters appearing as a kind of Central Asian

Artemis. It became clear, moreover, that in former times the branching off of a lineage needed a special feat of merit. A monumental stone was erected on this occasion, and remained as a symbol indicating the place for offerings.

Haramosh belonged to Baltistan for a long period, but lying beyond the Shengus pass lay beyond fully centralized control. This may explain the preservation of archaic beliefs.

For *Bagrot* we have an excellent description of buildings, monuments, customs and beliefs by Snoy[8] confirming the earlier notes of Ghulam Muhammad. It should be noted that the population of Bagrot was Shiite and that the troops enrolled in this valley formed the backbone of the army which could be raised by the rulers of Gilgit. Therefore Gohar Aman decimated its population in the last century when so many Bagrotis were killed, others sold into slavery. There are still many ruins, dating from this period of devastation, major reorganization of the ancient social and religious system must have taken place.

Bagrot however became a centre for shamans again. Sometimes we get the impression that the memory of the tragic past has been systematically suppressed in Bagrot tradition. The present situation, where extensive social change is occurring, has been studied by Grotzbach[9]. In the meantime the repopulation of Bagrot has found natural limits, so the general process of emigration to the lowlands has become more and more important.

The **valley of the Hunza river** was used as a short but difficult thoroughfare leading to passes crossing the watershed to Eastern Turkestan during many centuries. On both banks and in side valleys there are oases settled by speakers of three different languages.

The north called Gujhal is the homeland of the Wakhis. They are relatively recent immigrants from the Wakhan corridor of N.E. Afghanistan, but as they settled in the main valley together with people from the south, a sort of mutual acculturation took place. They were under the sway of the ruler of Hunza and heavily taxed. Even more cumbersome were the yearly visits of the ruler and his staff, as all of them had to be fed and entertained - somewhat similar to the traditional system in Chitral.

The next zone belongs to Burushaski speakers. It was divided into two rival states, Hunza with more open access to the north, and Nagar with an important route to the Shigar valley in Baltistan. Since the people of Nagar were ardent followers of the Shia, the survivals of their pagan past were not as well preserved as in Hunza. But this is no excuse that the folklore of Nagar has been neglected by ethnographically interested visitors for a long time. Only recently has an intense study been made by J. Frembgen. Already

his first printed report[10] reveals sofar unknown facts. We learn that important kinship groups immigrated together with the ancestor of the dynasty, who was a scion of the Trakhane. Apparently they gave up their Shina language for the local Burushaski but kept a great number of loanwords indicating borrowings in the spiritual and socio-political sphere. Even earlier settlers claim that they came from the south, e.g., from Gor, possibly in the time when Burushaski was still spoken south of the Gilgit Range.

In the period when Hunza remained a closeknit and extremely aggressive community, the rulers of Nagar introduced a systematic programme to expand their arable ground. But this extensive colonisation also implied their considerable exposure to attacks from Hunza. In the 18th century therefore the population was ordered to stay in the fortified capital in wintertime when the river might be crossed.

Habitual conflict with Hunza, however, never prevented intermarriages between the ruling families of these sibling states. Thier epical ancestors were actually considered twins already fighting in the womb.

Hunza succeeded in inspiring interest and admiration from European visitors from the beginning. So there are more and better descriptions of this region than anywhere else. Many books present an exaggerated and embellished picture of the "extremely healthy" inhabitants, looking and behaving like Europeans, their habits and their longevity.

In fact, not so long ago the Hunza people were concentrated in three fortified villages in a healthy climate, but there was deficiency of irrigated land, so the women were trained to dispose their provisions extremely frugally. In order to endure hardships in predatory raids which were extended as far as Sarikol and the Yarkand river, the youths were trained to cross frozen rivers, sometimes swimming below the ice, to sleep in the open, even in winter, and to carry heavy loads (namely plundered goods) back home on most difficult paths.

The tasks and privileges of the ruler correspond to those reported from Gilgit. He personifies a solar deity and has to behave accordingly. The queen has ceremonial tasks too. But such ideas were already connected with the rulers of Bolor, one thousand years earlier. The question is only, when they were brought to Hunzaland. The administration also betrays several features of the Gilgit system, with more personal political relations replacing an earlier emphasis upon ritual kingship.

The intensive studies of I. Stellrecht have made clear that the Hunza people had no system of castes; but the attribution of ritual

purity according to altitude, from the mountain tops down to the gloomy gorges of the river, appears to have been stressed more than by the Shins proper. Concepts like shamanism and witchcraft are encompassed within this ritual schema.

This world-view was hardly adapted to the basic needs of a population living on agriculture — it is used by an emergent nobility — a closely intervowen body of office holders, heroes, royal confidants, in order to legitimise a distinction not only from the despised Berichos — corresponding to the Doms — but also from those freeholders who had to carry loads. The hierarchy cuts across a segmentary system of clans of different origin, most of them exogamous, i.e. with a formal obligation to marry outside the group. Some of them were possibly arranged according to positive marriage rules, intermarrying clans lived together in the same village, but in different quarters.

Together with traditional training and thrift, the cult of purity has offered an easy approach to the modern world for the Hunzas. A fragrant smell was held as best proof of ritual purity, therefore regular baths, clean clothing and houses were considered as necessary — just what tourists desire, who are happy to find so many well-run hotels in the region owned or managed by Hunzas.

But finally we must admit that not all elements in the spiritual heritage of Hunza can be grasped within this system. The forces of nature were understood as divine beings, male and female. In a thunderstorm people heard the clash of the horns of bulls belonging to *Khuda-mo*, i.e., a female deity with an Iranian name (and a Tibetan suffix) used since a Millennium of monotheistic religion — but not only by them

Much less is known about the Shina-speaking inhabitants of the lower Hunza valley. The area of *Chalt-Chaprot* is famous for its exuberance of gifted shamans. Sometimes they are invited to Hunza where the tradition prevails that this profession is not a local one. Sometimes Shina is spoken during the trance, even by men not fluent in this language. But there is also an indigenous term: *bitan*. Chalt-Chaprot was an enclave of Nagar on the right (Hunza) side of the river.

In Hindi (=Hini), the village just south of Hunza's kernel of Burushaski speakers, it is said that in spring, when the *vats* full of new, recently fermented wine were opened, a sort of mock-fighting took place between the men of the different fortified settlements. It was restricted to fixed hours of the day, so that the not too badly injured participants could have their meals afterwards — and — after refreshing and impassionating gulp from the wine-vat — could sleep with their wives.

This information must have a realistic background, since Mirza

Haidar on his holy war against the infidels of "Balur Kafiristan" in 1526/27, not too distant from the scene of this information, reports a similar story of 'mock' warfare among its inhabitants.

Proceeding further to the west we find the *Karumbar valley* full of settlers of different origin: Wakhis, Khowar— and Shina-speakers, descendants of noble but somewhat destitute families. An energetic and intelligent Saiyid took over the task of re-settling land which formerly lay waste. So his descendants became great land-owners giving their daughters to princely families. Many old and seemingly un-Islamic graves were destroyed during re-culturation; and there are also ruins of an old fort here.

Only a large side-valley, *Ishkoman*, had a Shina-speaking population concentrated in a big village fortress. But also here it is said to have been founded not so long ago by people coming from Chilas. Therefore it might be concluded that a foreign invader had exterminated the previous population, maybe Mirza Haidar or one of his predecessors (for not all Moghal generals described their deeds in such a lucid way). In times when the glaciers retreat, the approach from the north is dangerously inviting to outside adventurers.

South of Karumbar valley, — between a narrow defile just west of its mouth and Golapur in the east, — there lies the fertile tract of *Punial* along the middle course of the Gilgit river. Even here we have stories of cruel destruction and a re-population by settlers from Gilgit and from the south, especially from Darel. A Dareli, named Shoto ruled there for a while as a peasant monarch. For many centuries, this area was a bone of contention between the Shah Rais who had their basis in North Chitral and the Trakhane of Gilgit.

Maybe the Shah Rais propagated a strange mode of burial: in subterranean chambers. The dead bodies were left there till decomposition, then the bones were stored in niches of the room separated according to sex, the skulls deposited on a low frontal bench. There was a building on top of the *ossuary*, always belonging to one lineage. When a member of this lineage was near death, minstrel music could be heard from the grave: the ancestors were eagerly awaiting him for a feast of reception.

A collective tomb of this kind was seen near Bubur by A. Friedrich and myself. Another one was mentioned near Sher Qila — the present centre and even the seat of the resident of the Shah Rais[11] in olden days. Land was set apart for the keepers of this sanctuary. The Shah Rais were certainly Muslims but apparently they preserved this pre-Islamic Iranian tradition of exposure and of secondary inhumation all within a royal grave.

Collective tombs were also made by the locals together with

the founding of a village fortress. A certain number of federated clans was requested, so we might think of a system of regulated intermarriages, as in Hunza.

Later on the Shah Rais were followed by the Khushwaqt, and finally by a side-line of them, the Burushe, until under British rule the administration was reorganized with a local prince as governor. All rulers produced an astonishing number of offspring, so Punial became known as the land of petty aristocratic "Gushpurs" (royal sons from mothers of lower status). In 1972 a new reorganization transformed Punial plus Ishkoman into one subdivision with its centre at Singol.

But we should rather stress the rich harvests and the pleasant character of the landscape. The local Ismailis were great fanciers of wine, and not so much official reprimand as the orders of the Aga Khan finally stopped its age-old production. I was told that in former days it was even forbidden to drink water — when the wine had matured and the women were invited to join in the celebration; but this may be a somewhat fanciful exaggeration.

On the other hand, Punial was formerly haunted by witches, and one of the rajas was keen enough to learn their secrets inviting them to a tea-party.

Yasin. We have noted that for a while even Punial was administered by the Ra'is rulers of Upper Chitral. When they were replaced by a new dynasty, later on split into Katore and Khushwaqte sections, the areas east of the Shandur pass were controlled by these newcomers. The attempts of the Shah Ra'is to restore their kingdom did not influence this periphery. But in the course of a still harder struggle for power between the two lines, the Khushwaqte, who had dominated a very large area including the Indus valley between Tangir in the west and Bunji in the east, created a strong basis for their further ambitions in *Yasin:* a mountain chamber north of the Gilgit river. Here they were in an excellent strategic position. The official system of administration was similar to that of Chitral: the custom of sending the children of the ruler as to be fostered by important families was the same. The ouctome, however, was different here in a restricted area which could be overlooked almost completely from a few chosen places: no open conflict would arise among the clans of the foster-parents then using the princes as their pawns — in contrast to Chitral, which was a much larger and intersected territory.

In Yasin the dynasty was based on a popular mandate. This was symbolized by the rule of performing important ceremonies not in the place but just in a spacious and solid peasant's house. The symbiosis between ruler and ruled was not hindered by the fact that the locals were Ismailis and spoke Burushaski, the rulers

being Sunnis speaking Khowar — who had brought their best fighters with them. In the context of this political accommodation based on mutual tolerance and common aversion against Gilgit (where the Shiites became dominant), it must be explained how archaic festivals and their songs — with many erotic allusions — were preserved. Maybe we find here traditions connected with the dynasties of Gilgit in earlier versions.

Since one of the rulers of Yasin, Gohar Aman, was especially antagonistic towards Shiites, and so successful against the Dogras, the population of the valley was decimated by the latter after their final victory. Only the low-caste Doms were spared; and so for a while they were almost the only group familiar with the past of this region.

Kuh and *Ghizr* are the names for the lands between the boundary of Punial and the Shandur (in fact not really a pass, rather a plateau with beautiful lakes), on both sides of the "Gilgit" river. Up to Chashi the major part of the population speak Shina, beyond Chashi Khowar prevails. In the upper parts there is much land for grazing used by a special breed of cattle adapted to the height through cross-breeding with yaks.

In this relatively open country no political centre could be maintained against the ever-present danger of invasion. Only British rule with its well-controlled governors brought some economic advantages which are now perpetuated by the building of better roads.

But much is still left to be done by the anthropologist. Near Gupis, the present capital, is a place considered to be that of a female spirit protecting mothers and newborn children. Near Roshan I heard of several places where holy men of the past were venerated, each of them specialised for particular misfortunes such as sickness, bad harvest etc.

Republics: Zone of Transition to Indus-Kohistan

To the south, beyond the Gilgit Range, there are the important valleys of *Tangir* and *Darel*. As mentioned before, this is a zone of transition to an area of a different political system. However the rulers of Gilgit were powerful also there: the main canal of Gilgit is said to have been built by Darelis who were rewarded by a most precious gift, the Khanberi valley, by the famous queen Dadi Juvari.

Later on the valleys lay under the rather weak supremacy of the Khushwaqte dynasty. Tangiris and Darelis joined the ranks of victorious rulers hoping to get their share of the booty — and lost their lives when the army of Khairullah returning from Afghan

Kafiristan/Bashgal was trapped by snowfall and completely annihilated.

Following the tradition of his forefathers and using old links created by milk fostership, a Khushwaqte prince, Pakhtun Wali Khan built his own independent kingdom here by energy and clever diplomacy. Starting from Tangir he extended his rule to Darel and Sazin before he was murdered in 1917. More will be told in the chapter on History. (Chapters VI and VII)

It may be added that several further attempts were made, before and afterwards, to pacify and to exploit these two valleys which were well endowed with extensive forests (the woodcutters floated the timber directly down the Indus river). But all efforts ended always with the death of the pretenders — for the inhabitants had become passionate freedom fighter and the area was a part of *Yaghistan*, "Land of the Free" or 'Land of the Rebels'.

Pakhtun Wali Khan had started his career in Tangir for very good reasons. There were foreign enclaves: Saiyids, Pakhtuns, and Kohistanis, all claiming descent from the original propagators of Islam. The large fortified villages once characteristic of this region, were already dissolved. In Darel the process of dissolution had just begun; but there remained some basic internal tensions with the community. Reforms brought by Islamic missionaries were scarcely compatible with its indigenous "caste" system of stratified groups.

When there was no opportunity for tyrannicide, nor chance for a raid against other valleys, the Yaghistanis alternatively indulged in romantic escapades with the wives of their neighbours — complicated by the everpresent need to guard their own spouses against similar temptations. The results were countless murder cases followed by blood feuds. Their monuments were towers erected by rival family groups inside their villages, sometimes in clusters giving the impression of a barbarian San Gimignano to bewildered visitors.

In this situation, hunting was not only a sport: it was a spiritual outlet, a way to enter the pure and (emotionally) cooler sphere of the high mountains. Therefore hunting customs and beliefs as described previously were preserved very well — practically as isolated remains of the pre-Islamic heritage.

The surplus in agriculture was enormously increased when other crops were replaced by maize. If the manure available was concentrated on it, only one harvest might be sufficient in areas where double-cropping had been possible. The herds were of considerable size, as meadows on the northern side of the Gilgit Range could be used according to a right acquired in former times. Khanberi had been used in the same way, but was later on rented

out to Gujars still paying taxes.

Since attempts to impress one's neighbours by personal luxuries were considered provocative, the surplus was used for buying excellent guns, and to take on people from Kohistan as *dehqans*, i.e. share croppers and tenants. So the landlords could pass long periods on the high meadows when the summer climate was most uncomfortable in the villages.

This state of affairs was already well established in 1952, when the valleys "acceded directly and voluntarily to Pakistan". A conciliation of all feuds shortly followed, but they grew up again: for the *dehqans* themselves adopted rather overhastily the political rhetoric that land should belong only to the man working on it. So the modern weapons earlier acquired by their masters turned out to have been a good investment after all; they decided the case in favour of the landlords.

Even in conflicts with the state, warlike virtues proved successful. At present the towers are being rebuilt: lower and more spacious, used as *hujras*, i.e. men's houses.

Remnants of the old *wesh* system (which was complicated enough since the large valleys were divided into quarters, and then into villages) became once more important when the sale of timber was reorganized by the state — offering new bridges and jeep roads for transport. Only old share-holders of the *wesh* system got their portion of the returns provided by these new contracts.

The next republic of considerable power was *Gor*. Here in a fan-shaped basin, three fortified villages were situated with their surrounding fields. Each was strictly regulated, with clearly separated quarters; towers at the periphery were delegatd to the young warriors. The forests of holm-oaks, so important for goat-breeding, were divided into rotational plots to be used in turn.

One grove was dedicated to the old protecting fairy of the community, Taiban. In his name animals were slaughtered, while all trees around remained untouched. No unclean cattle could enter this sacred precinct, and only the dung of goats was used for adjacent fields. Between the two main villages there was the (Muslim) grave of a holy woman — may be replacing the sanctuary of a female deity.

There was a strict rule that all marriages should be concluded during one communal festivity every year.

Gor had good relations with the rulers of Gilgit. There was a house where Gilgitis encumbered by political problems could find a refuge. Relations with other republics were not as pleasant. There was a long struggle with Darel for supremacy over the many valleys lying in between their territories. Finally Chilas was asked to intervene for arbitration, and that, indeed, settled the case: for Chilas

itself occupied the disputed territory. This in turn explains why the people of Gor were on the side of the invaders when Sikhs, Dogras and British detachments entered this part of the Indus valley. Due to their collaboration new settlements were founded by people from Gor; and for a while they were still included in the annual system of collective marriage, so they had to contribute provisions to the feasts.

In the meantime the system of strictly regulated agricultural activities protecting essential environmental resources such as the holm-oak forests, has broken down: a consequence of liberal individualism in community politics that is increasingly regretted as its ecological effects are becoming apparent nowadays.

For a while *Chilas* formed a common unit with the neighbouring valleys: Thak on the eastern side, certainly Gichi, Thor and may be also Harban on the western flank were included in a political block with diplomatic connections to the shina-speaking valleys of Indus-Kohistan.

The fortified village of Chilas was especially strong, and it held two water tanks inside its walls. Moreover it was the only large centre in this part of the Indus valley proper. A British force had been lured by the Gor people to Thalpan, just opposite Chilas. A deciding battle was inevitable, and the British thus occupied the place in 1892. It was transformed into a military garrison and defended against a sudden attack of the confederates in Kohistan who had raised an army of about 2,000 — a force too sizeable to be maintained/provisioned over a longer siege. Even local fortresses in the neighbouring valleys were destroyed after this campaign; and their settlers were driven into the side-valleys and restricted to their lands.

So ended a fascinating period in the history of Chilas. It had been the organizing centre and the starting place for so many raids taking people from "Yaghistan" towards the east, up to Astor and further. A special ability for swimming through torrents had been traditionally instilled through rigorous training for this purpose.

The fields around the British fortress were re-occupied by immigrants, the bazaar being organized by Hindus — who escaped after partition. But the foreign farmers remained — and that is the problem now.

When the forests are exploited by timber contractors, the aboriginal settlers get their share according to the *wesh* system (which thereby acquires a new significance). The others, excluded from such benefits, tend to be more industrious. They are now reinforced by the (still despised) gold-washers, recently made aware of the proper price of their product. These disenfranchised classes have now also begun to acquire guns, certainly a threat of future

conflicts. The tensions may be expected to be carried on the political level too.

As in other areas of he southern belt, Shina was spoken in *Astor*. This valley was always significant as a link to Gurez which for a while was a main outpost of the rulers residing in Gilgit. Later on it was included in the large territories conquered by Ali Sher Anchan, and ruled by a branch of the Maqpon dynasty.

Druing British times it was safe from the formerly troubling attacks of the Chilasis; and as the traffic along the Gilgit road increased, horse-breeding and the keeping of mules as pack-animals became especially rewarding in this area. Villages destroyed in previous wars were refounded, and many internal reforms took place.

Still in some remote corners old traditions were well preserved — as became clear from Ghulam Muhammad's notes. Further interesting material was also recently collected by A. Nayyar.

Goat-breeding has some highly archaic traits. Even more fascinating is the discovery that in the hierarchy of purity we find the snow-leopard: the male animal is considered too pure to have sexual contact. The famle has to descend to the bank of the river in order to mate the other *(lutra lutra)*.

In the meantime we know this story from other Shina-speaking areas: it illustrates the theme that purity needs a partner from the low and demoniacal sphere to become fully fertile.

Other elements of popular beliefs show influence from Baltistan. Information collected in the village Dashkin, near the Hatu-Pir where the Gilgit Road suddenly goes down into the Indus-valley, render some details about the calendar and deal with a female demon called Herati — certainly connected with Hariti, a deity of the early Budhist pantheon. But it is not clear whether this is a local tradition or was brought by newcomers settling in the destroyed village.

Territories Outside the Trakhane State: Baltistan

Baltistan differs from all other districts by the preponderance of a language closely related to Tibetan (often considered as an ancient dialect), and by the former coexistence of three dynasties with similar political and social systems.

In the Indus valley there were the Maqpons with their centre in the basin of Skardu, and side-lines in Rondu, Astor (as already mentioned), Tolti and Kartakhshah. Maqpon means "commander of a frontier district" in Tibetan, indicating that the influence from the east was much stronger and longer lasting than in Gilgit.

The second dynasty ruling over the large and fertile valley of Shigar is related to the chiefs of Nagar and was allegedly founded

by a refugee coming via the Hispar glacier. The third dynasty, with dominions in the Shayok valley, had pretensions to a northern origin: *yabgu* is a well-known title, certainly used by Turks. But the possible historical roots of this tradition fall outside the scope of this survey (see chapter on history).

There are many fertile tracts, but at very high altitudes, and the meadows are far away and under heavy snow in winter. Night-soil must therefore be used as manure. Only a part of the arable land can be tilled in the large basin of Skardu due to scarcity of water. In the centre we find a desert with sand dunes, reminiscent of the Tarim Basin in Chinese Central Asia. Rondu has high and flat valleys, but their access is easier from Astor, and therefore its settlers came from that side. The same is true of villages situated deep in the gorge. Taxes were never collected there because of the danger of reaching such places.

The regional peculiarities of the socio political system of Baltistan become clear if it is compared with that prevalent in Gilgit and its former dependencies:

In the west, in the Gilgit region, kinship groups were the operative units, lineages or clans being exogamous in former times. Their elders were often actively involved in competitive politics; but most collaborated with the ruler and his administration, its officials being selected according to their membership of hereditary status groups. So we may speak of "segmentary states" in this region, where kinship groups are effectively integrated within a centralized policy.

In Baltistan, however, the basic units of the Balti population were residential rather than kinship groups: i.e., neighbours, united by shred economic and ritual tasks during festivals and domestic rites of the life-cycle with a small mosque as their centre. Despite their Islamic foundation the similarity of these ritual communities to the phaspun-ships of Ladakh (with the mosque replacing the common Lho-tho sanctuary) is strikingly evident; and it may well derive from common institutions during the Buddhist period. The administrative system was more correspondingly hierarchic, particularly in its classification of hereditary offices. The late R.M. Emerson, who was lucky to have Yabgu Fateh Ali Khan, the last ruler of Khaplu, as his informant, presented an overall scheme to which I refer with minor corrections:[12]

Besides the heir (and his brothers) apparent born by a mother of royal blood, there was a large group of princes and descendants of princes born by mothers of lower status groups. They were trained as horsemen, fighters (and polo-players): the kha-cho's brothers of the rulers. They were in part a "standing army" and in part an officer corps, i.e., in war their ranks were filled up by

peasants. From each peasant household one man was mustered. Apparently the commanders of the forts called kharpon were taken from this noble but illiterate group. Their subsistence was guaranteed by jagir-like tracts of royal land called cho-pi-tsa worked by tenants or rather share-croppers with heavy conditions.

The next class were the hereditary cadres of officials, with the wazirs pha-cho's paramount. Drew heard that the "Wazir class intermarry among themselves", and that implies that they would have had relatives throughout the country — even in rival kingdoms.

On the other hand, their wives were the wet-nurses of the princes, so the *pha-cho's* could control succession to the throne, and it was already clear who would be chief minister of an incumbent ruler: his "milk-brother". They were thus the big managers of royal policy but not necessarily responsible if something went wrong.

Here the effects of milk-fostership were quite different from that in Chitral: There the princes were given to powerful and antagonistic clans which could provide the protege with an armed guard. They risked their land when their foster-son took up the struggle for succession and failed. When he won, however, they — and not the ruler — gained possession of the loser's lands.

The Hunza people effected a Solomonic solution to such struggles for succession. The princes were given as foster-children to different lineages. but the next king was elected by lineage chieftains in a joint meeting, and the not-so-able princes were then thrown into the river — if they could not escape in time.

So the wazirs in Baltistan had overall control in administration. They were assisted by officials of lower ranks, down to the headmen in the villages who formed a separate stratum.

Around the palace of the ruler there were also many groups with more menial hereditary tasks: people who brought firewood, worked in the kitchen, acted as grooms, doorkeepers, servants, guides and companions.

In Khaplu the ruler imported specialist craftsmen from Kashmir where the people were again and again suppressed and exploited by foreign lords. They provided those skilled artists whom we have to thank for the wonderful carvings in the mosques of this region. But several indigenous hamlets had to be evacuated in order to provide homesteads and land for thse immigrant artisans.

Apart from such "administrative reshuffling" of local peoples, the burden of the centralized state on the rural population was hard. From land not attributed to privileged *pha-cho* families, the fifth part of all produce (agricultural or pastoral) was collected. Moreover, each household was annually obliged to send a man for forty

days of labour, when needed.

In the system of public defence, which was the rationale for such taxes, not fortified villages but the main castles of the rulers were the strategic points of defence. Each dynasty had its own palace in the valley, (sometimes with a megalithic foundation) together with a fort on a steep and high cliff nearby. The defenders of such forts had no access to running water; but they depended upon a large tank within the citadel — and on an unhappy group of villagers to carry water on their shoulders to keep it filled. Apparently this arrangement was not in good order when the Dogras attacked, and therefore the forts fell regularly after a short and thirsty siege.

From this successful campaigns, Ali Sher Khan Anchan (1580—1624) brought back many prisoners of war taken between Gilgit and Chitral, as well as in Astor.

Most of these captives came from the area around Chilas which had been the headquarters of repeated raids tormenting the normally peaceful Baltis. (They however, turned out to be disciplined and effective soldiers in the hands of a great general). The prisoners were originally used for forced labour, building dams and canals; but they were eventually settled on land in the uppermost parts of valley giving access to the Deosai plains — i.e., on those routes where invasions were imminent. So these *Brokpas* (= settlers on high places) were used as guards and watchmen against their own relatives in hostile regions. Life is hard at such high and virtually treeless altitudes where sustenance can be had only from the most resistent crops, e.g., barley and a bitter variety of buckwheat. But the *Brokpas* managed to maintain their own customs, they remained organized in their traditional kinship-groups. Their shamans were highly appreciated — since the Baltis have not this religious calling and these were frequently used by rulers as oracles for deciding foreign policy. One shaman was offered to the Maharaja of Kashmir, where he acted with great success, albeit in favour of his paternal country.

The *Brokpas* have preserved their language, Shina, up to the present day, but they accepted the Shia faith of their overlords. (Descendants of earlier Dardic immigrants now speak Balti, but their western origin is clearly written in their faces).

Maybe in reaction to the rigid framework of the public administration, private life appeared more easygoing and relaxed than elsewhere. Still in the recent past, muta, the legal marriage for a restricted period was allowed to Shia communities. In Baltistan it was practised not only for temporary visitors, e.g., merchants, but even in the villages between candidates for permanent marriage. They should be acquainted with their partner intimately before-

hand — but after such a test they had to decide on their choice, once and for ever.

Baltistan was liberal in accepting foreigners in high positions, and even a *Brokpa* could reach the position of wazir.

The country may be proud of its cultural heritage. Many old songs were preserved by the otherwise despised minstrels. Young princes were trained not only in polo — which was considered as the national game (and may indeed have originated here) — but also in poetry. The famous Kesar epic of Central Asia was enriched by a kind of chivalry unknown elsewhere, and it was learnt by heart by all who wanted to belong to the nobility.

Modern Development

My overview started with reference to the ecology of the areas behind the Westermost Himalaya and by stressing common traits in the economic activities of the local populations. I conclude by mentioning some of the most relevant ethnographic changes now occurring in a process of development, filling in as this region has become increasingly integrated within the Islamic State of Pakistan.

After Partition, the administration implemented by the British overlords was changed in a very careful and moderate way. Practically all taxes imposed on the products of the land were abolished. The traditional land-settlement reports (never covering the whole area), became obsolete. This was an enormous deliverance, especially for Baltistan where the villagers were still subjected to corvee labour demands.

Communications were greatly improved due to a felicitous circumstance: The pony tracks and suspension bridges built by the British were broad enough to allow the use of jeeps, able to take even the steepest ascent. So ponys and porters soon disappeared. Instead of the now obsolete Gilgit Road, a line of communication was opened via the Babusar pass, accessible between midmay until the end of September.

So there were routes providing means for a considerable motor traffic even before the construction of an all — weather road through the Indus valley, later on expanded to the Karakorum Highway. These new infrastructural conditions had, of course, a restrictive influence on horse-breeding in this region. Instead of a good horse, the pride of a man of influence was now to be a jeep-owner.

The building up of a modern administration with a host of new officials, was also effectively a generous subsidy to the local population. Touristic activities brought further impetus for the

opening of hotels, in many cases very well managed by enterprising local people. Developmental programmes have had a sizeable impact on the regional economy of the Northern Area: by the import of artificial fertilizer, more productive crops, and the use of water-power for small industries. At the moment many such efforts are systematically concentrated in the hands of the Agha Khan Foundation, working with a large and knowledgeable staff and able to offer huge subsidies for investment.

However one basic problem has arisen as the direct consequence of such well-meaning and otherwise positive measures, particularly through the improvement of medical care and control on the one hand, and the prevention of internecine wars on the other (which were especially devastating in the 19th century):

The density of population has grown beyond all anticipated limits.

From an ethnographic perspective, we have to take into account that many of the traditional regulative institutions on demographic growth have been abolished. In olden days, during the prolonged period of breast-feeding, pregnancy was considered dangerous for both mother and child. In many areas young married couples had to restrict their sexual congress to clandestine meetings in the early years of marriage. These traditions, which once served to adjust birth-rates according to the economic resources of household groups, now tend to be considered non-Islamic superstition.

Accordingly, the population would now starve without an external supply of grain. For a while rations were distributed among the locals and transport costs were substantially subsidised.

Most valleys can rely upon locally grown grain for some nine or ten months per year, the remaining subsistence needs being covered by imports. Since these subsidised imports were artificially cheap, a necessity to expand the area under cultivation was not felt as an especially urgent problem. This economic dependency has certainly been a motivating factor for further integration in the community of Pakistan. The necessary imports are now increasingly paid for with money earned outside. Leaving their families in the mountains, the men are taking up seasonal, migrant labour in lowland Pakistan or else remain for long periods working in the Gulf States, visiting their families only occasionally. So "colonies" of northerners have emerged in many commercial and industrial centres of lowland Pakistan, especially Karachi. Opportunities for migrant labour are not equally distributed in the population: people who had already to work very hard for their livelihood in the past are effectively privileged in being able to earn cash as labourers nowadays. The drain of these workers, in their prime of life, is badly felt in many areas, especially in Hunzaland. Elder men

and women must take up again the heavy task of maintaining agriculture and herding.

Besides, there are other problems less apparent in everyday life — but some prescient persons are well aware of them, and they should be mentioned by the ethnographer: in future not only food-shortage is imminent. Traditionally people burn wood in the household as their main source of fuel. With a rapidly increasing consumption of such fuel (with that of the army on top), wood has become so expensive in wintertime that in Baltistan even furit-trees are commonly felled — a scarcely profitable action in the long run.

At present there is a boom in modern house construction, using mainly stone and concrete. Formerly the local style of domestic architecture (not well studied outside Chitral) had a fireplace in the centre of each building which were also well insulated. Now every farmer wants a modern "English home" with windows and doors leading to an open verandah and a nice chimney inside, and in this way much firewood is being wasted in heating.

In the south, the side-valleys of the large rivers had forests with splendid trees, undamaged for centuries. Pakhtun Wali Khan started their commercial exploitation. When Tangir and Darel joined Pakistan, the wood-cutters returned. But the floating of tree-trunks down the Indus has always entailed heavy losses. Now the Karakorum Highway provides easy access to lorries, while jeeps may enter the side-valleys. So export is much more rewarding — and Pakistan needs timber more than almost any other raw material.

A good share of the timber revenue is indeed paid to the local population — and divided according to the ancient rules of the *wesh*-system. Meadows and forests being traditionally considered common property, there are no individuals who held themselves responsible or competent for any particular region of the forest. So nobody will protest when the contractors not only select crippled trees, as is theoretically permitted, but devastate whole stands of prime forest. Rapid depletion of these forests is therefore happening with the same negative effects as in the Central Himalayas; and this is not even compensated by an equivalent expansion of agricultural land. For the slopes here are so steep that it is impossible to put them under cultivation, and hence the soil will be washed away for ever. In fact, agricultural efforts are thereby reduced — when a safe income in cash as '*wesh*-participant" in the timber industry is thus guaranteed.

The admirable extension of local schools, with a large teaching staff (partly coming from outside), has carried through the spread of Urdu as Lingua franca. But at the same time, effecting some cultural compensation, there is a tendency to create new scripts adap-

ted to the local languages. Here and there we find men eager to create indigenous literature, with religious books and poetry as its first manifestation. That is no easy task, due to the linguistic situation. Khowar has already a small but established literary tradition, and now attempts are being made also for Burushaski, Shina and Balti. The Baltis once suppressed by the Dogra administration are now leading in this cultural renaissance.

These tendencies of ethnic cohesion should be esteemed and supported by the state. For a while, no political parties were allowed in the Northern Areas, and the rifts and tensions inside the population were therefore mainly delineated by religious groups, even in regions where no such partisan feelings existed in the past. It would be useful to bring new loyalties based upon ethnic identities into this game.

To find one's ethnic self means also to discover old bonds of friendship and alliance with one's neighbours, and to become aware that they share a glorious heritage in common. In times when the lowlands were under the sway of invaders, the mountain peoples could preserve their traditions and soon regained liberty after hostile inroads. Without modern weapons and the organization of a great empire, it would have been impossible to conquer them. Even the local rulers had to be very careful in imposing their dominions before they had the backing of the British power. So there is a very long tradition of freedom in the Northern Areas which equally demands the respect of modern government.

NOTES

1. Carl Rathjens -- "Fragender horizontalen and vertikalen Landschaftsgliederung in Hochenbirgsystem des Hindukush", Wiesbaden.
2. Fredrik Barth — *Indus and Swat Kohistan: An Ethnographic Survey*, Oslo, 1857—1957. Vol. II.
3. Hashmatullah Khan — *Mukhtasar Tarikh-i-Jammun* (A Short History of Jammu and Kashmir and of the Area of Tibet), Pt. IV, Pt. VI: Lucknow, 1939, p. 758.
4. John Biddulph — *Tribes of the Hindookoosh*, Graz, Reprint, 1971, p. 134.
5. For detail see Karl Jettmar: *Religions of the Hindukush* (Eng. Tr.) in Press.
6. Peter Snoy — *Bagrot, Eine dardische Talschaft im Karakorum*. Graz, 1975.
7. Karl Jettmar. *Ethnological Research in Dardistan, 1958, Preliminary Report. P.A. P.S.*, Philadelphia, 105/1/ 79—77. 1961.
8. See footnote 6.
9. Grotzbach, Erwin — *Bagrot — Beharrung and Wandel einer peripheren Talschaft im Karakorum*, Die Erde, 115, 305—321.
10. See *J.C.A.* Vol. VII. No. 2. Dec. 1984, pp. 29—38.
11. Rais was the title of a high official in the Seljuk administration, mostly held by a man of non-Turkish origin.
12. M. Richard Emerson — 'Charismatic Kingship: A Study of State, Formation and Authority in Baltistan, *J.C.A.* Vol. VII/2,pp. 95—133.