









Pauline J. Kenworthy

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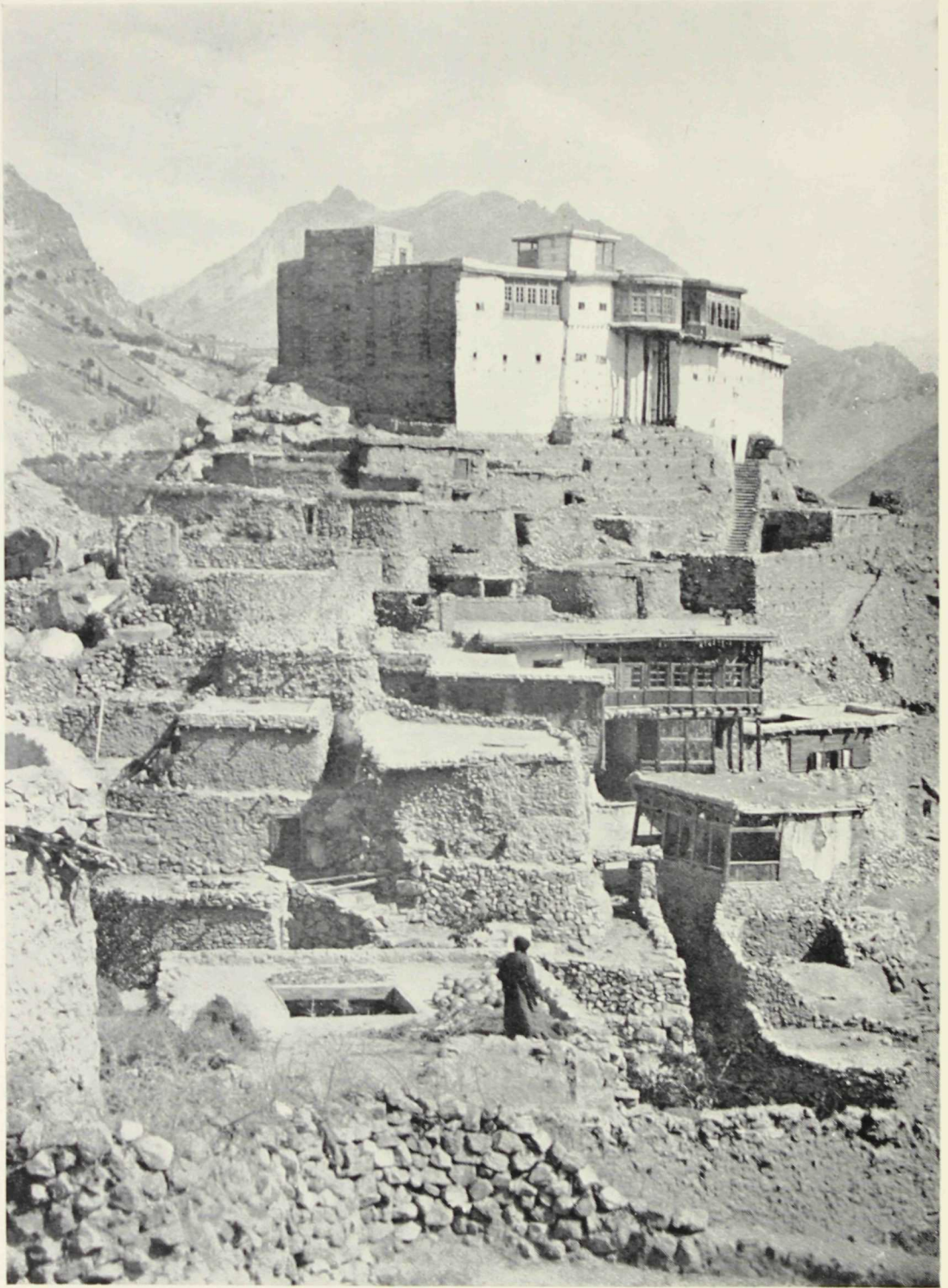
BETWEEN THE OXUS  
AND THE INDUS











BALTIT



# BETWEEN THE OXUS AND THE INDUS

by

COLONEL R. C. F. SCHOMBERG

*Author of Peaks and Plains of Central Asia*



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*To*  
*My Sister*  
M A R Y





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## INTRODUCTION

THE River Oxus rises in the snows of the Pamirs, in that remote region where Afghanistan joins China, and the two keep apart the territories of India and Asiatic Russia. The Oxus flows west till it reaches the Aral Sea, and at its source the mountains on its left are the boundary between British and Afghan territory. On the British side are the two States of Hunza and Ishkoman, both in the Gilgit political agency.

The Indus, in its long and tortuous journey from Tibet to the Arabian Sea, leaves Baltistan and flows south, skirting the Gilgit Agency, and passing through the wild republics of Kohistan till it emerges at Attock in the comparative peace of the Punjab. Between the source of the Oxus in the north and the Indus in the south lies the Gilgit Agency, an appanage of the Maharaja of Kashmir and under the charge of a British political agent. In this distant and rugged region the mountains of the Karakoram, Hindu Kush and Pamirs unite and form an intricate network of glacier, peak and valley. In deep narrow valleys nestle villages where straightened fields are



tended with endless labour, and thus a considerable population, which has preserved its customs and independence for centuries, is supported. In themselves these communities are often small and insignificant, but in the aggregate they form a considerable and varied population, which occupies an important and extensive part of the Frontier tracts of India. Indeed, the Gilgit Agency is one of the gates of India. It is possible for a man to go to the north of Hunza and stand in a place where he may look down into Afghanistan, on the source of the Oxus, with Soviet Russia beyond, and Chinese territory close on his right with the streams draining into Central Asia and finding their way to far Lop Nur, whilst behind him the melting snows send their water to the Indian Ocean.

If this spectator be well mounted, he can leave Misgar, the most northerly village of Hunza, cross the frontier into Chinese territory, ride across that narrow tongue of land and over an easy pass and, if he has started early, he can reach Kizil Robot, the farthest post south-east of Bolshevist Asia, and do his shopping in a Russian bazaar.

In the past eight years it has fallen to my lot to visit the Gilgit Agency a number of times and the following account has resulted from these journeys. Visitors are rare, and are not encouraged, since the economic situation has always to be watched. The garrison has to be victualled from Kashmir, with difficulty and expense. One of the chief anxieties is the



scarcity of fodder, which makes transport dear and inadequate. For six months in the year, too, the Agency is cut off from India owing to the impossibility of crossing the high passes which lie on the route, whether from Kashmir or from the south.

The Agency has some unpleasant neighbours in the disorderly republics that surround it, and the two valleys of Darel and Tangir, lands of blood-feuds and vendettas, are a constant nuisance to the officials. These two States are typical of the other republics that lie in Kohistan. These petty democracies are interesting but disagreeable survivals of a turbulent past, and have no attractions whatever, and certainly no virtues to justify their continuance as independent communities. These non-Pathan republics have failed to evolve any system of self-government. They have continued for generations wholly unable to govern themselves, heedless of their own chosen assemblies, and depending solely on the knife or the rifle to settle their difficulties or to avenge themselves. It is a state of affairs which the independent Pathan tribesmen would never tolerate.

This book makes no pretence to being exhaustive or authoritative. It endeavours to give no more than an account of this remote region where life is still simple, and where many attractive customs survive.

The following books have been of use to me, though one or two of them are, of course, quite out of date: *In the Footsteps of Marco Polo* by Clarence Dalrymple Bruce, *The Marches of Hindustan* by David



Fraser, *The Making of a Frontier* by Colonel A. G. A. Durand, *Political Frontiers and Boundary Making* by Sir Thos. H. Holdich, *Where Three Empires Meet* by E. F. Knight, *Chinese Central Asia, etc.*, by C. P. Skrine, *Tribes of the Hindoo Koosh* by Major J. Biddulph, *Jammu and Kashmir* by Frederic Drew, *Among the Kara-Korum Glaciers in 1925, with Contributions by Ph. C. Visser*, by Jenny Visser, *Results of a Tour in Dardistan, Kashmir, Little Tibet, Ladak, Zanskar, etc.*, by G. W. Leitner.

I wish to express my thanks to my friend Mr. David McLean for the help that he has given in preparing my book for publication.

R. C. F. S.

## CHAPTER I

### THE GILGIT AGENCY

IN the north-west of Kashmir State, running up to and on the right of the Indus, is the Gilgit valley, and in it is the Political Agency of the same name. Although the settlement of Gilgit is actually administered by the officials of the Maharaja of Kashmir, the headquarters of the Agency have long been established in the same town.

Just below Gilgit, the Hunza river flows from the north into the Gilgit river, and in its valley are the two States of Hunza and Nagir under their Thums or Mirs.

Up the Gilgit valley, about twelve miles from the town, begins the Jagir or Fief of Punyal, situated on both sides of the river; immediately beyond is the Governorship of the two States of Kuh and Ghizr. To the east of these states is Yasin, or, as it is known in the Chitrali or Khowar language, Warshigum. Beyond this again is the Governorship of Ishkoman.

The Political Agent at Gilgit has control of the four Governors—who are appointed and removed at will—and also of the two chiefs of Hunza and Nagir. The states ruled by the four Governors are known as the political ilaqas.



Gilgit is reached from Srinagar, the capital of Kashmir, through Bandapur, forty miles from that city, on the shores of the Wular lake, from which it is not quite two hundred miles by a good mule road to Gilgit. At first the scenery is pleasant, as the road goes up to Tragbal with its fine view over the valley of Kashmir, over the pass and through the well-wooded Gurais valley from which the Burzil Pass (13,773 feet) is reached. In summer this is an easy ascent, over grassy slopes covered with flowers and with not a trace of snow. In early spring it is a very different matter. Then avalanches are numerous, and it is seldom that some casualties do not occur. Early winter is also alarming; no one who has been much in Gilgit has not experienced difficulties on the Burzil. Indeed, this pass is quite a felicitous subject of conversation, as its dangers are common to all; it is the lion on the way to Gilgit, and is really a serious obstacle that nothing can improve. There is an alternative way, the Kamri Pass, which, except for scenery, offers no advantage as it opens later and closes earlier.

After the traveller has crossed the Burzil he is in another country. Thick forests and abundant grass have disappeared, and the descent into the Astor valley reveals a comparatively barren land. Trees become less and less plentiful, rock and stone far more so. Passing down the Astor valley the road winds down the famous Hattu Pir, a cliff face that is constantly slipping, and that is scarred with the



remains of the many difficultly aligned and skilfully built paths, most of which have fallen hundreds of feet into the river below. In some places there are galleries cut out of the cliff and supported on wooden struts, but generally the track is a series of zigzags. A heavy rock, stone shoot, or sharp shower of rain, any one of these is enough to destroy the tenderly cared-for road clinging so precariously to the hillside. Below is Ram Ghat, and the Shaitan Nara where the road crosses the Astor river by a suspension bridge. Once I came here and found two bridges—a wise precaution for the position is an important one—with a convenient little rest-house. A while later I returned, the rest-house was in the river and one of the bridges had been torn away with it by the hillside slipping and rocks falling. It is a hopeless task, and year after year alterations and repairs have to be laboriously carried out, but all work is no more than makeshift, since nothing is durable when built on the crumbling Hattu Pir. From the top of the seven twists or chakkars of the path over a spur of the Hattu Pir a dreary expanse of barren hill, plain and desert is seen, relieved by two green patches which accentuate the inhuman aridity. Behind, the barren hills of Astor are relieved by the forests of the chilgoza, or edible pine, and occasional red roses.

The road now follows the Indus river, that strange and immense river which through all its course from its source in Tibet to the Arabian Sea flows through barren and desolate land. Whatever settlements are



found on its banks depend not on the great river that rushes uselessly past but on streams from the hillsides. The plain of Bunji that now stretches before us is no exception; war and flood have destroyed its cultivation and now its dismal stony expanse gives no hint of former habitation. The present village of Bunji, small but pleasant, is the only oasis.

After crossing the Indus at Partab Pul below its junction with the Gilgit river the track turns and follows the latter valley. It passes through abundant cultivation, here shaded by a long avenue of willow trees and enters Gilgit from the south. The place is attractive with a good bazaar, the best outside the valley of Kashmir, pleasant gardens and houses, and good water. The drawback to Gilgit is its situation, as it is wedged between two walls of barren reddish-brown rock that rise like ramparts on both sides of the river. In the settlement itself all is green and fresh, but there is no escape from those walls towering grimly over the verdure. For two months in the summer the heat, sand flies and mosquitoes are intolerable; Gilgit is then a city of the dead which not even the fruit can charm into life. The winter is rather agreeable; there is little snow, it does not lie, and the really cold period is short. Fuel is scarce, and its supply is a problem which no one has solved, although all that is needed is an extensive planting of poplar trees.

The feature of Gilgit is its gardens, and the Residency possesses the best. It is the headquarters



of a Kashmiri Wazarat or province, with a Governor or Wazir, an embarrassing arrangement as the Political Agent of the Indian Government lives there also, and two kings of Brentford create a situation intolerable to both.

The outlying district of Chilas belongs to the Wazarat, but is in the charge of a British Political Officer who is under the Political Agent at Gilgit.

Chilas is six marches or eighty-five miles from Gilgit, down the Indus river, and is remarkable as being the only part of Indus Kohistan that has come under control: the rest of that extensive region consists of a number of small republics which demonstrate only the bad qualities of that form of government and prove its complete unsuitability to Eastern peoples. The theory is that these Kohistan States are governed by a jirga or assembly, but it is generally so large as to be unwieldy; no one obeys it, and there are no chiefs or leaders to enforce obedience.

Chilas has improved somewhat but is still unsatisfactory, and the people, although they are not Pathans, seem to possess all the bad and none of the good qualities of that race. In summer Chilas is hot, in winter tolerable, and it is famous for the Chilas fly, a foul insect with a very poisonous bite.

Chilas was seized by Algernon Durand in 1893,<sup>1</sup> after some fighting, and the Government of India appear to have regarded its occupation with no enthusiasm. It had once before been attacked, by the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *The Making of a Frontier* by Col. A. G. A. Durand.



Sikhs under Suja Singh about 1843, but with no success. In 1850 the Chilas plundered Astor, whereupon the Kashmiri forces entered the country and reduced the people. It must be admitted that Chilas is a nuisance, but far less so since it has been under our administration. Indeed, it is regrettable that all these small states have not been taken over, a feat that calls for no great expenditure or organisation. It is unsatisfactory for a remote province like Gilgit to have an Alsatia on its borders, and the road from Chilas to the Punjab by the Babusar Pass is exposed to the raids of the Indus valley tribes, though these savages are not so much a menace or a danger as a complication which needs dealing with.

This is, perhaps, a suitable place to refer quite briefly to political conditions in the Gilgit area, which has of late years fallen from its former eminence as a key-point of Empire. When Imperial Russia was threatening India Gilgit was in everyone's thoughts, but now that the threat has disappeared it has become an official backwater, without honour in the courts of the great. Whether in fact this is justified may be queried, for in these days of aircraft and rapid communication, when even motors may come within reach of Gilgit, conditions have radically altered. Gilgit is in a very forward, even an exposed, position, though the narrow valleys and stupendous mountains may continue to form a secure barrier for some time to come.



Apart from immigrants, the people of the Gilgit Agency are wholly Mohammedans, and many of these are Maulais or Ismailis, that is followers of His Highness the Agha Khan. Hunza, Punyal, and most of Yasin are Maulai. Nagir is wholly Shiah, of which sect there are 300 families in Hunza also. Ishkoman, Ghizr and Kuh are mixed Sunni and Maulai. In Yasin there are some Sunnis, whilst Gilgit is Shiah and Sunni. Chilas is wholly Sunni.<sup>1</sup>

The Gilgit Agency produces the crops usually found in other parts of the Himalaya, but a good deal of rice of inferior quality is also grown, principally in Gilgit itself, but some even as far north as lower Ishkoman, though it is hardly worth cultivating. The determining factor is the cost of rice at Gilgit where much is imported from India; the price is consequently high since the local grain fails to satisfy the demand.

Fruit is abundant and excellent. Apricots predominate, but apples and pears are plentiful. Gilgit produces quantities of grapes but of an inferior kind since the vines are not properly attended to, but allowed to grow in picturesque festoons in a semi-wild state. Peaches grow everywhere and are good;

<sup>1</sup> Maulais or Ismailis: a Mohammedan (*Shi'ite*) sect, followers of the Agha Khan, who claims descent, in direct line, from Ali by his wife Fatima, daughter of the Prophet.

Shiah and Sunni: the Shi'ites regard the first three Khalifahs (representatives of the Prophet), viz. Abu Bekr (father-in-law of the Prophet), Omar and Othman, as impostors, recognising only Ali who, according to the Sunnis or Sunnites, was the fourth.



the best are those of Hunza, though those of Punyal are also esteemed.

Agriculture in the Gilgit Agency has much to be thankful for; the snowfall in the lower valleys is light, but in the hills it is ample for irrigation, and thus there is never a shortage of water.

The chief need of the people is employment. From its nature, the country can only support a limited population, and with no trade there is no money, and with no employment there is much loafing: if the men of Yasin, Hunza and Punyal were enlisted in the police or army the situation would be relieved. The other states, however, produce so poor a type of man that they cannot be helped by the offer of Government service. The curse of the country, besides the unemployment of the surplus peasants, is the attitude of the Gushpurs. A Gushpur is a member of one of the ruling families who enjoys, owing to his social status, a certain prestige with, unhappily, certain privileges: he belongs in fact to a decadent, arrogant, greedy, privileged class, which will not work but expects to be supported in idleness. In some states the services of one or two peasants are placed gratuitously, and as a matter of right, at the disposal of each Gushpur. Every European is pestered by these hungry drones. It is impossible not to feel sorry for them, for they are largely the victims of tradition and environment, but it is equally impossible to help them. They intrigue and cabal and, in their way, are a nuisance. In the good old days war,



sudden death, and other eventualities, incidental to a wild and undisciplined existence, modified the problem. Now, alas ! it increases with the blessings of peace.

The Governor of Ishkoman, Mir Bais Khan, suggested, during the Great War, that a regiment of Gushpurs should be raised and sent to the front. If they died, well and good, their name would be honoured : if they came back they would have justified their position. In any case the Gushpur question would be ameliorated. This sensible, if cynical, proposal was unfortunately ignored, though it seems incredible that not a single one of this indigenous nobility went to the front. The peasants who suffer somewhat though not seriously from the privileges of the Gushpurs are always making fun of them, and call them by harsh if amusing names. Yet, when on one occasion a Gushpur enlisted in the Kashmir artillery the head of his house was furious, and preferred that he should die of ennui in poverty than lead an active and useful life.

Gilgit proper is noted for two peculiarities. Its land tenure does not follow the Shariat (Moslem law) when there are no sons to succeed, and it is at Gilgit alone that the ceremony of Kalak Malak takes place, which is a notification of the marriage and an assessment of the presents. Generally speaking, however, Gilgit is no more than a rendezvous, a cosmopolitan district rapidly losing the distinctive qualities it once had in the old days of its independence.



## CHAPTER II

## THE FIEF OF PUNYAL

IT is proverbially difficult to leave a town in the East and start on a journey to regions where bazaars are unknown. I always used optimistically to announce that we should leave on a certain day, but it was the needs of my servants and not the wishes of their master that decided the date of our departure.

When I left Gilgit, I was accompanied by Abdulla Beg and Daulat Shah, both belonging to Hunza, who had been with me on two previous journeys in Central Asia. Unfortunately, the former fell ill in Chitral and had to return to his home. My old cook, Aziza Rathar, a Kashmiri, also accompanied me. He had fed me on the same two journeys referred to, and I felt that if he wanted to come he should be allowed to do so, especially as I had survived his ministrations for so long. As a matter of fact, the journey proved too much for him, or else he felt that he had made his pile. At any rate, his interest in his cooking-pots was not as great as it should have been, and I suffered considerably from his lack of enthusiasm. He had with him the same fellow-villager as he had taken on the last journey. This was a willing, decent creature named Abdulla Rathar,



but as we had already one Abdulla his name was changed to Subhana, a fashionable Kashmiri name.

On our way from Gilgit we fell in with Hasil Shah who had been to sell a cow or to recover a horse. He was an active, strong, Hunza man, so he joined our troupe. In view of Abdulla's subsequent illness and departure, this was fortunate.

Gilgit is a small place, but the bazaar is good and, had we been moving forth from a metropolis, there could have not been more fuss and delay. It was mid-June, and the little settlement, crushed between its high barren mountain sides, blazed with heat. Everyone wished to leave and seek higher and cooler places, so that transport, always a difficulty in Gilgit, was very scarce. At last, after many disappointments, five ponies turned up—not enough, of course, but then no transport ever suffices in the East, for there the loads are not designed to fit the animals, and the unhappy beasts are always the sufferers. So the riding pony became a pack horse, and a miniature tragedy ensued, for Aziza the cook was obliged to walk! If we had left him behind to find a mount he would never have come after us, for his brains refused to work if he were six feet from his cooking-pots. He had no common sense, and often suffered from its absence. Thus he had to leave Gilgit on foot, an ignominious exit for a good cook. It is a Persian practice to limit the first day's march to a few miles, and we did the same. There was the village of Henzal eight miles off, and the cook's



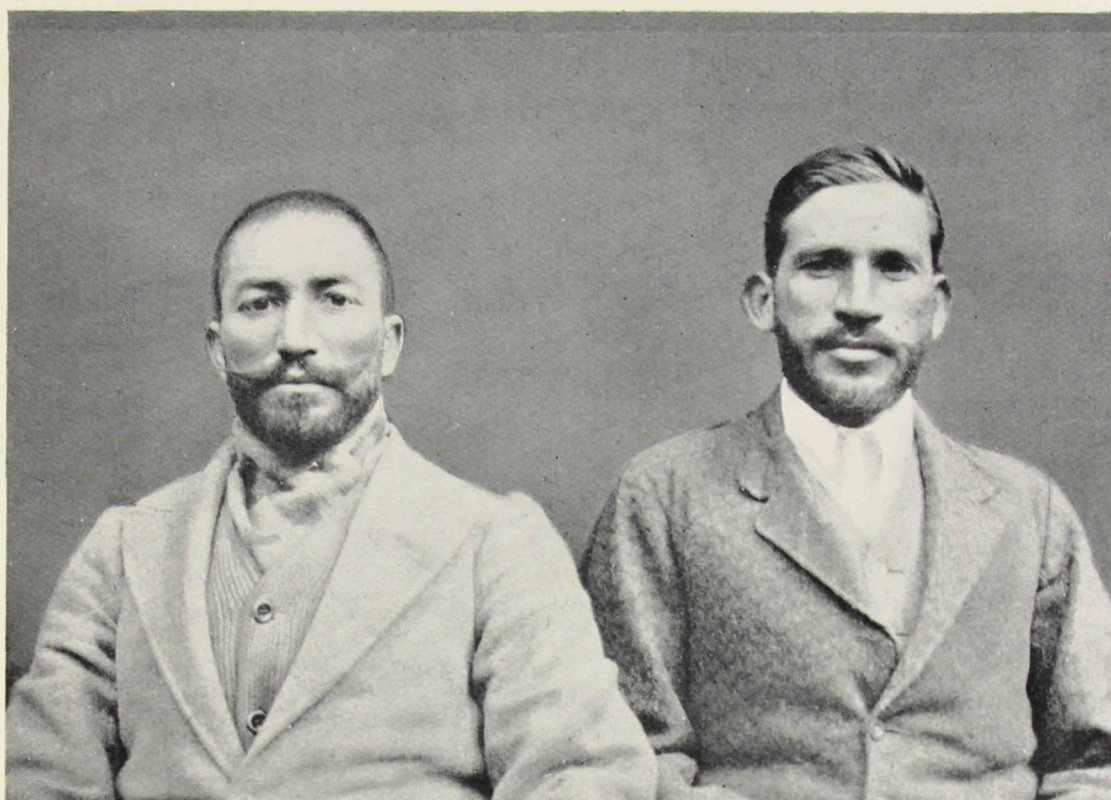
feet, the heat, and the hour of departure pointed to it as a desirable halting-place.

It was on the afternoon of 19 June 1933 that I sadly left my kind hosts, Major and Mrs. Gillan, and their delightful garden, and resolutely but reluctantly took to the road. The great king mulberries were fat and luscious, and squirted their juice all over one. The apricot trees were weighed down with fruit, and the lawns were dappled with the wind-falls. Sweet-peas, a treasured scarlet antirrhinum, and other flowers glowed in the heat, and there was I, leaving this alluring spot and the kindest of friends to wander through gloomy, rocky, broiling gorges.

It was indeed hot, perfect June weather. The wheat had been cut, and was standing in small bundles, whilst the newly uncovered soil was being hastily ploughed for the next crop, usually maize. When two or more crops are produced in one season, it is unwise to dally over the interval. As Gilgit is one of the highest places where rice can be cultivated with any success, some of the fields had been planted with it. The carriage from Kashmir is considerable and for that reason alone it was worth planting. It is a poor sort, and even the Kashmir variety is without honour amongst experts. Many of the rice fields had been sown ingeniously in concentric rings to simplify irrigation and to economise the ground.

As we ascended the valley of the Gilgit river the scene was fascinating. Graceful trees, abundant





DAULAT SHAH

ABDULLA BEG



ABDULLA RATHAR

AZIZA RATHAR





crops, and bright clear streams formed a striking foil to the baked and barren hillsides. It is this eternal contrast between the desert and the sown that appeals unfailingly to the Western mind. We in England are unaccustomed to vegetation and aridity being near neighbours, and we never cease to marvel at the feats that the power of water can achieve in a desert place ; the spectacle of the wilderness blossoming like the rose always enthrals us. In this glaring, stark, burning country, with rocky valley sides rushing upwards like monstrous walls to thin glaciers and scanty snows high above, these emerald villages soothe and allure. No wonder the native rejoices in an orchard, and in the ripple of water. So, too, did I when I passed a chenar (plane tree) by a noisy water mill and crystal stream, by which I would gladly have sunk to rest. Below, on our right as we shuffled along the sandy track, was the Gilgit river, tearing along—a desperate river, ugly with its black turgid flood. Some fishermen were casting their nets ; only two days before one of their kind had fallen in and been drowned.

The road led over the wide Kargah stream, cascading down, white and glistening. Above were Buddhist remains, and below long canals to carry water to Gilgit. I admired this clear dancing water but the prosaic practical Abdulla scoffed at my foolish sentimentality. 'It is horrible water', he said, 'it has no flavour, gives bad pains in the belly, and is famed for the goitre it causes.' Behind me rose the great pinnacles of Dubanni and Haramosh, caught by the



golden setting sun, whilst even the dreary lower hills were bathed in purple.

We slept at Henzal and next day left Kashmir territory, entering the State of Punyal. In Kashmir the cow is sacred, for the ruler is a Hindu, and whenever we left or entered its territories, the Moham-medans used to make facetious remarks about beef. My two Kashmiris, although Moslems, had been so used to the sanctity of the cow that they could never overcome their scruples about eating beef. The Hunza men would roar with laughter at the Kashmiris' gingerly approach to a piece of beef. Perhaps this was why Aziza the cook had never learned how to prepare any form of beef; he either kept the meat till it went bad or served it up as tough as stirrup-leather.

The track was good, very different from the rough path which the Gilgit Mission used in 1885, and where, a few miles beyond our camp, they lost a pony and four thousand rupees in silver. The apricots were ripe but only just so, for we were moving steadily upwards. Abdulla would climb a tree and sit in the branches eating the fruit, shaking some down for Daulat and myself; he looked like an overgrown bear, and about as attractive. The farmer, hitherto unseen, would turn up like magic when we entered his orchard. Property owners, the world over, seem invariably to arrive at inopportune moments!

Gulapur was the first village we came to in Punyal, and very beautiful it looked with masses of pome-



granate flowers rising from glistening leaves. Natives are very fond of pomegranates, whilst most Europeans regard the fruit as messy and unsatisfying.

The Raja of Punyal, Anwar Khan, lived on the opposite side of the Gilgit river, and, as there was only a rope bridge, it was his custom to cross it and meet the passing traveller on the road. This simple act of courtesy saved the visitor trouble and the Raja much expense, as there was then no need to offer hospitality to the passer-by. Protected by his tiresome means of access, the Raja could watch, with polite indifference, his fellow-chiefs and their numerous relatives passing along, close yet remote, as no horse could come to him, and he was seldom asked to put anyone up. The average hill-chief is economical. Indeed his economy is at times akin to miserliness. So, when the Raja's munshi (clerk) asked me when I should be passing the bridge, I blandly said that I should cross, and call personally on the chief. This was the wrong answer, but I was quite firm, although the munshi pointed out that there was only a rope bridge, no sahib ever crossed it—an untruth—and that generally I was obviously an unwise ignoramus. It was clear that if I were to see Cher Kila (often misspelt Sher) or the rock fort, the capital of the state, I had to cross the rope bridge.

A rope bridge consists of three ropes of twisted birch or willow bark. The performer walks on one rope, made of smaller ropes, usually three twisted together, and clings grimly to the other two which



are used as flexible insecure bannisters or rails, joined by short withies to the footway. The ends of the ropes are lashed to baulks of timber buried in stones, on either bank. The bridge is in a half circle. The traveller goes down steeply till a third of the way across where it is comparatively level, until the last third is reached when he climbs steadily. The whole device is economical, practical, easily constructed and quite suitable for the needs of the people, but to the boot-wearing European the passage of these bridges is detestable, and, to add to his trials, there are cross-pieces or thwarts of wood to keep the hand-rails apart; it is no easy task to climb these in mid-stream: also the sag is always considerable. Here at Cher Kila the river was one hundred and twenty yards broad, and it took me ten long minutes to cross. The water was foaming and tossing, it was deadly cold from the great flood of glacier water, and I tottered across splay-footed and miserable, clutching convulsively at the rough side ropes. The Raja met me at the bridge head, wearing a very fashionable 'sports' coat, and a neat pair of shoes. He led the way over the bridge with skill; I felt like a new pupil of some expert tight-rope walker, though when we got to the middle of the bridge and it swayed to and fro with our weight, I felt more like a monkey at the end of a rope. Had I been endowed with the prehensile bare foot of the native, I should have had no trouble at all, and would have crossed the bridge, hopping over the cross-pieces like an accomplished





CHER KILA





acrobat. But crossing a swinging stile in midstream was too much. When I finally returned to the starting-place, having crossed the bridge twice, I nearly smacked Abdulla Beg's face when he observed that it was a good bridge, easy to cross and very steady. Of course, travellers in the Himalaya know these bridges well. Kashmiris detest them and often have to be carried over blindfold. I asked if there were many accidents. 'No', was the answer, but sometimes men who have drunk too much lose their foothold and get drowned. The men of Punyal are notoriously fond of liquor.

On reaching the left bank, I followed the Raja through fields and orchards to his bungalow, where we sat in a large cool room, free from flies, and talked for an hour. A plate of large white apricots, another of smaller ones, and a third of plums, all ripe and good, were placed beside me, and I was given tea. My host was a pleasant active man of thirty-five, though looking older. His family is descended from Shah Burush, whose brother, Shah Kator, is the ancestor of the present ruler of Chitral. Both brothers were grandsons of Shah Khushwaqt, and in this part of Asia the Khushwaqt lineage is as esteemed as that of Plantagenet. Thus it will be seen that the chiefs of Punyal are largely Chitrali in descent.

My host's father, Mohamed Akbar Khan, was still alive, an active and irascible old gentleman of eighty. Years ago he arranged the murder of two men, an incident of no importance in these regions,



but not encouraged by the Government, who compelled him to retire to confinement in Kashmir, whilst a brother of his, Sifat Bahadur, ruled the state during his son's minority. But the peace and remoteness of Kashmir failed to mellow the old chief, who was later allowed to come back and proved rather a tiresome bore. He invariably abused his son, the present Raja, calling him soft and easy-going, not worthy to occupy the seat of his tyrannical ancestors. Well, that may be, but his much-abused son is approachable and sensible, and he should have many years of good work before him.

Of the states of the Gilgit Agency, Punyal is the most promising. The people are shrewd and intelligent, and there is a supply of water, famed for its purity and abundance in a region where water is scarce. The soil is fertile, and the state is accessible, as there are no passes to cross, and a good road goes through it. The only trouble is the system of land tenure, which will be referred to elsewhere.

The Raja's bungalow was on the edge of the polo ground; opposite was a handsome mosque with well-carved woodwork, ornamented with rows of markhor and ibex horns. The fine old fort by the river's edge was in sad disrepair, and it could only be a matter of time before it would be a mere heap of ruins. As I looked at it I felt repaid for crossing the rope bridge. After taking the usual photographs—a ceremony that no traveller with a camera should ever omit—I left the capital of Punyal, being



escorted by the Raja to the right bank of the Gilgit river, where I bade him farewell.

The valley now widened; I saw before me an open plain with some fields and much tamarisk. The latter was in flower, its delicate pink feather strewed the plain so that the whole valley glowed rosily in the sun. Often a dingy shrub, due partly to its habitat in dusty, open fields and partly to its dull green colour, the tamarisk is rarely impressive, but here it was a beautiful delicate lacelike growth, filling the whole expanse with colour, and standing out against a background of light green fields. The road continued to be desperately hot, for the valley between the villages was barren beyond belief and the rocks radiated heat. So small blame to us if we rested in an occasional garden, and ate apricots, not, alas, quite ripe, and inclined to give us internal twinges. I was shown too a curious raspberry-like fruit, the jomi, said to grow only in Punyal.

As I traversed the country I came to the conclusion that the people did not appreciate how well off they were. The Punyalis are splendid climbers and good fighters, second only to the men of Hunza, but none the less they are unenterprising and dirty, though now that at last the pressure of population is making itself felt, they have to bestir themselves. They refuse to go into service and thereby lose much useful employment. Like all races either of Chitrali origin or under Chitrali rule they are inordinately pleasure-loving and comfort-seeking. They love the juice of



the grape, either as wine or, preferably, in the form of that trebly distilled liquor, potent and unrefined, which would make any Western head ache for weeks.

The Punyali may be better than his neighbours, but his ways are somewhat disconcerting and his fertile land is wasted on him. No matter how harsh and rugged his mountains, his villages are beautiful, with a richness and lavishness unknown elsewhere in the neighbourhood. Whatever faults the men of Punyal may have, the women at any rate are hard workers, and do most of the field work. Their men folk hate agriculture, and substitute for a love of husbandry a taste for litigation, a sad declension amongst hill-men. Hitherto the Punyal women have incurred some opprobrium by their refusal to wear pyjamas, but they are not alone in their dislike of these elegant garments. However, no good Moslem can afford to ignore convention, and pyjamas are coming into use and their wearers into good repute amongst their neighbours.

No, decidedly the Punyali, though no blot on the landscape, like the people of Nagir and Ishkoman, is less pleasing than he should be and does not live up to his surroundings. I thought so indeed when I crossed the stream to Gulmit Tao and watched it cascading from the glen. White foam flecked the broad green water, large walnut trees overhung the torrent, and there was a confusion of rocks, rapids, wild roses and ferns, with a water-mill silent in the background. Below me was the black greasy Gilgit



river, and beyond, on the far side, the village of Bubur, said to be the most beautiful in the country, with wonderful orchards, gleaming with their crisp, new leaves. Further up the glen wild almonds abounded, useful for their oil and for their wood, for polo sticks. We passed men rolling stones down the hill and so clearing ground for new fields. Women were washing for gold—a miserable unremunerative task—and were cutting corn. They did not thresh it, however, but merely stacked it, as time is too valuable with a second crop to be planted at once.

Although we were now 7,000 feet up it was still amazingly hot, but very pleasant camping in an orchard with a burn humming close by and the river roaring below. We had many visitors, so Daulat would prudishly put up a large and elaborate screen when I wanted a bath. I protested that I was no purdah woman, but he declared that there were females at hand, easily shocked, and so much protection was desirable for both parties. Even Abdulla Beg thought the zariba rather too complete, and more suitable to a woman lying-in than to a sahib taking a bath! Custom, of course, prevailed, as it always does in the East. I retired behind the screen, the bashful fairies were driven off, a party of village elders retired to a modest remoteness and the conventions were safeguarded.

Just before the northern boundary of Punyal is reached the valley contracts and then opens out into a wide plain with scattered villages, reminding us

of Ladak. Near the gorge on the left bank were hot springs, from which the water is taken away in bottles. The more diseased or more energetic of the inhabitants used to visit the place and bathe.

We came to a wide open plain where the Ishkoman and Gilgit rivers join and the track plunged into a gloomy ravine with steep red-brown cliffs. It was a poor place in any circumstances, with a few willows and tamarisks by the water's edge and some scattered wild almonds. The road was bad, up and down a rough hillside, till we came to Hopar, and beyond, in a depressingly barren stretch of country a stone cairn marked the boundary of the States of Punyal and Ghizr.



## CHAPTER III

## THE TWIN STATES OF KUH AND GHIZR

WHEN we left Punyal at Hobar we entered the district of Kuh which, with Ghizr, is under a Governor who lives at Gupis. These Governors are called Raja in common talk, and sometimes even Mehtar, after the Chitrali fashion.

I had with me an old retainer, Murad Shah, who had found me out with the unerring instinct that guides a vulture to its carrion, for carrion I was likely to be if I did not resist his demands. As we entered the new state Murad Shah pointed to some poor fields and said that they belonged to the Raja. 'And that', said Daulat, pointing to a miserable lean-to hovel, 'is doubtless the Raja's palace.'

Murad Shah was rather put off by this treasonable remark, but at that moment a man came round the corner. He was ill-clad, with no shoes, and a single tooth quivered on the right side of his jaw. He was, however, the Raja's factor, said he was poor, and obtained an alms. We laughed, pointing to the fields, and asking how he dared plead poverty with all that before us and what his master gave him. 'Well', said Abdulla Beg, 'here are two annas and now give us



a blessing.' The man lifted up his hands and poured a benediction on us. The success of our journey proved the efficacy of our investment! Such was our absurd introduction to the new state.

We wound up a valley with the Gilgit river still beside us, roaring and fuming, and passed the village of Roshan with a great rock jutting into the stream. The old fort had been allowed to fall into ruin, and the picturesqueness of the scene had suffered. The lumbardeer (headman) of the place accompanied me, a pious soul who spent his time invoking blessings on the Government through which peace and plenty had come to the land. With one eye cocked on me, as a source from which further plenty might come, he heaved a sigh and said devoutly: 'By the gracious fortune of the Government, there are now no dragons in this village.'

As I have a special affection for dragons, those much maligned beasts, I was astonished, and wondered who had played the rôle of St. George and exterminated the dragons of Roshan. It seems that years ago, so long ago that his name was forgotten, a great man or buzurg had come to the village, where for generations a dragon and his mate had preyed on the people. Not only had mere bullocks and sheep been devoured, but stalwart youths and comely maidens. But the buzurg's spells were strong and both dragons had been turned into stone. So worked up had the old headman become that he turned round with a screech of triumph, and said: 'Look at the cliff behind you.



There they are, the two stone dragons !' Seeing was believing, for, looking up, I saw in the strata of the cliff the petrified male dragon, a long lissom alarming brute, and a few yards above, and almost parallel with her mate, the she-dragon, slimmer and smaller, but still a veritable dragon and no doubt of evil intent. The buzurg had done his work so well that I thought his name might have been remembered. Dragons are comparatively scarce in Mohammedan countries ; I was thus particularly gratified to come across them at Roshan.

A few miles further on we reached Gupis, the most important place in the Agency after Gilgit but, like most of such places, rather a disappointment. It boasted a garrison of Kashmir troops and revelled in such luxuries as a hospital, telegraph office and three miserable shops.

The Governor of Ghizr and Kuh is appointed by the British Government, like his colleagues of Yasin and Ishkoman and, although he usually enjoys the position for life, the tenure is neither fixed nor hereditary. The arrangement is satisfactory and might well be followed in Hunza and Nagir, where its introduction would be welcomed by the people.

In 1933 the Governor was Mohamed Rahim Khan who had only just been appointed. He succeeded Murad Khan who had been forced to retire on pension because of his age, very much to his annoyance but to the possible benefit of the country. The new Raja had been wazir of Chilas, where I had met him



some seven years previously. My present visit was not a success. Perhaps his promotion had turned his head, but Mohamed Rahim Khan earned the distinction of being the only person who was discourteous to me in the Gilgit Agency. Consequently, we only met very formally in a tent, pitched in a garden where the new chief was building himself a house. It was rather a forlorn site, a cross between a neglected allotment and a speculative builder's failure. In this part of the world the Mohammedans are not teetotallers, and so I was offered a whisky and soda. It was lucky that I was what my hosts were not, as the soda was so sweetened that my fellow guest, Ajab Singh, the genial commander of the Kashmir troops in Gilgit, hardly managed to conceal his surprise. But his good manners triumphed and he congratulated our host in devising a new and agreeable drink. After a short stay, for relations were strained, I took my departure and left the scene of carnival and carousal. We exchanged the usual presents: the Governor gave me a sheep and some eggs and I sent him fifty shotgun cartridges.

The Raja had a son who came to see me, a good-looking, well-mannered, pleasing youth, who spoke some English acquired in the school at Srinagar, where he had failed to pass any examinations, so his parent had recalled him. I must say that my sympathies were with the son. These Rajas send their boys to Srinagar and, as a rule, get no result from their outlay, which is a heavy expense for a petty



chief. The boys may be good lads but, coming from the simple life of their remote villages, the gaieties and distractions of a large city demoralise them. When you have never seen a motor or a cinema, or even a wheeled vehicle or a decent shop, the spectacle turns your head. So these young lairds lose their heads and their father's money in the whirl of life in Srinagar. They are wholly unable to settle down, and return under a cloud to their native mountains. It is all very unsatisfactory, especially since they have nothing to do when they do return. They are gushpurs, or members of the ruling class, and never will do a hand's turn of honest work. This youth was no exception. He was a jemadar in the Gilgit scouts and did some training every year, but most of his life would be wasted in loafing, intriguing and dissipating, all with the approval of his foolish old father.

Kuh—which means the 'lowland' or low country—and Ghizr consist of the lower and upper parts respectively of the long valley that runs from Shandur on the Chitral border to the junction of the Gilgit and Iskhoman rivers. It is, on the whole, a dull country, with an unusual amount of rock and stone in a land unduly endowed with both. There are, however, some good grazing grounds. Trees are few and the open naked expanses rather dreary. Like their neighbours of Punyal the people of Ghizr are too lazy to take service; men from Hunza do most of the odd jobs. Yet at the end of every winter the



folk of Ghizr are starving, and in 1933, when a late spring followed a long and early winter, they were in a particularly bad state. Mountaineers may be hardy and hard-working but not so the hill-men of Ghizr, where there is only one crop in the year and that one too much for the peasantry. Hard work is not relished in Chitral, but even so men come over from that state in the winter to do odds and ends of labour which might appropriately be done by the loafers of the country. Certainly it was a dull land: we trudged along, winding round cliffs and over the spurs of valleys, rewarded by no views and irritated by the blazing sun and the radiation from the rocks. The water was good. The wise man never drinks on a march, but then the wise man has never wandered up these arid baking valleys in a torrid glare, with the air dry and refined and the pack mules kicking up the sand as they lurch along the road. Had the wise man done so, he would say otherwise or else he would say nothing at all, for his mouth would be too dry to utter a word. Water was abundant, clear, pure and cool, and only a fool would in these circumstances have turned away from such a gift of God.

We met a Pathan from Swat fleeing his country, no doubt for very good reasons; he was accompanied by his wife and child, and a good dog like a Lhasa terrier. The man seized my arm and begged me to buy it, saying it would eat anything; but his wife so clearly longed to keep it that I had not the heart to take the animal, though probably the dog lost



a good home ; I wished afterwards that I had been less sentimental. To our relief the valley gradually widened, and instead of a river flowing between two walls we saw a green land with poplars, weeping willows and wild roses. In the midst of this was a fine stretch of plain which had gone out of cultivation as the kul, or irrigation channel, constructed with great labour and expense, had broken down and the delectable land had been rendered useless. No matter how lazy the people may be they take great pains over their irrigation, for on that everything depends. Looking up, we saw this tenuous little channel or canal crossing the face of a high cliff, in some places supported by struts across the sheer rock, in others high on a wall of stones. The aqueduct curved round nullahs and ran over spurs, a remarkable feat. Yet the people who had undertaken the work had not the energy to repair it or even to keep it in order—all their toil had been expended in the initial effort of its construction. The Governor had offered to put it right if he were given half the area watered. This was a fair deal and had been agreed to, so perhaps the labour would not be wasted. In a land where the average yield is only sixfold, every rood of soil must be utilised.

We found the villagers, as I have said, famished, for the old crop had been eaten up and the new one had not yet ripened. This is always a difficult interval to bridge, and there were no apricots here, as in Hunza, to enable the people to carry on.



We now reached Pingal, the last village in Kuh, and a pretty place if dull. The influence of Chitral was noticeable when we entered Ghizr, where the people spoke Chitrali or Khowar, and used antimony round their eyes. This practice is common enough amongst women in India, though why it should be considered beautifying is hard to say; but to see unwashed men and grubby little boys using it, or, failing the real stuff, smearing on charcoal, is quite absurd, and the appearance of the users is equally so.

Beyond Pingal the valley narrowed, and there was a darband, or a stone wall, built as a barrier across the valley, a contrivance very popular in hill warfare, and doubtless of value in former days. Here the walls were dilapidated and the forts collapsing, and this one seemed more a specimen of the art of bluff than of serious defence. Beyond this wall the valley again opened out at Rawat, the hills took on softer outlines, the country seemed less cramped, and we realised that Ghizr was an upland region where trees were few, crops scantier, and life uncomfortable. 'Why', asked Abdulla and Daulat of the people of Pingal, 'do you live in such hovels? They are not fit for a byre. You have three feet of snow in winter and have to spend much time in your houses. Why not build decent ones whilst you are about it?' The reply was artless and convincing. 'We are too lazy. We like comfort and hate exertion, so are content to exist in these houses. They are bad and miserable but we cannot be bothered to build better ones.'



There was a chorus of assent from the bystanders, and I knew that we had the character of the people of Ghizr described by themselves.

When we were near Chashi, we passed close to the right of the road two of those curious circles of stones that have baffled archæologists. These circles were eight to ten feet across, made of boulders arranged with a flat surface outside; they are about three-and-a-half feet above ground and one to one-and-a-half below. The boulders were thus about four-and-a-half to five feet high. The centre of the circle was piled with stone, either by accident or by design. These two circles—others are found elsewhere, at Gupis for instance—were close together, and probably were burial places, but the local natives knew nothing about them and cared less.

The road led above the village of Chashi, and below us were flat-roofed houses, each with a square hole in the roof for smoke and light; the temptation to lob stones into some of them was hard to resist. By the roadside was a woman rocking what looked like a small balloon of skin; it proved to be a tedious method of butter-making. The bag was large and it was no easy task to keep on shaking it.

We now wound up a great moraine, blocking the valley and making quite a climb, till we saw in its folds the green lake of Pandur and beyond a broad level plain through which the river wandered by flat green fields, the whole known locally and fantastically as 'Little Kashmir'. It was indeed a contrast to the



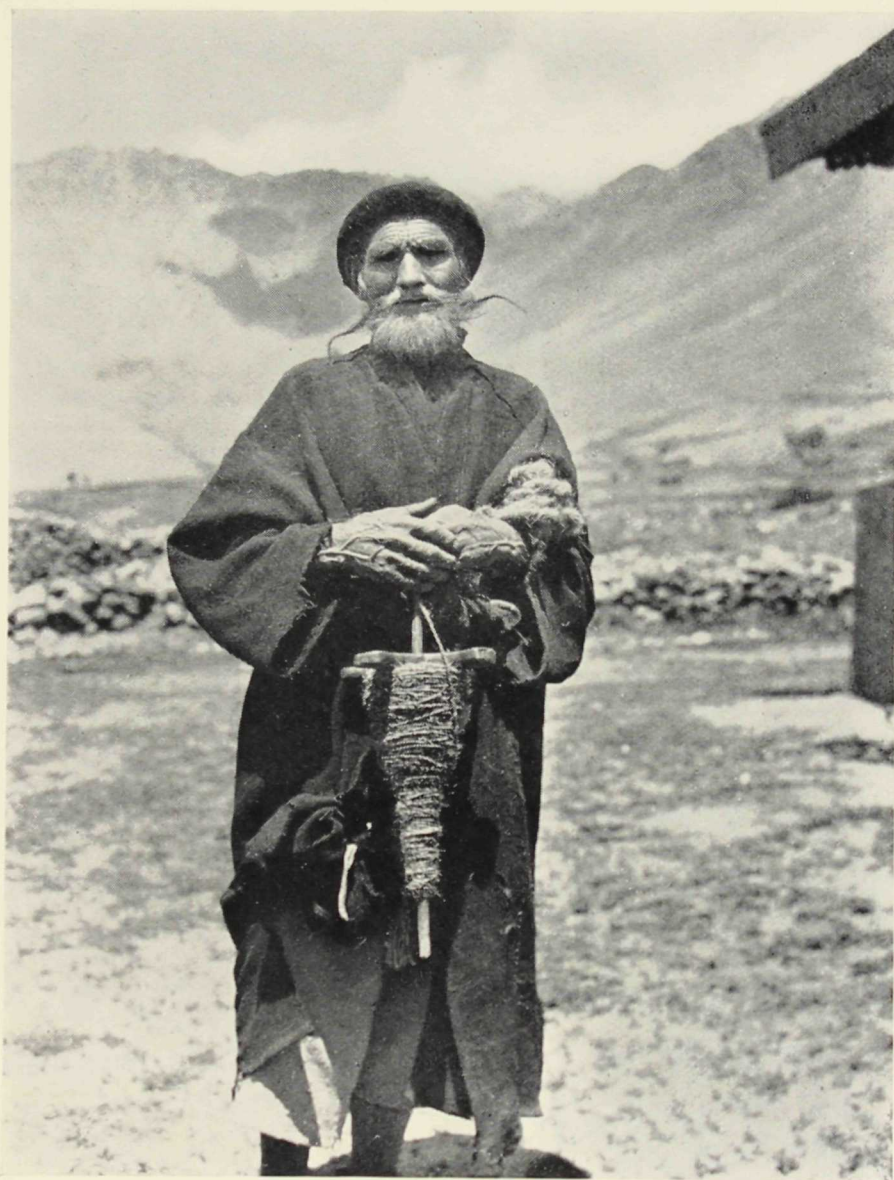
gorges we had come through, and a relief to let the eye roam over an expanse of meadow and swamp.

The Ghizr river has been stocked with English trout, and they afford good sport. The natives smack their lips and loudly praise the flavour of these fish, commenting too on the pleasing absence of bones. We failed to catch one, and were sorry not to eat English trout in the Karakoram. The fish are largely poached, but appear to be not only holding their own but even to be destroying the native fish. Beyond this plain was the large straggling settlement of Ghizr, with a great deal of scattered cultivation, much grass and swamp, but very few trees. The place was exposed, but well-watered, though the crops are indifferent as they ripen late in this altitude of 10,000 feet. We saw a woman drying the flowers and stems of the marghon, or blue campanula, which are boiled and eaten during the winter.

The last village in the state was Teru and, although we were now fairly high and near the Chitral watershed, the scenery was disappointing. In front of us to the west was a great rocky massif with two small glaciers, but it was all far too like that through which we had been wandering for the past fortnight to be really interesting.

As we left Teru for the Shandur Pass larks soared and sang blithely, the cuckoo joining in. The fields with their thin crops extended to the very top of the pass, but the peasants dwell in Teru, living, during the time of sowing and harvesting, in small huts.





A MAN OF GHIZR





The road led up a charming glen, with a clear torrent rushing down it. Willows, roses, yellow broom and a lavish display of other flowers brightened the way. On a level meadow some small black cattle were feeding and beyond was a wide open plain thick with yaks and cows ; the sight made my Hunza men burst with envy ! A little further on was the hardly perceptible watershed, for the Shandur Pass is a pass in name only, so gentle are the approaches on either side, and at its crest the State of Ghizr and the Gilgit Agency ended.

## CHAPTER IV

## THE COUNTRY OF YASIN OR WARSHIGUM

SINCE this book does not profess to deal with Chitral I pass over the route traversed from the border at the Shandur Pass to the northern extremity of that state, where we camped on 15 July 1933 at Chigar, on the Chitral side of the Darkot Pass. This pass is 15,380 feet in height and divides Yasin from Chitral, and over it we had to go to return by Yasin to Gilgit.

The usual and direct way to Yasin is from Gupis, but the Darkot is a recognised if little used pass: the Pamir Boundary Commission left and returned by this route.

We started for the pass very early hoping thus to meet hard snow, but our early rising was in vain. The day was dull and overcast, the snow as soft as cotton-wool, and we made poor progress. Our wretched yaks with their small feet sank to their bellies and groaned dismally as all yaks do. Near the first or false crest the snow was harder and, after five hours from camp, we reached the summit of the pass. There we paid off the Wakhis and were met by the villagers of Darkot, for the rule is that each district does its own portorage; any infraction of the rule means a fine of at least one sheep.



My men complained bitterly of the pass, a veritable tyrant of a pass, as they described it. They had had plenty of experience of passes and I have crossed very many worse. I quite agree that from the Yasin side the long pull-up would be very tedious and that at least one intermediary camp would be needed. From the Chitral side the gradient is not severe and the pass can at worst be called tiresome. On descending from the crest, however, our troubles were by no means over; we had more soft snow and then a second glacier to traverse, very difficult to walk on. After that we went down and down, like going down the side of a house, till we reached the valley.

After the dreary scenery of Punyal and Ghizr, and the open but uninspiring uplands of North Chitral, we rejoiced at the glorious prospect before us. Facing us were the great Darkot glaciers, three sheets of clear ice, and some hanging glaciers in the smaller valleys. Below was the local hot spring, a very famous one. 'Indeed', said the village headman, 'the like of it is unknown in the whole world: truly a splendid spring. If a man bathe in it he either dies at once or gets well, so that he and all know immediately what his fate will be.'

The flowers surpassed anything we had seen in Chitral, masses of large cream aquilegia, and a long sweep of hillside crowded with flowers and herbage, thriving on the rich black loam.

But still we went on, ever downwards and, as we peered into the valley below, it all seemed to us as far



off as ever. We had had with us for two days an old Maulai pir (religious leader) who with his dyed beard and deep groans had puffed along, bewailing to me in bad Persian the horrors of the road and, since the old gentleman's usual mode of progress was on horseback, I sympathised with him as he ploughed the soft snows of the Darkot. He had been to Zebak, in Afghanistan, to interview his spiritual head, and had found the pious journey a very weary pilgrimage.

We passed a darband, or fortification of towers and stone walls, stretching across the valley where the river was confined in a very narrow gorge, and whence the view up the pass was superb. Finally, quite exhausted, we reached the village of Darkot, having taken ten hours from the start.

Here I was welcomed by the Governor of Yasin, Raja Abdur Rahman Khan, of the Khushwaqt clan, and the brother of the uncivil ruler at Gupis. The old man had ridden twenty-three miles to meet me, but I was not in a fit state to see anyone, least of all a potentate. Daulat had preceded me to spy out the land and had told the Raja that the sahib was in no humour for casual chit-chat. After sitting with me on a charpoy for ten minutes, the Raja considerably left me; I was thus enabled to have a hot bath and become fit for society. Abdur Rahman Khan was a man of nearly sixty, well-built, active and genial. He came to tea with me and slowly munched Aziza's excellent cake; slowly because he had only three teeth left (and they were loose) in his lower jaw, and none



in his upper. He was just about to leave for Kashmir to obtain new teeth, and had been collecting money from his relations to pay for them. He had asked his near relative the Mehtar of Chitral for a thousand rupees ; I never heard how much he actually received. I found the Raja a most entertaining companion and, tired though I was, I thoroughly enjoyed my evening with him. After tea we adjourned to the polo ground which was partly the bed of a stream and partly a piece of dusty ground. Everyone played at once and there was no limiting the number of players : very bad polo it was, but all the more exciting to watch as the crossing was persistent and the escapes truly miraculous. Real democracy only exists in an autocratic country where there is one ruler and everyone else is equal, and it was instructive to see the Raja, the headmen, and all the ragtag and bobtail of the countryside, in fact, everyone who possessed a horse, playing together in perfect good-fellowship and complete indifference to person. They all galloped about wildly in a cloud of dust, and enjoyed it enormously.

Yasin polo is bad, because there is little chance to practise. In summer the people are busy in their fields, and the ponies on the upland pastures. In winter the snow hinders playing, so games are comparatively few. No polo in these regions can be played without a band, so two men with surnais (pipes), a man with a drum, and a marvellous expert on two kettledrums sat in a row, banging and blowing with ceaseless vigour. They were the Governor's private



troupe of minstrels and had come with him from Yasin town. In the evening the Raja and I watched the people dancing round a large bonfire, while the spectators sat or stood in a circle. 'You see, sahib', said the old chief apologetically, 'this is a frontier country and the women will come and look on. Most improper, I suppose, but they are but jungly folk.' He feared that I might think such behaviour unbecoming, as he glanced at the roof-tops crowded with the fair ones of Darkot, all enjoying the show and anxious to see their men-folk dance. To encourage the dancers and make them brisk and agile, headmen with long wands stimulated the spectators to cheer and to applaud. The dancing was good, but far the best performer was a deaf and dumb man who danced with vigour, great originality and skill; he was highly applauded. All the dancers wore their chogas and the flapping of the ends of the long sleeves, in time with the music, was a feature of the show. Much of the dancing was twirling round and round with arms outstretched like a dancing dervish. There was singing too at first—in Persian and Chitrali, but later in Burishashki, the local language. All were understood, but the last was preferred. One very old man and a youth brought down the house, hopping about with their flat caps adorned with flowers, and singing with gusto a comic song of great savour. Another performer danced along between verses which he sang, whilst the audience joined in the chorus.

The whole spectacle was not so monotonous as are



most Eastern dances. Hands were vigorously shaken in the air, a particular feature, but all the dancers were full of energy. They skipped, they hopped, they galloped, they pranced and leaped, whilst the bonfire blazed and we all howled encouragingly. At last all were tired and went to bed.

Darkot was the scene of the murder of George Hayward, the explorer, on 18 July 1870; he had come to Yasin and was on his way to Badakshan. The story of his death has been put into moving verse by Sir Henry Newbolt, but I could find no corroboration of the details. Colonel Lockhart, later Sir William Lockhart and Commander-in-Chief in India, was the head of the Gilgit Mission which travelled in these regions in 1885 and 1886, and he interviewed an eye-witness who described to him the scene as given in the poem. Briefly, Hayward had been warned that Mir Wali, the Mehtar of Yasin, meant to murder him, and so he sat up writing all night trying to prevent sleep overpowering him. Finally, he did fall asleep; he was seized and bound, but allowed to ascend a mound nearby to look once more on the rising sun. The man who gave these details to the mission described Hayward as he went up the hillock as 'tall against the morning sky, with the rising sun lighting up his fair hair as a glory; he was beautiful to look at'. He then returned, said 'I am ready', and was at once slain.

Mir Wali, the instigator of the murder, met his fate a good deal later at the hands of Chitralis who



had been sent in pursuit of him by the Mehtar, Aman-ul-Mulk, under Muhi-ud-Din, usually known as Pahlwan Bahadur, afterwards the ruler of Yasin. That Pahlwan Bahadur was a half-brother of the fugitive did not matter. It may be observed that it was not to avenge Hayward's death that Mir Wali was slain.

When the pursuers caught up to Mir Wali, they fired at him, hitting him in the thigh. He fell off his horse, and Pahlwan Bahadur ordered his men to cut his brother's throat. Two men ran forward to do so, but the wounded man drew his English pistol and shot them both. Two more came up, and these he killed with his sword. Bubuku, his Punyali servant, a small man with a lion's heart, threw himself in front of his master to protect him, shouting to Pahlwan's men, 'Why do you kill your Raja?' Finally Mir Wali was slain, but Bubuku was spared, and died later, in 1922, in Gakuch.

The Government of India seem to have taken no steps to avenge Hayward's murder; the Mehtar of Chitral merely pursued and slew Mir Wali because he wanted Yasin, and the murder afforded a good pretext for getting rid of one relative to give his property to another. What signified the death of an Englishman, or the death of any man to Aman-ul-Mulk, murderer of his nearest relatives?

Murders of adventurous Britons are singularly rare, and in the wild regions of the North-West particularly so, and I was at pains to make inquiries,



aided by my Hunza men who spoke the same tongue as the men of Darkot. The villagers said that Hayward was seized during a meal, bound and carried off with his five servants to the mouth of the valley leading to Ishkoman, apparently the Nia Bar, and all were at once killed with the sword. Hayward offered his murderers all he had if they would spare him and his men, but they refused, observing cynically that they would have all his property in any case. The actual scene of the murder was under a cliff at the mouth of a small nullah where it joins the main Nia Bar half a mile from the site of the camp. This nullah is now known as the Farang Bar or Frank's (foreigner's) nullah. At the time of the crime, Hayward's interpreter, or clerk, was away but was told on his return to the village that the sahib had gone to explore certain valleys. After feeding the man with lies for a month, they murdered him.

The story told me about this murder is corroborated by Drew<sup>1</sup> who gives an account of it. The picturesque descriptions which Sir William Lockhart and others have given are discounted by his matter-of-fact narrative, which declares that Hayward was taken in his sleep, led a mile into the pine forest and killed by a blow from a sword. Drew buried Hayward in Gilgit cemetery.

The Darkot villagers said that the arrangements for the crime were in the hands of a Chitrali called Bileni, but that the actual murderers were Mushir-i-

<sup>1</sup> *Jammu and Kashmir*, by Frederic Drew.



Din and Muhabi Hakim, both of Barkolti, a large village north of Yasin town. A headman of Sandhi played a conspicuous part.

It is said that some of Hayward's effects, a telescope, a saddle, and even a pistol are still in Yasin. The man who had the telescope was discovered with it in his possession, but managed to get off by bribing a Maulai pir to say that the telescope had been brought from Bombay where the Agha Khan had given it as a present. There is truly no tale to which a pir will not give colour.

I asked why Mir Wali had the explorer murdered. The people said that it was the sahib's second visit that made the chief nervous. He feared that a British occupation was imminent. I suspect that cupidity and cruelty were the motives, for Mir Wali, like most of his kind, was a black-hearted savage. In Newbolt's poem a reference is made to the Laspur Hills. These are out of sight, hidden by great snow peaks, but there is a Daspur mountain on which I noticed the early sun first strikes.

The villagers say that since the murder all the ibex have fled the country. Formerly the animals were so numerous that when the corn was being cut the harvesters would be on one side of the standing wheat and the ibex on the other—a picturesque exaggeration. Now there are no ibex.

From what I saw of the Darkotis, I should say that the murder must have been a task after their own hearts. We noticed that these villagers could



not sit together for half an hour without quarrelling violently. We heard that when five or six pilgrims from Central Asia arrived at Darkot on their way to Mecca, starving and bewildered, not a finger was lifted to help their brother Moslems. Once a Darkoti refused to provide grass for the Political Agent's horse, but his brother did so and was duly given a rupee. For a year the two brothers wrangled and fought over the money.

When I was at Darkot a lame man ran away. How, I asked? But perhaps it was not a very rapid movement as he took a shepherd's daughter with him. The father, not a man of the country, came to the abductor's brother and discussed the outrage. Long the two talked, and at last the Yasini killed a sheep and entertained the aggrieved parent who grew cheerful at the thought of some compensation for the loss of his daughter. He received it in full, in true Darkoti fashion, for his host drew a knife and thrust it hard, into his heart! Nobody minded. The murderer lived his life, blithe and care-free, and his brother married the lady.

There was good pasture near Darkot, but the sheep and goats were never taken further than a strip of swampy land close to the village where the grazing was scanty and not nutritious. It was just laziness. The lassitude of Chitral had extended to Darkot.

So far as we were concerned, the chief event at Darkot was the purchase and killing of a calf. The Kashmiris were thrilled, especially the camp cook,

who had never been present at such an *auto-da-fe*, for in very truth that is what the death of a cow is to a Mohammedan, and its preservation to a Hindu. But I did not benefit. As I have said, Aziza, owing to inexperience, failed to understand the keeping properties of prime beef, and the village dogs got my share, a very savoury one it must have been !



## CHAPTER V

## LOWER YASIN

WE had entered Yasin from Chitral by the Darkot Pass; we now intended going down to the capital, for so the village and fort of Yasin may be termed, and, after, regaining Darkot by the Thui valley and over an unknown pass to that village. Then, leaving Darkot for Ishkoman, we hoped to cross by yet another unexplored route, and so to see most of the country. Distances were not great, the weather was fine, the people were friendly, and the old Raja did all he could for us. So, after a short rest, we started down the valley for Yasin; the further we descended the more fertile the country became. Indeed, the whole land was prosperous, for it is a great granary, an unusual gift of Providence in a region where food is always scarce. Yasin, however, thanks to its level valley bed and its abundant water, even exports its barley and wheat, which are grown intensively. There was only one drawback, most of the country produced only a single crop, for the elevation is high and the season comparatively short.

Fruit trees were rather few, as they shade the ground, which was all needed for corn. Still there were some fine walnut trees, as well as some apple, apricot and



mulberry, but, compared with the other parts of the Agency, their number was insignificant. The Yasinis work fairly hard and seem to be good cultivators, but in many villages they only manure their fields once in three years. They have not enough cattle to do so more frequently, as there is a shortage of pasture-land.

As we progressed I thought Yasin a comfortable country. Every village had its own glacier and so abundant water, with a sloping plain of good soil, easily worked and irrigated. We found their houses fair, their orchards small but pleasant, their bread leavened and well-baked, and their crops splendid; a very smiling country and very decent folk.

We passed the fort of Mir Wali, now a heap of ruins though it figures so bravely on all the maps, as well as that of Gauhar Aman, grandfather of the old Governor, a mighty murderer and a strapping tyrant. Our escort was dull. They knew nothing of jinns which had left the country since the British came, and had gone, no one knew whither. One fellow, however, did enliven the march by pointing out the places where previous sahibs or their horses had fallen over the cliff!

The Yasin river became wider and wider, till it filled the whole valley, nigh a mile broad, with the hot grey stones of its dry bed, broken by occasional casual channels. As we approached Yasin the bed contracted. We crossed a shaky bridge to the right side of the stream and entered a level stretch, barren



and mirage ridden, the Dasht-i-Taus or Desert of the Peacock.

'Now', I said to the escort, 'we will shoot some peacock. Tell Daulat to produce the guns.'

'What do you say?', howled the escort, 'shoot peacocks, and where?'

'Why, here is their plain and so we can shoot them. Are we Hindus to be thus prevented?', I asked.

'But, Sahib, there are no peacocks. There never have been any——'

And so on. Then why this deceiving name ?

Years ago this area was cultivated. The old irrigation channel was still visible, and the present Raja, by making new water-courses, was bringing it into bearing once more. Houses were being built, trees planted, and land ploughed. All this was interesting and edifying, but I failed to connect it with peacocks. The first explanation was as follows: A peacock shines and flashes, it is brilliant and gorgeous, and implies wealth and grandeur. In Persia, for example, there is the peacock throne. So, although the land may be desert now yet it can gleam like gold, like the sheen of a peacock's feather. I thought this very poetical, and wholly unconvincing. I preferred the other explanation which was this. Years ago a peasant fell in love with a chief's daughter and she with him, but the ruler disliked the idea. 'However', he said, 'the girl is yours if you will bring water to that piece of ground (pointing to the Peacock's desert) and cultivate it.' Off went the youth and,



with the native cunning of his race, dug a long trench or kul, as an irrigation channel is called, and planted his sword upright in it. He returned to his chief and said: 'Look! there is the water channel and there (pointing to his sword) is the water flashing like a peacock's feather.' He convinced the father and won the girl. It was a pretty tale, and I should say wholly mythical.

The plain may be cultivated but, I fear, is unlikely to gleam again like a peacock's tail. In the middle still stood the remains of the old fort which the Chinese built when they held the country, and which may be turned into a farm-house if cultivation increases.

The Governor's son, a subahdar in the Gilgit Scouts, met me as I drew near the town, and took me to the rest-house. High on the hill behind was a monument, and I was delighted to find that it was a memorial to Queen Victoria, that admirable woman who is believed by many of these simple tribesmen to be still alive. At any rate, I used often to be asked after her health.

I visited the Governor, whom I found near the fort, and we sat placidly together eating apricots, a diversion that never fails. Behind us on a bed was his son, very ill with typhoid. His father assured me that the lad only took barley water, but the doctor had a very different tale. He complained that the boy's mother, sisters and wife gave him all he wanted to eat, from green apricots to roast mutton, and that his protests as



well as his appeals to the father had been disregarded. It was a typical instance of the stupid indulgence and stubborn indiscipline general in the East. The patient had never learnt to deny himself, and his women-folk thought it cruel to refuse him anything.

In the evening the old Governor came to dinner, which was a soft meal suitable for a guest with only three teeth and those all loose. 'If you do not mind', said the chief, 'I shall eat with my fingers', and proceeded to do so. Washing his right hand, and rolling up his sleeve, he made the pilau and curry into neat little packets, and popped them into his mouth. I much prefer the natural East to a caricature of the West; it is always distressing to see a sophisticated native playing at roller-skates with his knife and fork, the food flying off the plate to caracole over the table. I had, unfortunately, no liquor to give my visitor, and I fear he missed it, for he loved his glass. However, I rejoiced to see him eat well, as I hate a man who toys with his victuals. Afterwards we sat out in the moonlight and talked for a long time.

'Sahib', said the Raja, 'I like my food. I am known as Roti Bahadur (the knight of the trencher, it may be translated) and all the other Rajas laugh at me. But with my new teeth from Kashmir I shall be able to eat beef and mutton, not just rice and curry as I have had to do for these past years.'

Long we talked, whilst the mosquitoes hummed gently; next day I went down to his palace and took photographs. He then showed me over the old fort,



of which only one tower remained. In old days one of the rooms was a small durbar hall, a lofty, well-designed apartment with black carved wooden pillars, still marked where the Kashmiri troops had slashed and chopped during their occupation of Yasin in 1863. There was a good octagonal skylight, and a pleasant view of the valley. Sifat Bahadur had destroyed the rest of the fort to build a palace, but he died before the work was finished.

Since Yasin is such a great grain-growing country the supply authorities in Gilgit buy some 3,000 maunds yearly. The people would gladly sell more, indeed all they have, and trust to luck to last out the winter, but the Government has to protect them from their own improvidence, and the amount purchased is strictly limited.

The Governor received 1,100 maunds of grain a year. It sounds a great deal, but actually is very little. The custom of the country is to feed your retainers, and there were 150 of these satellites, including the Raja's sons, his wazir (minister) and a horde of hangers-on. This custom is very irksome and should now be modified, especially as the Raja has no means of limiting his uninvited guests or of levying a larger contribution. When polo is played visitors are frequent: they drop in from anywhere, arrive at any time of the day or night, and expect to be fed, housed, and bedded. Minor officials are always coming to see their prince and expect to be entertained. It is even harder for the Raja's sons, who themselves live on



their father's bounty, and so have no means of satisfying local custom. If a party of men call on one of the sons, to 'salaam' him, a mere visit of courtesy, tea has to be provided. Free hospitality is always expected from the chief. Feudal ideas are still rife and have to be considered, but it is a great strain. It is true that the words of the hymn, 'nothing in my hand I bring', are not applicable in these hill states. Every visitor is expected to bring something, even though it be only a handful of dried apricots, but the balance when struck is heavily against the Raja. Most of the rulers are mean, niggardly and avaricious, to an extent that amazes even the most well-informed European. They grudge their nearest kin the smallest advantage. Most of these gentry are only too well able to take care of themselves, but my friend of Yasin was open-handed and unbusinesslike. His ailing son had married a daughter of the Mir of Hunza, and there were still some of her Hunza attendants with her. These men complained bitterly of the mismanagement of the Yasin household, and how they could hardly get enough to eat. I was not surprised, as the genial old ruler never could be economical.

Despite their fine land and ample crops, or perhaps because of them, the Yasinis are rather indolent, though they must rank with, though after, the folk of Hunza and of Punyal as a race of men amongst a rabble of hill-apes. They like their food and, given the chance, will eat six or seven times a day; they are passionately fond of tea, taken with



salt and milk. Like most of the local tribes, they eat meat chiefly in the winter, slaughtering and drying it, and then gradually working through it. Despite its productiveness the country is not well situated, as it lies off the main stream of traffic and has no trade at all. Indeed, business is carried on by barter, to the great loss of the agriculturist.

At Yasin I found an old friend, one Sher Ghazi, a Chitrali shopkeeper, whom I had often met in Turkestan and who had entertained me splendidly. Here, too, he proved most hospitable, and lived in Turki style. He poured out his woes to me, and the gist of it all was shortage of cash. He had to pay for his tea and cloth in rupees, but his customers paid him in corn, of which he already had a thousand maunds in store ; he could not well pay the merchants in Gilgit with five hundred pony loads of grain ! The people, he said, had ample food but no means to procure small luxuries such as tea, salt and spices. So much is now said about the beautiful simplicity of barter that it was interesting to see how it did not work in practice.

I said good-bye with real regret to Raja Abdur Rahman Khan, never thinking that we should meet no more. The old Governor went to Srinagar and much enjoyed himself. The Kashmir authorities made him a state guest which gratified him very much, and he was returning with a light heart and a mouthful of new teeth, when, on the Burzil, he contracted diarrhœa which developed into dysentery. He ignored his



illness, feasted with his friends at Gilgit and drank bottles of new strong wine with the Raja of Punyal, never letting the Agency surgeon know that anything was wrong. During his absence his son had died of typhoid, killed by foolish indulgence, but the news was kept back from his father, as no one wanted to spoil the old man's holiday. However, a Kashmiri pundit, with a talent for malicious malapropos, met the Raja near Gakuch, and pertly condoled with him on his loss. The shock was too great for the old man, weakened by his malady, and he died at Gupis on 26 September 1933.<sup>1</sup>

Peace be to him ! He was a genial, easy-going prince of the old type, dying out even in the remote regions of the Karakoram and Hindu Kush.

<sup>1</sup> He was succeeded as Governor of Yasin by Mir Bais Khan, Governor of Ishkoman, a man of conspicuous ability, and not a Khushwaqt.

## CHAPTER VI

## THE UPPER VALLEYS OF YASIN

THE Governor of Yasin, like most of the upper classes, was well supplied with wives and sons, even though all were not lawful, so that when we left the capital to return to Darkot by way of the Thui valley, he sent another son with me. This specimen of the royal house was Mohamed Nadir Khan, an agreeable youth who hated walking since he always rode : tramping along a hill-path where riding was impossible consequently distressed him. He wore a golden-brown velvet coat, an elaborately worked pair of homemade stockings, and baggy trousers of white linen with embroidered ends, decorated with little blue spots. He was a gay and encouraging figure which I could identify anywhere, was pleasing to look at, and had the elements of good manners.

It was an advantage of travel in Yasin that the language was usually the same as in Hunza. The Raja himself always spoke Chitrali, his native tongue, which was the language both of Yasin town and of the neighbouring village of Sandhi.

Leaving Yasin and crossing the Desert of the Peacock, we turned next into the Thui valley which



is one of the recognised routes to Chitral. For the first stage we were able to use two mares, each with a skittish foal, round the necks of which were amulets to protect them from harm, for the young are ever exposed to accidents. We made poor progress and soon lost our tempers, as the Yasinis had as much idea of tying on a load as of tying a salmon-fly and, as usual, my Hunza men had to do the job. No easy task, as the ropes were old and rotten and a good wrench broke them. My stalwarts were well used to doing other people's work, but they did object when the others refused to learn how it should be done. At last, after much cursing and abuse, we reached Harf, one of a string of small villages in the Thui valley, and camped in a delightful orchard. Barley was being cut but the weather was dull and ominous, with a little rain. The villagers cheered us by saying that rain might always be expected when the barley was first cut. They grumbled about the poor yield of their fields, due to lack of manure; we explained that we could not make up the deficiency. It was a great pity, we said, that the women did not work in the fields as in Hunza and Punyal. The only outdoor work the women will do is growing vegetables, and not many of these, as we found to our cost when we went to get some.

Four miles above Harf we turned in a northerly direction, left the Thui valley, and entered the Daspur or uninhabited valley. We toiled up a steep spur, then up a broad glen choked and ruined by moraines



but with abundant water, brushwood, and even trees, with a few patches of arable land that had escaped the destructive stones and were cultivated in alternate years. Here, too, for the first time we saw those odd brushwood shelters, conical and comical, the summer-houses of the upland shepherd or casual cultivator. We passed many old and deserted fields, destroyed by avalanches, and we understood why the valley had been called the Uninhabitable One. So rough was the track that even Aziza the cook had to walk, an undignified experience for an old gentleman of his skill and importance. At the head of the main valley, where it divided up into small nullahs, we camped below a great glacier that had thrust itself across the floor of the valley and had curled up its opposite side like the tongue of some ice giant. There were huts too and we were most grateful, for they proved a boon during a heavy thunderstorm. True, they were full of dung and fleas, old bones and live ticks, but any shelter was welcome to our coolies.

Next day we started to cross the Ghamubar Pass, a fine resounding indigenous name which unfortunately means nothing more than Glacier Valley Pass, a foolish name in a country choked with glaciers. The main valley had turned west, ending in a splendid cirque of ice and snow, whilst we turned east, skirting the edge of the glacier for five hours, till we reached the summit of the pass. Daulat encouraged Aziza, who was toiling drearily up a shale slope, as steep as a gallows, by assuring him that he was going along



like a young ibex—a remark received in dour silence, for Aziza was no humourist and disliked Daulat.

On our right as we proceeded was a glorious glacier, and from the top of the pass we looked back on a superb panorama. Below, at our feet, lay Darkot with its fields and broad jungles by the river. We went down a shale slope with great speed, congratulating ourselves that we had not to climb it, as the gradient was severe. Our onward rush was checked to gather wild rhubarb which, young, tender and refreshing, was growing in great quantities by the way. Then we fumbled along, over soft snow and rough moraine, till, quite tired out, we camped for the night by some willows, with the nose of the great Darkot glacier a few yards off across the stream. A grassy flower-strewn slope was in front of me, whilst my tent was in a mass of wild spiræa. Everywhere, too, were wild roses of a brilliant pink that I have never seen equalled. We did not go on, as it was too far for tired coolies, and next day, the 23rd July 1933, we reached Darkot. There was no path, so many false casts were made. A good deal of the way was on the narrow top, often only six inches wide, of the moraine bank by a glacier, and we became thoroughly sick of mincing along this wall for two miles. We had grand views of the triple Darkot glaciers which afford as fine a spectacle as anything I know. They pour down the mountain side in a foam of froth and ice, with needle-like peaks soaring above, and hanging glaciers glittering. Beneath, at their snouts, lay the fields, trees and streams



of Darkot ; it was this contrast of the frozen heights and smiling crops, side by side, that made the scene so strange and lovely.

After a couple of days at Darkot we left for Ishkoman, the next-door state, climbing steeply up a hill above the Nia Bar, which irrigated the settlement. We had good views, and the patchwork of cultivation glistened below us. The people, however, complained loudly of the Qalang, a small dry insignificant ravine which, after heavy rain, comes down in spate and destroys the fields. They pointed angrily to a large area of good land swept by the flood and covered with stones.

We found at the top of our climb that there were fields and houses ; a pleasant grubby old man welcomed us with tea, so we went into the village, and I picked my way about the offal. In summer, the Yasinis live on the flat rooftops where they build shelters of branches and beams and camp agreeably, using the inside of the houses for cooking only. I did not know whether the fleas also camped out so I sat gingerly on the edge of a charpoy (native bed) and hoped the vermin were indoors. There were many children dressed either in the scantiest of rags or in nothing at all ; but the weather was so glorious, with the sun shining in a clear sky, that there was no reason why they should wear anything.

I took some photographs, to the delight of the people. I never understand the pleasure that some of the wildest savages derive from being photographed.



It is the greatest joy that can be given, and is worth much bakshish. The promise too of a photograph fills the cup of happiness to overflowing, though I fear that it is one seldom redeemed. But this is an imperfect world, even for simple aborigines.

We saw much good grazing, as we wandered on, but there is a lack of winter pasture in Yasin, and consequently a shortage of ghi (butter). This was a standing grievance of the Raja of Yasin against his brother the Governor of Kuh and Ghizr. The latter had more ghi than he could use, but refused to let his brother have any. The Governor of Yasin wanted a whole valley to be handed over to him, for the sake of the ghi, but his brother would not listen to the proposal. He was not going to supply the butter for his brother's bread. The quarrels of the two old men over their pats of butter had become a regular joke in the countryside, and a reference to the Governor's ghi was sure to provoke a smile; there certainly was something ludicrous about the quarrel. I could not help feeling, however, that the lack of ghi in Yasin was largely due to the unenterprising inhabitants. We had seen a great deal of the hill country and were surprised at the ample grazing as well as the abundant fuel, two products so rare in most parts of the Karakoram and the absence of which the Yasinis eternally grumbled about. When traversing the rich upland in July we had seen few cattle grazing just when the hillsides should have held numerous herds, for the summer grass was at



its best. The season is a short one, but the grass was wanted; and even allowing, as I have said, for a shortage of winter grazing, it seemed clear that the Yasinis were too indolent to develop the resources of their country. Daulat and Hasil, both of Hunza, cast covetous, angry eyes on these wasted prairies.

On reaching the heart of the valley, we saw abundant gentians but none of the large blue ones, which I have failed to find anywhere in the Karakoram. We had a delightful camp below the pass, on grassy turf with a burn close by and good fuel. Alas, the large green-eyed horse-fly swarmed everywhere, avid of blood and abominably persevering, but the moment the sun declined and the air became a little cold, they all vanished. Happily the small grey horse-fly, whose sole object in life is to bite the end of the human nose, was absent—mercifully, as we were fully occupied with the other species.

A few hours brought us to the top of the Atro or Atar Pass, on the watershed between Ishkoman and Yasin: it is an easy pass, particularly so on the Yasin side. On the way up, yellow and red stonecrop was abundant, as well as yellow ranunculus and prodigious quantities of the inevitable and inedible wild onion.

We liked our Yasin coolies. They were a willing crowd, and even managed to tie the loads on to the ponies, so we hoped against hope that the people of Ishkoman would not meet us on the border. But when we were near the crest of the pass we saw a number



of men awaiting us, though how they had discovered our movements I had no idea. Custom, and a very strict one, had as usual triumphed. So we dismissed our followers from Darkot and handed ourselves over to the people of Ishkoman.

## CHAPTER VII

## ISHKOMAN AND ITS GLACIERS

WE had entered Yasin by the back door, and we came to Ishkoman in like manner, for the usual approach is from Gilgit, by Singal, a good, well-kept mule road, very hot in summer.

The Ishkoman coolies took us over on the top of the Atar Pass. And as we caught sight of them we realised that we were not gainers by the change. They carried loads without reference to size or weight, and chattered discordantly as they went on their way. Daulat was not far wrong when he observed, after watching the new coolies, 'Any Wakhi woman of Hunza is worth three of these useless men.'

We went down a very steep gradient, but not swiftly, for the coolies stopped constantly, sat down every few hundred yards and made the air resound with their shrill squabbles. However, we did get along and, just as I was gingerly descending a particularly awkward slope, up jumped a son of the Raja of Ishkoman, accompanied by three men with tambourines and another with a basket of apricots. This was true politeness, but I felt wholly unworthy. Here was the Raja's son, Mir Ahmed Khan, an active young man, well turned out. There were we, dirty, un-



shaven and unkempt. Workmanlike, I daresay, but not elegant or picturesque, decidedly not that! We shook hands, talked, and resumed the difficult scramble. I tried to climb down with ease and insouciance that I might be worthy of the three musicians who walked in front with agility, banging on their tambourines and singing songs in the Shina language.

It was, of course, ridiculous and incongruous to go in procession amongst the glaciers and uplands of the Hindu Kush, but luckily a ford caused a change of formation, and the road became so abominable that there was an end of all minstrelsy till we reached camp. I had taken this unknown track as I wished to see the Atar or Atro Sar, a lake about two miles long, which I did not recognise when I first caught sight of it, for it was sage-green in colour and a very singular spectacle. The lake, formed by two moraines which had joined in the valley bed, was fed by glacier streams so dirty and dingy that the water might well have been even more opaque than it was. There was over half-a-mile of dry lake bed at the upper end, but whether this was due to a permanent fall in level or merely to a smaller water supply after the winter snows had melted it was impossible to say, though local tradition gave the former reason as the cause. Our camp lay at the lower or eastern end, and we walked along the south side of the lake, making very poor progress. Indeed, we could hardly do a mile in an hour as the shore and hillside were a mass of tumbled boulders and stony slopes, a hard bit of walking; we reached



the end with thankfulness and camped on a grassy alluvial spit of land, with trees and brushwood. Looking east, I saw, towering in grandeur, the great rock peak of Kanpur,<sup>1</sup> rising straight up from its girdle of glaciers, a very noble sight.

The scenery, indeed, was fine, especially looking over Ishkoman from the summit of the Atar Pass, where the distant peaks of Hunza came into view. Close by, on our immediate right, was a great cirque of snow. Curiously enough, the view behind over Darkot was most disappointing and the great massif with its glaciers and corries had dwindled into an insignificant and even commonplace heap. We were too high, or the direction was wrong, for, viewed from above Darkot, this group had presented itself as a superb piece of mountain landscape.

Having climbed a high pass and walked from dawn to dusk we were disinclined for revelry but, with fuel in abundance and a hospitable host, we had to dismiss our languor and prepare for amusement. So the Ishkomanis came and danced with a vigour and skill which I wished had been devoted to carrying our kit. As I looked at the audience standing round the fire and sprung from heaven knew where, I thought it was long since I had seen such undersized, poorly developed, ill-nourished creatures. With their small stature and long flapping sleeves they skipped and pranced in the fire-light, looking exactly what Daulat

<sup>1</sup> The name is probably Kampir or Kampiok, meaning 'old woman'.



called them, newly hatched chickens. The more I saw of the inhabitants of Ishkoman, the more was I struck by their degeneracy ; they were poor in physique and lacking in brains ; a strange type of mountaineer !

When I asked about the three tambourine players who banged and thumped so assiduously, I was told there were no musicians in the whole state. No one knew or troubled to learn how to play the surnai (pipe), the kettledrum or fiddle, or any instrument either string or wind. These absurd pygmies in front of me, whacking their doleful tambourines, represented the sole musical talent of Ishkoman. Nothing better could be produced locally and, if it were required, players were summoned from Hunza. The longer I stayed in Ishkoman the more I realised how meagre were the abilities of the people.

A drum had burst in the night, so the next day there were only two musicians to play us out, banging and screeching with unimpaired vigour. We went down and down, a rapid fall, passing numerous summer grazing grounds, and being met with shafial. *Shafi* is the vernacular for bread, and it was the custom for the women to hold a large cloth across the road and so close it. We handed over some money and the headman came out with a large wooden platter of bread and butter. We all took a morsel and went on.

To my surprise and delight, as we went further down, I saw real pines growing in abundance, and the whole of the Maithantar (Distant Pasture) valley was clothed with them. Birch and especially poplar were



numerous; the latter were shedding their seeds of cotton-down which lay in soft heaps on the ground. In Turkestan the careful women collect the down and stuff pillows with it. In Ishkoman there were no pillows to stuff.

The path was deplorable, and though wood was so abundant the bridges were usually a bough flung haphazard over a stream and as thick (and useful) as a barber's pole. We ambled along the higgledy-piggledy track, as confused a path as the minds of those who used it. There was no effort either to align or repair it, and these signs of slovenliness on all sides began to depress me.

I was told that there were neither carpenters nor masons in the country, so that all building or working in wood was out of the question. There was gold in the Ishkoman river, but neither man, woman nor child knew how to wash for it. No one in the country could weave decent frieze which was obtainable in the neighbouring valley. It seemed, indeed, that no one could do anything. Seventy per cent. of the people were diseased; it was all depressing.

The people were Maulais, and thanks to certain innovations of the Bombay hierarchs of the sect, their religious obligations had been reduced to a bare minimum, so that their religion entailed fewer duties than any other creed on earth. Religious stimulus as well as religious control were thus both absent. Liquor too is allowed and even encouraged. To put it mildly the people, one and all, are toppers, brewing a potent



and malodorous spirit from mulberries. This poison is widely drunk. A man with a copper pot, such as is usually kept for brewing tea, began to boil some water over our fire, but the vessel had held mulberry spirit, and the stink it gave off was vile, so we bade him be off with his infernal machine.

There seemed abundant land in the country, for when we passed the summer settlement of Handis, with ample fields and water on both sides of the stream, we found that the people only cultivated one side each year. The possibility of bad harvests or bad seasons never worried their lazy minds, for their mistaken economy was but due to sloth.

We were traversing the valley of Ishkoman proper, the first, and for long the only, settlement in the country, the inhabitants of which could alone boast of being true Ishkomanis. Elsewhere there were Wakhis at Imit and also folk from Chitral, Yasin and Gupis lower down, even a few Pathans and some rubbishy Seyyids, but the original settlers were confined to the Ishkoman river valley, in itself only a tributary of the main stream.

Why these people should have degenerated it is hard to say. Their ruler said that they were so isolated and neglected that they had been left to themselves, with deplorable results, hidden away in a remote valley with no stimulus and no encouragement to better themselves. Ishkoman itself was a small settlement with a fair amount of cultivation around it, but it had no claim to distinction. The fort was in ruins,



no famous warrior nor holy pir had ever lived in the place, it had been the scene of no fighting, and its chief claim to interest was the narrow gorge, four yards wide, through which the river flowed, truly a great natural achievement to force a glacier stream through so straight a channel.

Our destination was Imit, the present capital of the country, on the left bank of the Karambar river which rises in the Afghan frontier, and runs into the Ishkoman river. It was now reported unfordable, so we proposed to proceed down the right bank for twelve miles, cross by the bridge, and return up the left bank, a detour of twenty-five miles and with only a rope bridge after all our toil. How Aziza the cook would ever cross I dared not think, and I put that problem resolutely aside; but fate proved kind and we had not to solve it.

As we left Ishkoman town for the bridge head, and went round the barren hillside (all the hillsides were barren hereabouts, but I never grew used to the aridity) we saw opposite to us a rider moving quickly along the narrow track. This proved to be the Raja Mir Bais Khan, Governor of the state, a man of great energy, or he would not have forded a river in full flood. The dilemma, however, was complete, but we solved it by camping at the next village, Dalte, which was mercifully close by and where, under the finest apricot trees I have seen, we sat and awaited the Raja, consoling ourselves with large baskets of apricots that were sent for our encouragement and sustenance. He



came at last, and we had tea under the trees in a flood of apologies and regrets.

At Dalte apricots were abundant, and Daulat rushed in, bidding me come and see the men of Ishkoman eat them. I saw a large circle of men working their way through a vast pile of apricots, heaped on to a blanket, and, when the fruit was finished, they started on the kernels which are much esteemed. Far into the night the gentle cracking of the breaking fruit-stones could be heard. When the apricot season is in full swing, every convenient stone along the roadside has a heap of the broken shells. It is an agreeable feature of the apricot that excess in eating seems to cause no ill-effects. The natives say that the fruit is easily digested but that the kernels should be eaten after the fruit. Considering that for weeks the sole diet of the people consists of apricots it is perhaps as well that they are so wholesome.

Next day we had to retrace our steps to Ishkoman town where we crossed the narrow gorge, descended the left side of the valley and in a few short miles we reached the Karambar river, which we were expected to ford. There was an immense stretch of grey stone at the junction of the two streams, a great plain of desolate useless rubble, over which the river flowed at will. At the time we arrived it was flowing in five channels, but sometimes it would capriciously flow in one, when all idea of fording had to be abandoned. The Raja said that the difficulty of crossing was not so much the current or depth of the stream as the



abundant small stones which moved with the current and made one's foothold precarious. However, a camel had been provided for the bedding, and yaks for the rest of the kit. The camel ambled placidly through the water but not so the yaks, which grunted and groaned and made a prodigious fuss. They always do, but they are wonderful beasts for certain types of work, and never lose their foothold. The hillside may give way under them but they never slip; their one fear is heat. As long as it is cold enough yaks can do anything; the freezing glacier water of the Karambar suited them admirably. They crossed five swirling streams, the water dashing over their backs, on which we clung like organ-grinders' monkeys. We arrived without a thrill at the other side. Yaks may be ungainly, ill-tempered and obstinate, but they are in a class apart. From the left bank of the river it was a short march to Imit, now the capital, where the Governor had built a good rest-house for visitors and a house for himself.

When he first arrived in Ishkoman, on the death of the old Wakhi chief, Ali Mardan Shah, there were a few shabby huts: the old man had been a true nomad and had never looked on Imit as his resting-place, but always hoped to return to Wakhan. His belief was more optimistic than intelligent as the Afghans never give back what they have taken. Ali Mardan had escaped with his life after one promise had been broken by the Afghans, and he would have been foolish to trust them again. Yet he never had



been able to reconcile himself to ending his days in Ishkoman but lived in squalor, without even a stable, his followers surrounding him in their own styes. After his death, half of them returned to their native Wakhan, longing for their free, careless, haphazard nomadic life—and small blame to them—but they found conditions so changed that they hastened back to Imit.

The present Governor has induced them to build houses, plant trees, rotate their crops and improve their condition generally. The Wakhis are no fools; they are conspicuously the best race in Ishkoman and, when once they realise that their pastoral life is definitely ended, they settle down contentedly. The Wakhis plant quantities of tobacco which they sell to the silly Ishkomanis who firmly believe that they will die if they plant it. Thanks to the Raja, however, this idea is disappearing and a few patches have been planted, but their owners are nervous, unhappy and decidedly apprehensive.

Imit is famous for its hot springs which are slightly sulphurous but not, to my mind, quite hot enough, though pleasant to sit in under a blazing July sun. We all bathed, even Aziza the cook, a notable opponent of modern bathing habits.

Imit had two other claims to distinction, the flies and the dogs. All night long a mob of lanky, crop-eared brutes roamed round the rest-house and howled continuously. All day long droves of flies swept gustily through the rooms. The Raja dealt with the dogs, but he was helpless against the flies.



From Imit there is a little used route which leads up the Karambar valley to Chitral and Afghanistan, but in summer the water is too high and the way is closed. However, there is a glacier, of the same name as the river, which comes down into the valley, so we went as far as it, and gained a good view of the upper regions of the country. They were, however, as desolate and lifeless as any of the neighbouring valleys. We saw some choughs, but no animals. We passed several Wakhi villages, and it was evident that these former nomads were settling down and already becoming an asset to the country.

We reached the Karambar glacier, crossed it and found, to our surprise and delight, a fine grazing ground, with cultivation, abundant willows, pencil cedars and grass, all high up on the right side of the valley. From it we looked down on the great glacier filling the entire valley bed and, with fine views all round us, it was in every way an ideal summer camp. At the head of the valley rose a black pyramid of rock, 23,000 feet high, the centre of a group of snow peaks, whilst the séracs and crevasses of the great glacier fell in glistening tiers. In the evening the sun fell on the vast ribbon of ice, which glowed rosily, the snow slopes catching and reflecting the radiance. It was a sublime spectacle.

We went to the head of the glacier and found it is a stiff march. Curiously enough, it was the vegetation that most impeded us. Both sides of the valley were clothed with dense dwarf willow, growing on



a perpendicular slope, and we had to scramble through this for some distance, making very poor progress. We swung ourselves along by catching hold of the roots and boughs, but we were men, not apes, and consequently amateurs. Our efforts were well rewarded by the magnificent scenery at the valley's head.

We had with us another son of the Raja, a pleasant youth who had been educated at the missionary school at Srinagar, and was in consequence much bored by life in his own land; like all Asiatics he thought education was a means to a job and not an end in itself. As Daulat and I never ate or drank during an expedition he could not understand us at all for, like all his race, he drank from every stream and whenever the chance offered. I used to make this lad come to tea with us every day and we had long talks, although I had to provide the openings. He was a nice fellow, rather soft but (like his brother Mir Ahmed) a magnificent rider and polo player. He was always lamenting his miserable lot, his poverty, his lack of prospects and the general insipidity of life. He felt it hard that, after all his education, he was no more than a village schoolmaster on twenty rupees a month. I suggested several ways of relieving the tedium profitably, but the poor lad had the faults of his class. He was a gushpur, a member of the ruling caste, and so exempt from all exertion; generations of this outlook on the world had bred an indolence which he could not overcome.

What is a European to say to a young man, intelligent, healthy, and well-educated, who has not the



remotest notion of what to do with his time, and to whom even reading is irksome? Poor Mahomed Ayub Khan was typical of all these gushpurs, whose education had been a waste of money, and who had all become bored loafers. He used to say to me: 'You sahibs are always busy! Why, my headmaster's wife would work in the garden if she had a moment to spare!' I used in desperation to suggest that he should climb a few mountains but there was always some excuse. I do not blame him in any way. He was one of many victims of a system to which I refer elsewhere, and I fear that this torpor of character eludes remedy.

After visiting some more glaciers at Bhort and Bad Swat we returned to Imit, and found a lion there which had escaped our notice. It was the shrine of Tibet Baba, famous for its miraculous millstone. The people of the Ishkoman valley had greatly coveted this stone, had stolen it three times and taken it to their village. Thrice had the stone returned mysteriously, without human agency, and was now imbedded in a small platform of mud, four feet square and two feet high, in a small building adorned with flags inside and out. We reverently and critically inspected the sacred ashlar which shows no external signs of sanctity or antiquity. A small mosque adjoined, with the tomb of Tibet Baba, of whom no one knew anything or cared at all. The regular custodian of the shrine was away collecting alms; an old devotee from Kashmir was in charge, but he apparently found it a dull profitless occupation, for he was off to spend a month in



Bunji. He had chosen the hottest time of the year to visit the most unpleasant place in the district, but he was doubtless anxious to expiate his sins, for it would be a fine way of doing penance.

It was now time to leave Ishkoman and its kind Governor and, as I had run short of everything, I determined to go to Gilgit, the local metropolis, and replenish my supplies. I had no stores and no money ; my photographic plates were finished, and I had worn out three pairs of the best English boots in under three months. The men, too, had worn out their foot-gear. It is, indeed, difficult to realise the incredible roughness of the tracks. They are nothing but stones, which cut leather like a knife and pull out nails like pincers.

We stayed a night at Imit where Daulat urged his old enemy Aziza to take another bath in the hot sulphur springs. 'Ah', he said to the cook, 'your face is all shining from the last bath ; a second one will do you good.' Aziza giggled and blushed, looking at once sheepish and annoyed. 'A second bath', I chimed in, 'will make you ready to take a second wife when you reach home,' a remark which made him more sheepish and more annoyed than ever.

Finally he went to the spring but refused to enter the water, sitting prudishly on the edge and bathing himself skimpily.

Our route was down the valley for one stage, up the Pakora valley and over the Pakora Pass, then by Naltar and Nomal to Gilgit. It was rather a round-about



route, especially in view of our wretched boots, but it was at any rate cool and beautiful.

Our first march from Imit brought us a mile or so from Chatorkand, the largest place in the state. Here there was a school, under my companion the Raja's son, a rest-house and a dispensary, and the Raja was building himself a house. Chatorkand has ever been famous for its pir and its bugs. The latter require no elaboration—they are at once ubiquitous and omnivorous, and have defied all efforts at extirpation.

The present pir is a young man, one Jamal Ali Shah, son of a really famous father Seyyid Jalal Ali Shah. He has a large following outside the state, especially in Punyal, and the mantle of that esteemed religious leader, his father, has descended on him. Maulais venerate their pirs, whose social status is high, and whose property is frequently commensurate therewith. Indeed, the present Mir of Hunza married the sister of the young pir. The young saint came to see me; he proved a pleasant, attractive youth, but a very taciturn visitor. His belief was clearly that silence is golden, for he has become famous for never speaking. During his visit to me he never once opened his mouth, not even to say a word of welcome or of farewell, but sat, mumchance though ornamented, on a string bed. He brought me some fruit and I gave him a bottle of scent, four handkerchiefs of divers colours (guaranteed fast dyes) and a cigarette case. He had with him an elderly but raffish uncle who was prepared to atone for his nephew's silence.



The local nobility used to grow rather irritated by the young pir's refusal to speak. Not that they wanted to hear his voice but they did wish to make him talk ; he baffled them continually.

I had been giving away presents constantly, yet I was certain no one was satisfied. I had, however, become quite hardened. When, in my foolish Western way, I asked if such and such a Raja or wazir was contented or pleased with his gifts, my prosaic Hunza men would tell me sarcastically that if I gave all I possessed the Rajas and gushpurs would not be satisfied. It was only too true. From the mirs to the most impoverished gushpur no one was ever content. It was beyond the wit of man to fill the maws or sate the greed of these mean, grasping mountain savages. Every race has its defects, but it was disconcerting to witness the greed and avarice of notables who, in other respects, were agreeable companions and able rulers. It is a serious and even a dangerous defect of character, for their avarice leads them often to grind and oppress their people who have, unfortunately, no remedy. All visitors to these distant lands of the North-West have the same complaint to make, and the various missions and expeditions always report their failure to satisfy local greed.

I had now to leave the main valley and start up the Pakora side, so I said good-bye to Mir Bais Khan who had throughout been courteous, hospitable and helpful. I thought him a man of outstanding ability, and his long intercourse with British officers had given



him a breadth of view which none of his colleagues shared. He was very active in habit, and keen on introducing anything likely to benefit the country. He had planted trees, built kuls, made paths and vastly improved his domains. He was now about to live at Chatorkand for half the year, and the place would benefit. Although the soil was abundant, the quality was bad as it tended to cake, and the manure supply was inadequate. The Raja, I knew, would make the agriculturists take more trouble, to the advantage of all. He might even manage to banish the bugs. He had already succeeded in making the population of seyyids, who are always a useless and subversive element in society, do manual labour and carry loads, a feat he was pardonably proud of, although he whispered to me that their claims to be descendants of the Prophet were largely bogus and quite unsubstantiated.

It was regrettable that Mir Bais Khan had so limited a scope for his talents, for the population of Ishkoman was small and unpromising, with aborigines no better than cretins and a mixed jumble of undesirable emigrants in the recently settled districts, poor material for a progressive ruler.

We left for the Pakora Pass with fairly well-built men to carry our loads, for we had insisted on having the best of a bad lot. Yet they complained bitterly at carrying luggage which the men of Yasin had carried blithely over the Daspur Pass. So loudly did they lament, that we began regretting that we had not gone by the hot high road to Gilgit, as these chicken-



hearted louts promised to give trouble. 'We are weak men', cried a stalwart peasant, 'and cannot do the work.' A salvo of pungent and uncomplimentary language assailed him. Of course a good deal of the shirking was mere bluff and both sides knew it.

The Raja's son was still with us; he rather resented our behaviour to his father's subjects, but I told him that if he did not urge the coolies we should, for someone had to do it as I did not intend to spend the summer in Pakora. He saw the point and afterwards became quite useful in stimulating the whining, protesting, muscular skrimshankers.

Discovering that the people of Ishkoman possessed a large number of yaks, we asked why they did not use them for carrying loads. It turned out that their yaks are never used at all for any purpose. Their owners neither ride nor load them; they do not even collect their valuable hair, still less do they milk them. The loss through this criminal laziness must be enormous. These yaks are left in the upland pastures in a semi-wild state, and their owners only visit them either to kill one for meat or to brand a newly-born calf. In Ghizr, Punyal and Yasin the same custom prevails, and the only people who really use their yaks are the Wakhis, who put them to the many purposes for which they were created.

I am afraid that the people of Ishkoman represent as low a type of humanity as any in the North-West of India, and diseased as they are, will improve with difficulty. I did not envy the task of their Governor.



## CHAPTER VIII

## THE ROAD TO HUNZA AND NAGIR

THE Hunza river flows into the Gilgit river some four miles below the town of that name, and the whole of the Hunza valley, except for the last eighteen miles of its course, belongs to the two States of Hunza and Nagir. Since the main route from North-West India to Chinese Turkestan leads through the Hunza valley, these two states have recently become fairly well known.

The first two stages from Gilgit are unimpressive : after crossing the suspension bridge over the Gilgit river, the road traverses an arid hillside, turns away from the river, and goes up the right side of the Hunza valley. At Silbish the track approaches the muddy but blessedly cold water of the Hunza river, but the first cultivation is not reached until Nomal, eight miles further on. This is an unsatisfactory place, but is famous for its grapes, which are small, sour, full of large stones, and undeserving of praise.

From Nomal the road crosses the Naltar stream which is the unprepossessing means of access to the lovely valley behind, and at Gwech, a small village seven miles from Nomal, Kashmir territory is left, and that of the Mir of Nagir is entered.



The road is a good mule track, well-bridged and graded, but in former times it was a very different matter. The Hunza gorges were famous, the Hunza parris, or cliffs, were dreaded, and the reputations of Hunza and Nagir owed not a little to their remoteness and to the very real dangers of the road.

Just beyond Gwech is the famous Chaicher parri, the key position to the valley in former days, as the cliff dropped sheer to the river. Before any traveller could pass, a man had to be sent down the cliff with ropes which he fastened to large wooden pegs driven into the rock. Clinging on to these the traveller passed along and, when he had gone, the ropes were removed and the path closed. The alternative was to cross over the Hunza river by a rope bridge which was destroyed when necessary.

Beyond these cliffs, which have been struck by lightning in recent years and have become far less formidable, is the Bong Tsilai, a narrow couloir and a recognised landmark. Snow never lies above this gully, but avalanches down, destroying the track and often blocking the valley. A *bong* is the mouth or neck of a goat skin in which curd is made. When it is opened the curd rushes out white and glistening. As *tsil* means water, the analogy is that snow in winter and storm water in summer both come down white and gushing like curd out of a *bong*.

The first settlement in Nagir is Chalt, with a ruined fort, an abandoned store, a small hospital, and a history of departed glory. Cultivation is abundant: the place



is the estate of Raja Khisrau Khan, eldest son of the late Mir of Nagir and a well-known character. Indeed what he does not know about horses is certainly not worth knowing ; it is his delight to buy up unpromising beasts and turn them into valuable animals, and if any man can make anything of a useless horse it is the old Raja. He has had a life of many vicissitudes. He has been imprisoned and exiled, he has lost the throne of his country through no fault of his own, he has escaped murder and sudden death in a miraculous fashion, and is a fine survival of the old order, now passing away. He is a keen shikari, a fine climber, and, of course, a good horseman ; he is also a mine of information on all that has happened during the past fifteen years. Naturally enough, since, having been in the front seats throughout, he has seen everything and known everyone intimately.

At Chalt there is a telephone, and one of the curses of both Hunza and Nagir is the use of this reactionary instrument. In civilised places it can be an unmitigated nuisance, but it has its good points ; amongst savages, who have only taken to pyjamas in the last fifteen years, it can be a menace !

Above Chalt is the Chaprot valley where for years there used to be a Kashmir garrison, and which has always been, and still is, a bone of contention to Hunza, Nagir, and everyone else. All claim it, and the rights of all are equally nebulous. In former days the place undoubtedly belonged to the Ras of Gilgit, but it was alienated as a fief, or jagir, and the title to it was that



of the strong arm. For sixty years the men of Hunza, the most careful and painstaking husbandmen in Asia, held Chaprot, and when I travelled through the valley my men said bitterly that all the gardens and orchards, the neat fields and elaborate cultivation were the labour of their countrymen. It will be remembered that when the Gilgit mission (under Sir William Lockhart) visited Hunza, Ghazan Khan, the Mir, held out for Chaprot. 'Give me Chaprot', said the Mir, 'and you can go anywhere.' It is a great pity that it was not given back to Hunza which is now cut off from Gilgit by Nagir territory. With Chaprot in the hands of Hunza the two states would be separated by the river, and although, thanks to the presence of British officers in Gilgit, they have to keep the peace, it may not always be so. The two states hate each other, and the Hunza men know that if they were allowed they could seize Chaprot at any moment and keep it. 'Chaprot', they say, 'why it is as easy to take Chaprot from the Nagiris as it is eggs from a sitting hen.' So Chaprot remains in alien hands, but it is a replica of Hunza, for nothing can destroy the labour of the men of Hunza to whom the neat cultivation is a lasting monument. The Chaprot valley is lovely, more beautiful than any other valley in the whole of the Gilgit Agency, and it is far more accessible than many better known.

The road above Chalt crosses to the left side of the Hunza river by a fine suspension bridge, and we saw, a long way off, some coolies carrying loads. 'Hunza



men', said Daulat laconically. 'Now, how can you possibly tell?' I not unnaturally asked, as all hill-men look alike from a distance, and they were still far off. 'Oh', replied Daulat, 'by the way they walk. You never see those swine of Nagiris walking briskly and steeping out.' He was quite right, they were Hunza men taking fruit down to Gilgit. There is always a stream of men carrying produce from their country to sell in the bazaars of the town, especially peaches and apples which are little grown lower down. Peaches which are twenty a penny in Hunza are sold for sixteen a penny in Gilgit, a price that is regarded in Hunza as very high, and this is good profit.

We now entered the territory of Nagir, a wonderfully fertile strip of country along the river. There is no scarcity of land in this state as in Hunza.

Nagir is a beautiful country. There are forests of pine whilst in Hunza there is not one tree, and there men pay a rupee for each span's length, say eight inches, of a poplar tree if they wish to build a house ; and poplar is a wood that never seasons, only dries and cracks. But it is the only wood available, and so they groan at the thought of the abundant timber in Nagir.

Dumani or Rakaposhi (25,550 feet) rises perpendicularly from the fields of Nagir, but it is so close that the view is fore-shortened, and it is only from the opposite side of the river that it can be properly seen. From there it is truly a noble sight.

In all these countries a common object by the roadside is a small hut with an opening which resembles





DUMANI OR RAKAPOSHI FROM HINDI







a square window or low door, on a level with the road, below which is a pit filled with water from a neighbouring kul, or sometimes the stream itself flows below. This is a ghurk, and by it lies a square wooden box, with a long handle which is the ladle or dipper, known as a tanus. The thirsty traveller dips it in, and drinks the cold water. To build a ghurk is a meritorious action, and is often done as a memorial to some dead relative, and many a departed rascal has been thus commemorated. The ghurk can hardly be called hygienic. Every living creature from man to dog drinks from it; and the ladle lies outside, exposed to every infection. But the people of the Gilgit Agency and of Nagir in particular do not worry over such trifles.

Another good work is to build a baldi, a small verandah for rest and shelter by the roadside, or sometimes near a mosque. Men are commemorated in this way; for instance, just above Murtizabad in Hunza, there is a conspicuous and well-known one, called Kasim's baldi. A traveller may rest in these verandahs and if he stays the night he is entitled to food and fuel from the village. The accommodation of a baldi is somewhat scanty, especially so for passing a night. Perhaps piety, humanity and prudent economy are happily blended in their design, to avoid too great a burden for posterity.

Women are—perhaps suitably—commemorated by heaps of stones called 'mans', which are built by the wayside for coolies to rest their burdens on. They



are like small platforms, of a convenient height, so that the load may be supported without being taken off the back. These mans are a great boon in a country where everything is carried by human beings.

The best known place in Nagir is the village of Nilt, where the fort was the scene of a gallant attack in the Hunza-Nagir war of 1891. The people to-day take great pride in pointing out the various places of interest, and never display any rancour, as why indeed should they considering the years of peace that the expedition brought them? Nilt is situated on the left of a fine chasm, through which the torrent roars from the glaciers and snows of Dumani, immediately above. Below is the swirling black Hunza river, the one repellent feature in the scenery, and bestowing no good as it rolls along. Just beyond the Nilt gorge there used to be an apple tree, but when I last passed in 1933 it had gone. In it, throughout the siege, a sniper used to sit and fire at the troops, who fired back, and hit him many times but failed to kill him. His escape impressed the countryside, and the destruction of the tree was regretted. It too, was hit, but like its occupant it survived.

It is impossible for the traveller not to remark the difference between the two states. In Nagir all is abundant. Across the river, which usually flows between high conglomerate cliffs, are the villages of Hunza where water is scarce, and crops and orchards less luxuriant. We often saw the khuraput, or gold washers, working away by the river side. There are



eight of these in every riverine Hunza village, and they are excused all other village duties, no great compensation for spending all their lives washing for gold with primitive appliances. It is dreary work, for the gold is not abundant and is won with much labour.

Walnuts abound in Nagir, also flies. When I complained of the latter, I was told that the nuisance could soon be remedied by strewing walnut leaves. We filled the tents with leaves, but the flies did not mind in the slightest.

Quantities of buckwheat are grown, the last crop of the season. The sweet kind is the commoner, and has a pinkish flower which looks well in a mass, but the smell is overpowering and nauseating, a detestable mixture of lavender water and night soil; when the wind blows over the wide pink fields, the result is asphyxiating. The bitter buckwheat, with a small insignificant flower, is less common. Vegetable marrows were much grown, and their golden blossoms are dried for use as a vegetable. The fruit of Nagir is poor, as the people are lazy and, having an easier soil to work, take less trouble over it. Besides, there is not so much sun as in Hunza, and all produce is inferior in consequence.

After passing Nilt, the road led to Thol with its Buddhist stupa and then to the village of Gulmit, the former capital of the country, with the famous shrine of Seyyid Shah Wali, and the graves of many great men. Here were buried Gauri Thum and Malik Din, murdered by their brother UZR Khan in 1891.



The shrine and mosque were shaded by huge chenars and opposite was a fine orchard in which we camped. My memories of Nagir, through which I have often passed, have always been marred by the flies; there seem to be more there than elsewhere, and that is saying much! My Hunza men liked to see the flies as they regarded them as a clear proof of the dirty habits of the Nagiris, although it cannot be said that there are no flies in Hunza.

We passed by Yal—the word means ‘shade’ because in winter the sun never shines on it—with its glacier in rapid retreat; then Pisan, its cliffs projecting like battlements above the river, two hundred feet below; it is an attractive village on a spur near the stream, but unhealthy. Soon after we reached Minapin, the last village under the Dumani massif.

It is difficult to describe the luscious beauty of a walk through this countryside when summer is ablaze. The people, stupid, dirty, and but indifferent imitations of monkeys, cannot mar the noble prospect. Above are the great peaks and snow cliffs of Dumani, furrowed by torrents and gleaming with glaciers; below lie rich crops and orchards, with the shining leaves of walnut trees, and the abundant gentler green of apricots. Below is the river with the stark hills of Hunza beyond. The whole scene is a combination of grandeur and fertility nowhere equalled in the Himalaya, for nowhere else does a mountain of such great height rise straight and unobscured in one visible plane out of the cultivation at its foot.



Nevertheless the people of Nagir are poor husbandmen, believing rather in the kindness of Providence than in hard work, and their lovely fertile country owes but little to its owners.

At Minapin is a fort ; and opposite, on the Hunza side, is another, now in ruins. Here Daulat Shah always dropped a tear, for his maternal grandfather came to an early and unexpected end nearby. In the old days of ceaseless enmity between Hunza and Nagir, constant sniping relieved the tedium of life when field work was over. Now it chanced that a cow had calved on the Nagir side and, separated from its calf, went lowing after it. Seeing the poor beast wandering disconsolately, unattended and ownerless, Daulat's grandfather swam over—no mean feat—and secured the cow. As he reached the river's edge the Nagiris fired at and killed him. Hyder Beg, his brother, was in the nearby Hunza Fort. 'Ho ! Hyder Beg', shouted the Nagiris, 'we have killed an ibex. Come along and take the meat, for your brother did not catch the cow and we know he likes meat.' So Hyder swam over, seized his brother's body and swam back. Bullets whizzed by him and some were caught in his long hair, but, though wounded, he managed to regain the other side and buried his brother. But he was unavenged. So a few days later, when he saw two Nagiri boys, stout lads, tending their sheep near the river, he waited till they lay down to rest, then swam across, seized and bound them, and swam back with them. It sounds



incredible, but it was so, for Hyder Beg was a fine athletic fellow, like most of his race. He took the boys to the Mir, who gave him a choga, the long woollen coat of the country, and sent them to the Pamirs as slaves, where they were exchanged for two sporting dogs. The Mir believed that he had the best of the bargain. In the village of Hindi we met Hyder Beg's grandson. 'Look at him', said Daulat, 'a mere human bundle and no man, and he the descendant of such a hero !'

Beyond Minapin the road divides; one path leads to Hunza, the other continues high above the river and goes to Nagir town, the capital of the state and, in 1933, our destination. Opposite, spread before us, was Hunza. We noticed that many of the Nagir villages had well carved buildings, and the headman's house at Askardas and the mosque at Shayyar were good examples of ornamental woodwork.

The hillsides now became very friable and subsidences were usual. We passed several orchards and fields destroyed by falls of rock; indeed the path up the side valley to Nagir is always slipping. In some places thousands of tons of rock, masses larger than houses, had fallen on to the fields. There is no remedy. The parri falls and then all is over. It is impossible to repair canals or reconstruct fields, as the damage is complete. The tremendous débris must remain. Consequently there is little settlement until Nagir proper is reached. Nagir, the present capital of the state, is situated in a narrow valley.



Below is the fort, now in ruins, on a hill covered with squalid hovels. There is a shabby lake of green water, and the Nagiris, who never wash, declare that it is unfathomable. Just beyond, the path up to the palace leads through a polo ground, a fine piece of ground shaded by large chenars and hallowed by no less than three mosques. It is a short steep ascent to Dongsir, where the ruler's palace is situated on a spur. On one side an earth cliff falls to the Nagir far below, and on the south side there is a steep but less severe fall to the fort and polo ground. It struck me as a most precarious site on which to build and, sooner or later, there must be slips or subsidences, certainly towards the river. The view to the east, that is towards Baltistan, just misses being a particularly fine one; instead it is merely exasperating. Otherwise, north, south and west, there is no view. Near the cliff was a large imambarah, rather pretentious but a handsome building for this remote land, and a large mosque. The people of Nagir, it should be said, are very devout Shiah. Below, on the fort side, was the Mir's palace, a comfortable attractive building which pleased me, for I had not expected anything so good, and the plenishing equalled its setting. Indeed, the whole group of buildings perched on a high spur in this remote glen was impressive.

Shah Sikandar Khan, Mir (or Thum) of Nagir, is descended from the same family as his neighbour and rival, the Mir of Hunza, but circumstances have kept the branches apart, in more senses than one.



He was (1933) a good-looking man of sixty-eight, fair-skinned and tall, a great shikari and a very pious Mohammedan. Living up a side valley, seeing few visitors, and rather cut off, he lacks the experience and *savoir-faire* of the Mir of Hunza. His interests are local, he is absorbed in the affairs of his state, and the financial side of administration especially appeals to him. He is self-contained and quite satisfied, and in all respects is a great contrast to his neighbour. Of one thing he is intensely proud, his descent from Alexander the Great, and he informed me three times that the Macedonian was his ancestor. I acquiesced politely and ventured to congratulate him. It is considered tactful for the visitor to remark that the Mir's profile is like that on a Greek coin, and, strangely enough, it is but the bare truth. Although, thanks to usage, this diplomatic remark has lost some of its pristine freshness it is still a valuable conversational counter, if brought in with care.

I was entertained with courtesy and comfort in the fine centre room of the palace, but I confess I found it hard to talk to my host. I had always to lead, and those who have had contact with orientals know how wearisome is that exercise. I had, on several occasions, travelled through to Hunza but I had never found time to visit Nagir, and perhaps my host was a little hurt by my tardy appearance, although his capital is definitely out of the way. Nagir, nevertheless, has one or two curios. The first was the muezzin, or mullah, who gave the bong, the early call to prayer.





SHAH SIKANDAR KHAN







I woke with a start, even with annoyance, but admiration supervened as I heard the great roar rolling out in the crisp dark dawn of early autumn. *Allah Akbar*, God is great! The *Allah* was lengthened and lengthened till it reached the distant snows. A superb performance, stimulating and compelling, wholly uncurtailed. Christian though I was, I felt constrained to rise and seek the mosque. But I did not do so, for I well knew that, except for the Mir, not a single Nagiri would go to prayer. Even my old cook Aziza, known as the mullah for his devastating orthodoxy, would not relinquish a single snore for the most resonant mullah in Asia.

The Mir had an interesting collection of photographs; he showed me with pride one taken on the occasion of Lord and Lady Minto's visit to Srinagar, with the ladies in the group wearing the large hats and high-necked dresses of the period. 'Ah', observed the Mir primly, 'those fashions for women are superior to the present ones.' I cordially agreed.

An interesting old gentleman was Typhur, the wazir, kind, courteous and incredibly old, long past the duties of a Prime Minister. I had known him for some years, so he came and talked, wagging his red beard, and describing his journey to Kashmir, where he had recently been for an operation for cataract. I should have liked to talk intimately with the old man, who was an encyclopædia of knowledge, but circumstances rendered it imprudent, so we bored each other with stupid generalities. If Typhur



were past work as a premier, he was not so as a raconteur.

From Nagir an expedition is made by all visitors to Hopar to obtain a better view of the Hispar peaks and to look at two or three dull and dying glaciers, masses of dead ice and rubbish, rather a dreary scene. We passed over the Hopar Plain or Ghutum, for these parts form an unusually level and extensive alluvial plain, which, though well watered and cultivated, is of little use to the people, as will appear. We were amidst the scenes of the exploits of a famous saint or buzurg, Shah Buria. He had come to Hopar from Baltistan and had been scurvily received by the villagers. It is curious how vindictive are these Eastern ascetics and how discourteous and unwise are the villagers in receiving them. Shah Buria cursed the people of Hopar, and he cursed the ground. So now, although the harvest is ample every year, as soon as the corn is ground and stowed in coffers in the houses, it dwindles away of itself. No matter how carefully it may be conserved, by February the bins are empty, and a harvest that should last till spring is finished prematurely. Truly this was a powerful curse, effective after centuries.

Near Hopar, the blessed man's companion fell into a crevasse. The saint threw his staff in after him, and staff and disciple emerged at the snout of the glacier unscathed.

Shah Buria has a shrine near the polo ground, and it was here that, wishing to pray and having no water



for his ablutions, he struck the ground with his staff. Up welled a copious spring, so much so that there was no dry place on which to pray, but at his wish a stone appeared. There he knelt, and the marks of his hands and knees appear to this day. The stone is not in the same place, however, for as Nagir grew larger, the place became noisier, and ill-adapted for meditation : so the stone kept bounding up—always to beyond the limit of cultivation, moving as the fields extended, and now it rests on a hill high above Nagir, secure from the inroads of noisy men. The shrine and spring, however, remain at the polo ground. The unamiable saint is buried at Gulmit.

After a pleasant visit I left Mir Sikandar and his kindly capital. Not an interesting place, but quiet and remote. There were tame snow-cock running round on his private polo ground, and his descendants and retainers wandered about aimlessly. Nagir must be a dismal place in winter ; the narrow gorge always causes a sensation of imprisonment. It is a backwater, noticeable as such even in the calm of the Karakoram.



## CHAPTER IX

## HUNZA

AFTER leaving Nagir we made for Hunza, a short way as the crow flies, but a good day's journey for a man on foot. We crossed the Nagir river by a double rope bridge in a bad state of repair, as are so many other things in that state. There was a large rock in midstream and, as the span was too wide for a single bridge, these abominable contraptions were hitched on to either side of it. It took an immense time to traverse, for laden coolies necessarily go but slowly. We then crossed the Hunza river by a fair suspension bridge and entered Hunza territory at the village of Ganesh. This was Abdulla Beg's home, and it was wonderfully picturesque. The houses clung to the edge of the cliff above the river. A high tower with a projecting cap, old mosques by the side of a tank, and tall chenars (plane trees) just beyond made up a most attractive picture. In olden days the men of Ganesh conducted many forays into Nagir; so much so that they became great adepts at raiding. If a distinguished guest came to stay with the Mir of Hunza he would send word to the village; the men would then cross over the river to Nagir, capture two or three men or boys and send them up to their ruler, who would



present them to his visitor. This was a very practical gift and bound to be appreciated. It had, moreover, the advantage of costing the Mir nothing. The Hunza men were always kidnapping their neighbours who apparently were powerless either to retaliate or to protect themselves. The captives were sold in the Pamirs or in Yarkand, usually for a sheep or an old pelt.

From Ganesh the track led steeply up to Suriyas or Karimabad, where the Mir lives during the summer. It is, of course, a roundabout way to visit Hunza by way of Nagir. The direct route is by Minapin but, as the bridge had been blown away by the wind four years previously, the road followed the right bank of the Hunza river. As the parris were steep and always slipping the road was often broken. There is a great deal of sulphur near the river; whole hillsides are impregnated with it, smelling unpleasantly. These sulphur slopes are particularly friable and liable to give way. Volcanic influences are also seen in the hot springs on both sides of the river close to Tashot. A feature of the direct route to Hunza is the garnets which are embedded in the hillsides, near Murtizabad in particular, and which can be picked out. They were always used in former times as bullets, sometimes encased in a thin coating of lead, more often just as they were dug out. I collected numbers: they are most conveniently shaped slugs for native matchlocks. It was with a garnet bullet that Colonel Algernon Durand was wounded at Nilt in 1891.

Although I have often been to Hunza its appearance



has never failed to enchant me. For eight miles along the river cultivation extends, with a breadth of four or five miles. Every inch is cultivated, the fields (sometimes barely a few feet in extent) rising tier above tier. The monotony of these terraces of husbandry is broken by belts of orchards or by rows of tall poplars rising over fruit trees. Behind are steep mountain sides, entirely barren, without a vestige of herbage, harsh and forbidding. Above this wall of brown are the snows, and the setting of the scene, soft and fertile at first, then harsh against its mountain rampart, is sublime. Curling along the bleak stony hillsides, winding sinuously along the indentations of their slopes, may be seen the kuls on which the very life of the whole community depends. The biggest and longest of these is the Berber, famous everywhere in Central Asia, six miles in length and a work of great skill. Below it is the Samarcand. From the Bultur glacier five kuls take off to the east, and four to the west. All are of dry masonry, all have been built without any scientific aid, with nothing more than industry, common sense and the usual tools of a peasant; ibex horns were chiefly used. The mere existence of these kuls places the men of Hunza in a class apart.

Their skill in making these irrigation channels has not diminished of late years, as is evident from the new conduit made not ten years ago at Raminj in the lower Chapursan valley. This work of art—for so it is—took five years to construct, and cost the lives of eight men, six of whom were buried by the



fall of a cliff. This channel is over two miles long and winds, tenuous and precarious, down a side valley. Often it is 500 yards above the stream which it has tapped, hanging to a perpendicular cliff and displaying throughout its course great ingenuity and skill. The flow of the water must be exactly right, there must be no leakage, no danger of breakage in the midst of the irrigation season. All this has been achieved solely by the light of experience. A skilled engineer might well be proud of what these villagers have done. It is possible to walk by the edge of this little thread of water, but it is ticklish work in parts, for the foothold is often narrow, and it is comforting to clutch the rock and forget the sheer abyss below. The stone 'shoots', where the shale and small rocks slide down, are skilfully tunnelled and need careful passing.

It is difficult to say at what season Hunza is fairest. Early spring when the blossoms are on the trees and late autumn when the apricot-leaves are brilliant and vermilion are both alluring, but I myself think that the height of summer shows the country at its best. Then the crops are yellowing and swaying in the breeze, the trees laden with fruit and nature is fresh and lavish. In the autumn the harvest is over, the fields are drab and empty, and winter is drawing nigh.

Contrasted with Nagir, the land is far better tended. Pressure of population is severe and care has to be taken, nor is vegetation so abundant as in Nagir, where soil and water are ample, and nature does most



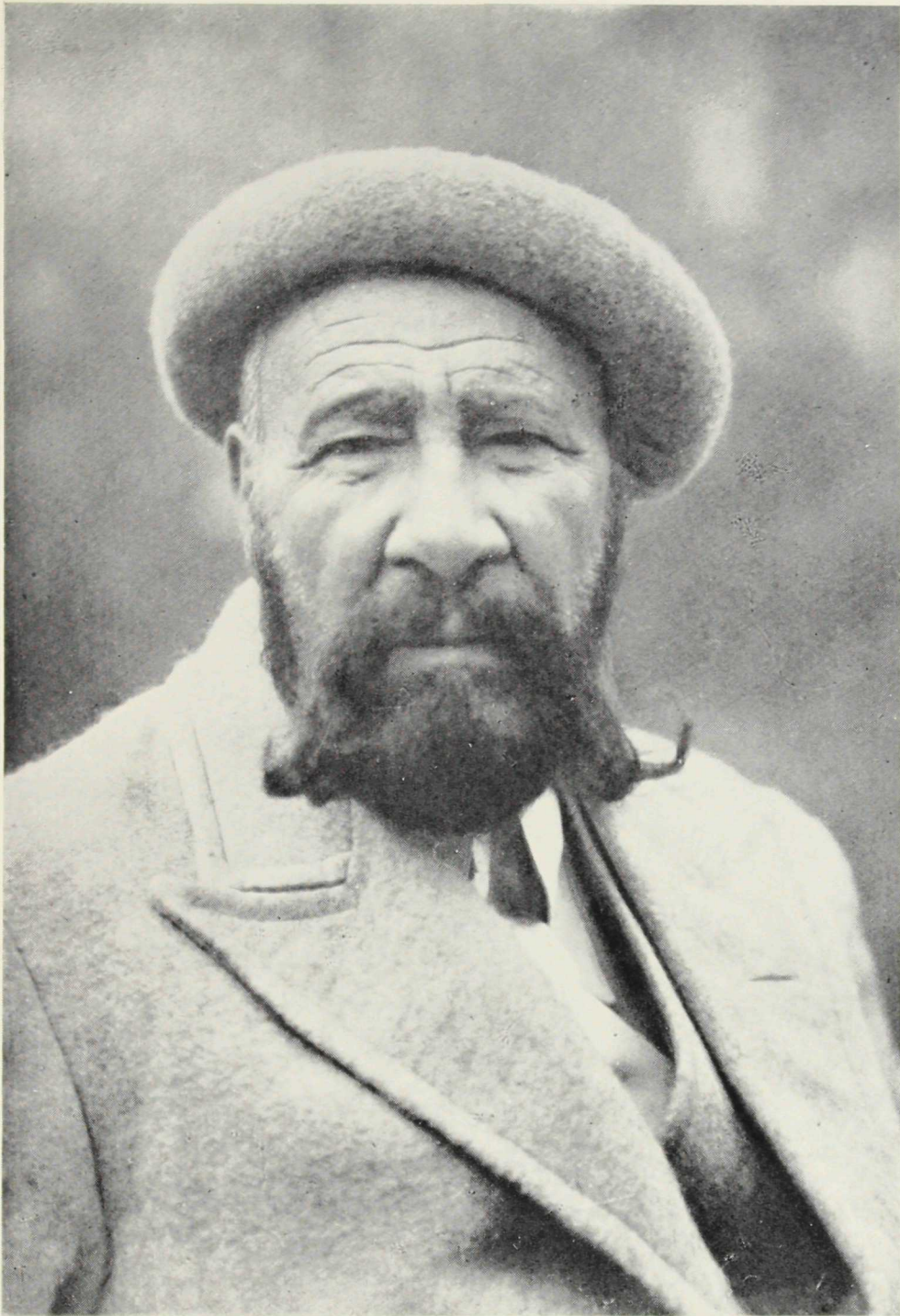
of itself. Both are scarce in Hunza and nature has to be regulated.

The Mir or Thum lives at Karimabad during the summer, and in winter retreats to the old castle of Baltit. His summer quarters are comfortable, with a good bungalow in a large walled garden for his guests. Thus the Mir has his visitors under his eye, knows whom they see and what they say, to his great satisfaction. I occasionally broke away from this hospitable supervision, as I do not like espionage however genial. There are fruit trees at Karimabad and plenty of vegetables and flowers.

The Mir is a great gardener, and so are most of his subjects who understand and appreciate gardening, and take great pains over it. I always enjoyed going round the garden with the old chief and listening to his comments on his flowers.

Mahomed Nazim Khan, the present Mir, is the outstanding personality of the Gilgit Agency, as his wazir, Humayun Beg, was before him. In 1933 he was about 75 years of age, but still vigorous. He has a cataract in his left eye but time has dealt kindly with him otherwise. All the other rulers take their cue from him and he knows it. 'Why', he said to me once, 'if I threw myself into the river, the Mir of Nagir would do the same.' The Mir is an excellent host and his arrangements are faultless. He speaks Persian well and also Hindustani, besides his native tongues, Wakhi and Burishashki. What is more he is thoroughly conversant with current politics and he has





MOHAMED NAZIM KHAN







a shrewd, original outlook. He cannot read or write, and anyone who believes that success in life depends on these two accomplishments would reverse his opinion after a stay with the Mir of Hunza. I have never failed to be surprised and diverted by his resource and enterprise. He once showed me the carving in his new 'stone bungalow' (as he called it) and said that he had copied the design from the carving in a London church of which he had found an illustration in some book. His ingenuity was shown in buying quantities of cheap Russian chintz with which he 'papered' the roof in a new guest-house. In embroidery, gold and silver work, furniture-making, and other crafts he shows his own originality and the skill of his artificers. On my last visit to him he had just captured a Russian refugee who was instructing the Mir's shoemakers how to make soft Russian leather and long boots.

One of the great sorrows of the old chief's declining years has been the death of his little son, the Benjamin of his old age, by a gun accident. I knew the child well, and fully appreciated his father's great sorrow at his loss. Happily other olive branches have appeared, but none seem to have found the way to their father's affections as did little Amin Khan.

The Mir is a frank critic of all and sundry, and is feared by his brother rulers. He has a passion for collecting reports, and his agents on both sides of the frontier never fail to provide him with the latest news. The result is some very remarkable



information, but it has now been found that his enterprising correspondents can never sift fact from fiction, and the value of these news-summaries has to be considerably discounted. I sometimes think that the old Mir likes to keep the authorities on the *qui vive* in order to emphasise the importance of his part of the frontier and his unrivalled means of discovering all that happens beyond it. His system of intelligence is not limited to foreign territory, and an energetic and persistent use of the telephone keeps him well-informed of all events in the Agency.

The Mir is also a wonderful raconteur, and as he never stops talking and always gives the impression of complete frankness, his conversation never lacks zest or interest. He has a well-regulated flow of talk, both in quantity and in quality, and I have often found myself wondering what voltage I have received in his current of speech, for it is not vouchsafed to all to hear the same things.

There are no shops in Hunza. There was once a bazaar but the Mir said that it was a nuisance, closed it and himself opened a shop to supply the wants of his people. There was once a post-office, an innovation of which the chief did not approve, so he arranged for a general boycott and, after six months during which not a single letter was posted or postal transaction took place, the office was closed. At present, the Mir himself receives the dak or letter-bag, and takes a paternal interest in all correspondence.

The strong point in his character is his common



sense, a legacy perhaps from his peasant mother. I daresay that he is tiresome at times, all men are and hill chiefs particularly so, but he is a truly remarkable man. In former days when Humayun Beg was his wazir, the young ruler did not dare to decide anything as his masterful minister dominated him. Now, since that famous man's death, there is only one king in Hunza, and nobody (no matter who) has a single word to say on any subject. The Mir has, undoubtedly, the interests and welfare of his subjects at heart. He may fail to realise that life in a remote mountain state cannot satisfy the youth of his country who hear tales of service under the Sirkar and fat pensions afterwards—tales that make the hungry mouths of the struggling hill-men water like their own snow streams. The Mir, however, hates to see his people leave their valley. He cannot bear to lose them or the *corvée* which they are called on to give, mild though it is. It is rather a pity for the urgent need of all these valleys is a little cash. There is no income coming in. The people have enough to eat, but with the development of the country their needs increase. Even now there are few men in Hunza who can afford to drink tea even on special occasions, and the trickle of money which flows into every Indian village either from lads in service or as pensions would mean much to the people of Hunza and also, of course, to the other neighbouring states. But since the Hunza men are so conspicuously ahead of all their neighbours in brains and sinew they feel a sense of



frustration. What is more, the country is a hard one, land is exceedingly scarce, and although the Mir has done much to open up new tracts of land—often with much labour—the population must outstrip the resources of the country, and the men of Hunza must emigrate. True there is unwanted and suitable land close by, but it does not belong to Hunza. The Mir dislikes seeing his subjects serving another monarch, and the most satisfactory solution would be a chance of employment under Government.

A dinner with the Mir is an agreeable experience. His cook is good, his home-made wine, five years in bottle, is sound and comforting. Singing boys squat outside and warble in Turki, Persian, or even in other languages. The Mir's conversation never flags; it embraces all subjects. His historical knowledge is considerable and his memory unimpaired by reading books. Now, in his old age, his chief interest in life is finance, and I think that in consequence he has become too absorbed in his revenue, and in devising means for its increase, so that his people are becoming rather estranged.

Like other of his fellow-potentates the Mir enjoys a patriarchal fecundity, to the dismay of his subjects, who know that every happy delivery in the palace eventually means a very different delivery for them. I have now known the Mir for a good many years: his ways are not ours, but of his ability and foresight there is no question. I have found myself wishing that he had previously received more advice and



guidance from political officers, which would have made his great talents more valuable to his state.

My last visit to the Mir of Hunza was in May 1934, and I found him absorbed in preparations for a marriage between his grandson and a daughter of the Mir of Nagir, and one of the latter's sons with one of his daughters. To arrange these nuptials had not been so easy a matter as might appear, as the Nagir family is Shiah by religion, and that of Hunza is Maulai. There had been endless difficulties and delays from the Nagir side, but at last all had been settled and the marriage was to take place in July. In anticipation of the feast, the Mir of Hunza had arranged for 60 yaks, 300 sheep and 100 maunds of ghi for the visitors, and had also engaged a Turki tailor to make 180 long coats of silk for the wedding escort. The old chief was as interesting and active as ever, although suffering from cataract in both eyes, and anxiously awaiting the arrival of Major Ledger, the Agency surgeon, who was to operate on him. I felt sorry to say farewell to him. He is a personality seldom met with in the East. He is a thorough Oriental in every respect, and that is to his credit. As I have observed, his sole interest at present is in finance. His chief desire is to be given the title of 'His Highness' and he certainly deserves it. Considering that India is full of petty and often ridiculous princelings who enjoy this distinction, it seems unreasonable to deny it to the Mirs of Hunza and of Nagir.

When, in course of time, the Mir of Hunza passes



away, there will go with him the last link with the past, with the days remote yet near, when Hunza was an unknown hill-state, but I trust that whoever contemplates the past history of Hunza, will not calumniate the chiefs of old and the Hunza men of bygone days as mere savage banditti. The people of Hunza will miss their Mir when the time comes to bid him adieu. They have their grievances, of that there is no doubt, but they will realise their loss when he is gone.

The Mir's eldest son, Ghazan Khan, is now a man of middle age, with a large red moustache and fair complexion, a contrast to his father, who is very dark, and who dyes his beard a rich purple black.

Baltit, the capital of Hunza, stands high above fertile slopes, its old white-washed castle is a conspicuous object visible for many miles. It is a curious old place, with balconies and bow windows, and a magnificent view. Here the Mir keeps all his property. Below are his granaries and his mills, as well as other stores. On the top of the castle there used to be the youdeni or fairy drum, about ten inches across, and shaped like a single small kettledrum. When trouble or war threatened the country, the drum began to rumble and murmur of itself and, as soon as the noise was heard, a special drummer was sent for who beat it all night long, sounding the tocsin and sending the warning over the countryside. This drum has disappeared. The Mir has searched everywhere for it, but failed to find it, although he believes it may be in Punyal. It has been



stolen and, as it was the last fairy drum, he is much vexed at its loss.

The town of Baltit is worthy of its castle, for the houses are often picturesque and well-carved. This especially applies to the mosques, some of the oldest in the country. Both in Hunza and Nagir the carving on these mosques is interesting, symmetrical and perhaps conventional, with designs of flowers and of geometrical figures, original yet not crude, elaborate, yet not excessive. The carving is excellent, for the craftsmen of Hunza are skilful.

As the majority of the people are now Maulais who worship in assembly rooms and not in mosques, modern buildings are less attractive. For instance, at Aliabad there is a large, new, expensive assembly-place which resembles any large hall, and is dreary and commonplace. At Ganesh, on the contrary, where the people are Shiah, there is a new mosque of a most elaborate nature and colour, with a ridiculous little turret over the centre like a huge cuckoo-clock, but though it is too new to be attractive the wood-carver and the decorator have lavished time and cunning on it; when the rawness has worn off it will be an artistic building.

I saw two old mosques close together, one about twenty feet square, the other twelve. On the south and east sides (the sunny ones) there were two double verandahs, the northern and western being occupied, so to say, by the mosque proper; the upper part of the verandah or loggia was closed with carved lattice-work. The windows too were covered with carved lattice,

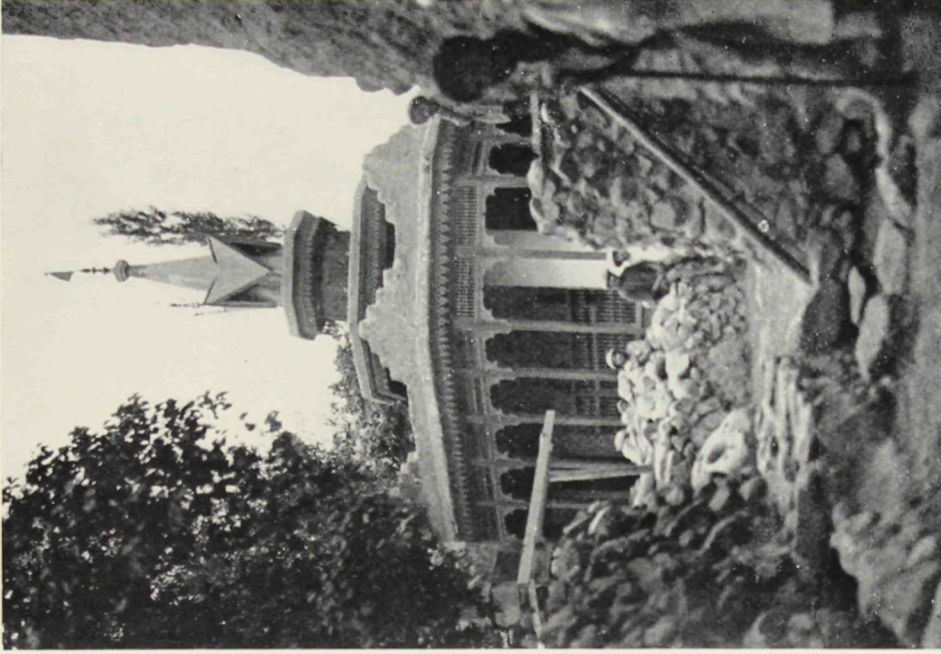


and their frames and sills carved with the design repeated on alternate panels. The wood was mulberry or pine, and much labour had been expended. The woodwork, mellowed and carved, the double verandahs and the small cube-like mosque in the corner harmonised well with their setting of trees and tank. Contrast the above with that new prayer-hall at Aliabad. The modern building has only utility and solidity to recommend it. When I visited it, being proudly conducted by the colour-sergeant of scouts, an oldish man with immense drooping whiskers and mustachios, I was forced to admire it, as he was so pleased with this expensive and pious monstrosity, but I turned with relief to the old mosque close by, which the new one had ousted. The contrast was that between a non-conformist chapel and a Norman abbey.

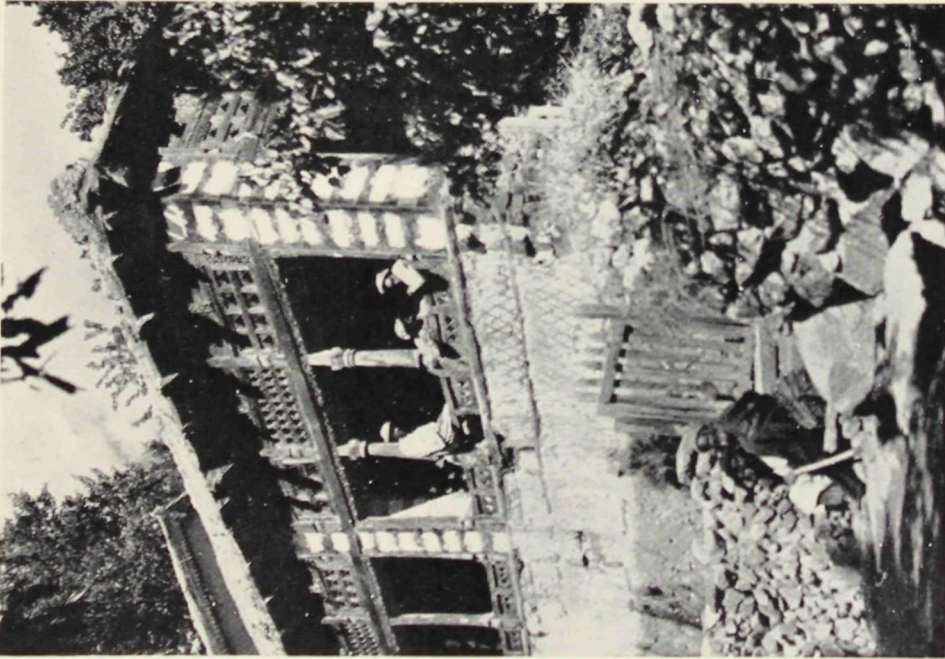
At Aliabad there was an old palace of the Mir but the village was deserted; the inhabitants were away on their fields and only dwelt in the old town during the winter. They were gradually abandoning the place which was cramped, dark and insanitary, and building themselves houses elsewhere. In old days concentration was necessary for safety, but the need has passed. Even the great gate and well had gone, and the town was decaying fast.

Near Aliabad is the famous bottle-jagir or estate. Before Hunza knew the outside world, a man had gone to India and on his return presented an empty whisky bottle to his ruler, who was so delighted with the rare and novel gift that he gave the man a grant of





SHIAH MOSQUE, GANESH



MOSQUE AT BALTIT







land in return. The pleasant piece of land known as Phuru Har is the actual piece given.

Not far from Baltit, at what in former days was the northern boundary of the state, is Altit, with its old castle standing on the edge of a cliff. Close by is a large tank or lake, which once was much bigger but has sensibly been filled in: with its old houses and chenars it is in every way a charming place. The situation of the castle in the middle of dense orchards of apricot trees is unusual, and it must have been impregnable. I always enjoyed a walk in Hunza on the narrow walled paths between carefully tended fields; it is like going through a great garden, where every device to add a square foot of soil to the acreage is adopted. I once saw what seemed like the destruction of the cliffs above the river, as the dust was rising in clouds, and I wondered why. It turned out that the owner was flattening out the vertical face of the cliff by turning on his irrigation water. He hoped that he might at any rate grow bushes on a gentler slope, whilst the soil that had fallen would produce a few vegetables at the foot of the cliff.

I also visited one Ghulam, the famous blacksmith of Hunza, who is a craftsman of real skill. I had admired several objects in metal, gold, silver, brass and copper in the Mir's house, as well as some ingenious devices, and found that Ghulam was the artificer. A delicate brooch or a rough axe came equally well from his cunning hand. I found him a cheerful fellow, sitting all day making whatever



articles the people needed. The metal has to be brought by his customer, and in return for his skill and time every household supplies him with 9 lbs. of flour (4 seers) a year. He made a knife, scissors and a razor for me, all serviceably turned out in a very short time.



## CHAPTER X

## THE PEOPLE AND CUSTOMS OF HUNZA AND NAGIR

THERE are three distinct racial divisions in modern Hunza. The lower part of the country, that is from the Nagir border above Chalt, along the right bank of the Hunza river as far as but not including Murtizabad, is populated by inhabitants of the Indus valley. From Murtizabad to Altit, both inclusive, the people are the original inhabitants of Hunza. Beyond Altit, from Gulmit upwards, the country is known as Little Guhjal, and was once a separate state, under its own ruler ; it is populated by Wakhis. There are also numerous settlements, usually of recent origin, of Hunza men in other parts of the country, e.g. Misgar, and in most cases any newly opened land is colonised by people from Hunza proper, since the congestion there is very great. Hunza proper, as distinct from the modern Hunza State, is, in fact, only that district which stretches along the river for five or six miles, and of which the chief place is Baltit. Here for many centuries, in complete isolation, the men of Hunza have lived. They are, it is true, a mixed race, but they are quite distinct from other adjacent races of the Gilgit Agency, although most writers,



even so competent an observer as Biddulph,<sup>1</sup> class them and the Nagiris as one race. Undoubtedly the first settlement in Nagir was made from Hunza, but that was many centuries ago, and subsequent immigration has destroyed all traces of it. The people of Nagir bear no resemblance to those of Hunza, and their only common bond is language, not blood, and even in their speech there are many differences. Still less are the Hunza folk of the same stock as those of the rest of the Indus valley. It is certainly difficult to understand how anyone, after having dealings with Hunza people, could imagine that they had anything in common with their neighbours of Nagir, still less with the inhabitants of Gilgit or the Indus valley. They resemble them in no way whatever, and differ from them as much as a Punyali differs from a Madrasi. It has also been said that the people of Hunza were originally refugees from the North who gave a vague allegiance to the Ra of Gilgit to prevent their being attacked and driven out by him.

Two unfortunate pseudo-scientific words have been allowed to obscure the racial diagnosis of the Karakoram. The first is Dardistan, with the term Dard for its inhabitants, and the second is the word Yeshkun. I introduce the matter here as Hunza men have been called Dards and Yeshkuns. They are neither, if these words denote racial distinction, in any sense at all. Who, then, are the men of Hunza? In their own tongue the word 'Huns' means an arrow, and it

<sup>1</sup> *Tribes of the Hindoo Koosh*, by Major J. Biddulph.



is supposed that, as the Hunza men are very expert with their bows, so they have been given this name, but I fear that this explanation is not very credible. The people themselves say that they come from Badakshan and Wakhan, or, in other words, that they are of Iranian and Turanian origin, Turks and Tajiks. There have even been Chinese settlers in Hunza proper, but one thing there has not been, and that is an admixture of blood from Kashmir, Baltistan, or the Indus valley.

Biddulph believes that the Yeshkun or Burish of Hunza and Nagir are descendants of the Yuechi who conquered Bactria in 120 B.C. They probably occupied the Shigar valley in Baltistan, all affluents of the Indus and the Indus valley itself. He sees a connection between Yuechi and Yeshkun. An objection to this theory is that in Hunza the tradition is undoubtedly that there was an invasion from the North and that in any case Hunza was settled by immigrants from the North. The reference to Nagir given by Biddulph can be ignored.

The situation of the country, and its relations with its neighbours have militated against any general intermarriage with their enemies of Nagir, Gilgit, and the like, whereas with the Sarikol Pamir, Wakhan, and Turkestan proper there has been considerable intercourse from time immemorial. The language of Hunza is Burishashki, a peculiar and difficult tongue. It is spoken in Nagir, and to some extent in Punyal and Yasin, where there have been colonies



from Hunza or some intermarriage from which this language—the language be it noted of a masterful race—has been introduced.

What, then, are the people of Hunza like? I should describe them as fair-skinned, well-built and active, of medium height and rather broad. They are adaptable and responsive, and their intellect is above the average of their neighbours. Perhaps they are chiefly conspicuous for their powers of endurance and physical activity. They are essentially a manly race, and on the hillside they are unequalled. They are fine workers, good shikaris, and as tillers of the soil quite in a class apart. They alone—and this always strikes me as truly remarkable—are good craftsmen. As carpenters and masons, as gunsmiths, iron workers, or even as goldsmiths, as engineers for roads, bridges or canals, the Hunza men are outstanding. Even their home-spun cloth is better than any other, and in a dozen ways they show their superior skill. Thus it is that, even apart from their physical differences, their qualities of hand and brain separate them from their neighbours: even as servants or coolies they are preferred before any other race in the Agency.

One of their bad points is their quarrelsomeness. They are great individualists and do not agree easily, and they are selfish towards their families. A Hunza man will go away from home to earn his living, but will seldom send money or even a letter to his relations. Their besetting sin is avarice. Greed



is the curse of the Karakoram, but it is worse in Hunza than anywhere else. Even in 1886, when the country was unknown, Sir William Lockhart complained bitterly of the grasping habits of the people who used to demand a thousand times too much for every article supplied. Nothing, not even the granting of their most extravagant demands, will satisfy them. There is, too, an effrontery and insensibility in their extortions that is repellent.

The good and bad qualities of Hunza men come from the land in which they live, where there is great congestion, existence is a struggle, and land and water are both inadequate. Writers have referred to Hunza as a robber state, to the Mir as a robber chief, and to the people as bandits; and Knight<sup>1</sup> has been a particular offender in this inaccurate and slovenly description. The people were accustomed to foray and to raid, much as the Pathan is, for both in Hunza and on the North-West Frontier economic conditions compel them to do so. But it is childish to call these industrious peasants a race of mere robbers. That they never were.

There is a tradition about the ancestry of the Hunza men that must be mentioned, as it is interesting though improbable. It is said that five soldiers of Alexander the Great remained in Hunza. They were Khwaja Aral, who finally settled in Gilgit after being in Hunza; Titan and Khuro, who went to Baltit; Gayar

<sup>1</sup> *Where Three Empires Meet*, by E. F. Knight.



who went to Ganesh, and Shin who went to Hindi.<sup>1</sup> But whatever the origin of these hill-men they are certainly a race who have lived apart, secluded in their remote and inaccessible valley. They have been cut off from even the meagre association and connection with the outside world that Gilgit could offer. Self-contained and satisfied, they have remained unspoilt and uninfluenced, and it was not until after the British expedition in 1891 that they began to seek employment outside their country. Owing to that environment the people of Hunza still preserve a number of habits and customs that have disappeared elsewhere.

They are divided into four tribes, viz. Diramitting, Baratilling, Khuru Kutz and Burong, from the four original heads or founders, Diram, Barat, Khuru, and Buran, but these divisions are social, not racial or territorial. Until 1930 all these tribes were wholly exogamous, never marrying within their tribes, but endogamous cases are now known. For instance, one of my own men, Hasil Shah, married his first cousin, but has no children. A few years ago marriage within the tribe was regarded almost as incest. The tribe too has an absolute right to retain the land of its members; if a man sells land, he must do so within his tribe. If, however, he cannot find a purchaser, he may sell to another tribe, but his own tribe always

<sup>1</sup> It is said that the first settlement of any kind in the Hunza valley was at Ganesh, where a Chinaman built a house and cultivated the land, and to this day there are families in Ganesh who claim a Chinese origin.



has the right to redeem land alienated on making appropriate compensation.

The tribes are equal in all respects, except only that the Diramitting have a prestige which may be traced to a hieratic origin. For instance, if a house is built, a canal dug, or any work of public utility undertaken, a Diramitting has to be present, and has to begin it. He lays the first stone of a house, he turns on the water into a new irrigation canal, at a funeral feast the first day is reserved for the Diramitting, at a marriage the first to go out of the house must be a Diramitting. In the old days when the Mir started on a journey, or even went out of his house, a Diramitting preceded him.

It is told in Hunza how at one Tum-i-shilling, or fire festival, there was a massacre. In those days the Diramitting say they were known as Diram Kuyuntz. The Birchattalling (of whom a few survive to this day in the village of Ganesh) killed every member of the Diram line. The following year all the wheat was diseased. The subsequent year, when it was again diseased, the people attributed the catastrophe to the murder of the clan, and this tradition corroborates their friendly or auspicious influence. It was then discovered that in Phikr, a Nagir village, a woman was with child by a Diram and in due course gave birth to a boy. When the child was born, its hand was thrust into the seed-corn. That year half the corn was good, and half was bad. Next year the child was bigger, and was able to take some corn and



throw it on the field; the result was a good crop. All Diramittings of to-day are descended from that child, and it is owing to this tradition that every piece of work is begun by one of the tribe—and that when the corn is first sold at the yearly festival it is a Diramitting who casts the first handful.

Up to the time of Asadullah Beg, wazir of Hunza, the land tenure in Hunza devolved from father to son. If any of the sons died before his father, the widow took his share quite irrespective of what children she might have. This system has been modified so that a woman who has lost her husband during his father's lifetime receives land in trust for her sons according to their number. The idea underlying this arrangement is that a man who survives his father may become the parent of other male children: if he predeceases his father, it is unfair that his widow with one son should receive as much as a surviving son with several children. If a man dies, and leaves no male issue, his daughters have a right to a certain amount of corn from their father's property, but to no land. In other words, landed property in Hunza must devolve on the males, either in direct descent or to the next male kin within the tribe. On the other hand, and this is worth noting, whatever disposition of property a father makes during his lifetime can never be upset after his death.

When a death occurs no fire is kindled within the house, no cooking or washing is done, and all food is brought from without. For three days one of the lesser



mullahs reads the Koran. Later the mullah himself comes. A large lamp is lit and filled with butter, and the mullah and his assistant make a number of wicks with which they feed the lamp. A sheep is killed by the mullah or, if the home be a well-to-do one, several sheep, and the meat is placed in a pot with a large quantity of wheat which has been crushed by beating in a mortar with a pestle. Whilst the meat and wheat are being cooked, the mullah reads the Koran. But when all is ready (after 24 hours) and when dawn comes, he stops and eats the stew. In Hunza he eats three mouthfuls only; the relatives eat the rest. In Hunza also the tribes are invited in order to the feast. The Diramitting come on the first day, on the second the Baratilling, on the morning of the third the Khuru Kutz, and the same evening the Burong. The body has, of course, been buried long before, dressed in a shirt and wrapped in two sheets.

Food in Hunza is always scarce. On rising a man eats nothing but goes straight to his fields. About 9 o'clock he returns, has bread (chupatti) and vegetables, with milk or butter milk. At midday he has fruit, if there is any fresh; if not he has dried apricots kneaded with water. And in the evening he has the same as in the morning.

In winter all classes kill and store meat and meat is eaten every day, but at night only. Hens are few, because they do damage to the fields, and so eggs are not eaten.

In summer, perhaps once in ten days, a piece of



meat is eaten, but fruit is really the Hunza staple. It is eaten with bread, far more so than vegetables, as it is more abundant and needs little attention. The bread is always of wheat, and is bought largely from Nagir, where the people do not appreciate it. The flour is ground once a year only, except for odd quantities which are ground to eke out a shortage. The grinding is done at once, in one or two days, before winter sets in and the streams are frozen. Wheat is ground separately; so, too, is tromba or buckwheat, of which there are two kinds, though occasionally dal (chickpea) is ground up with the wheat. Beans, barley and peas are often ground up together.

The day on which the wheat is first taken to the mill is known as Desshakki. The flour is stored in large chests (called tsaghur), and this practice of storing wheat is different from that elsewhere in the Gilgit Agency. It is only in Hunza that the Mir is believed to have the power of producing rain, and if water is needed all go to beseech him to produce it. A mullah is ordered to sit for one or two hours up to his neck in water; sometimes he may escape this ordeal, in which case he only ties an amulet to the trees, and prays. To guard against too much rain every village of Guhjal (that is of the Wakhi part of Hunza) gives ten seers of ghi annually to the Mir. In Hunza proper, if too much rain falls ten or twelve mullahs collect in a mosque or in the graveyard (if the mosque be too small or too hot). The zemindars collect a heap of wood, the mullahs read the Koran and then set fire to the wood.



Flints are then collected from the river, the Qul-o-Allah is read one hundred times, the stones are breathed on by the mullahs, and then flung back into the river.

In 1933 water was sorely needed by the villagers of Hindi. They besought the Mir to arrange for rain, and sent him an offering of three sheep. His son Ghazan Khan was given two, and his son Jamal Khan received one. The result was most gratifying. Rain came in quantities and very unexpectedly of course. Personally, I was much inconvenienced by the success of the Mir's intervention.

The people of Hindi, who are of Shina stock, have always suffered severely from want of water, due to the supply depending on a very inadequate glacier. So on one occasion they took a large lump of ice, buried it in the ground some distance from the snout, and connected the piece of ice to the glacier by a sort of underground tunnel into which they poured water: they were much disappointed to find that neither the glacier nor the stream advanced lower.

As the festival of Tum-i-shilling is now celebrated in a proper manner in Hunza only, it is better described here than with the festivals common to the districts generally. It takes place in the middle of December. Early in November every household kills a goat, sheep or bullock; the head and the stomach are kept in the house, uncooked, till the time of the festival. On the night of the Tum-i-shilling (the word means tree scattering) the stomach of the animal is filled with flour made from buckwheat (jokish in Hunza) and the



smaller stomach filled with little pieces of meat and fat (shopan). Then both stomachs with the head are placed with turnips in a large pot and cooked all night. In the morning every male in the house takes a piece of wood a few inches long, which has been kept for two months previously to dry. A drum is then beaten and all go out of the house simultaneously after lighting the wood, and holding it in their hands. If by inadvertence anyone goes out too soon, the others who come behind throw the wood at him. When they are all outside the burning wood is thrown on the ground with shouts. As soon as the wood is burned out, the women, dressed in their best clothes, emerge, and everyone dances. They then go and have some food at the house of some relative. The householder goes out with them, makes a round of all his relatives and tribesmen, and if there are any quarrels or outstanding cases to be settled they are all made up on that day. The mullahs of Nagir and neighbouring states discourage this relic of Hindu superstition.<sup>1</sup>

Let me now return to my description of the men of Hunza, for they are an oasis of manliness in a desert of trousered women. It is quite a usual thing for a Hunza man to walk the sixty miles to Gilgit in one stretch, do his business and return direct. On one occasion Daulat Shah's horse was stolen; he went after it and kept up the pursuit in drenching rain

<sup>1</sup> Teleni is the name of the wood burned at this festival. The Shina word *nos* applies to the ceremonial killing of these animals. (Compare Biddulph, p. 100.)



over mountains for nearly two days with bare feet. Another man of mine, Akbar Shah, would dive to retrieve duck from a frozen river and think nothing of it, though I stood horrified on the bank. But this was nothing to a man who, in winter, used to make a hole in the ice on one side of a broad pond, dive in, and after swimming under the ice, come out by a hole near the far bank. At Gilgit, too, there used to be a man who, every day, went up to the forest, high on the hill, cut and brought down two and a half hundred-weight of wood on his back.

They are great shikaris in Hunza, and perhaps that is why there is now little left to shoot. The hunters complain that the ibex are now wily, whereas in the old days when an animal was wounded it used to lie where it fell until a hunter came and cut its throat. The tale is told that, while thus lying awaiting its end, the ibex was reproved by a chikor (partridge). 'Look at me', said the bird, 'I can hide from the hunter and save my life, while a great brute like you gives in when he's received a trifling wound.' The ibex from that time forward has always saved itself by flight, for it told all the other ibex about it.

But it was in their raids and forays that the Hunza men showed their wonderful powers of endurance. They used to travel for miles along the cruel precipices and unbridged rivers of the Karakoram where to this day no loaded coolie will go, and as they went they hid bannocks of coarse bread in the rocks. If they were lucky enough to meet and loot a caravan, well and good



—if not, they had all the trouble for nothing, and had to return with little to eat on the way.

Hunza men are not cruel or vindictive, neither are they great fighters like the Pathan or the Gurkha, in the sense that they enjoy a battle. They are hard and enterprising because their rugged land makes them so. Undoubtedly they were fond of their freebooting ways, and derived much pleasure from attacking the soft and feckless Nagiris, looting the fat Turkis on their way to Mecca, and plundering the Kirghiz of the Pamirs. Now, however, they have fallen on evil days, and the curse of peace in a congested country is rotting them. They are, however, still a fine race, conspicuously the best of all the medley of tribes and mongrels for hundreds of miles round. They themselves admit that they are not what they were—and have no scope for their abilities. They do regret their old lawless life, with its call for quick decision, great hardships and real pluck.

It is a dismal commentary on the benefits of British rule that the only opening it has given to these splendid tribesmen is domestic service in some official's house in Gilgit, a sorry exchange for their former hard but free existence. They cannot afford to play polo, they have not enough land to occupy them, and game animals are well-nigh extinct. Year by year the population increases and nothing has been done, either by pumping water from the river or by carrying a flume from Nagir, to bring more land under cultivation. The Mir has done a great deal to open out new tracts



of ground, but he has neither the skill nor capital to operate on a large scale. The only grazing in the country is the property of the Mir, yet in adjacent valleys, in other states, there are wide and wasted pastures. The rich uplands of North Chitral, used by nomadic Afghan subjects, the untouched slopes of Bar and Daintar in Nagir, and others—with direct access to Hunza—come to mind.

The Indian Army enlists no man of Hunza. It is true that the Guides Infantry once took a few men, but the Mir objected and the authorities forbade further enlistment. Indeed, the Mir objects to his subjects leaving his state, and his attitude is, perhaps, natural, but it is reactionary and quite unpractical: in his own interests, it should be discouraged for the sake of his subjects.

It is incredible that during the Great War, when aborigines from Assam and Central India, Fijians, Chinese, and many strange tribes were recruited for all purposes, neither from Hunza nor from anywhere in the Gilgit Agency did anyone go to the war. It is true that a few men squatted in the Pamirs where there was never any prospect of danger to anyone. Looking back on that critical time, it is incomprehensible why the Political Officers and the Mirs failed to respond. I have often asked why this was and the reasons given have been quite admirable, but then they always are when a duty has been shirked; there is no convincing explanation.

The Gilgit Scouts do offer some employment for



the Hunza men, as one company is recruited from them, but these scouts are not permanently embodied, service and enlistment being in the hands of the Mir. The whole corps is more of a harlequinade than a serious guerilla force. I am afraid that all the above sounds like special pleading. To a lesser extent my remarks are applicable to the men of Yasin and Punyal, where there is fine material but not the same economic urgency. The point is that our advent to Gilgit and our control of Hunza have failed to give any lasting benefit to the fine folk of Hunza—to their prince yes, to themselves no.

It is difficult, as I have already said, to understand how the inhabitants of Nagir can be regarded as of the same race as their neighbours in Hunza. It is true that in Nagir the original inhabitants are confined strictly to the Nagir valley and to one or two villages below it, actually on the Hunza river where they speak Burishashki; elsewhere Shina, the Gilgiti language, prevails.

Recent but rare marriages with Hunza folk, combined with the effects of the first settlement of Hunza men in Nagir, have occasionally produced a faint trace of the Hunza stock, but this is an exceptional phenomenon. The Nagir race is a mixture of Balti, and to a less extent of Gilgiti, blood and is wholly distinct from that of Hunza. In Hunza the inhabitants scoff at the notion of being one blood with the people opposite. They point out that the Nagiris are small, black, and of different habits; that the road



to Baltistan used to be easy, and it is only in late years that a glacier has blocked the route and made the journey awkward, and that all this Balti blood came from Baltistan. What is more, when in 1838 and onwards, Kashmiris came with the Dogras to Gilgit, they found their way to Nagir, as most of them were men of some technical knowledge whose services were welcome to the chiefs. They were allowed to settle at Nagir, where land was abundant, but they were turned out of Hunza.

There seems a good deal to be said for these contentions, and it is probably true that the route to Baltistan used to be much easier than it is now. The Hunza men say that a few of their fruit trees came with them originally from Badakshan in the North, but that the greater part, and especially the apricots, came from Nagir. Now, good though the Hunza apricots are, it is recognised that those of Baltistan are far better, and that all the best varieties came over from Baltistan to Hunza via Nagir. Probably the peach, apricot and other fruit trees found their way to Baltistan from Kashmir where they had been brought by the Moguls, or else they reached Skardu in Baltistan from Kashgar, as in those days there was an easy route from Turkestan.

The characteristics of the modern Nagiri also differentiate him from the Hunza man. For example, his standard of life is shown to be lower, for he sells his wheat to Hunza in exchange for wool, potatoes and numdahs, and he himself eats inferior grains such



as barley. As carriers Nagiris show the contemptible incapacity of most Indus valley tribes. They can neither carry a load nor tie it on a pack animal and, if anyone travels in Nagir without a few Hunza men to show the people how to do things, the consequences are indeed tedious.

As artificers the Nagiris are bad ; and even in rough work they show little aptitude. The road to Nagir was made by Hunza workmen who are also responsible for most of the bridging.

It has been said that these differences of the Nagiris are due to the lack of sun, for they live on the shady side of the valley. This might modify their habits, but the explanation is inadequate to account for such fundamental differences.

In religion the Nagiris are Shiahhs, and in standards of comfort differ from their neighbours in Hunza. Their disposition and character too set them still further apart. They have always been defeated in war, they are feckless and indolent, they lack initiative and enterprise and, in fact, neither physically nor mentally resemble the men of Hunza. The Nagiris come from the East and South ; the Hunza men from the West and North.



## CHAPTER XI

## HISTORY OF HUNZA AND NAGIR

THE origin of the two states of Hunza and Nagir is very vague, and the story handed down about their foundation is picturesque but unconvincing. The tale, however, is well worth repeating, but I should point out that versions differ, and that the following account was given to me in Hunza.<sup>1</sup> It will be recognised that the story bears some resemblance to others, for instance that given by Biddulph ; it has real value as tradition. The absence of dates is annoying, but I have failed to discover any means of allocating events to particular years.

Two princes of Persia (for in this part of Asia all that is respected or admirable is attributed to that country, often mistakenly), by name Abdul Faiz and Abdul Ghani, were exiled from their own land and came to Baltistan. At that time a queen was reigning there, who made it her practice to live with any man she liked, but to kill both her paramour and any male offspring she might bear, though a girl child was allowed to live. She fell in love, however, with Abdul Faiz, a comely youth, but he refused to be anything

<sup>1</sup> The name Kanjut often given to Hunza, particularly by the Chinese, is unknown to, and ignored by, the people of that country.



to her but a real husband. After long argument she gave way, but the prince stipulated that, as her subjects regarded her as a goddess, some kind of divine intervention before their marriage would be appropriate. So one day Abdul Faiz appeared sitting on a throne, on a high rock, and this heavenly origin showed him to be a worthy mate for such a queen. Of this union Yaqut Shah was born, and he in turn had two sons, Azur, sometimes also known as Jamshed, and Murad Shah, and the two, on the death of their parents, divided their kingdom between them. To the former fell Hunza which included Nagir, and Azur, therefore, became Prince of that land. Nur Bakht, the daughter of Shiri (Sri) Badat, the cannibal king of Gilgit, fell in love with him and they were married secretly. Their son, when born, was put in a box and floated down the river to be found by a gold washer called Guddas. After the death of Shiri Badat, Azur ruled for seven years till, overcome by his wife's jealousy, he could endure it no longer and committed suicide.

The people of Gilgit were without a king and an old man suggested that as Guddas had, besides a number of other sons, one descended from the Ra or King of Gilgit, he should be chosen. No sooner had the young man come into the presence of Nur Bakht than her breasts filled with milk, and she knew that her own son stood before her. This son, Su Malik, was the great-great-grandfather of Lili Thum, father of Girkis and Moglot, and ruler of Hunza and



Nagir. On his death Hunza fell to Girkis as his portion and Nagir to Moglot. Up to this time the two brothers were devoted to each other but, when they became rulers of different states, the Hunza river divided their affections as well as their kingdoms.

Girkis had a son Maiyur who complained to his father that the Diramoti or Thapkan tribe in the Hassanabad nullah of Hunza were too independent and were likely to cause the Mir trouble. So when this tribe came to the great festival of Tum-i-shilling, when all Hunza was assembled, the Usengus and the Brong Hareyo, the two clans of Altit and Baltit, killed fifty households of Diramoti when the latter were all lying drunk. Girkis was grieved at so infelicitous an event; he exiled his son, first to Wakhan, from which place he went to Shighnan where he married the daughter of Shah Darwaz, the lineal descendant, as everyone in Hunza and Nagir says and knows, of Alexander the Great!<sup>1</sup>

Moglot of Nagir disliked his side of the valley, which was more fertile but shady, and plotted with his wazir, Moghul Beg, to kill Girkis when he went out to shoot teal on the river. So the wazir shot him with an arrow through the chest; it was a useless murder, for the people of Hunza refused to accept Moglot, and preferred to be ruled by Mir Begum, daughter of their dead ruler. It will thus be seen

<sup>1</sup> Another account gives Maiyur (or Mamuri) as the father of Girkis and of Moglot and the son of Lili Thum, but it seems quite impossible to arrive at any real degree of accuracy.



how early the tale of fratricide began and how futile, from their inception, such crimes have proved.

Tiring of their queen, the people went to fetch Maiyur back from exile where he had been for fifteen years. He had, however, died leaving a son Ayesho, aged seven, who was brought to Hunza, much to the annoyance of his aunt, Mir Begum, whom he eventually succeeded. He gave a daughter of his aunt to a son of Moglot, and he himself married a daughter of Jan Khan, Mir of Wakhan.

Here there are two points to be noted. The first that Ayesho is a son and not a daughter of Maiyur, the other that he did not marry into the family of the Mir of Nagir.

Another equally, or perhaps even more, reputable tradition makes Ayesho daughter of Girkis, and married to Kamal Khan, son of Moglot. The explanation often given is that the female Ayesho had an intrigue with a prince of Nagir, and to explain the liaison and justify its consequences, the sexes have been changed in the Hunza narrative. Whitewash is appreciated even in the Karakoram. Be the truth what it may, Ayesho, or the Heavenly One, is the ancestor or ancestress of the present ruling family of Hunza who call themselves Ayeshé in consequence.

The whole genealogy is most doubtful, though it is the detail rather than the general outline that is suspect. Eastern princes, like their colleagues elsewhere, are always ready to elaborate their family trees and so enhance their prestige, as witness the



fantastic claims of both the present Mirs of Hunza and Nagir to be descendants of Alexander of Macedon. That these two chiefs have a common ancestor may be acknowledged, but to grant that he was descended from Alexander is asking too much of common politeness.

Ali Dad Khan, great-grandson of Moglot, was driven out of Nagir, his kingdom annexed, and he himself compelled to flee to Baltistan. He returned with 300 men and reconquered his kingdom.

The dates of Moglot and Girkis may be taken as sometime in the first half of the 17th century or possibly (though I think it is unlikely) as at the end of the 16th. It is a matter of little importance as, with data both meagre and confused, a proper pedigree is hard to construct. In addition to the fact that Prince Abdul Faiz came from Baltistan, there has been some connection between the reigning house of Hunza and the Ras of Shardu in Baltistan.

It is said that Ayesho Khan II—this makes the first Ayesho male and not female, though a well-established and equally authentic genealogy makes it female—married the daughter of a Ra, and when the lady came to Hunza, Baltit and Altit were built for her, and by workmen from her own country. Through this marriage the Shiah form of Mohammedanism was introduced into the country. Later, in the time of Selim Khan III, the Maulai form was introduced by his marriage with a princess of Punyal, and by the time of Ghazanfur practically all the country



was Maulai. There are still three hundred Shiah families in Hunza, chiefly at Ganesh and thereabouts. They are not popular, and there is a tendency to compel them to embrace the Maulai doctrine.

Modern history in Hunza begins with Ghazanfur Khan who died in 1864. He was the first Mir to extend his dominions, and helped the Chinese considerably in 1847 when the seven Khojas of Yarkand rebelled; he was rewarded with a grant of land near that town and the inevitable memorial tablet which is, in China, the happy lot of all doers of good deeds. He was a great bandit, and the robberies committed under his benign and energetic rule were frequent and remunerative. He occupied many places across the present Chinese frontier in upper Sarikol. In what is now known as the Taghdumbash Pamir, both Ghujad Bai and Bozai Gumbaz were founded by him. At the former place there used to be a tower to commemorate a Hunza governor, and the dome at the latter was to commemorate the defeat of the Kirghiz, whose chief is said to have been named Bozai.<sup>1</sup>

Abdulla Khan was the leader of the Hunza men in these expeditions; he was a brother of the Mir but was murdered by his nephew, Ghazan Khan, when he succeeded Ghazanfur, as being too dangerous a relative.

The Sikh occupation of Gilgit (1842-7) did not

<sup>1</sup> The men of Hunza are said to have defeated the Kirghiz of the Pamirs in 1765 but there is no trace of any lasting results.



greatly trouble Hunza, though it is true that Nathu Shah, commander of the Sikh troops, attacked Hunza as punishment for raiding five villages in Gilgit territory. This attempt at retribution was not a success, as Nathu Shah, with his ally Karim Khan of Gilgit, was killed and the Hunza forces returned triumphantly. This was in 1847 or possibly 1848.<sup>1</sup> The Hunza leader in 1848 was Asadullah Khan, the wazir, father of Humayun Beg and Tara Beg alias Dadu, who later played so conspicuous a part in the Hunza-Nagir war against the Government. It was Asadullah Khan who attacked Nagir and captured it. The Mir of Nagir had gone to help Gauhar Aman, his father-in-law, and his wife was captured and carried off to Hunza to be the mistress of Ghazanfur, the ruling Mir.

The triumph over the Sikhs and over Nagir probably influenced the attitude of the men of Hunza when the British invaded the country in 1891. They had never been defeated, and could not believe that an army of foreigners from the plains could deal with mountaineers on their crags.

In 1866 the Kashmir authorities again attacked Hunza, for the forays of its turbulent inhabitants had exasperated them; they enlisted the help of the Nagiris who were always the bitter but feeble foes of their neighbours. These, however, failed to cooperate and gradually began to desert their allies, till the Dogras, contrary to the usual manliness of their

<sup>1</sup> Biddulph, p. 79, gives the date as 1848.



race, fled in panic one night, thinking that the Nagiris were attacking them.

Nothing checked the Hunza raids, and in 1869 they attacked Nomal and took away 200 of its inhabitants to be sold as slaves. No matter what they did the men of Hunza were neither punished nor defeated. Their raids into Chinese territory were stopped during the reign of the Mohammedan prince, Yaqub Beg Bedaulat, the Attaliq Ghazi, who instilled fear into these mountaineers: the moment that that much maligned but able ruler died, and the Chinese regained the country in 1878, the raids recommenced, the Chinese turning a blind eye to them and a deaf ear to their subjects' complaints; it was only the British occupation that stopped the banditry in Chinese territory. The raids into the Kashmiri districts were ended by mutual agreement between the Mir and the authorities in Gilgit, but they were never stopped by force of arms. It is therefore hardly surprising that the whole of Hunza has a supreme contempt for anything Kashmiri. It must also be remembered that the Hunza forces took part in the annihilation of the Dogra army of Bhup Singh in 1862.

In 1868 Ghazan Khan, with the connivance of his sister, murdered his father Ghazanfur. That lady, Bibi Taira, dearly loved her brother, so she took a fresh smallpox vesicle or pustule and put it into her father's food. Another version says that she sent him a choga (robe) which had recently been worn by a smallpox patient. The Mir at any rate died.





GHAZAN KHAN







A passing reference may here be made to Chaprot, now in the possession of Nagir. In 1853 Gauhar Aman invaded Gilgit, and the men of Hunza, who were living in isolation as interlopers in Chaprot, left that valley. It was recovered but, when the Nagiris invaded the place in the time of Mir Ghazan Khan of Hunza, the inhabitants again left. Why, is not clear, as there was no defeat. In 1866, when Aman-ul-Mulk of Chitral attacked the Kashmir forces at Gilgit, wazir Asadullah Beg of Hunza drove out the Kashmir garrison from Chaprot. The Nagiris regained the place in 1877, by agreement and with the help of Kashmir.

In 1886 Sir William Lockhart arranged for the Nagir garrison to evacuate Chaprot, but to leave the Kashmir sepoy there. He intended to delude the Mir of Hunza into believing that he was to be given Chaprot as Sir William Lockhart had been refused all assistance by Hunza until it was returned. There are now no Kashmir troops in Chaprot, but the valley is still coveted by the Hunza men who regard it as their own.

To return to the murder of Ghazanfur and the succession of Ghazan Khan, father of the present Mir. This amiable parricide was very short, very fond of wine and food, fat, black, and ugly, as his portrait shows, but all the same a popular ruler. He suffered from heart disease and had dropsy in the legs. It was he who resolutely refused to allow the Gilgit mission under Sir William Lockhart to go through



his country on their way to the Pamirs in 1886. He used to describe himself as a subject of the Emperor of China, as indeed he was; consequently he hardly welcomed the British as a possible set of new masters, although in 1869 he had become in a vague way a tributary of Kashmir. His hostility to the mission was largely due to his wazir Asadullah, who was bitterly anti-British. The Mir himself, however, wished to bargain and hoped to obtain Chalt or Chaprot. The wazir, however, died in March 1886, and permission was finally given for Sir William Lockhart and his party to travel through Hunza, which they eventually did with complete safety. They had taken hostages from the Mir but, if the latter had meant mischief, he would not have held his hand for the sake of his son and other relatives in Gilgit, of which he had plenty. Aman-ul-Mulk, Mehtar of Chitral, helped to induce the Mir to give leave. Best of all the wife of Mir Mohamed Khan of Nagir, who was a sister of Ghazan Khan, was in Kashmir, and the family had been befriended there by Lockhart. She sent a lock of her hair to the Mir and told him to let the British mission pass through.

Ghazan Khan had been a good killer like all his class for, besides arranging the death of his father, he killed his uncle Abdulla Khan, his brothers Tawakkal Shah and Nuni Shah and other relatives. That he met his death violently was not therefore surprising nor a cause for bewailing the death of the innocent.

The murder of the Mir, then seventy-eight years



of age, took place in 1886. He was living at the time in the old palace at Baltit and had ridden out to see his son, Mohamed Nazim, the present ruler, who was in a house outside, laid up with typhoid fever. As the Mir was riding away he was shot down by four men, in the presence of the wazir, Dadu (or Tara Beg). His son and successor, Safdar Ali, was not present. It is a mistake to believe that the wazir was a friend of the new Mir, rather it was the reverse. Safdar Ali was no fool, and he wished to kill Dadu and make his half-brother Humayun Beg, then in exile, his wazir. When Dadu's wife, a clever, one-eyed woman, heard this, she told her husband to make the Mir marry Humayun's wife. The Mir did so, and by this simple piece of diplomatic adultery Dadu prevented Humayun from returning, alienated the Mir and his half-brother and saved his own life. It was Dadu too who persuaded the new Mir to kill his brother Sillim, declaring that the latter meant to seize the throne. Safdar Ali had wished to send his brother, who was married to the daughter of Karim Khan, chief of Sarikol, to that country and had even arranged it with the Chinese. He sent his brother to the remote valley of Shingshal and would never have killed him, had not a headman, Zeru, plotted to murder Safdar Ali and put Sillim on the throne. Two sons of Humayun's sister were also at Shingshal, and they with Sillim, Taighur, and two more men were all killed. It was an act of self-defence on the Mir's part.

I have never understood why Durand, in his book,



is so severe on Safdar Ali. He describes the late ex-Mir as bearing an ill name for treachery, cruelty and weakness, as a contemptible young parricide, and talks of the deep discontent of the people with Safdar Ali, whose cruelty was unrelieved, and so forth. I believe that Durand was wholly misinformed. It was not likely that, with their ruler an exile and a British force in their country, anyone would espouse the cause of Safdar Ali; it was naïve of Durand to expect to hear any good of him. To-day, in Hunza, you will not, if you are an official or a stranger, hear a word in his praise. Neither his brother, the present Mir, who enjoys the throne of Safdar Ali, nor any of his relatives will say a good word for him. Yet he was a popular and humane man, a just and genial ruler, and very easy-going. He remitted a number of taxes, and was considerate and affable. He saved the lives of his nephew, Khisrau Khan, and his three brothers, Abbas, Badshah and Suleiman, by sending them with their mother to Gulmit, to escape the clutches of Uzr Khan of Nagir, who wanted to slay them as possible claimants or rivals for the throne of Nagir.

Safdar Ali never intended to flee and he sent his brother, the present Mir, to come to terms with the British, but the negotiations miscarried. He was stampeded into flight by his wazir Dadu, on being told that Humayun Beg was returning with a force from Chitral and by other rumours. When in Chinese territory he went with Dadu to Urumchi where the two quarrelled violently, as the ex-Mir bitterly



reproached his wazir and finally even struck him. The wazir took opium and died very soon after his arrival in that city, but Safdar Ali lived till 1930, when he died at Yarkand. I knew the old man well, and I shall always remember him in his ragged old coat, dusty, cracked long boots, and Turki cap, driving a small donkey laden with wood in the bazaars of Kucha in Turkestan. He was always genial, always polite, though desperately poor. He had forgotten his mother tongue, but spoke Persian well, and could quote from Hafiz or Sadi. He was welcome at every feast, and much enjoyed talking with my Hunza men. 'Ah, Abdulla Beg', he used to say to one of them, 'many a glass of wine I used to have with your father, and here you are, not taking a drop.' He never said anything about the state of affairs in Hunza, never disparaged his brother, and never complained. The only favour he ever asked was to be allowed to return to Yarkand; this was arranged, and he died peacefully there, although his brother, true to the frontier policy of hitting a man, good and hard, when once he was down, strongly objected. Safdar Ali never received justice; and his kingdom was taken from him without its ruler being allowed to speak in his own defence. Not even was a small allowance given to him as some compensation. Let it be remembered he was never a British subject but a vassal of the Manchu Emperor. He was, moreover, encouraged by the Chinese to go to war with the British and was even supplied by them annually with ammunition. When an exile, desperate and



almost starving, the old man would go to the Chinese authorities and show them the letters of Lu Ju Shwe, the late Governor-General of Turkestan, urging him as Mir to go to war with India, and he would bitterly accuse the Chinese of being the cause of his present plight. He was a Chinese feudatory, ignorant, remote, and true to the savage customs of his land; and the story of his poverty and exile is discreditable to all concerned.

A reference must be made to the present relations between Hunza and the Chinese. The Mir claims that the Taghdumbash Pamir as far down as Uruk Jilga on the right of the Taghdumbash or Tashkurghan river, and below Dafdar is his territory. He collects yearly from the nomads tribute in the form of numdahs and ropes to a value of certainly not more than one hundred and fifty rupees. He also claims grazing rights for himself and his subjects, as well as the privilege of issuing passports to his own people to travel as far as Tashkurghan. Besides these rights, he claims that Raskam, on the Sino-Indian frontier, belongs to him, and that he can graze and build, plant and settle there. The Chinese admit certain privileges in the upper Pamirs, not as a ruler, but solely as a landowner who may graze his own sheep but no one else's. If he levies tribute from the nomads that is a matter between the Mir and the nomads. If he issues a passport, the only value of it is as an identification of the owner. As to Raskam, the Mir has no standing there of any sort whatsoever.



The Mir sends every year his elchi (envoy) with a tribute of gold dust; he is received in state by the Chinese Governor of Kashgar who takes the tribute, and in return sends presents for the Mir, and gives others to the envoy and the other leading men present. The party is likewise entitled to free transport to and from the frontier, at the expense not of the Chinese but of the nomads and villagers. The value of the gold is perhaps about £10 at the outside, and to pay for it a small cess, either of gold dust or corn, is levied on every household in Hunza proper. The presents given are worth about £40, though naturally their value fluctuates with the market. These gifts consist of two 'shoes' of silver, silk, teacups, slabs of compressed tea, coarse cloth, and other local produce. Formerly, the whole party was fed well throughout their stay, but they are now only fed for ten days, and during their journey to and from the frontier. A photograph of the tribute is always taken and sent to Urumchi as evidence that homage has been paid by China's vassal.

Now whatever rights the Mirs of Hunza once had in present Chinese territory were abolished by the Pamir Commission which delimited the frontier. The British Consular authorities in Kashgar ignore the whole business, very properly, and avoid all interference on the subject of the Mir and his rights. It is not easy, however, to abstain from some official recognition as the Mir of Hunza hardly allows a month to pass without complaining of some petty infringement of his privileges. The whole business is an

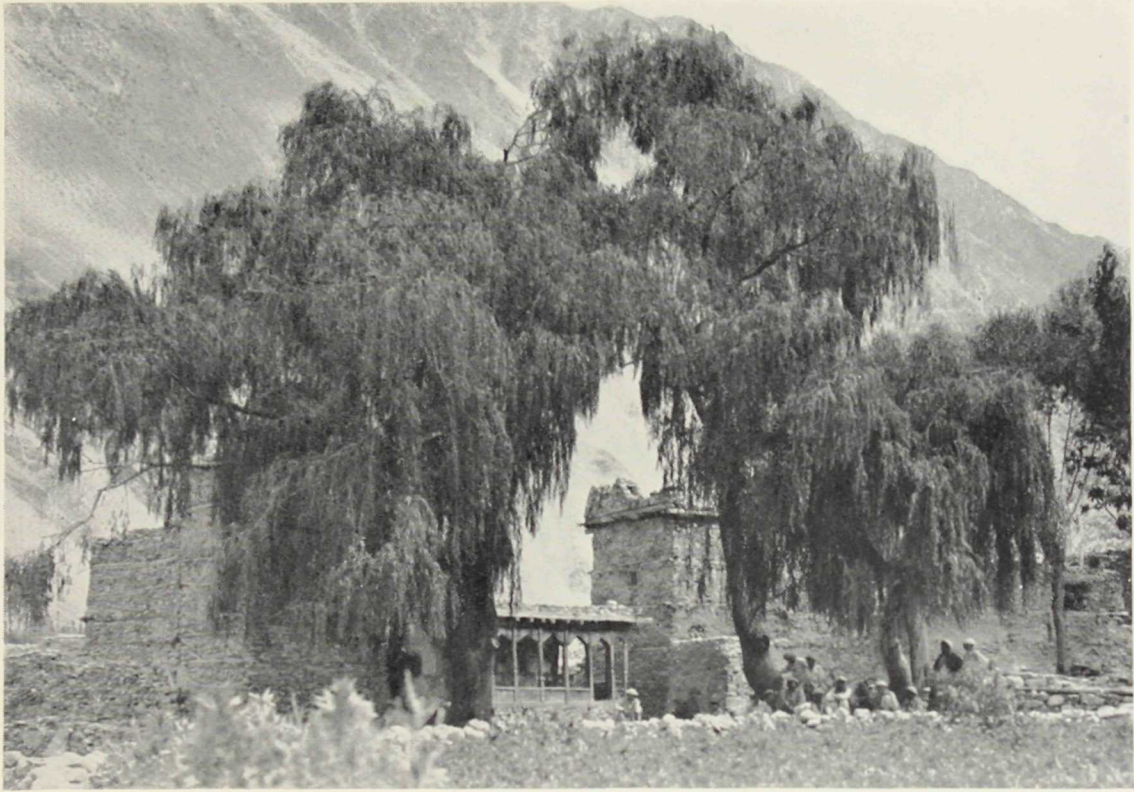


unmitigated nuisance, especially as the Mir becomes aggrieved and querulous if the British officials do not hasten to support his often excessive demands. It seems, on wider and national grounds, a very unfortunate complication and it would be well to buy out the Mir. The sum of £250 would be generous compensation, but the Mir should give up all idea of eating his cake and keeping it and should confine his very active political energies to his side of the frontier.

A brief account of Nagir must now be given, but this state, if only by reason of its situation, has played an insignificant rôle in history; even the States of Punyal and Yasin have been more in evidence. Thrust aside from the scanty traffic of the mountains Nagir has vegetated, and has always been regarded as the unwarlike neighbour of the fierce men of Hunza. At no time have the Nagiris defeated the Hunza folk, and while the latter have always been independent, save for the vaguest form of allegiance, more in name than in fact, to Kashmir, Nagir has always been under the suzerainty of some neighbour. Not indeed that their allegiance has ever been severely tested, for Nagir is such a weak partner that it has rather been ignored. Formerly, in the days of the Shin Ras of Gilgit, the Mirs of Nagir are said to have been their vassals, and the villages of Gulmit, Nilt, Thol and Pisan were given as dower to Mirs who married the daughters of the Ra.

During the Sikh occupation of Gilgit, 1842-7,





OLD FORT AT THOL, NAGIR







relationships with Nagir were closer and Ali Dad Khan, an infant son of the Mir of Nagir, was even installed as Ra of Gilgit. Indeed in 1848 Nagir acknowledged the suzerainty of Kashmir, though the tie was very loose. Later, when the Maharaja tried to use the people of Nagir as his allies, during the period 1863-7 when the Dogras had to fight for Gilgit, he found them quite untrustworthy. The Nagiris are thus to all intents a people without a history, and when the stirring events that enlivened life in other states close by are considered, it is remarkable that Nagir should have lived so placidly. But its seclusion as well as its unwarlike people insured its insignificance.

After the Hunza-Nagir war, the old Mir of Nagir, Zafar Khan, nominally ruled the state till his death in 1904, when the present Mir, Sikandar, who had been regent for his father, succeeded him in name as well as in fact. The rulers of Hunza and Nagir are addressed as Nasr, but are sometimes referred to as Suri. For instance, a man will say that he has received a gift from the Suri: and it is said that this name is connected with the Sanskrit Sri, a Hindu title of respect. It is found in Suryas, the place of the king or chief, which was the old name for the site on which the present Mir of Hunza has built his summer palace, and which he has rechristened Karimabad.

In Nagir and Hunza the rulers are called Thum; the title Mir is a fine flower of conversation reserved for use amongst strangers. Thum (the word rhymes



with 'rum' or 'thumb') is said to be derived from the Chinese title Tung, and perhaps it is.

All the chiefs dispense justice in open court or durbar, where, sitting with his advisers, the ruler gives a decision which is at once enforced. It is usually fair, but the advisers are frequently blamed, for when the Mir has given his sentence, he turns round and asks if his award is right. It is not so much a question as to whether the case has been adjudged rightly, for it usually is, but rather if the fine or penalty is excessive or otherwise: and it is here that the advisers fail. If it is a fine it is generally paid into the treasury, which is a euphemism for the Raja's pocket, so knowing the acquisitive tendencies of their rulers, the elders are reluctant to reduce an award.

In Hunza and elsewhere in the Agency, the usual system of village administration is established. A trangpa or lumbardar is in charge of the village duties, and under him are minor officials who do the real work for which the trangpas receive the remuneration. The principal of these lesser lights is the chirbu, who really does the work for the traveller, providing supplies and so forth. In Hunza there is an uyum (lit. 'great, big') who comes between the chirbu and trangpa. These village officials have duties connected with settling disputes, collecting revenue, and the like, for all of which they receive certain payment in kind from their villages. The yarpa is the personal representative of the ruler. It is his duty to attend to his



property and privileges, which are somewhat complicated, and to represent his interests generally.

These intentionally brief accounts explain the simple and even paternal method of rule in Hunza and Nagir. It suits the people, and is in harmony with the usual traditions of the East, but its success depends wholly on the personality of the ruler who is, in fact, the sole arbiter, the sole judge, and from whom there is really no appeal.



## CHAPTER XII

## THE PEOPLE OF THE GILGIT AGENCY

IT is far easier to describe than to explain the people of the Gilgit Agency. In no circumstances would the task of tracing the history of a number of tribes in a remote valley be easy, especially when records are wanting; but the initial difficulties have been increased by the use of the words Dard and Dardistan for the people and country, applied not merely to Gilgit but to the Indus valley generally between Ladakh and the Punjab. Suffice it to say that the term Dard is unknown to the people in this district, and Dardistan is equally incomprehensible. There is no need to labour the unfortunate application of these words, except to observe that they are not even useful labels or general classifiers. They obscure the issue, and it is disappointing to find such a shrewd observer as Drew using this loose nomenclature, but it must be borne in mind that when he wrote little was known of the country.

Biddulph, who wrote later, is less sweeping, and observes that only one tribe on the left bank of the Indus in Kohistan is called Dard, and that Dard is not acknowledged by any section of the tribes to which



it has been so sweepingly applied. He humorously but seriously suggests that the word is a nickname given by the Kashmiris to all the tribes from these savage parts, implying that they were beasts or robbers (dud, a beast of prey; or dahyu, a robber; or even darena, fierce—words of Persian origin). I propose therefore to discuss the peoples of the Gilgit Agency as they are to-day, and not to theorise about their past or assign ethnographic origins to them. In doing this the word Yeshkun (or Yashkun) always crops up, which is as unfortunate a word as Dard, and, though not quite without meaning, is equally misleading. It must be remembered that, when Hinduism was the religion of the country, the descriptive names given to what appear now to be different races were merely used for difference of classes or castes. Thus the term Yeshkun which figures so often in all ethnographic discussions, and which has caused confusion, appears to mean no more than peasant or zemindar. Yeshkuns are agriculturists and may be of any race, provided they ply the business of husbandry. It is thus a term of no value whatever and particularly confusing when used of Moslems, as it implies a distinction that does not exist. It was used by Biddulph and Drew because they believed all the people of the Gilgit area to be ethnographically one. It is peculiarly exasperating to be told that the most numerous caste in an agricultural community are agriculturists, for that is what it amounts to. When further the so-called high castes, such as the Shins and the Ronos, are also



occupied wholly in agriculture, the distinction becomes meaningless.

The Shins, who were formerly high-caste orthodox Hindus, are now Mohammedans, but have retained certain observances and characteristics of their old faith.

The Ronos are a race and not a caste, and I think there are grounds for believing them to be immigrants from the West, even from Arabia as they claim, and those that I have seen do certainly differ in appearance from their neighbours, being often taller, with a more aquiline profile and higher cheek bones.

The opening up of the country subsequent to the British occupation, the levelling effect of Islam and consequent intermarriage are banishing the distinctions between races or castes. In a few decades the Moslems will be Moslems and nothing else, and the differences of even half a century ago will have disappeared.

The Shins, however, are still a class apart—I do not say a race or a caste, though they may be the former, and it seems that their modern characteristics are only survivals of the Hinduism they have repudiated. It is said that they came from Pakli on the Indus, founded principalities as they passed north, of which Gilgit and Battishan were the chief, and remained a race apart, conspicuous and unblending, thanks to their high caste Hinduism. The Shins of to-day are a much scattered race and in the Gilgit Agency are chiefly found in Chilas, where half the



population is Shin, and in Bagrot where they are nearly all so.<sup>1</sup>

The Shins still regard themselves as the aristocracy of the district, a claim that is not generally recognised. They are arrogant, miserly and aloof. Their prejudices regarding the cow are dying out but are still strong. Indeed, though the Shins are Shiah Moslems, they still claim descent from the gods which is hardly an orthodox belief. They now admit that they drink a little cow's milk, and an occasional man does eat beef, but they still believe that, if they eat beef or drink cow's milk, they will become lame or blind. Their hunters and herdsmen never touch a cow or calf, beef or milk, as they say that, dwelling as they must in dangerous mountains, the fairies or the demons would regard them as impure and they would perish. Women will now put a calf to a cow for suckling, but men never will do so, and formerly even women used to catch hold of the calf with two sticks and put it to its mother.

Shins are strictly endogamous ; when demanding a girl in marriage they never give or receive anything except when the marriage is approved. They then give a knife and ten yards of cotton cloth and the dowry

<sup>1</sup> There are no Shins in Yasin, Ishkoman, Kuh or Ghizr. Many are in Chaprot, three or four families in Gulapur (Punyal), and one or two others elsewhere in that state. Minawar, near Gilgit, is half Shin. The present home of the Shins is Indus-Kohistan, or Yaghistan, as it is more aptly described locally, where in Darel and Jalkot half the people are Shins.



is always fixed at five rupees. At the actual wedding the bridegroom or his family provide a feast, and no more entertainment is given. The girl's father gives some jewellery and cloth.

During a woman's monthly periods she is sent to a place in the house apart from the rest of the family and her plates and dishes are kept separate. When all is over her clothes are washed, she bathes and the place of her seclusion is purified by lighting a fire of juniper or pencil cedar on it, after which she rejoins the family.

The meanness of the Shins is famous and increases their unpopularity, which is shown by other races calling all Shins khajuni, which is Shinauri for useless. The non-Shina-speaking races also call the Shins dangarik, or the people of the cow. Yet Shins are very industrious agriculturists; they will always abandon their land, even if it is ancestral, and go elsewhere if there is promise of a better or larger acreage.

As an example of their meanness and suspicion the Shins still hide their money and valuables. This custom was common enough in former days and easily understood, considering the insecurity of the time, but the habit has persisted even to this day. A Shin will go alone and secretly to some place in the mountains, there to bury his money and valuables in the ground; he even takes the precaution to lay down and walk on a line of stones which he afterwards removes, so that his footsteps may not be seen. He



intends, of course, to disclose the hiding-place to his heirs, but death often overtakes him before he has done so. His family know the custom, and spend much time in searching fruitlessly for the buried wealth, but the work has generally been done too well. I was often asked by Shins if I could not discover by means of my scientific instruments where all these lost treasures had been hidden. In spite of their pride, they are stupid creatures. In the remoter districts no merchant will visit them to buy their produce, because they demand much more than the bazaar prices (usually double the Gilgit rate) and thus, thanks to their greed, they have to take their goods to the market, and sell them for what they will fetch, having lost the chance of a decent profit.

We noticed their habit of using their timber before it was seasoned. For instance they make ploughs and rafters of new wood and then expose them to dry, with the inevitable consequences. They are extremely dirty in their habits. They wear filthy puttoo (native frieze), and a cotton shirt seems unknown amongst them ; their caps are grimy too.

One belief persists from the superstition of the holiness of the cow. It is well known that if at Sayyar in Nagir or at Jaglot in Kashmir territory opposite Nomal, any cow-dung, or cow-skin, or part of a cow falls into one of the wells a tempest at once arises.

The Ronos are a highly honoured race ; most of the wazirs come from this clan which is not



numerous though, perhaps, most so in Chitral where there are some three hundred families. They will marry the illegitimate daughters of the Rajas, and in turn will give their daughters to the chiefs and the seyyids or descendants of the Prophet.

In Nagir and Yasin they call themselves Hara (or Harair). Their claim is that they are descended from Muhamad Hanifa, son of Ali, the son-in-law of the Prophet, but others assert that Zoon, Rono or Harai, a son of Su Malik who once ruled in Mastuj, was an ancestor. Neither tradition is very convincing, but the Ronos do undoubtedly, as mentioned above, appear to be physically different from their neighbours and they are much looked up to on all sides.

A very brief reference is necessary to the other castes or rather professions. Kamins (millers and potters) are not found in Hunza and Nagir, and Doms (musicians, blacksmiths and cobblers) are most numerous in Yasin, Chilas and Nagir. The Shotos or leather-workers are only met with in Nagir. I think that these castes are, with the exception perhaps of the Doms, as musicians, becoming yearly less differentiated from those which follow other occupations.

After this description of the chief classes of the Gilgit Agency as now existing, it is desirable to give some indication of what is the origin of the people, although I have already referred to the great difficulty of doing so.



The inhabitants of Hunza have been accounted for, also those of Nagir who are largely Balti with some admixture of the Indus valley tribes. The Wakhi who are found in Upper Hunza ('Little Guhjal') and Upper Ishkoman are easily identified as Iranian nomads from Wakhan, of an old Persian stock. As to the rest of the people it may be hazarded that three ingredients may be found in the formation of the mixed races of the Gilgit Agency. First of all the people of Yasin, Punyal and, to a less extent, Kuh and Ghizr are of a superior stock to the other dwellers in the country. Punyalis and Yasinis can, in some circumstances, compare favourably with the Hunza men. They are good on the hillside, are keen on shikar and, though apt to be lazy and unaccommodating, are a race apart from their neighbours of Ishkoman, Gilgit or Nagir.

The explanation which, after much inquiry, appears to be the most reasonable, seems to be that they came originally from Kohistan, that wild, still uninhabited, country between the Indus and the Swat rivers, and especially from the more northern extremities, Darel and Tangir. It may be argued that the inhabitants of the two latter valleys possess few of the qualities of the Yasini or Punyali, but the explanation lies in the discipline, and even culture which their strange hot-headed rulers, the Khushwaqt, have introduced among them. Besides, life in a settled district means intercourse, to some extent, with the outside world and still more with the world of Islam. Notwithstanding



their many and outrageous defects, not merely were the Khushwaqt a race showing ability and energy (and no one can say that their subjects lacked incident in their lives when under the rule of these princes), but their relationship with Chitral had a harmonising and stimulating effect, for with all their faults, numerous enough to destroy an average mortal, the Chitrali has always proved a fine mountaineer and no emasculated creature. Then too the position of their lands to the north and on the right of the Indus ensured their freedom from Balti and Gilgiti influence.

Ishkoman, however, once a penal settlement of Yasin, was colonised from Gilgit, and from Bagrot, and so the Ishkoman people are the dregs of the neighbouring valleys. Baltistan has contributed no small amount to the population, especially in Nagir and Bagrot, and the valleys leading up to it. The very mixed nature of the present inhabitants of Gilgit is evident, but the origin of its population is traceable to the Kohistanis. Just as they colonised in Yasin and Punyal, so they did in the Gilgit valley, but whereas in the former they remained comparatively pure, in the latter circumstances contaminated their race. The Kohistanis are the same, I suppose, as the original inhabitants of Chitral and are an indigenous race. In some places they have kept their language and imposed it even on their conquerors, in Chitral, for example, as well as in Ghizr and in the valleys. The Shins probably are a racial wave that has been cast up the Indus valley from the South and have imposed,



thanks to Hinduism and caste, their language and habits on Gilgit.

All this is merely theory ; the difficulty is to reconcile a virile race such as exists to-day in Yasin and Punyal with a decadent and even despicable race living close by in Gilgit and its environs. It is not unreasonable to conclude that purity of race and its later adulteration with an admittedly inferior stock offer one solution of the problem. Kohistan would provide one race, the Shins another, the rest of the people (excepting Hunza) being an amalgam of both.

Although the languages of the Gilgit Agency are of interest there are in fact only two indigenous ones, Shina (or Shinauri), which is spoken generally throughout the Agency, and Burishashki, the language of Hunza proper, of Nagir town and valley (but not of the rest of that country), of Punyal and of certain villages of Yasin. In the Karambar valley of Ishkoman and in Little Guhjal, the Wakhis have their own language. In Yasin there is some Shina and a good deal of Chitrali or Khowar, and the Burishashki tongue, which differs considerably from the dialect of Hunza, is not holding its own and is limited to Darkot and the remoter valleys. The influence of Chitral is considerable, and is seen in the use of its language which the Khushwaqt chiefs of Ghizr and Yasin invariably use both in private and in durbar. The result is that in Yasin itself and in other villages there is a tendency for Khowar, which is regarded invariably even in Gilgit as the language of the polite world, to drive out Burishashki, probably



as the tongue of the hated Burish for whom the Khushwaqts have little liking, and to displace even Shina, especially in Ghizr. There are too indications of Chitrali becoming the *lingua franca* of the political ilaqs of the Agency, although in Hunza and Nagir Chitrali is quite unknown, since there is little intercourse with that country and no desire for more.

Urdu, or Punjabi as it is called, is widely known everywhere, and a knowledge of it will carry a traveller through most places.

In conclusion it may be agreed that the term Dard, as a single classifier for the races of the Gilgit Agency, must be abandoned as too vague and wholly unsound. The differences between the various peoples cannot be assigned to accidents of environment or to political stress. The people of Yasin and Punyal, the Shins, and the Nagiris differ far too fundamentally ever to have had a recent common origin. The folk of Hunza bear no resemblance to their neighbours. The term Dard means even less than European or Asiatic, for the limits of Dardistan are uncharted and its extent wholly arbitrary. It is a pretty theory to explain away the people of the Indus valley by successive emigrations from India. That there were such is certain; but the problem cannot be answered so simply. Rather was Hunza peopled from the North; Nagir chiefly from the East: other valleys from the West, and the main Gilgit area from the South. Thus, aided by its ruggedness and remoteness, the inhabitants of the Gilgit Agency have founded their present abodes



in various ways, and their differences are due not to successive immigrations along one line of advance, with modification due to environment, but rather to approach from wholly different quarters, with the result that similarities of custom and habit have developed after their arrival in the area rather than being traceable to any common origin.



## CHAPTER XIII

## THE HUNZA-NAGIR WAR

THE operations in Hunza in 1891 were the consolidating factor in the formation of the Gilgit Agency. The Government of India, although naturally interested in the then extreme North-West Frontier, had not seriously considered the situation. They had sent Major Biddulph in 1878 but had withdrawn him. They then despatched the more elaborate Gilgit Chitral Mission of 1885-6 and, finally, largely as a result, sent Colonel Algernon Durand to establish an agency and open up the country politically. Complications with China, Russia, or even Chitral might have modified this programme. As it turned out, the operations in Hunza-Nagir resulted in treaties with obligations which were difficult to ignore and which crystallised the attitude of the Government of India. Indeed Simla was probably alarmed. Russian expansion was a very real and rapidly approaching menace in the last quarter of the 19th century, and it was only right that its course towards India should be watched, especially if India itself were the objective. Little was known of the politics of the Karakoram and Hindu Kush, just as little is known or cared about them to-day and, although nervous and even apprehensive, the Government of



India could not foresee events. Information was vague and unreliable, communications indifferent and the attitude and dispositions of the leading chiefs problematic. The Russians too were much nearer, with easy access to the present frontier-line. The authorities did not wish to be involved in a war with Russia or a second Penjdeh affair, but they certainly wanted no Russian penetration. On the whole they acted very wisely in their attitude towards the Gilgit area, and the only criticism is that up to the time of the expedition their excessive deliberation was hazardous ; The Russians might have forestalled them. It was probably pre-occupation elsewhere that alone prevented Hunza and Nagir from being incorporated in Russia-in-Asia before the events occurred which stirred the Indian authorities to action. The actors in the drama that brought matters to a head were Uzr Khan, son of Jafar Khan, the old Mir of Nagir who had little authority in his state, and Tara Beg, commonly known as Dadu, who was wazir of Safdar Ali, Mir of Hunza and half-brother of Humayun Beg, the capable wazir of Hunza after the war.

Dadu was, indeed, the instigator of the whole business. He was a man of great energy and ability, and very far-seeing. He failed, and so has had to suffer the revilings and the degradation which, in the East especially, always attend the unlucky.

The Mirs of Hunza and Nagir had not watched the return of the British to Gilgit with any enthusiasm. Durand had established himself as Political Agent in



1889 and had held his first durbar to which the local potentates had been bidden. By 1890 he had greatly improved his position. The Kashmir troops had been taken in charge, their fighting value much increased, and the more scandalous abuses abolished. Roads, provisions of supplies, and other pioneer measures had been attended to, and thus, at the beginning of 1891, the British Agent was in a fairly secure position. But only fairly, because the long and vulnerable line of communication to Kashmir was a great anxiety, and in an emergency the Political Agent could not be helped from India.

Great and many wars have been the lot of the British Army since 1891, and it is natural to regard these operations rather condescendingly. This attitude is unjust. To begin with, the political importance was immense, quite disproportionate to the few actors on the small stage, since the effect of a defeat would have been far-reaching and would have stirred Russia to action and the occupation of Hunza and Nagir.

In a military sense the force was small, the ground exceedingly difficult, the equipment inadequate or, at any rate, barely enough, and the troops quite definitely second-rate. Punyal levies and Kashmir sepoy had but a scanty leavening of properly trained sepoy of the Indian Army. As Durand says, the 180 men of the 5th Gurkhas were the backbone of the force.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The composition of the force was 180 5th Gurkha Rifles, 450 Gurkhas and Dogras of the Kashmir Bodyguard Regiment, 250



I do not think that Durand has ever received the credit he deserves: though he expected to meet a force of 4,000 to 5,000 indifferently armed men that was neither compensation nor consolation for attacking, knowing as he did that although, even with his inadequate force, there was no means of avoiding war, he would be blamed for any failure.

As Political Agent he had to act, and he had no alternative but to attack with the force at his disposal. He took a grave risk, but his political insight made him realise the need for immediate action. The country he was to fight over was severer than any the North-West Frontier had to offer. Roads, bridges, shelter, supplies had to be improvised. Even now with a good road and spacious bridges the Gilgit Agency, and especially the valley of the Hunza river, is an extremely awkward terrain for any force to operate in.

The immediate cause of war was the news that Uzr Khan was threatening to seize the forts of Chalt and Chaprot. The details of the expedition are given in Knight's *Where Three Empires Meet*, but more readably and briefly in Durand's own book, *The Making of a Frontier*. The Political Agent moved every man he could to Chalt whilst Uzr Khan was collecting his forces in Nilt and then, very wisely, began

Dogras of Kashmir Ragu Pertab Regiment, 150 Punyali Levies, the Hazara mountain battery with seven-pounder guns, and the Political Agent's personal escort of 20 men of the 20th Punjab Infantry, half with a Gatling gun: of these he very wisely gave 10 men to stiffen the Punyalis.



negotiations with the enemy who were disconcerted by this prompt action and by the presence of British troops at their door.

I do not believe that Russia had any active share in instigating the chiefs or tribesmen to take the offensive, though undoubtedly she would have taken advantage for her own ends of any success of the mountaineers. I have asked many of the leading men of the country about this war which is still a recent and very vivid occurrence and, indeed, the only great event in the local history of the last fifty years. Fear for their independence was probably the underlying, even if unperceived, motive for attack, but ostensibly and primarily it was, as I have stated, the work of Dadu (Tara Beg). I have asked if he wished to become Mir, but local opinion is against this idea which would have been hard to realise. Dadu may have been a black-guard and may have deserved the abuse heaped on him, but he had acumen. The murders of the members of the ruling family were doubtless cruel but necessary for his object, which was to remove all rivals to the two Mirs. He knew, as did everyone else, that so long as the brothers were left alive there would be no safety for the chiefs and no peace for the country. Writers waste time, ink and labour in castigating savage rulers for acting as their instincts direct them: it is illogical to defame Dadu or Uzr Khan for acting according to their lights.

I have been told, however, that ultimately Dadu meant to depose Safdar Ali, the Mir, and unite both



states under Uzr Khan of Nagir, with Dadu as wazir of Hunza. If so, it was a well-conceived and ambitious scheme.

There were other influences that encouraged the two states to resist. Their age-long isolation and immunity from attack, the difficulty of the country, and the opinion that the British were bluffing, all inclined them to war. Thus it was that the summer was spent in futile negotiations, and the longer the British patiently palavered the more certain the tribesmen grew that it was all make-believe. It is easy to be wise now, but it would have saved much trouble if the expedition had not tarried at Chalt on the Kashmir-Nagir border.

The Government of India meanwhile reinforced the Political Agent with two hundred men of the 5th Gurkhas and two guns, in addition to sending fifteen British officers. By November all was ready and on the 29th November 1891, Durand sent an ultimatum to the two states announcing that he would advance if they did not abandon their hostile and truculent attitude. On the 1st December the Hunza river was crossed above Chalt, and on December 2nd Nilt was stormed and taken. Durand himself had been wounded early in the day—and nearly succumbed. The war was over, and his *coup de main* had been amazingly successful in every respect.

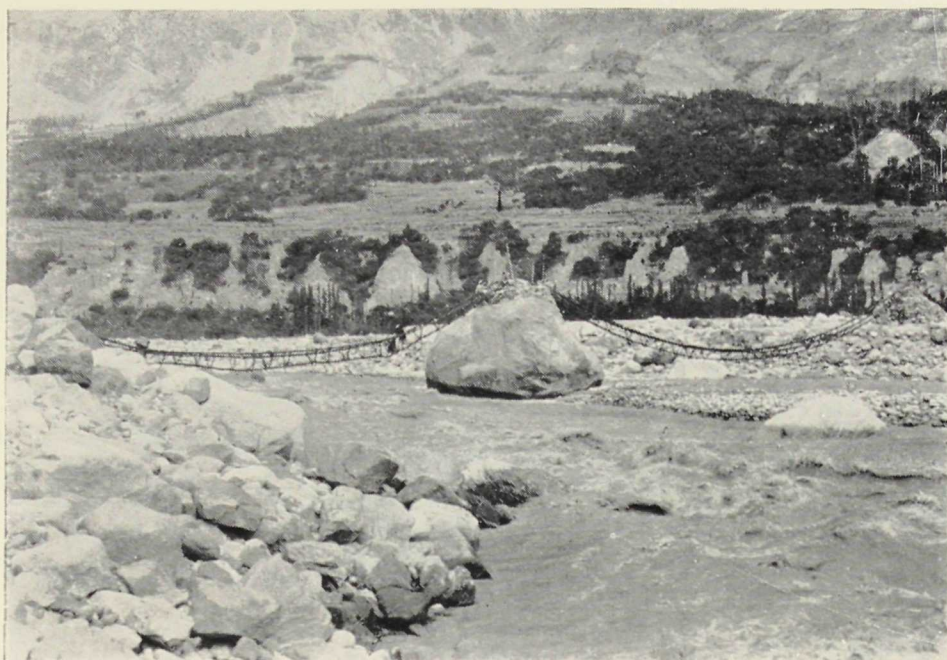
When the force arrived before Nilt, Safdar Ali, who was perfectly aware of his wazir's intention to depose him, sent Kuram Shah, headman of Ganesh,



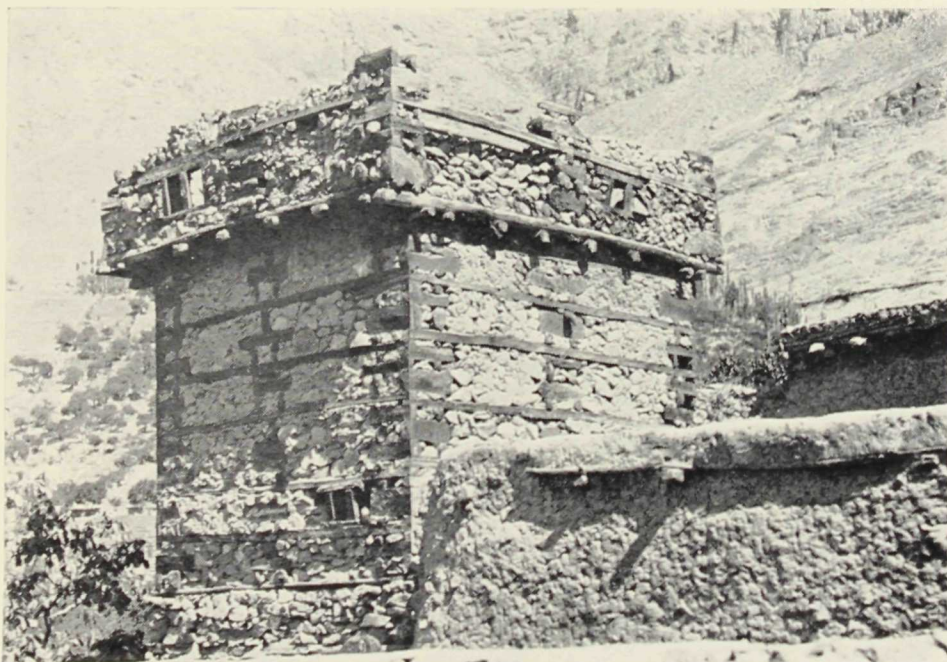
to make terms with the British. The envoy was stopped by Uzr Khan and Dadu, who told Safdar Ali that if he wanted to go, he had better do so, but that they meant to fight it out. The voluntary departure of the Hunza Mir would have suited the two schemers admirably. Safdar Ali was equally determined to dispose of Dadu, but was not strong enough, with the Nagir chief siding with the wazir.

I have given this brief account of the Hunza-Nagir war because subsequent events in those two states have been entirely directed by its result. (The fate of Uzr Khan and Safdar Ali has been discussed in the chapter on the history of the states.) This expedition, as has been explained, laid the foundations of the present political administration and arrangements in the Karakoram. It is easy to criticise when all is settled and time has shown the mistakes but, considering how anxious the authorities were about the whole 'Gilgit Question', the post-bellum settlement was hurried and makeshift. As matters are now there are two authorities in Gilgit, the Wazir-i-Wazarat, or Kashmir Governor and secondly, the British Political Agent who lives where he does not rule and who is in the position of a consul in a country often politically estranged. There is no need to elaborate the manifest disadvantages of a position which is fundamentally bad and unfair to both parties. Then again two Mirs were put on the thrones of Nagir and Hunza who had no claims to rule. Both appointments have been justified by success, for Sikandar of Nagir





BRIDGE OVER NAGIR RIVER



LAST REMAINING TOWER IN BALTIT







and Mohamed Nazim of Hunza have certainly merited their selection. Nevertheless in these wilds primogeniture is paramount, and a man's haq or right is everything. Hence these two Mirs govern by the authority of the Sirkar and not by their own privilege. Their claims rest neither on prowess nor on birth, but solely on good luck. There was no need for the undignified haste which was shown in filling the two thrones ; a little delay would have been both desirable and diplomatic. Safdar Ali, the *de jure* and *de facto* sovereign of Hunza, was still in the country. Failing him, his half-brother Mohamed Nafis was the next heir, and, in the same way, Khisrau was *de jure* heir to Nagir with Sikandar a good way after. The only good result arising from thus disregarding primogeniture is that, having nominated rulers out of their turn, the Government can claim in the future the sole right of appointment. As primogeniture has been set aside in favour of the present Mirs, it cannot well be invoked if the Government does not approve of the heirs apparent.

Biddulph mentions the advantages that Kashmiri rule has given the inhabitants and contrasts these benefits with those that Khushwaqt rule might have produced, or rather would never have produced. He is right, as he generally is in his views. Kashmiri rule is, however, intensely unpopular with the neighbouring chiefs, who deeply appreciate the fact that their immediate superior is the Political Agent and not the Maharaja's wazir. The cause of their gratitude is



wholly selfish and therefore easily explicable. Wherever the Dogra rule of Kashmir has extended the local princes have disappeared except only in name. The King of Ladak, the Rajas of Astor and Gilgit, and the numerous mountain chieftains of Baltistan have now but the shadow of a great past for their consolation ; their status and their wealth dwindle as the years go by. It has been our policy, on the contrary, to keep the petty princelings on their thrones, and it seems to be a mistaken one. In Kashmir territory there is only one ruler. In the Gilgit Agency there are no less than six ; if the welfare of the governed be the gauge of success the arrangement is a failure.

Recent events in Kashmir may have shown dissatisfaction with the Maharaja's rule, but none the less his subjects are far better off in every respect than are those of Hunza and Nagir and, to a lesser extent, than those of the governorships of Yasin and others. Our policy of non-interference with the ruler reacts harshly on the people, and we often maintain a tyrant with whom his subjects, if left to themselves, would promptly deal. Kashmir rule, moreover, is Hindu rule and for that reason is held in dislike even by the languid Moslems of the Karakoram. Officials too are numerous and, perhaps, unsympathetic ; but there is not the same interference with the people as there is in the hill states, where the chief has his eye or his spy on every one of his subjects, and where there is a good deal of bullying and sometimes real oppression, with no hope of redress.



Kashmir officials may be venal, but then that is often the case in India, and I doubt if they are worse than the run of their colleagues. If they take money they take it for a service done, whereas the chiefs take money whenever they can as their undoubted right, and do nothing in return.

Biddulph writes of the prosperity and security that Kashmir has brought to the country, and this is a right and well-deserved tribute: it is difficult to imagine the condition of the Gilgit area if the Dogra ruler had not stepped in. Biddulph especially dwells on the absence of slavery in Kashmir territory and, although that eulogy has now lost its point since slavery no longer exists in the Agency, yet when he wrote it was a great tribute to the Maharaja's rule.

It may well be argued that, at the close of the Hunza-Nagir war, we should have clarified the whole system of government and, with the thrones of Hunza and Nagir at our disposal (for the old Mir of Nagir was a mere figurehead), the Raja of Panyal our ally, and our control of the Wazarat, we could have done exactly as we liked. Yasin, Ghizr and Ishkoman, always coveted and annually claimed by the Mehtar of Chitral, would also have been co-ordinated with the other states and the administration greatly simplified. It would be wrong to say that there are now great problems or troublesome situations, but we lost the chance of welding an amorphous mass of states into a well-shaped administrative whole.



## CHAPTER XIV

HABITS AND CUSTOMS OF THE PEOPLE OF THE  
GILGIT VALLEY

THE people of the Gilgit valley are, on the whole, well-housed and their dwellings compare favourably with those of the Astoris, Baltis or neighbouring races. The design of the houses is usually similar, a number of small low rooms leading out of one another with rafters overlaid with mud. There are no chimneys. The window and chimney are one, a square opening in the flat roof over the hearth. The main room has some dignity about it, with an octagonal sky-light made by rafters laid crosswise, but even on a bright day the interior is dark. The universal use of paraffin oil lamps mitigates the severity of the long cold winters, spent huddled up in a dark room; but none the less the rooms are stuffy and dreary, and winter is a trying time for the people.

The floor of the main living room is usually divided into three parts by two beams let into it. The left side, facing the hearth, is reserved for the women, the right for the men and the centre space is kept for children and servants. On one side of the room the floor is raised, and here honoured guests are seated. Against the wall of the raised part are carved shelves



on which the family possessions are kept. Tea-pots and tea-cups, usually of Russian origin, trays, bottles and other domestic odds and ends are kept here, but more valuable objects, clothes in particular, are kept in locked tin boxes. Immediately below the sky-light is the fire-place, with a clay support for the pot.

The walls of the living room and also of some of the lesser rooms are decorated with conventional designs, made of flour. When the time of sowing the crops arrives the walls of the room are cleaned and the seed is stowed in a strong bag, made of skin, and placed near the door. A sheep is killed, bread is made, and a feast ensues. All in the house eat, then the flour is taken and patterns, usually round circles or little blobs, made with it on the walls of the house. Then the man who has made the patterns goes outside and puts some flour on the head and shoulders<sup>1</sup> of the men who will sow the seed for the new crop. This custom is general in the states of the Karakoram but has died out in Gilgit itself; in Hunza stamping or marking with flour only is done.

In one house which I was shown by the owner, who was a well-to-do man, there was a new guest room, placed apart from the rest of the house so that neither guest nor host might be incommoded. It proved to be a small, dingy, damp hovel, with a door to pass through which the visitor had to bend double. The owner was very proud of it, but it seemed to me no better than an unventilated pigsty. In Hunza the

<sup>1</sup> See p. 202, where this is also done at weddings.



houses are often three stories high, as land is scarce ; they are better built than elsewhere in the Agency, more airy and rather better lit, but otherwise present little difference.

The food of all is much the same as that described as eaten by the Hunza people, but in the Gilgit valley more tea is drunk, as it is easily obtained. Butter is habitually buried in the ground, as it is said to improve with years ; it is quite common to keep it for five or even for as long as twenty years. It turns dark red and is very bitter, burning the throat, but it is highly esteemed, and brought out at weddings, funerals and great occasions, and is also used as medicine. It is usually buried under an irrigation channel. At Ganesh in Hunza I opened the channel which ran under the main street, and below the water was the butter of the village. It is thus kept cool and safe in the summer by the water flowing above it. When winter comes, and the channel is dry, each owner can take out his butter.

Apricots enter largely into the food of the people, especially in Hunza, Nagir and Punyal. In Yasin and Ghizr there are not many trees, as it is either too cold or the trees are not planted in any great number. In Hunza in particular the apricot is a great staple, and not a day passes throughout the year that apricots are not eaten either dry or fresh. It is curious that in the many books that deal with these Himalayan lands so little prominence has been given to this tree which is found everywhere and is as important as



wheat and other cereals in the diet of the people. The apricot tree grows and fruits well up to ten thousand feet, even higher if the situation be favourable. There are many kinds of fruit and the people differentiate the varieties. Some apricots are large, red and dry, others white and sweet. It is said that you can eat 3,000 of the Barum Joo, a white variety, and never suffer a qualm, so digestible is it. After eating the fruit, it is customary to crack the stones and eat the kernels. Much oil is made from these, and one old woman told me that I could eat all the fruit I wanted provided I left the stones.

In summer, every large rock, the roofs of houses and all handy open places are strewn with apricots set out to dry; the landscape is ruddy with outspread fruit. Baltistan exports quantities, even as far as Lhasa, also to Kashmir and the plains of India. It is a common thing to see small nurseries of apricot trees, and it is said that they can be grown from seed (i.e. stones), provided the original shoot is in no way damaged. If however it is damaged then the fruit becomes harsh like a wild apricot. Grafting is common and there is little the people have to learn about their fruit trees, except perhaps to prune them more. No Asiatic understands pruning. His withers are wrung at the idea of cutting away branches which do actually bear fruit.

It is quite usual to string apricot kernels and give them thus as a present. Sometimes children wear these necklaces, with large dried apricots inserted as ornaments. As fuel the apricot wood is considered



better than any other, and in all respects the apricot plays a leading part in the economic life of the country. When planting a tree of any kind it is usual to sprinkle the ground with the blood of a goat or sheep to ensure fertility.

The people will eat fish when they can get it, but the Rajas and upper classes refuse to do so, averring that its smell is offensive. I fancy there must be some primitive taboo here.

Grain is stored in bins in Hunza and kept in the houses, which is the wisest way; the people say that there is then no danger of theft, vermin or other damage, and they are right.

In Chalt, parts of Nagir proper, and especially where there are Shins, a deep circular pit is made in the ground, usually about four feet deep, and in a dry place free from danger of irrigation water or drainage. The sides of the pit are lined with birch bark, and kept in place by the sacred juniper wood. As soon as the harvest is over, the grain is buried in these pits, which are close to the threshing floor, and the whole is carefully covered up. This practice is a very lazy one, and appeals to the Shins on that account. In other parts of the Agency it is a common practice to stow the grain on the roofs of houses in circular clay receptacles which look like large chimney pots.

The clothes of the people are usually made of puttoo, the native cloth, but cotton shirts and drawers are becoming more popular every year. The long choga or shuka, a sort of woollen dressing gown, and



the small round cap or kui (in Hunza parzin), made of rolled-up puttoo, are the basis of the dress. There is also a curious warm cloth made of ducks' feathers woven in with wool, worn only by women.

For years the men wore no trousers at all. In Hunza very loose trousers indeed used to be worn, so loose that it was unnecessary to remove them for any purpose whatever, and I have seen these in actual use but very rarely. When doing any awkward work trousers were discarded.

The women of Nagir do not wear pyjamas even to this day, and it is said that even in Hunza pyjamas were only introduced by the great wazir, Humayun Beg, in 1890. The women are fond of chintz which they make into long loose coats. On their heads they wear small round embroidered caps. In Hunza, particularly, the women are very clever at embroidering chogas and cloth; the work is well done and cannot be equalled elsewhere.

Long loose leather boots called pabboo are commonly worn, but for climbing and rough purposes, as well as generally by the poorer classes—for a pabboo is locally an elegant and comparatively expensive article—the taoti is worn. A taoti is a piece of skin wrapped round the leg and foot, and kept in place by a leather thong wound round and round. When new it is a splendid form of footgear and gives a fine grip on a rock. Unfortunately, taotis are rarely new, and when coolies are employed they are constantly sitting down to fasten these ridiculous pieces of leather,



full of holes, round their feet. The taotis never seem to stay on the limb, although I think that in most cases tying up the taoti is merely an excuse for a rest. The taoti is universally worn all over the North-West of India and in the Karakoram area by non-Pathans.

A curious custom is chop. When a woman gives birth to a child an ibex horn is roasted in the fire, ground on a stone with water, and the paste applied to her face. Then, when a woman after her delivery goes out, there is no danger of her catching cold, and the mixture thus applied informs the world that a happy event has taken place. I have seen women thus smeared; the effect is peculiar. Women are considered unclean for seven days after birth and remain segregated for that period.

Foster relationship is still common, but more amongst the upper classes than the lower. The children of the mirs and his sons are invariably at once taken away and given to someone outside the palace to nurse. The foster father becomes the ushum of the mir or person whose son he has been given, and the relationship is still a coveted one. Originally the object of fostering a child was to ensure its safety. There was less likelihood of its being killed than if it remained in the palace and, when it grew up, its foster parents and all their relations formed a party to support their foster child's interests. If his father were the mir, then they hoped that the child in their care would succeed his father, and they did their best to bring about this happy upshot, sometimes with



lamentable results to the peace of the state. In any case when the child was due to return to its parents the foster parents sent it to them accompanied by a present of money, often a large sum, and with clothes and other gifts. It is correct for a grant of land to be made in return, but there are complaints that nowadays the mirs give nothing ; how true this is I do not know. This system of fostering children is a thoroughly bad one ; it causes more bitterness, intrigue and friction than anything else in the Agency. It is said to be forbidden, but if it is, the prohibition is a dead letter. There is nothing to be gained by continuing this custom, which is now an instrument of oppression to the foster parents. Yet this foster-tie is wonderfully strong and the devotion of the foster parents deep and selfless. I have known foster parents lavish all their affection and, though often by no means well-to-do, all their wealth on their foster-children to the disadvantage of their own offspring. What is more, they often get no return whatever from the real parents for years of trouble, devotion and expense. Much might be written of the evil of this foster relationship. Marriage between foster relations is regarded as incestuous.

The strength of the foster-tie is shown in the almost superstitious bond that drinking a woman's milk ensures. The virtue of a woman's milk is such that a man will sometimes, for some reason or other, apply his mouth to a woman's breast, and thus secure a further relationship akin to that of mother and son.



Human milk is regarded as a valuable specific for cataract.

The amusements of the people consist of polo, shikar and shooting, but of these the chief is polo, which occupies a great deal of their interest and is quite unlike anything we know in India or elsewhere. The game has been explained elaborately by Drew, who wrote at a time when it was comparatively little known in England,<sup>1</sup> and there is only need to refer to the local differences. Polo-grounds are a great feature of every village and are long and narrow. The length depends almost wholly on the ground and, since level areas are very scarce anywhere in the hills, it is never as long as is desirable. Two hundred yards is a good average length and the width is between thirty and forty. The great feature of the local game is that there is no limit to the numbers playing, though in matches there are generally six players a side, but this is by no means a rule. It is a wonderfully democratic game; it is a curious paradox in a land of autocracy to see the Raja, his sons, and wazir all jostling and crashing together with any peasant who has a pony and cares to play. There is no respect for persons whatever.

The polo-ground is surrounded by a low stone wall and the goals are marked by heaps of stones. Play begins by the chief person galloping down the ground till he reaches the centre when, throwing the ball in

<sup>1</sup> *Jammu and Kashmir*, by Frederic Drew, published in 1875.



the air, he hits it with his polo stick. This is the tambuk, and if well done, as it often is, a goal is frequently hit. There seems to be no time limit. The players go on playing sometimes for over half an hour ; since the ground is often very rough and stony and the ponies undersized and in poor condition it is a strain ; shorter chukkers would mean better play.

The heads of the polo sticks are made of willow, apple or mulberry wood, but the shafts of wild almond, though I fancy willow is also used a good deal. A polo match is a stirring spectacle, with the long narrow shaded ground lined with spectators who are shrewd critics and keen partisans. There is always a band of drums, kettledrums and pipes which plays furiously throughout the whole match.

To anyone used to Indian polo, the roughness of the game is remarkable. There is 'crossing' of an outrageous nature, hitting your opponent's pony very hard with the polo stick, catching the ball in the hand, putting the arm round a man's waist, and a number of customs that would not be tolerated down country. At one such match I sat with the Mir of Hunza and he had many reminiscences about his previous games of polo. We were eating peaches from a large plate, the Mir tossing the stones on the heads of his unmoved subjects below. He said he had given up playing, he was too old and, as he was well over seventy, I agreed. He had been injured badly at least three times and he felt it unwise to risk a fourth time. He remarked—and it surprised me—that formerly the



game used to be played in more orderly fashion and it was then, naturally, safer. There are numerous accidents; the marvel is that there are not more. I remember once condoling with a gushpur on having hurt his eye, which was concealed behind a pair of goggles. I offered him some medicine, but the poor man had lost his eye at polo long before and was embarrassed by my proposal.

Another amusement is to gallop and shoot with a bow and arrow at a mark; this used to be popular, but it is now only practised in Hunza. It is well worth watching the performers riding as fast as they can and shooting at the mark, usually a piece of paper, as they rush past; no easy matter with a bow and arrow. The bow is held high in the left hand, the arrow is kept on the string the whole time with the same hand and the string pulled just as the mark is reached. Each competitor tries thrice; it is remarkable how often the mark is hit.

In former times when a chief or his son visited another, the custom of koba (the word is differently spelt) was prevalent. A bullock or goat was brought to the visitor on arrival at the polo-ground and he or one of his attendants was expected to cut off the head with a blow of his sword. At present the only ceremony observed on such an occasion is that a mark is put up and both riders fire at it, but even this shows signs of falling into disuse.

Shooting is still a popular pastime, but as nearly all animals have been killed off it is not easy to indulge



in. There is perpetual warfare against every living animal, foxes for their fur, birds for their meat and feathers; even sparrows are pursued relentlessly by small boys with slings and stones. The ram chikor, or Himalayan snow-cock, is trapped by making small square holes in the ground, eighteen inches deep and two feet square, with stone sides flush with the ground. A light flimsy cover is then put on, snow is heaped over it and some grain scattered on the top. The birds walk over and fall in and as many as four or five may be caught by this simple device.

The result of this incessant pursuit of every creature is that wild life is almost extinct in the Gilgit Agency. One or two nullahs are preserved by the chiefs, but even these are poached; it is distressing to wander through much country, splendid ground for ibex and markhor, and to see no sign of any wild creature at all. I often urged the chiefs to preserve, asking what their children would do for sport, but the Asiatic is far too selfish and short-sighted to see the benefit to be gained from protection. It means effort and effort is abhorrent.

Many of the festivals that Biddulph mentions in his book have disappeared, but the Ganoni is still celebrated. Curiously enough it has disappeared in Gilgit itself,<sup>1</sup> though universal elsewhere, and it is perhaps the chief festival of the year. Ten days before the barley is cut, when it is yellow but not ripe, every

<sup>1</sup> Biddulph states that it was kept up in Gilgit. Cf. *Tribes of the Hindoo Koosh*, by Major J. Biddulph, published in 1880.



household collects curds, butter and other milk products such as cheese, but chiefly curds, milk and lassi (butter milk). Bread called kamalli is made, with butter in between each layer, and is placed on a plate. Then all the men, but no women, go with this bread to the fields, ask a blessing on the harvest and land, and also pray for good health. A handful of barley is taken from the field and all return to the house. They then put five or ten stalks of the barley on the beams of the house, on the right side as they enter. The rest is then parched, and a little lassi taken in a spoon and eaten with the barley.

In Hunza only, the festival of Piyakmar<sup>1</sup> is held on the third day after Ganoni. Wine is drunk, there is much dancing, but the four tribes celebrate this apart. The festival is not observed in Guhjal, the Wakhi part of the country.

At the Bazono festival, held when the first green corn appears, a lean sheep is sacrificed on the polo-ground. This is not observed in Hunza or Nagir, only in Gilgit and Punyal.

Domenika, celebrated at the end of the harvest, is apparently obsolete.

The ceremony of the sowing is known in Gilgit as Bipow; in Guhjal as Shahgun, and in Hunza and Nagir and everywhere else as Bopow. The name Chili now appears wholly unknown. The Bopow consists of the Mir personally ploughing the ground

<sup>1</sup> This may be a corruption of the word Paighambar, messenger or prophet, but I have failed to find its meaning.



in Hunza, thus inaugurating the opening of the agricultural year, usually in February. It is interesting to note that on this occasion the Mir wears a turban, the ceremonial headdress reserved for durbars, New Year's Day, and other official occasions. A Diramitting has to be present to scatter the first handful of the new grain into the furrow ploughed by the chief.



## CHAPTER XV

## MARRIAGE CUSTOMS

THE marriage customs of most states of the Gilgit Agency vary little since there is now a tendency to simplify them ; consequently the following description applies generally to most parts of the country. When the bride is selected by the father or near relative of the bridegroom, four of the bridegroom's and one of the bride's representatives go to the latter's home and convey the proposal. The headman of the village with four elders, or in the case of an important marriage with even more, discuss the intended marriage and, if approved, the bridegroom gives the bride's father a good cow or bullock, or else six goats and a kid. If he has not the means he borrows the money and buys them. This gift is the *duman* and naturally is liable to vary. The bride's parents may even ask for a gun or a tola (half ounce) of gold as well. If the boy be a very ardent suitor he gives of his own accord three tolas of gold and twenty yards of calico or chintz. It is customary to give six yards of cloth to the girl's maternal uncle, and the like amount to the girl's father and to her mother. This present is meant to be enough for a turban, which is the ceremonial head-dress.



It will be realised that so far all the presents are from the bridegroom and, considering what small value girls are supposed to represent, the parents obviously do very well out of them. On the day of the wedding the bridegroom, taking with him a goat worth six rupees, goes to the bride's home. A matrimonial agent, sent from the home of the bride's parents and known as a chudugarh, arranges all the details of the wedding. For this he receives, when he reaches the bridegroom's house, six yards of cloth and five seers (ten pounds) of ghi.

The boy, accompanied by twenty of his friends or even more, goes to the girl's home and the day and night are spent in dancing, singing and feasting, the whole party being accommodated by the bride's family. Next day, the bride and bridegroom leave the house and, as they cross the threshold, they are pelted from the roof-top with stones, rubbish and dust. On their way four or five girls and ten or twenty youths escort the couple to the bridegroom's house. The relatives of the bride then adjourn to the boy's house and are fed and entertained for the night. The marriage ceremony is performed by the mullah, and more dancing and singing take place after. The whole village often comes to the bridegroom's house and expects to be entertained.

The girl brings to her new home some jewels and bedding. Usually, after about two weeks' stay, she returns to her father's house where she may remain quite a long time, dependent on her age as sometimes



the marriage takes place very early in life. When she goes permanently to her husband's house she takes fifty to sixty large loaves of bread with her.

In Punyal the marriage festivities have been simplified and the duman, or engagement fee, is fixed at four rupees. The Raja is given by the bridegroom either twenty rupees in cash or else a bullock as a marriage fee. The Punyali boy now gives nothing for his wife as it is considered to look too much like buying her. There is always a legal dowry fixed but not paid, and a nominal sum due to be paid in case the girl is divorced. In practice too the girl's father gives as much as he can to his daughter as a dowry and to set her up in her new home. In Ishkoman, Kuh, Ghizr and Yasin the boy generally gives two lengths of cloth and three bullocks to the girl's father, who in return gives what he can with his daughter. The Raja or Governor is given nothing.

If there already be a wife the father of the first wife is given a bullock. This is an invariable custom, as it is considered an insult to the first wife's people if a present be not given.

In Yasin the marriage customs have been systematised. The bridegroom gives his future father-in-law four bullocks and two pieces of cloth and obtains with his wife one or two bullocks, some jewellery and bedding. If the man marries a second wife he gives his first wife's father a gun, a horse and an ox, which is more than is given elsewhere. As has been explained the object of these gifts is to make it



clear that no disrespect is implied in taking a second consort.

When the Raja of Punyal is married every household gives him seven rupees and a like sum when his eldest son is married. In Hunza and Nagir the custom is to give, for the Mir's marriage and for his children's, about seven rupees on each occasion. The people are apt to complain that it is not fair that they should pay for the frequent weddings of the Mir of Hunza and his progeny. They say that in practice only one wedding of the Mir, and the marriages of two or three of his children, should be recognised as legitimate occasions for a cess, and that these annual events are oppressive. The grievance seems reasonable, and the present custom is an innovation.

The immediate preparations for the actual wedding ceremony are rather intricate. An old man, usually a relative, is given ten yards of cloth for himself and six for each of the musicians (usually three or four, but sometimes as many as twelve). He then goes to the bride's house, throws flour over his left shoulder and on his head, and sends the musicians to sit on the roof, where they at once begin to perform. The old man then takes butter and some sweet-scented herbs, and places them in the pan or pot for baking bread. He then lifts this large cooking pot off the fire, holds it above his head and dances round the room, waving it about. The spectators applaud him with loud cries. He then puts the pot back on the hearth. An eight year old girl comes and makes some thin dough which



she places in the pot. This is the phaphaon and, after the first one is made, the women continue to knead others all day until the evening when there are large piles ready; they are then baked. Usually six or eight women do the kneading and baking. Some of the bread is put into pots with butter and the old man, who still acts as master of ceremonies, takes a phaphaon (which is really a very thin chupatti with a piece of butter in the middle of it) and gives it to all the guests who come to the wedding. Juniper branches are placed on it. This is known as the dumani phaphaon or smoky phaphaon; and is clearly a relic of an old ritual, incorporating the sacred chili tree.

On the day before the wedding kista (soft leavened bread) is also made. During the bread-making an agent or representative comes from the boy's home and sits outside the girl's house. He is then invited inside and comes up to the door where he lows like a cow. A little flour is put on his head and left shoulder, he is brought into the house with great ceremony and made to sit in the place of honour, whilst shafial (bread) with ghi is handed to him only. If by any chance he does not low the children all mob him, clapping their hands, abusing him and making him dance. He then has to ask pardon, and the children tear a small piece of his choga while he has to sit down in a humble place.

All the preparations described above are preliminary to the actual wedding feast, and it is usual for near



relations and friends to come in and help. Although, as has been stated, there is feasting in both the boy's and girl's homes, it is rather less in the latter. The bridegroom is expected to give butter to all the girls who attend the wedding.

The bride and bridegroom usually go separately from the girl's house to the boy's at an interval of half an hour. An elderly or respectable relative, usually her mother's brother or even her brother, escorts the bride and stops there a day. In the morning the bridegroom gives presents to his friends and relatives, money, a choga or a piece of cloth; the better gifts to the better men. If there be any foster relatives present they stop three days and go away with a horse, cow or some valuable present.

In Hunza customs are simpler, for one reason because all marriages take place on the same day, usually about the middle of December. This excellent innovation was introduced by the present Mir, and saves much useless extravagance, as nobody can feast at more than one house; it also assists the ruler to collect his marriage fees.

The custom of an old man imitating a cow is not followed, but he comes straight into the house instead. The musicians necessarily go from house to house, as with several weddings taking place they cannot remain in one. It is customary to sing a great deal, and especially to chant the praises of the ancestors of the bridegroom and of the Mir.

As there are four tribes or clans in Hunza the



wedding guests sit apart, according to their clans. The Diramitting and Baratilling sing in contest against each other : the Khuru Kutz and Burong also do so ; all sing the great deeds of their clans, and that clan which is adjudged to have sung and lauded itself the most, is made to sit in the front row at the feast, with the others behind.

Infidelity is not now very common, whatever it may have been in the past. If a man sees his wife misbehaving with another man he is allowed to kill both at once on the spot : if he delays he loses his right. The reason for this is clearly to prevent any bargaining, with the threat of killing the offender if he does not agree. If the woman and her paramour are able to reach the chief they are safe and no harm can come to them, but they remain in a sort of domestic slavery to the ruler for the rest of their lives. On the other hand, if they can give both to the Raja or Mir and to the aggrieved husband an amount in cattle double that which the husband gave on his marriage the matter is ended, and the woman goes to her new home. In Punyal, however, the marriage tie is so lightly regarded that only a small fine is exacted from the abductor. I have collected the above information with some trouble, not because it was not forthcoming, but because there was a good deal of variation and some uncertainty which show that, in so important a matter as marriage, old customs are being rapidly modified, and in many cases are dying out.



The really significant part of the marriage ritual is the baking and distribution of the phaphaon which is a species of ceremonial token to be eaten by all guests at the feast. The soft bread or kista is for the enjoyment of the wedding party and has no religious implication.



## CHAPTER XVI

## FOLK-LORE

THERE is still some folk-lore in the Karakoram, but it is tending to die out and in many cases survives only as meaningless custom of which the origin and significance have long been lost. There exists too in all Mohammedan countries a feeling of shame that these remains of pre-Moslem days should be perpetuated. There is still, for instance, the belief in the sacredness of the chili (the sujo chili or 'pure juniper' of the Shina language), and the smoke, wood and leaves of this, the pencil cedar or juniper, still have a recognised rôle in many customs of the people. When there is sickness it is usual for a fungus which grows on old juniper trees to be burned and the smoke inhaled. Juniper is burned at weddings to purify the house, to fumigate the grain pits when they are being filled after the harvest, and ceremonially with certain food, e.g. the phaphaon, which plays an important part in the marriage ritual. There is still too a belief in fairies or in jinns, their name under Moslem influence. There are two in particular, Yetch and Rui, known in Hunza and Nagir as Phut and Billass. Phut or Yetch is the male, and Billass or Rui the female deity or fairy. The upper classes smile condescend-



ingly when asked about these beings, but the lower classes are still devout believers in them, though they say that Yetch and Rui are known no more. For instance Faiz Ali, the son of Daulat Shah's mother by her first husband, used to be a postman and carried the dak (mail) between Hindi and Aliabad in Hunza. Once, on a moonlight night, he saw, as he was going along, two women whom he recognised as his neighbours. They said that they had just found a goat that had strayed, but it was dying; they asked him to cut its throat to make the meat lawful. He seized hold of the goat, held it down by its front legs in the usual way and cut its throat. He then saw to his horror that he held a man's hands in his own!

On arrival home he found an old man dying and the same two women who were neighbours wailing beside him. The old man's throat was cut. The goat he had killed was Billass, who had thus managed to compass the death of the old man. The story is very well known and Faiz Ali is called Billass's butcher. He says that this adventure has befallen him three times, but that as he refused to cut the throats the fourth time when asked to do so, Billass was furious, seized him and took him to the Daiyur Kuhat, a high mountain above the Daiyur village which is some six miles from Gilgit. There he found a man with one eye in the middle of his forehead who was Billass's King. Arraigned before the King and his court the unfortunate Hunza man was asked how he dared refuse to do Billass's order to cut throats. If he again declined to



do so his own throat would be cut, so in fear and trembling Faiz Ali agreed to do as he was told.

Whilst this was going on the King's dinner was ready and Faiz Ali was told to eat it, whereupon a woman with a scale for weighing gold came and weighed out minute pieces of human flesh which she distributed to all present on the palm of her left hand. Faiz Ali ate some and noticed that it was salted. Immediately he had done so he found himself back in his own garden, although it was a four days' march from the court of the fairy king. His mother, after hearing this story, tied a powerful talisman on her son and he was saved from the further attentions of Billass.

Phut only appears when the corn is being stored in the bins for the winter, and he then begins stealing. To avoid this, some flour is put with water in a large pot and well stirred. Some bitter apricot kernels are ground up with salt and pepper and are then placed in the middle of the mixture, the whole of which is known as Phut-o-mal or Phut's stirabout; this is placed on the edge of the threshing floor. Phut comes and eats it: the corn is hastily gathered up and carried away whilst the pot is attracting the attention of the visitor. If this be not done the fairy takes away the grain from one side of the heap whilst the farmer is carrying it away on the other. This belief is current throughout the Agency.

Punyal is said to be famous for its vampires. By day they are harmless creatures with wives and families but by night they are transformed. They then have



long sharp teeth and huge mouths ; they lurk behind bushes and tear to pieces any traveller who comes near them. These are known as dains.

A dainyal is a diviner or wizard and in Hunza is known as a bittan. They are rare and are often women. When in Hunza in 1933 I was able to see one of these strange beings carry on his trade. The best bittan, a woman, was too ill to perform, so I had to be content with a man. These witches and wizards are peasants, usually well-to-do, and when not engaged in incantation perform the ordinary work of a farmer. They never touch milk or any product of the cow and will not carry cow-dung.

We all assembled on the long polo-ground below the castle of Baltit. It was a good vantage ground, well shaded with poplars, walnuts and apricots, with a grassy slope opposite. The bittan, a young man with long hair, was lame from a wound in his foot. After he had entered the ring branches of burning juniper (chili) were brought and thrust under his nostrils. To inhale the better he sat down with his head on his hands and a cloth over it, to prevent the pungent smoke from escaping. Pipes and drums began to play. The former are like flutes, some three feet long, and emit a thin tremulous note, beloved of the fairies who are frightened of the noisy surnai. The bittan, when he had inhaled enough smoke, jumped up and down, tossed his long hair about with jerks of his head and then threw himself prone on the ground with both hands flung out : his mouth was full of juniper leaves.



Attendants lifted him up and he danced round the large ring of onlookers amid loud shouts and cheers. He often stopped, then whirled round like a dancing dervish: the applause became vociferous. He went to the drum, crouched over it for a few minutes, and then walked round in complete silence, with his arms bared, taking low leaps into the air. Then he returned to the drum and sat exhausted on it. After a brief rest he stood up, jerked and twitched all over, and looked round. The audience clapped their hands and cheered vociferously. He smiled very sweetly at them, hopped slowly round with a fixed smile, his eyes up-turned and staring. He was looking for the fairies. He hurried his steps, tried to free his arms from his long sleeves but failed to do so, started to run and leaped at and on the audience, struggling to break the ring and escape.

Things now livened up. Cat-calls, clapping, plaudits, howls, every sort of noise was made. The bittan leaped up and down in the middle with great energy. A stick was thrust into his hands. Still staring at the fairies, sitting on the trees above our heads, he went to the drum, leaned over and listened intently, applying first one ear, then the other to the skin. The people said he was getting warm. Suddenly, amidst intense silence and interest, he began to chant. The flutes played gently, the drum so slowly and lightly that it was hardly touched. He said: 'I have been to China. I have seen a child with a string round its neck. He will wear a crown.' The pipes and drum played





HUNZA MUSICIANS



MAKING WOODEN BOWLS, HUNZA







loudly. The bittan threw away his stick and began to clap his hands in tune with the drum, but suddenly became motionless and kicked the drum away with a gesture of contempt. The excitement grew intense as the climax was apparently approaching. The bittan kept circling round, gazing with staring eyes at the fairies sitting in the trees along the sides of the polo-ground. He rushed up and down, his hands uplifted to the fairies, his long hair waving. He gave great leaps into the air but was obviously growing exhausted. He sat on a drum but when offered some water he dashed it aside roughly. He again listened to the drum, bending over it and in a low voice (quite inaudible to most of the spectators) said: 'I went to the black city of China. When I arrived there I saw a lake of blood. There is no food in that country. All are dying of want.' After this he walked about a little, then suddenly jumped on to the back of a man and was carried out in a kind of fit.

It was altogether a most extraordinary performance. There was nothing dull about it, though it did last for an hour and the wizard only spoke twice. It is difficult to do more than record the scene as it was enacted. It is, however, said that the bittan always prophesies about contemporary events, and his words were intended to refer to the rebellion in Chinese Turkestan which was then in progress. It was usual in former times for the bittan to make remarks about local events; he was a recognised means of conveying home truths to the ruler. The Mir told me that in



his lifetime (and he was over seventy) he remembered seven bittans in all.

There are many tales told about the people of Bagrot, a village below Gilgit on the left bank of the river which, though not far in actual distance, is very inaccessible. The people are largely Shin and are famous for their stupidity which these tales illustrate. On one occasion the Bagrotis went to war with Punyal. There was a Punyali living amongst them as a spy and he said to them : 'I can show you a way by which you can reach and attack Punyal. It is a fine short-cut and you will surprise the enemy, but you must wait until the river sleeps, as you must cross it if you follow the path I shall show you.' The Bagrot army gathered by the river which was roaring and surging. 'This will not do', said the spy, 'the river is awake. Let us go somewhere where it is asleep.' He took the army up-stream to where the river flowed deep and smooth. 'Ah', said he; 'this is better. The river is going to sleep. Let us sit down for a time and wait.' After a short while he threw a large cake of dried cow-dung into the river. The cow-dung floated serenely on the surface. 'Splendid!' said the spy, 'the river is now asleep. Come, let us cross it.' The Bagrotis immediately sprang in and, as no Bagroti can swim, they were all drowned.

Once a Bagroti took eight rupees and went to Gilgit to buy some clothes. When going through the bazaar he saw a large water melon in a shop, a thing he had never seen before. He asked what it was. 'Oh',



said the shopkeeper, 'that is an elephant's egg. An elephant is a grand animal. All your family can ride on its back. The egg will hatch shortly.' So the Bagroti gave his eight rupees and went off in triumph with his egg. As he was going along the steep nullah that leads to the village the melon slipped from his grasp, rolled down, and burst into a hundred fragments. As it did so it disturbed a hare which bolted like a flash. The Bagroti was much disturbed and spent a great deal of his time in trying to catch the hare, but naturally he failed to do so. His wife, when he returned late, demanded where the clothes were, and he had to tell her the whole story of the elephant's egg. He said that what delayed him was that when the egg burst the young elephant rushed out and he had to stop and try to catch it.

The Ra of Gilgit once summoned all the Bagrotis to Gilgit to meet him. They had never seen him, did not know what to do and were very much agitated. One of their number had, however, been to Gilgit and told them to behave exactly as he did and to bend down and kiss the Raja's hand as he would. They all went off to Gilgit. It was summer and the Ra was sitting on his throne. Around him were his court: his advisers were eating melons and elegantly casting the rinds on the floor, a custom that prevails to this day if anyone goes to a durbar during the melon season. As the leader of the deputation lent forward to kiss the Ra's hand he slipped; at once all the rest of the Bagrotis threw themselves on the floor in imitation of their leader.



## CHAPTER XVII

## THE NORTHERN VALLEYS OF HUNZA

No account of Hunza would be complete without some mention of the northern part of the country which, as it is a recognised route to Central Asia, is comparatively well known.

Beyond Baltit, the capital, is the picturesque village and castle of Altit standing on a cliff which falls sheer to the river. In autumn the nearer slopes of this spur are brilliant with the vermilion tints of apricot trees, and from the battlements the view embraces the whole of the Hunza valley, a glowing expanse of rich cultivation.

Altit is, in reality, the northern boundary of Hunza proper and the state used to end there. Now, with calmer times and duller pursuits, the inhabitants have overflowed their former bounds and have colonised wherever there has been enough soil to support life. From Altit the path, never good but, considering the difficulties, remarkably easy, ascends the valley of the Hunza river. The broad well-made and well-graded Government mule track wisely terminates at Baltit. So the onward path enjoys freedom of movement, to run over spurs and down to the river's edge, winding endlessly across the face of precipitous cliffs. It has



been constructed with infinite patience and skill. High dry walls of stone, struts in the rock, and galleries carry the path precariously onward.

The first village beyond Altit is Gulmit; on the way a white tablet in the cliff face commemorates the visit of Lord Kitchener, when commander-in-chief, to the gorges of the Karakoram. Gulmit is the first village in Little Guhjal, as the upper part of Hunza state is called. The people are all Wakhis, and were once under a Raja of their own, but have since come under the Mir of Hunza. Originally nomads from Afghan and Russian territory they migrated generations ago from their grazing grounds. They have quite lost their former habits and have settled down to agriculture. Indeed, they have become model cultivators and their crops are excellent. They have, moreover, preserved their skill in tending cattle, a relic of their old pastoral life, and their flocks and herds are esteemed by the people of Hunza.

The present Mir of Hunza is a Wakhi on his mother's side. He has a good house at Gulmit, and once I had the good fortune to be present when he visited the place, as he does every year. It was well worth seeing. First came the bodyguard, then the Mir and his sons. A band played with great energy before him and a large body of his loyal and duffle-clad subjects surged round him.

Gulmit is a favoured spot. The trees and crops are good, water for irrigation abundant (which is not the case in Hunza proper) and the situation is sunny



and sheltered. Beyond Gulmit the track continues through the gorges of the Karakoram, but is still liable to be broken. Heavy rain, a fall of snow or a stone shoot will mean the destruction of many yards of the neat laboriously constructed path. When the river is low it is possible to avoid many of the bends and gradients of the road and in winter the journey is wholly in the valley bed.

The scenery is stern and impressive, but too gloomy and harsh to be really sublime. Great cliffs of barren rock are apt to depress the traveller. Often there are glimpses up a side valley of some fine peak, but generally, as in other parts of the Karakoram mountains, the track is at the bottom of the gorge, oppressively shut in by vast walls of stone. The one thought of the bored traveller, and also of his men, is to reach his destination and be quit of it all.

The path leads over two glaciers, the Pasu and the great Batura. The latter I have crossed seven times ; and it has always varied enormously. Sometimes it has been easy enough, smooth as a level piece of road. At other times it has been a mass of small tiresome crevasses, entailing many detours, and involving hours of tedious walking. Thus the Batura glacier is often a real obstacle, especially if there are horses, in which case they have to be taken across the river twice and if the water be high, this cannot be done.

Between the two glaciers is the village of Pasu, a delightful but not a very fortunate place. On the north, a fine stretch of good land has been ruined by a flood



which has destroyed the irrigation canals, diverted the water supply and consequently has done irreparable damage. The Shingshal river which flows in here has also washed away many of the fields in time of flood. It is a sad business, as the Wakhis of Pasu are industrious and skilful folk. Their apples are famous, large, rosy and of good flavour; probably the best in the country.

Wakhis are clean in their habits, at any rate those that have ceased to be nomadic; the villagers of Pasu are particularly so. It is curious that there are people helpless without their long boots of soft leather, and there is a proverb in Hunza which says 'Do not strike a Wakhi but take his boots.'

Pasu is magnificently situated, in a country where nature has designed everything on a noble and lavish scale. The valley there is wide. On one side are the two glaciers, but rather hidden. The great attraction, however, is the Pasu peaks, a chain of great rock summits, harsh and serrated, that rise in one plane from the black waters of the river. Opposite the village is the sinister gorge of the Shingshal river; the whole scene combines to form a very noble prospect.

Beyond the village the valley again contracts into the usual narrow bounds of a Karakoram ravine: and at Khaibar the track winds up a narrow cleft and is barred by a door with a lock and key. A feature of the hills at Khaibar is the forest, a sadly scattered one, of juniper, almost the only wood that is found



in Hunza territory and, unhappily, not very valuable wood either.

The scenery grows wilder as the path reaches higher altitudes, and the vegetation seems to grow sparser. The endless prospect of rock and stone undoubtedly becomes monotonous and the inhuman nature of the country is emphasised. There are one or two bridges, primitive but adequate, but apt to be a nuisance as we found when we tried to coax one of our yaks over one. The beast had come from the Pamirs where bridges are unknown, and all our persuasion and all our efforts failed to make the animal cross. So it had to be swum twice through the boiling stream; it did not mind that operation in the slightest. It had successfully defeated us.

The last village in Hunza is Misgar where there is a telegraph office to keep in touch with events on the frontier. The operators there are usually Kashmiri pundits, and they not unnaturally detest the place for they are two Hindus alone amongst Mohammedans, and wild ones at that. They loathe the climate, the food and the loneliness. The road, too, is a torture to them and they remain at Misgar, prisoners, until they are relieved and return to their homes in Kashmir. On one occasion, a pundit bemoaned his fate to me. 'Ah', he said, 'the journey is terrible. On arrival I telegraphed to all the high officials. I said: "Road dangerous: daily demonstration of death: no one caring for our lives: please arrange."' Poor man, nothing happened to his appeal, and the road is as



bad as ever. One of these poor exiles died recently : in the following chapter on the Chapursan valley I describe the unhappy fate of the surviving pundit.

Above Misgar two tracks take off leading into Chinese territory. As the traveller climbs up to the passes on the frontier, he gazes over an expanse of snow and rock. To the east are the Karakoram, the Kuen Lun, and the Himalaya : to the west and north are the Hindu Kush and the down-like wind-swept Pamirs. To the south are the great snow ranges of Gilgit and Kashmir. He has reached the solar plexus of the mountain system of Asia, baffling and almost repellent.



## CHAPTER XVIII

## CHAPURSAN

THE Chapursan valley is the most important tributary of the main Hunza valley ; it is a place of considerable interest but seldom visited. In former times it was not a part of the Hunza State, and was populated by nomadic Kirghiz and Wakhis. The former have disappeared and the latter, save for a few Hunza settlers lower down near its mouth, occupy the valley.

To reach the Chapursan we had first to go to Misgar, the last village in Hunza, about 10,000 feet above sea-level. It is inhabited by emigrants from Hunza proper who are cut off from their countrymen by an intervening belt of Wakhis. It is a bleak spot but crops ripen well, there are apricot trees the fruit of which seldom matures, and a fine roaring winter wind that does not allow the snow to lie. Its telegraph office was established solely for the benefit of the Kashgar consulate, twelve days away on foot, but telegrams must be so old by the time they arrive at either end that the saving of five days which this office ensures can hardly be worth the expense.

As already stated, there are usually two Kashmiri pundits in charge of the telegraph but, on my last visit, I found only one, and a very unhappy Hindu he was.



His colleague had recently died, and he had had to light the pyre alone. With little work, no proper food, no amusements, no society, the life of these Hindus is indeed miserable. Their families are far away, the Mohammedan villagers (who cannot speak their language) ignore them, and it is cruel to send them to this purgatory. This little Hindu was especially depressed for not merely had his colleague died, but so had his son-in-law and, whilst I was at Misgar, he received a telegram to say that his daughter was dead. He shut the office, and went and wept in a corner. Even his Hindu servant had decamped ; he was a very sorrowful babu !

From Misgar, worn out with sympathising, we went up the valley, passed a tumble-down tower known as 'The Battery' and entered a charming valley, full of glens lined with trees, and enriched by clear streams, strange contrasts to the stark and sombre hills. We had with us a yellow dog which our coolies declared could stop any ibex, and hold it till it could be shot. I said that this was not sport, that the idea was repellent, but the Misgaris said they must have meat. They yearned for it. Hence the dog, and so I promised to do my best. The first time that an ibex was seen, the dog was taken across the river on a horse (for he was terrified of water) and sure enough he did corner the animal, but in a place where no man could get near. All night long the dog howled, but we could do nothing, and in the morning he was brought back. The next day we saw a herd of ibex. Off went the dog with its



master, and I climbed up a nullah to be ready to shoot. When I reached the place where the ibex should have been held at bay, I saw the yellow dog galloping along the hillside after the fleeing game. The dog had not a chance and had been given an impossible task. I was much relieved as I disliked the idea of shooting. The coolies were miserable, as the craving for meat amongst these people amounts to a species of mania. After all, they seldom taste meat except in winter. We crossed over a pass and descended into the Chapursan valley where we were met by the local headman, a Wakhi; he was a fine specimen of his race, well set-up, pleasant mannered, and anxious to help. Not even the fact that he was dressed in a woman's discarded black velveteen coat lessened his dignified demeanour and appearance.

We had a troublesome crossing of an easy pass, as we approached it from an unusual angle. We intended to ascend diagonally up the slope, and so we started first, leaving the coolies to follow. We went ahead, laboriously improving the path to near the top, when, on looking back, we saw, to our rage and disgust, the coolies far away, crawling up the edge of a precipice with apparently no certainty of arriving anywhere. Mercifully they managed to cross the pass, but admitted that they had gone astray. It was an amazing piece of good luck, so when Daulat and I looked over the crest, and saw the coolies at the camping-place, cramming meat into their mouths as fast as they could, we were both happy men.



The view from the pass was fine. Below was the Chapursan valley with its fields of green wheat and barley, whilst opposite and above was a rampart of black jagged peaks, laced together by slopes of shining snow and glacier.

We found our camp at the summer pasture of the villagers, with a small spring chiefly consisting of diluted manure. We dug, however, a fresh spring below. On the hillside there were old pencil-cedars, writhed and bent into fantastic shapes, and—save for a branch or two—quite dead. These trees live to a great age, and their roots and trunks have a wonderful capacity for resisting rot.

The next day we descended to the bed of the valley, and paid off the coolies. The men of Misgar are very troublesome to deal with, and we discussed quite frankly with them why they were so truculent and disagreeable. They were equally frank with us. They said that, being on the frontier, all duties fell to their lot. They had to patrol the border, carry loads for the Mir (chiefly presents sent by interested parties in Turkestan), find men for the post, safeguard the Mir's flocks, and generally do a thousand odd jobs that no other village in the country was called upon to do. They thus led the local equivalent of a dog's life, and they said they could not help being awkward to handle. On the other hand, they are an isolated community, out of touch with events, undisciplined, and often making too large a profit on pilgrims and other wayfarers.



We now went up the Chapursan valley which proved to be fine and broad. The weather was perfect, with a cloudless sky, but we found, whatever the weather was like, that the wind roared and rattled all day down the valley. Its barren sides were of every hue, ochre, red, grey, black, cream, and so on, and in the clear light glowed gaily before us—an attractive aridity.

We passed several ruined villages and wasted fields, for Chapursan has suffered greatly from floods which sweep down and cover the fields with a hard crust, as level as a tennis court. It is impossible to clear away this deposit.

A few years ago the crops of this valley were the best in Hunza, but now the yield has decreased by a third; the cause of this, so the people say, is due to their selling the grain to the Kirghiz and other frontier people. Eight years ago they began to do so, and since then the harvest has diminished. Considering that neither water nor labour has failed this is a curious state of affairs.

However, we passed several prosperous villages which had been resettled after the flood, having escaped the full damage done to others, and we finally reached the flourishing village of Reshit. I asked if there were any shade, for it was blazing weather; but the Wakhi usually plants but one tree by his door and often not that, and all I found at this village were three wretched poplars and two poor willows. So we established ourselves in the upper storey of the Mir's house, in



a sort of open verandah, which kept off the wind and sun. There was a closed-in room for the kitchen, so we were generously sheltered from the elements.

The village was built years ago by Mir Sillim Khan as a fort, for protection against the Kirghiz, and the house was built by Safdar Ali, the last Mir. Here we heard the same tale about the failure of the harvest. The people said that formerly they entertained all travellers free. When their cupidity got the better of their hospitality they began to charge; also their crops began to diminish. 'The Kirghiz have taken our luck away'—so they said—just because the Reshit folk had sold to them. But it was hardly the fault of the Kirghiz.

We spent two nights at Reshit to collect coolies and supplies; settling up was a great business. After we had paid the villagers, they divided the money amongst themselves, a transaction that took hours; far into the night we could hear endless wrangling and discussion.

Before leaving Reshit most of the coolies were sprinkled on the head with flour by their parents or relatives, a Wakhi custom when going on a journey, and one which we hoped implied good luck.

As I went along I was surprised at the extent and development of Reshit; it now consists of sixty families and is growing steadily, thanks to the level well-irrigated plain. Beyond this plain the remains of the great flood which took place a century ago—four generations as the people said—were very evident, for the valley was littered with mounds—in some cases fifteen to twenty



feet high—of grey mud and stones. Often indeed these mounds looked like dilapidated graves.

We crossed a rough moraine and beyond, wedged between this moraine and the slope of the next spur, was 'The Estate of the Old Woman', a patch of fertile fields with three houses, the sole remnant of a prosperous village. Close to the road was a large rock.

The story is that years ago a wandering saint—not Baba Ghundi referred to later—came to the village and was driven away by the inhabitants. One old woman alone showed him any courtesy and she gave him some milk. The saint was righteously angered at his treatment. 'Go', he said to the woman, 'and sit on yonder rock.' The woman did so. Straightway the holy man invoked curses on the village. Down rushed the flood, causing the present moraine. All the village was destroyed, except the strip of cultivation belonging to the old woman, which survives to this day. The Wakhis actually cultivating this piece of land were immigrants from Afghan Wakhan close by. Indeed there is a regular coming and going between the districts on either side of the frontier; the people also intermarry.

As we went further up the valley, the debris of the flood became more general; the whole valley was filled with sinister evidences of this disaster. It was a dreary sight to see these ugly lumps of mud and stone strewn over what was once good soil and now was good for nothing.

At last we reached Yishkuk, a large open space



with patches of grass, with roads and springs and with well-grown thorn jungle. This last reminded me of dwarf cryptomeria trees, and Yishkuk itself resembled, in some respects, a Japanese miniature garden.

In former times this was a flourishing settlement of a hundred Wakhi houses and a hundred Kirghiz tents, but prosperity had made the inhabitants proud and graceless. Thus it was that, when the 'local' saint, Baba Ghundi, visited them, he met with a hostile reception. One man alone was civil and was told to take his flocks and his family, and go to the mountains. He did so and, coming back a few days later to fetch something from his house, found the whole of the village under water. The people say that this disaster happened in the winter, and that for two or three years afterwards the cries of the drowned could be heard. The remains of the old irrigation channels of Yishkuk can still be seen. There are many variations of the legends of Baba Ghundi; I give the stories as told to me.

There were fish at Yishkuk, and we successfully poached them by spreading a blanket in the river, then paddling from above down-stream and driving the fish before us. The blanket was then carefully and gently lifted up, and the fish brought to land. This is the accepted method of fishing when the size of the stream allows it.

Above Yishkuk there is a good deal of red sandstone, which makes the hills look as though they were made



of red sealing-wax, and the valley generally is more humane and genial than its neighbours of the Karakoram, for Chapursan is in the Hindu Kush, and the hills are lower, more open and less stark.

Yishkuk itself and all the country above are kept by the Mir for his own numerous flocks, and for growing barley where the ground is suitable. In one or two side valleys he allows each household to graze one horse and one cow or yak. Considering the amount of land still undeveloped, and the urgent need of more grazing, he might well surrender his monopoly. The pressure of population in Hunza is now acute, and the Mir has more pasture than his flocks require. The people feel aggrieved, and with considerable justification.

We crossed a lateral nullah, with steep clay sides, and a door to close the path. This ingenious device was intended to prevent animals from crossing the nullah and eating the crop below.

Above Yishkuk we reached a dry lake bed close to the path. Here in former days dwelt a nine-headed dragon which invariably ate two of all passers-by, until the beast was slain by Baba Ghundi whose shrine we were now approaching.

Just before the shrine we passed a small village with many pigeons which Daulat proceeded to stalk. I sat down by the headman of Reshit and watched the proceedings. Whilst doing so, one of the villagers came up, sat next the headman and proceeded to blow his nose on his hand, wiping his fingers on the headman's clothes. This seemed to me to be straining the



canons of local etiquette, and I was glad that he was not sitting next me.

The upper Chapursan we found, thanks to the sandstone, even more variegated than the houses. Venetian red, bright browns and yellows, and cold greys all harmonised, and in front was a great maroon-coloured massif. Below, in the nullahs, wild roses, from brilliant pink to white, grew in profusion, just at their best in June.

At last we reached a little plain and at the far end, beyond the swaying green barley, were the fluttering flags of the famous shrine of Baba Ghundi. The Mir of Hunza had built a stone wall, six foot high, all round, with small pilasters at the angles. There is a slope at the top of the wall, and the whole was a work of great merit. The appearance of the shrine was ruined. Inside was the original old wall of mud and stone, and the sanctum itself was protected by a wooden roof that made it look like a fowl-house. Old ibex horns, once adorning the old wall, were now heaped outside, in a grisly blackening pile. The whole place looked entirely commonplace.

The Mir of Hunza has a real devotion to this shrine and, with his Rani, visits it regularly. The yearly addition to his progeny shows that his piety is rewarded. I was interested to see that, in the inscription over the gate of the shrine, the Mir calls himself the Wali of Hunza. In front of this gate was a walled-off open rectangle and, facing the gate, was a small verandah in the eaves of which were stuffed half a dozen copies of



the Koran for the use of worshippers. One or two of the books were beautiful manuscripts.

Here we sat with the Sheikh of the shrine and other local oddments who had collected. The Sheikh had been there for four years, and knew as much about Baba Ghundi as he did about Barbarossa, but I managed to glean a few facts from the assembly.

First of all, the saint's body was not in the shrine. It never had been there. It seems that the holy man after his drastic treatment of the village of Yishkuk disappeared from human vision on the site of the present shrine, which is nothing more than a cenotaph. Secondly, his body was probably in Kerbela, a good safe guess as the saint was a Shiah and all good Shiahs wish to be buried there. Finally, I was told that the saint came from Ghun in Shighnan, in Russian territory. The word means a narrow confined place, and one of the bystanders had been there.

The whole trouble with this somewhat vindictive saint was that, on his arrival in Chapursan, then undoubtedly a densely populated area, he ordered the people to do what he bade them. They mocked him, even threw dung at him, and asked him by what right he gave these orders. It was for this treatment that they were flooded out, and lost their lives into the bargain.

The Baba is highly venerated, as all revengeful but pious folk are in the East. Even from Gilgit and Wakhan pilgrims come, usually in the autumn when the harvest is over and the rivers are easily forded.



The 'stand' of flags, varied with a few yaks' tails, all bent in the direction of the prevailing wind, was the only attractive feature of this shoddy shrine.

So we left the shrine of Baba Ghundi by a bridge but six feet wide where the river rushed between two rocks that almost touched; we camped in a place agreeably known as Tapap or the Sunny Jungle, a pleasant spot with dense thorn, willow and tamarisk, and with a great wall of roses, fifteen feet high, all blooming below a clay cliff. Long grey horse-flies attacked us vigorously and sucked our blood.

We made a detour from here to the side valley of the Irshad at the head of which is a pass leading into Afghanistan, but the view from the crest was disappointing on the northern (or Afghan) side. Of the God-given pure soil (as the Afghans feelingly call their country) a few jagged and barren summits alone greeted us. Very different was the prospect to the south where a wide vista of the snow peaks and pinnacles of Hunza lay serenely before us, not clear and distinct, but bathed in a gentle sleepy bath of azure-grey haze.

The Irshad Pass itself was covered with snow, and the climb to the top made us sweat to our loins as we plodded in the soft shale till we reached the softer snow where we floundered ludicrously. The height is over 16,000 feet, so it was pardonable to pant and puff.

The Irshad valley was full of wild onions, of a high-powered smell when trodden on. On our way down



we met a party of women with donkeys, coming to collect the onions. The leaves are gathered, boiled once, then put to dry in the sun, and kept for eating with meat in the winter ; in a land where even salt is scarce, they give a fine zest to mutton. One of my men said facetiously, 'If you eat these onions you don't forget it till the first of the following month.' Even a lover of garlic would hesitate to cope with this ferocious vegetable.

Our coolies amused themselves in Irshad by playing a simple and Spartan game. They grasped long flat slabs of stone, whilst others threw stones at them which were 'batted off' by the slabs. It was a wild pastime but there were no casualties.

We then went to the top of the Chapursan valley, and stayed a few days at the small stading of Buattar. The word is the name of a plant of which the root is a wonderful cathartic, having an effect as soon as it is taken, graphically described by our 'levy' or orderly.

The old wife who lived in the bothy was of great use to us, as her husband had charge of the Mir's flocks, and she was an adept at making cream, curd and butter. The last was very welcome ; my only tin had turned rancid, even the Wakhis would not touch it, so it degenerated into dubbin. But the old lady, having lived in the Mir's household before she married, was able to produce butter that was not the local train oil made from sour milk. She had had a varied life, as her husband, who came from beyond the frontier, grew weary of a regular existence. His



nomad blood called him. He and his wife left Hunza for Wakhan but, after seven years of semi-starvation, returned, finding a full belly preferable to a free life. They have settled down in charge of their flocks, for Wakhis are excellent herdsmen.

In spite of ample soil, the flowers were poor and commonplace, consisting chiefly of scraggy forget-me-nots. The real alpine flora, owing to the permanent lack of moisture which is general when once the winter snows have melted, cannot flourish, and common plants of no interest usurp its place. The scenery, too, was somewhat disappointing at the extreme head of the valley except for gorgeous red cliffs, red slopes, and red torrents which were a feature of the end of the Chapursan. We found the Wakhis agreeable folk, but I doubt if they have as active an intelligence or vigour as the men of Hunza. They are true Iranians and are often fair. Indeed, I had an orderly, or 'levy', who, with his fair hair and complexion, was a typical Russian Muzhik to outward appearance. He was smiling, willing and tireless, but had little brain. A feature of the Wakhis was that they could never pick a path on a bad bit of hill as quickly as a Hunza man who, in a moment, knew by instinct where to go.

But the Wakhis have many good points, decent, law-abiding, biddable people; yet always, deep down and sub-consciously, they are nomads, yearning for the open grassy uplands which they have left and lost for ever.



## CHAPTER XIX

## DAREL AND TANGIR

No account of the Gilgit Agency would be complete without a reference to the adjoining valleys of Darel and Tangir which have played so conspicuous and sinister a rôle in the politics of the Indus valley.

In the narrow hot valleys of the Indus there are many independent communities, small democratic states, where everyone is his own master and where law and order are unknown. It is due chiefly to their inaccessibility, but partly to the indifference of Government that this republican Alsatia has survived, although it would be untrue to describe this curious non-Pathan enclave as a menace or even a nuisance. It is rather a complication; for it is always difficult for a highly organised state to march with a region where there is no shadow of administration at all. Thus it is that the two valleys of Darel and Tangir have a wholly abnormal influence on the Gilgit Agency.

Since the time when Gauhar Aman was on the throne of Yasin the Tangiri people have acknowledged the ruler of that state as their suzerain. In 1846 Badshah, ruler of Mastuj, fled to Kammi in Tangir, the country was invaded by Gauhar Aman, and five months later the Tangiris agreed to pay tribute to



Yasin. They preserved their independence, however, none the less jealously, and it was to save interference and occupation that they pretended to be the vassals of Yasin. On the other hand, both Darel and Tangir have always welcomed refugees; it has happened that an old aggressor whose fortune has changed and exiled him from his own land has been warmly received by the very people whom he had previously tried to conquer. After all, this attitude is not illogical in the orbit of frontier politics where war, assassination and treachery are never treated very seriously. Every man is ready to embrace one or all of them given a favourable opportunity.

Darel is the more easterly of the two states, wedged in between the Gilgit wazarat, the Chilas district and the Indus and, because its administered neighbour is wholly Kashmir territory (except for a small strip in the north), it has played a less conspicuous rôle than Tangir on its west, which has easy access to Yasin. Indeed the only way for a Tangiri to reach a land of some civilisation is to go to Yasin by one of the many tracks, more or less easy, that lead thither. With the Indus on the south, Darel on the east, and the savagery of Kohistan on the west, the Tangiri is brought into close intercourse with Yasin, not because he wants to be but because he must. It is often not understood that, troublesome though a barbarous neighbour may be to a settled district, law and order next door can be equally or more annoying to the adjoining savages.



It will thus be seen why Tangir has bulked so largely in the politics of the Karakoram and it is also easy to understand why, in a land where rock and stone predominate, the magnificent forests of Darel and Tangir have fascinated the poverty-stricken chiefs. They know that the merchants of India would willingly and handsomely pay for the fine timber, and the Pathans who specialise in felling and exporting trees could easily come to terms with the owners in the valleys. Both valleys drain into the Indus, and it would be childishly easy to fell the forests and let that great river transport the wood to the merchants. It is such a simple way of making large sums of money and the gains more than compensate for the risks. So by hook or by crook, by fair means or foul, the rulers of the neighbouring states have determined to seize these local El Dorados. Men to whom life was of no value considered the danger no deterrent. They were in fact too covetous to be put off by any risk, and it is difficult to blame them, when the condition of their poverty-stricken states is borne in mind.

Tangir resembles Yasin, with wide plains and fields but with the precious addition of its forests. The people, however, live apart in scattered houses, not in fort-villages. In Darel, on the contrary, the inhabitants live in forts, that is a collection of wooden houses built close together for protection. The folk of Tangir are generally cleverer, politer and more civilised and, I should add, more cowardly and treacherous



than the Darelis ; their proximity to Yasin and to Chitrali influences explains the considerable difference.

In Tangir there are many well-to-do seyyids—no point in its favour—and the sister of Mir Bais Khan, Governor of Ishkoman, is married to one. Her husband is very well-to-do ; he has five sons, a useful bodyguard in a land of anarchy, but they can only muster a hundred or so cartridges between them, and those made in Swat, poor ammunition which makes a terrible smoke and is quite unreliable.

The inhabitants of these two valleys know nothing of law and order ; the one interest of their lives, their one obsession, is murder. They obey no man, they do not even obey their jirga or assembly, and are more undisciplined than the most primitive pagans. It is not therefore strange that only one man has ever dominated the country ; he was Pakhtun Wali, son of Mir Wali, the murderer of George Hayward. For twelve years he ruled Darel and Tangir, and the cowards, liars and assassins that dwelt therein. He ruled them too as a murderer, for he himself was a blackguard, a treacherous, lawless tyrant, and an accomplished and unflagging intriguer. To us, used to the ways of the West, he sounds a scoundrel, but he was a *man*, a robust, hard creature who governed the villainous tribesmen as they have never been ruled before or since and in the only way in which they could be ruled. It was a curious feature of the man's character that he disliked the British, curious because, astute though he was, he failed to realise their value



to him, an adventurer playing a lone hand. Yet he often came to Gilgit, and on one occasion was given advice by Humayun Beg, the wazir of Hunza, a man admitted by all to be the most accomplished statesman that the North-West had seen for generations.

‘Look here, Raja’, said the old man, ‘take shelter under the umbrella of the Sirkar. The head clerk of the Gilgit Agency is a capable man: borrow him from the Political Agent. Your savage subjects will then know you have the approval of Government and they will not dare to touch you, and we, on our side, will not interfere with you.’

‘Never!’ replied Pakhtun Wali; ‘I will be under no man: I will govern alone and owe allegiance to no one.’

‘You will be dead within a year’, said Humayun Beg, who knew more in his little finger about most things than Pakhtun Wali did in his whole body.

But nevertheless Pakhtun Wali was no mere adventurer or he would never have succeeded as he did. He was a true diplomat, far-seeing and patient, and absolutely ruthless though blind in the end to his own interests. When he first went to Tangir he remained in the small village of Sheikh for some time. He was without servant or follower, and once, when he was asleep with his mother, his wife and his children, the Gabaras, a clan of Kammi, came, some forty persons in all, heaped piles of dry maize stalks at the door of the house, set fire to them, and threw blazing stalks down the chimney. Pakhtun Wali took his rifle, fired



up the chimney (which is a square hole in the flat roof), and killed two or three of his attackers. He then opened the door, rushed out firing and killed four or five more. His enemies then cleared off to a distance and began to shoot at the house, but only succeeded in wounding Pakhtun's mother, and then but slightly, for this intrepid woman, worthy mother of a fearless son, had rushed out waving the Koran, demanding how the Tangiris dare to try and kill her family.

The whole episode made a great impression in Tangir. The assailants had wasted many precious cartridges and had failed even to hit Pakhtun Wali who, they believed, was protected by some amulet and was invulnerable. His bravery, his daring and his resource appealed even to his unchivalrous neighbours, on the principle of admiring in others what is absent in oneself, and generally the prestige of this Khushwaqt rose greatly throughout that savage land.

Pakhtun Wali remained quietly in the country, feeling his way. He joined in all the feuds, helped people and so formed a party of his own. He was a very strong man, with a large black moustache, black bushy eyebrows, and great furious red eyes. His intellect was as commanding as his person, and he was soon feared by all. Thus he gradually dominated a country which was a prey to intrigue, disorder and division, where one determined man was bound to win through and achieve his object, always provided he was not assassinated. He built two forts, Gumari



in Darel, and Jaglot in Tangir, and then proceeded to do that which many a wiser ruler has neglected ; he disarmed his subjects.

For twelve years Pakhtun Wali ruled savagely and prosperously. He had an income of 2,000 maunds of wheat besides one or two lakhs of rupees in hard cash which the Kaka Khel woodcutters paid him for cutting timber. He never counted the money but, to the astonishment of the countryside, merely weighed it. This still further established his fame, as no one in the Indus valley, unless he were a great man, would risk the loss of a single rupee for lack of counting. Every day he killed a bullock and a goat to feed his two or three hundred retainers.

But sooner or later violent death was bound to overtake him in the den of murderers in which he lived ; it is a tribute to the fear he inspired and the skill of his rule that he eluded his fate for twelve years of harsh and turbulent government. When attending the building of a new house at Kammi he told his servants to leave their arms and help in the meritorious work. He himself had a bath, then sat in a chair with his pistol lying beside him on the ground : he had a cloth over his shoulders for his head was being shaved. There were many men passing to and fro near the Raja, carrying bricks and mortar. Suddenly several attacked him, hitting him on the head with an axe. He stooped down for his pistol, but was struck four or five times and died without being able to do anything in his defence.



After his death his forts were looted, as no one had the sense to shut the gates, whereby both might have easily been defended. Pakhtun Wali's murderers never paid for their crimes. To-day he lies in one of the nine graves of those who have tried to seize the sovereignty of Tangir, but he alone was successful. One of his sons, Raja Shah Alam, is a refugee at the court of the Wali of Swat and hopes one day, with the aid of that ruler, to regain his father's dominions.

As we crossed the Shandur Pass into Chitral in 1933 we met an old woman with two young men. She was the aunt of Pakhtun Wali and the two boys were her nephews, two of the seven sons of the dead Raja. They were without land or money, and wandered about living on their relatives, truly a sad fate for the descendants of a ruthless but able chief.

Only one man has ever come near to occupying the vacant throne, and that was Raja Sifat Bahadur, of the Burish clan, paternal uncle of Anwar Khan, the present Raja of Punyal. He had been given the governorship of Yasin, although he had no specific claim to the post, to which the Government, however, had every right to nominate whom they would. In dealing with these hill chiefs it is at times desirable to assert the prerogatives of the suzerain and not to allow vague claims to become undisputed privileges.

The Khushwaqts and Burish have ever been a restless race, often energetic and able, often cruel, lazy and short-sighted, but always dissatisfied. They are adepts in intrigue and low cunning, and are usually



brought to an untimely end by their greed. Their whole history bears out their character. After eight or nine years of ruling over the fat lands and pleasant folk of Yasin, Sifat Bahadur cast a longing eye on Tangir and Darel, so fatal a lure to many of his house. Rich forests and large sums paid by traders were a sore temptation. He knew that, if he seized the country, all he had to do was to give the necessary permission to the contractors and the rupees would roll into his treasury without further effort. What hill chief could resist so easy a way of making money? He began to intrigue and to form a party in this coveted country. Now this has ever been a simple matter, for there have always been two parties in these lawless lands. When one party weakens, it begins to intrigue with some neighbouring ruler, hoping to induce him to come in, occupy the country and enable his supporters to work off their vendettas on their stronger opponents, and so redress the balance of power. When the Raja Sifat Bahadur thought that all was ready he prepared to start and win a new kingdom.

The Political Agent at Gilgit sent for the Raja and told him not to be so foolish. He warned him that if he went to Tangir he went for good, he could not continue as ruler of Yasin; if he turned back on the very frontier it would not be too late, but once over the border he would never be allowed to return to his state. He must choose between Yasin and Tangir. This was very good advice, advice given as a friend and not merely as a matter of routine.



Again and again he was warned that, if the venture failed, he could expect nothing from Government. At this time Sifat Bahadur was about forty-four or forty-five, a stout, reddish-faced man, easily moved to anger, obstinate and intractable, florid and strong, generally a fine fellow.

Sifat Bahadur, however, was not alone in his designs on Tangir. Mohi-ud-Din, a Khushwaqt prince who lived at Dain in Ishkoman and who was the brother of the present Governor of Yasin and Ghizr, also had his eye on those fertile lands, now at the mercy of any adventurer, and the intriguers in Tangir had begun to intrigue with him. In fact they played off one candidate for the throne against another, a piece of treachery that appealed to them enormously. The tribesmen sent both to Mohi-ud-Din and Sifat Bahadur, asking them to come, so that when the latter started for Tangir by one valley, the former at once followed by another; and for a time each manœuvred for a chance to kill the other.

Sifat Bahadur still hoped to secure the aid of Government for, like many an intriguer, he could never believe that the warning he had received was anything more than diplomatic subterfuge. He accordingly went to Gilgit ostensibly to greet the Commander-in-Chief who had come there on a visit, actually to ask for help which was, of course, refused. So he hastened back, determined on the death of his rival, for he realised that he stood alone and his position was critical; in fact he already regretted the whole



enterprise. Both men were in the village of Kammi (the word means 'fort') each with his gang of supporters.

Sifat Bahadur determined to go to Jaglot, rebuild Pakhtun Wali's fort, and kill Mohi-ud-Din. The latter was equally determined to prevent the rebuilding of the fort and went to Jaglot, resolved on killing his adversary. It was Sifat Bahadur who got in the first blow. He went to his rival's house when all were asleep, surrounded it with men, and laid a bomb covered with grass at the door. The device was highly successful. The bomb went off, set fire to the grass and awakened the occupants. The light of the burning grass illuminated the whole scene. Sifat Bahadur jumped on to the roof of the house and Mohi-ud-Din fired three or four times at him from inside but failed to hit him. He then rushed out of the house and Sifat Bahadur's men fired at him, hitting him in the mouth. The bullet passed out at the back of his neck, and he fell, mortally wounded. His Tangir servant Hazal shouted to Sifat Bahadur that his master was dead, and that there was no need to kill the rest. Orders were given to throw all arms out of the house, and this was done. Mohi-ud-Din was not dead but he was laid on a charpoy, died next morning, and was buried near Pakhtun Wali's grave. His followers were sent to Chilas.

When Sifat Bahadur went to conquer his new kingdom he took his confidential attendant with him, a Dareli, Shiti by name, who had committed murder in his own land and had fled to Yasin. His duty was



to stand behind his master with a loaded Martini carbine in his hands. Shiti's enemies made overtures to him to induce him to kill the chief, and promised in return that they would forgive him the blood-feud. Sifat Bahadur was one day sitting and superintending the rebuilding of the fort of Jaglot. His nephew, Faqir Wali, with his loaded Mannlicher rifle, was beside him, and in a house in the village was Sifat Bahadur's well-grown son of eighteen, Amir Haider. Close to Faqir Wali was a trusted Tangiri servant. Faqir Wali gradually began to doze, and as he slept his trusted servant slowly and cautiously moved nearer him, and turned over the safety catch of the Mannlicher rifle, locking the bolt. He then gave a sign to Shiti, who at once shot Sifat Bahadur through the neck, and he dropped dead. Faqir Wali woke up, the more quickly as the Tangiri behind him had hit him on the head with his uncle's sword. Faqir Wali was a powerful youth, well made, active and resourceful. He seized his rifle, tried to fire it, but naturally failed to do so. His scoundrelly servant again hit him on the head; he closed with him but he had no hope of escape as the other Tangiris gathered round him and slew him.

One Tangiri, however, rushed off to the village, told Sifat Bahadur's son what had happened and urged him to escape. It was not humanity nor loyalty that moved him but, as the lad was well armed, the Tangiris did not wish him to defend himself in the house but rather in the open country where the chances would



be against him. The poor boy ran out and tried to hide. The Tangiris first shot him in the leg and then murdered him as he lay on the ground. Had he stayed in the house his followers might have rallied to him and he might have escaped, for concerted action would have been impossible in a country where there are always two parties.

So Sifat Bahadur never actually ruled in Tangir or Darel, and never gave an order to anyone. He was slain before his object was achieved, and Pakhtun Wali still remains the only man who ever became King of Tangir and Darel. As to Shiti, faithless servant, he was slain by Seyyid Khisrau, nephew of Mir Bais Khan of Ishkoman.

Apart from these incidents, the reign of Pakhtun Wali and the abortive attempt of Sifat, the history of the two valleys has been but a dreary tale of murder and blood-feuds. So bad has it now become that there is no house without its vendetta, and life has become intolerable. Even murder appears to have lost its charm; and the savages are sated with blood. Yet these valleys continue to exercise a fascination over the members of ruling houses in the Karakoram, and the Political Agent is often importuned to give leave to some gushpur to try his luck there.

Undoubtedly if anyone went under the ægis of the Government his path would be smoothed. Previous adventurers were murdered because the people of Tangir and Darel knew well that there was nothing behind them. They were mere bandits, after loot



and power, and their success would not benefit the country. After all, Tangir and Darel were free, and their inhabitants had no desire to be ruled by a tyrant or be crushed by some incompetent self-seeker. They are now quite ready, indeed are anxious, to be ruled by someone recognised by the Government of India, for they are sick to death of blood and anarchy. Once under a capable administrator, they would be freed from the burden of vendettas and assassination, and would benefit by the solid advantages of regular administration.

In Sifat Bahadur's time messengers were constantly being sent to Chilas to inquire if the Raja had the support of the Government. If he had had it he would be ruling there to-day. Instead, he, his son and his nephew lie buried at Kammi, beside Pakhtun Wali, in three of those nine graves that mark the resting-places of aspirants to the throne of Tangir and Darel.

At present these two countries cause much trouble to the districts of the Gilgit Agency, owing to the inroads made by the tribesmen. Occasional murders too take place, cattle are driven off and travellers robbed. The authorities retaliate by fining the tribesmen and blockading them until the money is paid. It is unsatisfactory because nothing will settle the question except the occupation of the two valleys; half-measures are useless. Indeed, as has been explained, the people want to be taken over, and they hope to force the Government to do so by making themselves troublesome. It is an interesting situation



considering how much our methods of government are disparaged by critics. The old Governor of Yasin and other chiefs were very emphatic on the subject; all declared that the occupation would be profitable to everyone concerned, and the revenue from the forests would, far from involving extra expenditure, bring in a handsome profit to Government. All that is wanted, they said, is a letter from the Sirkar to say that they are taking over the two countries. The mullahs might object, but the people, if once they know that they are coming into the Gilgit Agency, would be delighted and there would be no trouble at all, and certainly no war. It seems the only solution of a tiresome and impossible situation, which is trying the tempers of everyone concerned.



## APPENDIX I

## THE HISTORY OF GILGIT

THE history of Gilgit, 'Sargin Gilgit' or the happy land of Gilgit, as it is known in its own Shina language, is lost in antiquity. The last ruler reputed to have been a Hindu was Sri Badat, whose rule extended over all the neighbourhood from Astor to Chitral; he was a real person, but has become legendary on account of his reputed cannibalism. It is narrated that on one occasion he went to a woman's house, and when he demanded food she gave him the 'meat' of a kid that she had reared on her own milk. The flavour was so excellent that the Ra (king) asked how it was that the meat was so delicate, and when he learned the cause he never afterwards ate anything except the flesh of young children. Hunza tradition has it that the daughter of the cannibal king married a Hunza prince and it was this daughter who arranged her father's death. Only fire could harm the Ra. They dug a deep trench near his castle gate, concealing it with a cloth. They then raised an alarm at night, the Ra rushed out to repulse what he believed was an attack, fell into the trench, and was killed by the villagers throwing burning torches on him.<sup>1</sup>

Azor or Azur-i-Jamshed succeeded Sri Badat: he was undoubtedly a usurper, but whether he married the daughter of the king or not rests on tradition only.

<sup>1</sup> The Tum-i-shilling (Fire festival) is said to be founded on this event.



Sri Badat appears to have been the last non-Moslem Ra, if the Mohammedan names given to the princes after him were their real ones. Whether Sri Badat was a Buddhist, or what is more likely a Hindu, is conjectural. It is said, locally, that Azor introduced the Shiah form of Islam into the country. He reigned for seven years and on his death, since there was no heir, an old man suggested that, as a local man named Guddas had a son descended from the Ras of Gilgit, he should be put on the throne. This son was Su Malik I., and tradition aims at establishing a dynastic link between the rulers of Gilgit and of Hunza.

Azor is sometimes identified with Shamsheer, a fact which tends further to confuse the issue. The dynasty of the later Ras was called the Trakhan, after the prince of that name, whose son, Su Malik, refused to pay tribute to Badakshan. This was about 1620, and the Mir of that country, Taj Mughal, invaded the Ra's territory, but was defeated and fled back to his own land. This Su Malik is sometimes confused with an earlier and legendary person of the same name who flourished three generations previously and was the great-grandfather of Mirza Khan, the warrior Ra of Gilgit, father of Trakhan the eponymous founder of the dynasty, whose son was Su Malik II. This Mirza Khan was poisoned by his wife, whose seven brothers he had killed.

It must again be emphasised that no real reliance can be placed on the genealogy of these princes. The names may be accepted as those of actual Ras, but the order of succession is uncertain, and several names may have dropped out.

Su Malik II., also known as Gilgit Malika (or the Gilgit prince), is also the hero of tiresome legend which, since he flourished so late as the seventeenth century A.D., might well have been avoided. It was his grandson, Mirza Khan, who was murdered at Nagir; and



the murdered man's great-grandson, Gauri Thum or Suleiman Khan, was killed about 1805 by Suleiman Shah of Yasin who was a refugee in Gilgit and had been given protection by the Ra. He murdered his host as the old man sat in his garden, and his wazir as well, a typical piece of Khushwaqt treachery.

Any attempt to chronicle a history and pedigree of the Ras of Gilgit must, for lack of authentic records, be an unprofitable task: it would be easy, but useless, to adorn this necessarily brief and unsatisfactory account with details which are obviously mythical. It is remarkable that so little should be known of Gilgit; it has always been a place of importance, and its Ras exercised a wide jurisdiction. The introduction of Mohammedanism should have created a broader outlook, and have resulted in a closer intercourse with its neighbours; it may be doubted if the country did embrace Islam as and when tradition now asserts. Considering how strongly Hindu practices linger amongst many of the Moslems of the valley, and especially amongst the Shins, whose conversion admittedly was comparatively recent, it may be possible that the Moslem names of the Ras were but labels which religious fervour gave to Hindu rulers. If Hinduism lasted longer in Gilgit, if indeed it became a Hindu enclave in a Mohammedan area with the old faith of India preserved by means of these Hindu rulers, the extreme vagueness of all Gilgit history would be largely explained. There, however, the matter must rest.

The death of Gauri Thum, after a reign of fifty-three years, ushered in a period of such rebellion and misery as Gilgit had not previously known: this was due to the restless energy of the Khushwaqt family, to whom the extinction of the dynasty of the Trakhan, except in the female line, was a golden opportunity.

In 1819 Suleiman Shah of Yasin killed Mohamed



Khan and Abbas Khan, the surviving sons of Gauri Thum. There was no male issue surviving, but the daughter of Mohamed Khan married Karim Khan of Nagir and the descendants of this union represent the Trakhan family. With the death of Gauri Thum all power was lost to the ruling family of Gilgit; the present Ra is without any position or prestige, a person of no importance whatever. He is no more than a landed proprietor, and wanders about the bazaars of Gilgit, a sorry figure of no consideration. It is singular that the struggle for Gilgit, pursued with vigour by the Mohammedan princes, led eventually but to the establishment of Hindu power. Had either Yasin or Punyal taken the country, and held it undisturbed, Gilgit might now be an appanage of Chitral, and the Mehtar's kingdom would extend from the Indus to the Kabul river. The introduction of Kashmir into the Gilgit region has proved definitely prejudicial to Chitrali influence.

Drew has devoted much care to recent events in Gilgit, but it is regrettable that so accurate an observer was not able to glean any earlier evidence about the Trakhan family.

Suleiman Shah of Yasin gained little by the murder of the two sons of old Gauri Thum or from arranging in Nagir the murder of Asghar Ali, son of Mohamed Khan, the elder of the two dead brothers. He was murdered at Cher Kila by Azad Khan, Burish, who in his turn was murdered by Tair Shah of Nagir, who ruled from 1833-7, and whose son, Karim Khan, married the daughter of Mohamed Khan (see above), the sole heiress and descendant of the Trakhan family. Karim Khan was invited to accept the throne of Gilgit as this daughter was too young, and the Nagir princes were the nearest collaterals. His son, Sikandar Khan, succeeded him, but was murdered by Gauhar Aman who in turn, after a reign of eight months,



was driven out by a Sikh army who installed Karim Khan on the throne. Karim Khan may be said to be the last Ra of Gilgit who exercised any authority (and that much diminished) in virtue of his being related to the original dynasty.

The Sikh Government of the Punjab finally occupied Gilgit, being invited there by Karim Khan, and the period of their occupation (1842-8) was really a struggle between their representative Nathu Shah and Gauhar Aman of Yasin. For a time a Hindu, Mathra Das, supplanted Nathu, but stayed only a short while. The redoubtable Khushwaqt defeated the Hindu so thoroughly that he did not stop running until he reached Kashmir, and Nathu was left in undisturbed possession of his difficult province till his death and that of the Ra of Gilgit in 1848. It was a consequence of this catastrophe that the infant grandson of Karim Khan, Ali Dad Khan, was installed by Dogras<sup>1</sup> as nominal Ra of Gilgit.

When Gulab Singh became Maharaja of Kashmir, the position in Gilgit was as precarious as ever, thanks to the turbulent Gauhar Aman who attacked the Dogras. They in turn sent for Bhup Singh, the Dogra commandant at Astor. He made a mistake which has always brought disaster to every force that makes it, he allowed the enemy to seize the high ground whilst he remained below. At the famous Bhup Singh parri, the Dogra commander halted between the river and the cliffs. From the height above the men of Gauhar Aman fired on the helpless mob or else hurled stones upon it, whilst from across the river Hunza mountaineers shot down the Dogras. Over a thousand of the Dogra army were killed. Gilgit Fort fell and its garrison was butchered; another detachment of 300

<sup>1</sup> Dogra, a race of Hill Rajputs, who form the ruling race in Kashmir.



men also succumbed to Gauhar Aman who had at one stroke annihilated the three forces of the Dogra Maharaja and had killed some 1,500 of his soldiers. Indeed, it is doubtful if 200 in all escaped with their lives to become slaves.

In 1860 the new Maharaja of Kashmir, Ranbir Singh, determined to reconquer Gilgit, and the task proved an easy one. Gauhar Aman had died in 1858 and his new fort at Gilgit inspired no confidence in his people without their savage ruler, so that when the Dogra army came there was little or no resistance.

But although Gauhar Aman of Yasin was dead the Dogra rule was once more threatened, in 1866, owing primarily to the failure of a Dogra invasion of Hunza which encouraged their enemies. Now Aman-ul-Mulk, Mehtar of Chitral, had always coveted possession of Gilgit and so, with allies from Yasin and Darel, he descended on that place. He was baulked by the behaviour of Raja Isa Bagdur (not Bahadur, as he is so often called) of Punyal who provisioned his fort of Cher Kila, and with a Kashmiri garrison held out bravely. He thus blocked the advance of the main force of the Mehtar and, although a few men did reach Gilgit by a roundabout way and even invested the fort there, most of them were detained at Cher Kila until the arrival of reinforcements from Kashmir alarmed the Mehtar and he withdrew. What a different story it would have been if Gauhar Aman had been alive! From this time onward Gilgit has enjoyed peace, as an integral part of the dominions of the Maharaja of Kashmir.



## APPENDIX II

## HISTORY OF YASIN

THE Kator family, the ruling dynasty of Chitral, and the Khushwaqt, that of Yasin, claim descent from a common ancestor, one Kator, said to be a Kafir of the Hindu Kush who ruled from Jelalabad to Gilgit. When the present dynasty in Chitral came into power the founder of it, Motaram Shah, was given the name Kator by the people.

The senior or Kator branch has been on the throne of Chitral for at least two centuries, whilst the junior or Khushwaqt has with varying fortune dominated Yasin and the adjacent territories. The two families have shown a curious affinity towards one another and, whilst ever ready to murder and rob amongst themselves with utter callousness, have a tendency to coalesce before a common foe, but the dominant and, in case of war, the successful partner has always been the Kator or Chitral stock.

It is claimed by the Kator that they are the *de jure* owners of Yasin and the neighbouring states because they are the lawful heirs of the Reyis or princes who ruled from the Burzil to Chirghan Serai in the Kunar valley, that is to the frontier of Afghanistan. The last Reyis ruler of Chitral gave his daughter to a prince of Khorasan, who was a refugee at his court, and from this union the Kator and Khushwaqt are descended.

Later on the Khushwaqt took Mastuj (now part of Chitral) with Ghizr, Kuh, Yasin and Ishkoman on the Gilgit side of the Hindu Raj range. The Mehtar



of Chitral became a feudatory of Great Britain in 1878-9, and as he subsequently drove his Khushwaqt relatives out of their possessions, he claims that, since he was suzerain of the Khushwaqt, so their possessions are his. He even extends his demands to Punyal, Gilgit and actually to Hunza and Nagir, but they cannot be considered seriously. It must, however, be realised that Chitral is aggressive in its pretensions, and for that reason the Kator family is extremely unpopular with the other regnant chiefs. Also, it is principally on account of the attitude of Chitral that the Governors of Yasin, Ghizr and Ishkoman are appointed by Government for life and not necessarily from Khushwaqt stock. For instance, Mir Bais Khan, Governor of Ishkoman, is a Burish of the Punyal family, whilst Murad Khan, late of Ghizr, was of the family of the Astor chiefs. The appointment of non-Khushwaqt chiefs was resented in Chitral, affording an instance of family feeling in face of the foe, notwithstanding which the Mehtar wishes to take all three states for himself. It is remarkable, also, that in spite of the evil record of the Khushwaqt, their name still carries weight in the country which they used to misgovern so abominably, and the people still respect them. The Chitral rulers also say that, when the Khushwaqt chiefs attacked Gilgit in 1880, when that place was under British protection and in possession of Kashmir, the Kator family was promised the restoration (*sic*) of the three states in return for turning out Ghulam Mohiud-Din, Pahlwan Bahadur. But to return to the history of Yasin.

Shah Khushwaqt had an elder son, Faramurz Shah, who took possession of Yasin and other states, but his family died out and it was the younger son, Shah Alam, who became the common ancestor of both the Khushwaqt and Burish families of to-day. His son, Shah Badshah, had no less than six sons, of whom the elder,



Mulk Aman, became ruler of Yasin whilst Suleiman Shah was installed as chief of Mastuj. Suleiman Shah was succeeded by Gauhar Aman who, from then onwards, dominates the whole history of this region.

The Khushwaqt family yield to no other race in the Hindu Kush or Karakoram for greed, cruelty, intrigue, or restlessness, and so in spite of, or because of, all their misspent energy and utter unscrupulousness, they have but a sinister fame.

Of all the oppressors of this clan none was more deservedly detested than Gauhar Aman, a typical scion of a race of murderous ruffians. Yet, although his evil deeds are well-remembered and execrated, he is still spoken of with a note of admiration and approval, for the cruelties of this fierce savage find an echo in the breasts of other savages in the Gilgit Agency. He was born in 1809, the son of Mulk Aman, Mehtar of Yasin, and married the aunt and the sister of Amanul-Mulk, Mehtar of Chitral in 1825 and, as a third wife, the daughter of Azad Khan of Punyal. This Azad Khan was the ruler of Gilgit in 1827, and later killed Suleiman Shah, uncle of Gauhar Aman, but was driven out himself and murdered in 1833. In 1829 Gauhar Aman marched against Suleiman Shah who was then in Yasin Fort. He surprised and captured him.<sup>1</sup> His next feat was to capture Punyal, but he was defeated by his brother Mir Aman, ruler of Mastuj in Chitral, and fled to Wakhan. From Wakhan he escaped to Tangir, always ready to offer an asylum to fugitives and, though a mere refugee with a handful of followers, he subdued that country which since then has always acknowledged, more or less, the overlordship of Yasin. Mir Aman ruled Yasin till 1839 when Gauhar Aman returned, seized

<sup>1</sup> Biddulph, p. 184, says Suleiman was captured at Cher in Punyal:



Yasin and drove out his brother, but was himself expelled.

In 1840 and 1841, for eighteen months, Gauhar Aman held a continuous stretch of territory from the Chitral border to the Indus. Although when Karim Khan, accompanied by Nathu Shah (the Sikh general but a Seyyid of Gujranwala), attacked him Gauhar Aman defeated them, the Sikhs later occupied Gilgit. Apparently Gauhar Aman considered it good policy not to defend that town and, after his victory, he retired to Cher Kila in Punyal. He was prudent, for he knew that his subjects in Gilgit had suffered greatly at his hands, and with the Sikhs without and revolt within, it would be a hard task to hold the place. Karim Khan was once more installed as Ra, but he and Nathu lost their lives whilst invading Hunza in 1848.

When Aman-ul-Mulk had been Mehtar of Chitral for some time, he entered into an alliance, in 1847, with Gauhar Aman, whose brother-in-law he was. In 1848 these two attacked and retook Gilgit, but an arrangement was eventually patched up with Kashmir. In 1853-4, however, Gauhar Aman invaded Gilgit again, annihilated the Dogra army, and held the place till his death in 1858; when that occurred he was in occupation of the whole country from the Shandur Pass to Bunji on the Indus.

In the last year of his life Gauhar Aman attacked and captured Chalt and Chaprot, and was on his way to Gilgit when he passed Daiyur with its famous shrine which lies on the left bank of the Hunza river, but can be seen from the opposite side, on which runs the path to Gilgit. The shrine had always annoyed the irascible ruler; he flew into a rage when he saw it and ordered its destruction.<sup>1</sup> He rode along but as

<sup>1</sup> It is said that the shrine was twice removed to Gilgit by order of Gauhar Aman, and that its site was marked there by a miraculous pomegranate tree.



he approached Gilgit he fell ill, and could not pass water. He at once sent word to stop demolishing the shrine but it was already half pulled down: and the Raja grew no better. It had ever been his custom, in time of trouble or pain, to sacrifice men to the Almighty, and so he bethought him of the twelve prisoners he had taken at Chalt. He had his bed placed by the river bank at Gilgit just below the fort where he could see the captives who were coming along. As they reached a point opposite to him they were all executed. He, however, grew no better and was carried on a litter toward Yasin, but died at Gakuch two days later and was buried at Yasin.

Gauhar Aman was never happy if he had not arranged for someone's death every day. He was a Sunni, and he used to say that whenever he was tired or dispirited, nothing refreshed him so much as seeing a Shiah put to death. If he saw two men talking together, he would send for them and have at least one executed. Drew (p. 437) tells how he once threw up a child and killed it by cutting it with his sword in the air; whilst Biddulph (p. 138) mentions a Seyyid of Badakshan who was sent a present by Gauhar Aman of 100 Gilgiti slaves. Indeed this Khushwaqt had a particular fondness for selling men, women and children into slavery, and did not spare his own relatives. Most of the fathers of the Punyal gushpurs of to-day were sold as slaves, and those he did not sell, he slew. Amongst the former were Jafar Ali Khan and his son Murad Khan, who was Governor of Kuh and Ghizr till 1932 and now lives at Bargu, near Gilgit. These two, father and son, were sent by Gauhar Aman as a present to Chitral, where the lad became a dancing boy. On one occasion later on, when fortune had changed, the Political Agent with Murad Khan met some Chitrali notables on the Shandur Pass. Murad Khan did not rise when the party approached. Later



on, when all were watching some dancing, Murad Khan remarked that it was very good. 'Yes', said Dastirgir Mehtarjau of Chitral, 'you ought to be a good judge of dancing.'

Though as a conqueror it may be doubted whether Gauhar Aman was as great a man as Suleiman Shah, Khushwaqt, or Azad Khan, Burish, yet his name endures for ever.<sup>1</sup> He was succeeded by his son Mulk Aman, who governed from Ghizr to Gilgit. The Kashmir Durbar, however, had long determined to recover its trans-Indus possessions, and in 1860 an army under General Devi Singh Narainia, after capturing Gilgit, advanced on Yasin, captured the Muduri or Yasin Fort, and laid waste the Yasin valley. Mulk Aman fled, but was subsequently reinstated as ruler of Ghizr, Kuh, Yasin and Ishkoman, that is of all the lands of the Khushwaqt.

The Kashmir authorities had detested Gauhar Aman, with good reason, and they hated all his descendants. They knew that Mulk Aman was no friend of theirs and, on the arrival of General Hoshiyara at Gilgit in 1863, an expedition was sent against the Mehtar of Yasin who, with all his people, resisted bravely at Marorikot, in the main valley beyond the town. The Yasinis were completely defeated, the loss of life was considerable, and they were so cowed that for some years they even sent tribute to Kashmir.

<sup>1</sup> It is often said that General Hoshiyara defeated Gauhar Aman, but the former did not arrive in Gilgit till 1863, and the only Dogra commander who would have attacked the Khushwaqt was General Devi Singh Narainia, who reached Gilgit in 1860 (see Drew, pp. 444-6). It is clear from oral tradition that Gauhar Aman died a natural death, a remarkable fact considering his life and the times, and before Devi Singh could reach Gilgit, and it is a reasonable inference that, had he survived to meet either general, he would have defeated them as he had Bhup Singh and Nathu Shah. Gauhar Aman had, it is true, built an impregnable fort at Gilgit, but without the master hand it availed nothing.



Mulk Aman fled to Tangir, that ever hospitable refuge, and Mir Wali, his brother, assembled a force to ensure that he did not enter Ghizr and so return to Yasin. He then made himself master of his brother's lands, patched up a peace with Punyal, and made overtures to Kashmir.

The next event was a proposal in 1866, by Shujah Khan, Burish, of Punyal, to Aman-ul-Mulk, Mehtar of Chitral, who was a relative by marriage, to attack Gilgit. Mir Wali agreed to take part, but betrayed them, although or perhaps because he was a Khushwaqt, a co-religionist, a relative, and a pledged partisan. He gave the news to a Gilgit commander. The attack was not a success, Gakuch was destroyed, and the Mehtar returned to his own country to continue his intrigues for the possession of the Khushwaqt dominions. The only retaliation made by the Kashmiris, at whose approach the invaders fled, was to send an expedition to Darel, a futile manœuvre, and it was this lukewarm attitude of the Kashmiris that encouraged the Khushwaqt to further depredations.

The Mehtar of Chitral, in 1867, persuaded Mir Wali to patch up some terms with his brother, Mulk Aman, who was still a refugee in Tangir, so that he too might attack Isa Bagdur, that loyal ally of the Dogras in Punyal, and bring that state under the Khushwaqt rule. The enterprise was a complete fiasco. The garrison of Punyal was largely Dogra, and the Yasinis retired crestfallen to Yasin. There, to the great disgust and alarm of Mir Wali, Mulk Aman determined to settle. Waiting his chance, Mulk seized and disarmed his brother, spared his life, sent him to Ghizr, and ascended once more his old throne.

An episode of this nature is a complete enigma to the European mind. The two brothers were ready to murder anyone, and had indeed often done so, yet although they would callously remove any



competitors to power, they spared each other. They must have known that the position could not last, and must have been manœuvring for an opening which fortune gave to Mir Wali. For Mulk Aman had been foolishly weak, according to local opinion, in not slaying his brother before. There may be one explanation—they were both children of the same mother, for it is when brothers have different mothers that the tie of blood is no obstacle to crime.

Mir Wali went to Chitral, raised an army, and advanced on Yasin. As soon as Mulk Aman learned the news, he fled back to his old place of exile in Tangir, bitterly repenting that he had spared his brother's life. Mir Wali once more ruled in Yasin.

A rapid change now took place in Yasin affairs. Mohi-ud-Din, known as Pahlwan Bahadur ('the noble hero'), brother of both Mulk Aman and Mir Wali, had been made Governor of Mastuj by his uncle Aman-ul-Mulk, the Mehtar of Chitral. After the murder of George Hayward in August 1870, Pahlwan Bahadur, aged twenty, arrived with a small force at Yasin. He had come with the approval of his uncle, and also, it is said, with the connivance and at the instigation of Mir Wali's wazir who was alarmed by the murder, perhaps because he might have but had not prevented it. At any rate, Mir Wali fled to Badakshan, and ultimately to Chitral, where he made terms with the Chitrali ruler. Indeed, to such effect did he cajole his uncle that he was allowed to return to Yasin, but he had to earn his reward. Mir Wali undertook to kill Seyyid Ali Shah who had murdered Shah Motaram Shah, elder brother of the Mehtar, and on accomplishing this very proper act of justice, regained his throne in Yasin from the Mehtar, who clearly enjoyed disposing in summary fashion of the fortunes of his Khushwaqt kinsman, sending word to Pahlwan Bahadur to vacate it.



Aman-ul-Mulk continued his rôle of king-maker in Yasin, and a year or two later picked a quarrel with Mir Wali over some property which he claimed as his, and the Yasin ruler fled again to Badakshan. Two years later, when on his way back from that country, he was killed by the orders of the Governor of Mastuj. It is clear, I think, that neither Aman-ul-Mulk's action nor Mir Wali's fate was in any way due to Hayward's murder. Pahlwan Bahadur again ruled in Yasin, which must have been bewildered by the rapidly changing fortunes of its princes ; but although he was the third son of Gauhar Aman to sit in his father's seat he was no happier than his brothers. In 1878 Major Biddulph visited Yasin and was very cordially received, as was proper in the case of the first accredited Political Agent in Gilgit. The Mehtar of Chitral was extremely angry at this reception. His jealous and suspicious brain imagined that his nephew had been plotting to dethrone him, for the arrival of a British official at Yasin must have some hidden object. His tortuous mind began intriguing how to get rid of this rival and so he persuaded him to attack Gilgit, promising his help. It was a well-conceived scheme, one indeed of magnitude and foresight, and worthy of the old villain who designed it. If it succeeded the Mehtar would eventually obtain possession of Gilgit, if it failed he would be free of his tiresome nephew ; whatever the upshot was he would be the gainer. Acting on the Mehtar's advice Pahlwan Bahadur, in 1880, attacked Cher Kila in his advance on Gilgit but, unsupported by his uncle, failed, as was almost a foregone conclusion, and being much alarmed at his situation went to Chitral to remonstrate. The Mehtar would do nothing. It was hardly to be expected that, having failed to help his nephew before he attacked, he would be so ill-advised as to reinforce him when defeated. Pahlwan even went to Bashkar,



in Kohistan, to raise troops wherewith to attack the Kashmir army, but without success. Not only had the Mehtar failed to help Pahlwan Bahadur but he sent instead troops to occupy Yasin, so that the wretched ruler lost all at the hands of his unscrupulous uncle.

It is said that Aman-ul-Mulk, cruel tyrant, ruthless murderer, but affectionate father, wept the whole of one day because he was driving Pahlwan Bahadur, his sister's son and also his own son-in-law, out of his state; but he declared the temptation to seize the country was too great! He installed his son, Nizam-ul-Mulk, as ruler of Yasin, and Afzal-ul-Mulk in Mastuj. Between the departure of the rightful ruler, Pahlwan Bahadur, and the appointment of Nizam-ul-Mulk, there was a brief interregnum during which Mir Aman, brother it is said of Gauhar Aman and so uncle to Pahlwan, became chief of Yasin. In 1880 Pahlwan and Mulk Aman attacked and defeated him, but Mir Aman remained in possession. The two brothers then attacked Ghizr but failed, and fled to Tangir. Afzal-ul-Mulk then drove out Mir Aman, who in his turn became a refugee in Tangir, but Nizam-ul-Mulk became Governor as mentioned above.

In 1881 Pahlwan successfully invaded his old dominions but was too terrified of his uncle, the Mehtar, to remain, and he returned to his place of exile with his brother, Mulk Aman. There one day, that same year, he was walking hand-in-hand, as is the fraternal habit, with his brother when his nephew, the son of Mulk Aman, came behind and shot him in the back.

Nizam-ul-Mulk ruled Yasin till 1892, when Afzal-ul-Mulk drove him out and he fled to Ishkoman. Afzal-ul-Mulk was murdered by his uncle, Sher Afzal, who in turn fled at the approach of Nizam-ul-Mulk. On 1 January 1895, Nizam-ul-Mulk was shot by a servant of his brother, Amir-ul-Mulk, who was deposed



in favour of Shuja-ul-Mulk, the present Mehtar of Chitral. It was owing to this series of murders that the Government of India very prudently, on the occasion of the accession of the present Mehtar and in consequence, also, of the Chitral siege, separated the Khushwaqt country from all connection with Chitral. Mastuj too was made a separate district under a Governor, but was handed over to the Mehtar in 1914.

In 1895 Yasin and Kuh were placed under one Governor, and Ghizr was separated. In 1896 Ishkoman was separated from Yasin. In 1911 Kuh was given to Ghizr.



## APPENDIX III

## HISTORY OF PUNYAL AND ISHKOMAN

PUNYAL (or Pial as it is known in Chitrali) differs from the other states of the Agency in being a hereditary fief or *jagir* of Kashmir. It is controlled, however, by the Political Agent at Gilgit. The ruling family are the Burish, the cadet branch of the race or family of which the Kator of Chitral are the senior, and the Khushwaqt the next in rank. Shah Badshah, the Khushwaqt Mehtar of Yasin and Mastuj, appointed Shah Burish its first chief, and the Burish family threw off the Khushwaqt suzerainty and became independent.

Gauhar Aman seized Punyal in 1841 in spite of the help given by Nathu Shah of the Sikh forces at Gilgit. When his eldest son, Mulk Khan, was driven out Punyal was given back to the Burish by the Dogras, but it remained a source of disagreement between Yasin and Gilgit, until in 1880 it finally came into the possession of Kashmir who gave it to Raja Isa Bagdur (not Bahadur, according to Drew).

But although from 1860 Punyal was generally recognised as the property of Kashmir State it was a constant object of attack. Its situation was important athwart the Gilgit river. Its chief place, Cher Kila, commands the approach to Gilgit and, although a few men can reach Gilgit by the mountains, a large force would be required first to account for this Punyali stronghold if it wished to proceed. No one from the north could hope to hold Gilgit without holding Punyal.



When the Mehtars of Chitral and Yasin advanced on Gilgit in 1866 they reduced all forts in Punyal except Cher Kila, but although Mir Wali besieged it with vigour, he failed to take it. It is true that Gilgit was attacked but it was not captured, and the failure was due to the diversion of the siege. Before Cher Kila, however, could be taken Kashmiri reinforcements arrived, and the enterprise was at an end. When Isa Bagdur was attacked he sent all his own subjects out of the fort, to be free of treachery within, and conducted the defence with his 100 Kashmiri sepoys. In 1867 the Yasin Mehtar again attacked the capital of Punyal but was unsuccessful. In 1880 Pahlwan Bahadur tried to capture the fort when on his way to attack Gilgit, but he failed, and his whole enterprise collapsed in consequence.

Isa Bagdur was succeeded as Raja—the title officially enjoyed by the ruler—by Akbar Khan who, however, was sent to Kashmir in 1905 for being implicated in the murder of two men, and during the minority of the heir, Anwar Khan, the present Raja, Sifat Bahadur, was allowed to administer the state. The old Raja has now returned to Punyal and is a severe critic of his son. In 1933 he was living some three miles away from Cher Kila, but had lost all influence.

It is said that the Burish, the reigning family of Punyal, are bitter enemies of the Khushwaqt, but it is difficult to estimate what this hatred implies. Considering how the Khushwaqt treat each other, it is hard to see why the Burish, of the same stock, should behave more amiably. All these petty chiefs hate each other, all are rivals, and Punyal, being in a less favourable position *vis-à-vis* the Kashmiri authorities, is naturally somewhat sensitive. Punyal, too, has changed hands so often that its influence has always been small in local affairs, where the opinions of



other rulers have counted, and still continue to count for much. Even to-day, the Burish Raja of Punyal carries no weight amongst his fellow-chiefs. Biddulph says that Punyal was a republic as are some other valleys to this day in Kohistan, until a certain man called Shot, a Dareli, seized power, became chief, and finally was slain by Shah Pershah of the Khushwaqt family, who established his son, Burish, as ruler. This, however, can be but a brief incident in the history of Punyal, and it is more likely that in old times the place belonged to Gilgit, just as it does, in a certain sense, to-day.

The district of Ishkoman has come into prominence of late now that it has a Governor of its own. Formerly it was used as a kind of penal settlement by the Yasin princes who sent all their undesirables, whom they had not murdered, to sojourn in the small village of Ishkoman, in those days the only inhabited place in the district. Isa Bagdur of Punyal held it for four years during the brief occupation of the Yasin throne by Azmat Shah, after which it reverted to Yasin.

The next occupant was a much more interesting person. In 1883 the Amir of Afghanistan, Abdur Rahman Khan, sent his troops into Badakshan. At that time Baba Khan was Mir of that state, and Yusuf Ali Khan, Mir of Shighnan.<sup>1</sup> The latter refused to accept Afghan rule and, as his country was mountainous and difficult to attack, the Kabuli army did not invade it. The Amir, however, sent a Koran, with the autographs of himself, his sons, and 600 notables and mullahs, promising generous treatment and guaranteeing complete safety. The Mir, accordingly, agreed, for how could he repudiate the written promise of the greatest men in the land, written in the Holy Koran? With him, too, came his fellow-chiefs,

<sup>1</sup> His name has also been given as Zafar Ali Khan.



the Mirs of Wakhan and of Zebak and many of the local princes. They all met at Khanabad, where the Viceroy of the Amir, Alam Khan, Naib-i-Hukumat of Badakshan, was staying.

Nobody met the party when they reached the Afghan camp, and all the Mirs went straight to the Durbar Hall of the Viceroy. There, as they stood before him, trusting chiefs of old lineage from the recesses of mountains which still remain almost unknown, the Naib glanced at them, but made no salutation. He quoted instead in a loud voice a verse from the poet Nizami: 'Nasir pukhtater kun chi kham amadid.' Which may be translated, 'Make doubly certain that you have not come rashly.' The Tajik rulers were frightened when they heard this, for the ominous import was not lost on them. Ali Mardan Shah, Mir of Wakhan, at once fell on his hands and knees, and crawled through the crowded Durbar of the Naib to kiss his feet. The Viceroy bade him rise and walk. 'No', said the Mir, 'I am a dog of the God-given empire of Afghanistan. When a dog comes to its master it comes on four legs not on two. So do I.' The Naib was pleased at his submission and ordered the Mir to leave the court. He did so, and at once went to his horse, mounted it and rode away. He had had the foresight to post two horses at every stage of the way down, and so regained Wakhan in a very short time. He took no risks. He collected his family, and fled for protection to Aman-ul-Mulk, the Mehtar of Chitral, whose sister he had married. The Mehtar gave him Ishkoman, where he lived till his death in 1924.

Ali Mardan Shah was a genial, easy-going man, with gentle, courteous manners and delicate hands; he was completely dominated by his wife, who would never allow him any money. The only way in which he could obtain a few rupees for his personal use was



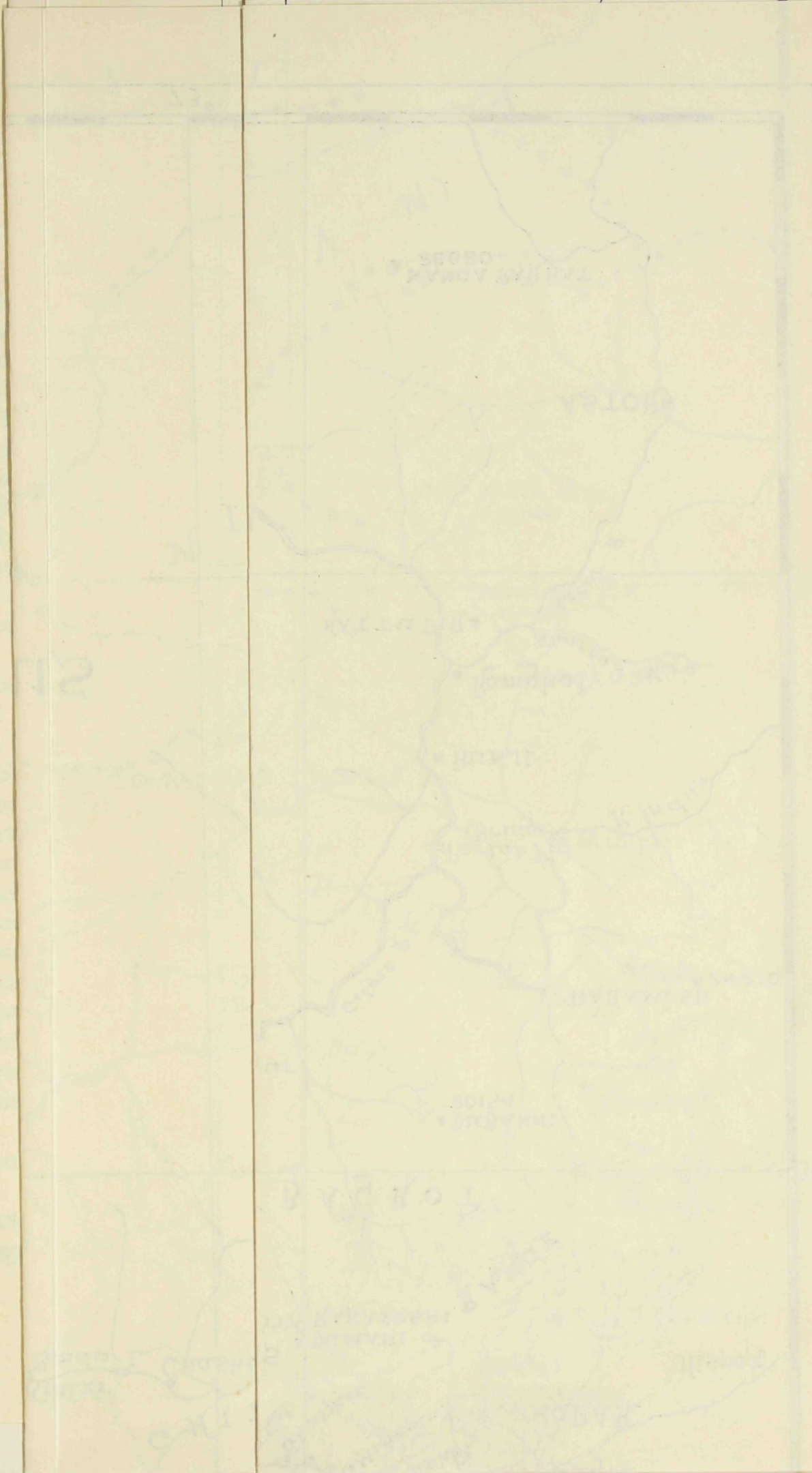
to pretend, when he handed over his salary to his wife, that the Government had not paid him in full.

The old man was famous for his love of tea ; when he had drunk with the sahibs as much as he could procure, he would adjourn to drink with the servants. After his death his wife refused to return to Chitral at her brother's invitation, but lived in Ishkoman State near Chatorkand. She was alive in 1933 : a daughter, who is married to the Raja of Yasin, is the sole descendant of the Mir. He himself was buried in Wakhan whither, after his death, many of his followers went, intending to settle, but they found conditions so unattractive that they returned to Ishkoman, and gave up their nomadic life.

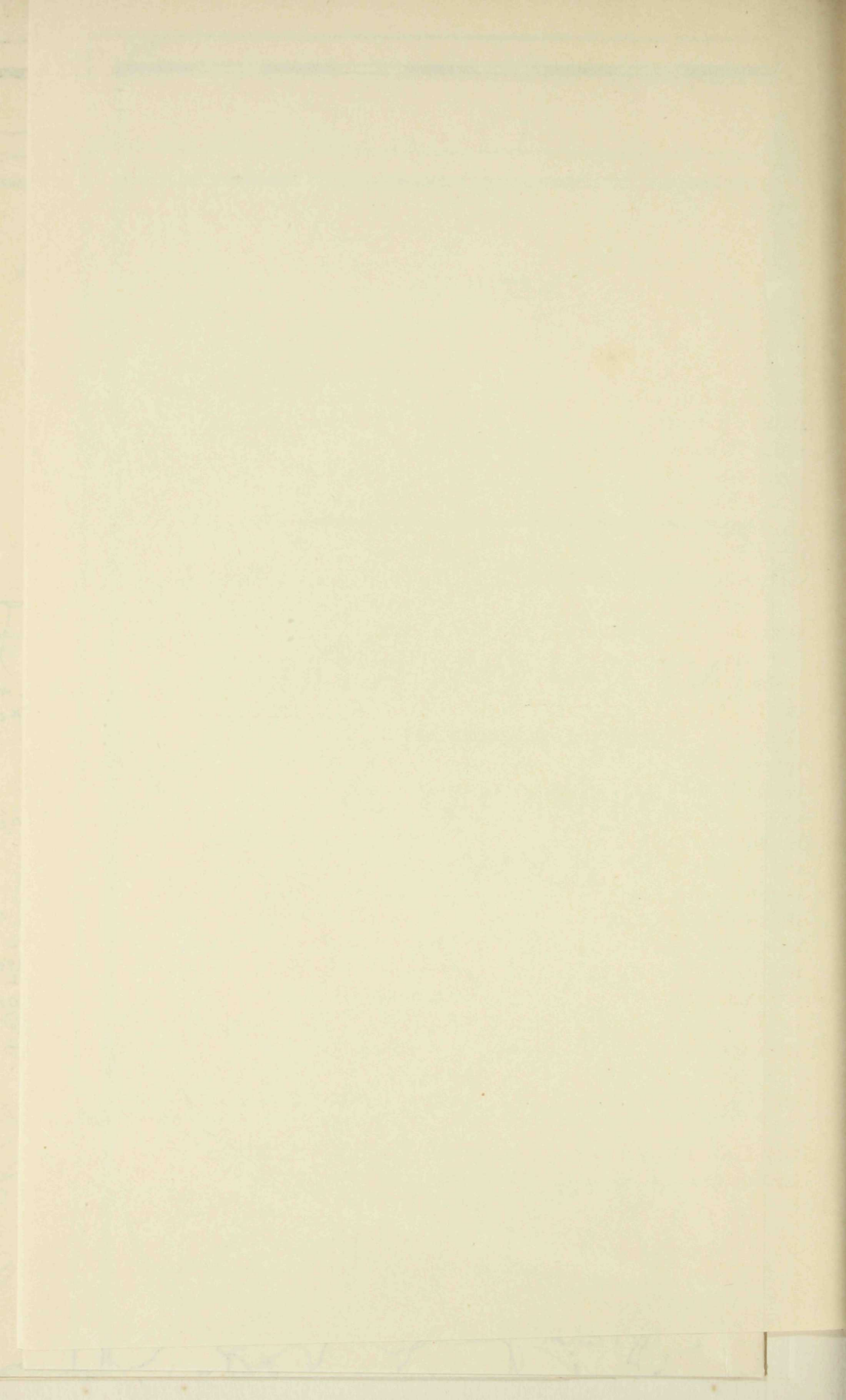
Old Ali Mardan never troubled about the interests of his new state, for his heart was in Wakhan, and he always hoped he would return there. His little kingdom did not thrive under Afghan rule after his flight, and the nomads there longed for the return of their old chief. But Afghanistan is like Kashmir, and indeed like all other Oriental states in its attitude to minor princes, especially if those princes are either weak, or worse still, conquered ; for then there is no toleration. Afghanistan had swept away the princes of Wakhan, Shighnan, Zebak, and Badakshan, for nowhere in that God-given kingdom was there to be any other authority than that of Kabul.

On the death of Ali Mardan Shah, Mir Bais Khan, Burish, was appointed to govern Ishkoman.











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