

DARDS OF GURAI & TILEL IN THE KISHANGANGA VALLEY

A Preliminary Report.

The inhabitants of Gurais and Tilel areas settled in the Kishanganga valley form the largest group of muslim Dards. There is a small group of muslim Dards inhabiting the main villages of Khanlu and Dras in Ladakh. The one of Dras maintained until recent times trade contact with Tilel area. The majority of the muslim Dards inhabit the northern areas of Pakistan.

The only group of Buddhist Dards are to be found inhabiting villages (Da-Garkun-Darchicks; mDa' Gar-kon Dar-rtsig) along the river Indus prior to its entry into Pakistan in the north-western corner of Ladakh. Until the present the Buddhist Dards have retained their ancient religion and customs in the purest form (Vohra: 1982 & 1983). This can be evidenced from the study of the research work carried out in the Northern Areas of Pakistan since 1956 (Jettmar 1975) and this comparative material forms an important basis for any research among the Dard population inhabiting villages in India. However the present preliminary report will only take into account the above material when it is directly relevant to the material collected in Gurais and Tilel during the summer of 1980

The muslim Dards living along the Kishanganga river are divided licitly into the Tileli and the Gurasi with reference to the area they inhabit. Tilel area stretches from where the Kishanganga takes into origin to the village of Acchura. Gurais area begins with the village of Chonwan and extends until the river enters Pakistan.

The Villages of Tilel are poorer and the inhabitants have retained their archaic culture, traditions and language in greater purity than is the case in the Gurais area. Gurais area being traversed by major routes, lies open to external influences through the centuries as opposed to the geo-physically isolated Tilel region.

The total population of Gurais and Tilel is approximately 14,000 out of which Tilel accounts for 8662 inhabitants (1980). Aside from this there is the village of Sarbal (map: spribal) which lies on the Sonamang-Leh road prior to reaching the Zoji La pass. According to Tileli informants there are 30-40 households which also have land in the Kangan village to which they descend during winter. The language spoken is tileli shina.

Jaldar (also Jawdara) is another shina speaking village in a side valley and it is famous for its weaving craft. The blankets and other products are known for their excellence and beauty of design.

The different words between the shina of Gurais and Tilel are approximately 25 % according to the educated local information. The similarity to the shina of Astor is far greater than that of Gilgit as some of the elderly men informed me. The villages in the Tilel region have mostly shina names which are pronounced differently in kashmiri.

ROUTES ACROSS THE KISHANGANGA: PAST & PRESENT

The Kishanganga river in its upper reaches played an important note in historical past. We have evidence of this region

being traversed by merchants and pilgrims who have left us records of their journey. It is through the Gurais area that the route from the north, providing access to Srinagar, led into Kashmir valley.

According to the sources available there existed in ancient times three northern routes leading out of the valley. The Chinese pilgrim Ou-k'ong who passed through Kashmir in 763 A. D. mentions three great routes which since ancient times formed the main lines of communication between the valley and the outer world.

Sir Aurel Stein provides the following identifications: 1) there is the mention of the road eastwards to Tilel which is no other than the route which leads up the valley of the Sind river and over the Zoji la into Ladakh territory and hence to Tibet and Chinese Turkestan. 2) Then there is the road westwards to Gandhara. The route passes through the gorge of the Vitasta (Jehlum river) below Varahamula. This route has been the most favored western entrance into the valley and was the one used by Hiouen-Tsang when he entered Kashmir (Stein, 1896: 22-23). Al-Birûni writing during the 11th century mentions this route as the best known entrance into Kashmir (Sachau 1910: I, 206-207). 3) It is however the route through the Kishanganga Valley which formed, since ancient times, the passage used by the Dards in their inroads into the valley. Ou-k'ong mentions this route to Po-liu (Bolor of islamic authors), i.e., Baltistan, which crosses the mountain range on the north into the upper valley of Kishanganga and thence leads either over the high plateau of the Deosai on over the Bunzil pass to Skardu or Astor, respectively. This is the "Gilgit Road" which was used during the late 19th and early 20th century by the British to maintain control over the north. The route crosses the Tragbal pass (now called Rajdhani pass) to the north of Vulur (Wular) lake. The pass, in the ancient times, was guarded by a frontier fort which is referred to by Kalhana under the name Dugdaghata or Durgaghata (Rajatarangini: VII, 1171 & VIII, 2715). Sir Aurel Stein identified this name with the Dudakhut pass which crosses the range about eight miles to the north-east of the Tragabal (Stein 1896: 22 - 23, f.n.1).

The "Warden of the Frontier" (Skt. Duarapati or Duaradhipa) was responsible for guarding the northern gate which was constantly threatened by the Dards. Hence we find in the 11th century the Dard chief Vidyadhara shahi who occupied the fort and numerous villages in the realm. The Dard ruler is sometimes referred as chief and at other places we find Kalhana giving him the title of Raja. At this time the armies of king Harsha tried to besiege the fort but were unsuccessful (Rajatarangini: VII, 913).

We further learn that during the 12th century, upon the death of the Dard king Yashodhara, there occurred inter-governmental rivalry to take control of the Dard kingdom. The minister Viddasiha conspired with the queen and usurped power as the prince was a minor. Paryaka, another minister, sought aid from Kashmir and with the help of the Kashmir forces invaded the Dards at the fort Dugdaghata but they were unable to take the fort. Kalhana describes the situation in the following analogy:



“Immature persons could not seize the government of the Dards which had fallen into internal dissension, as a tree which having fallen through landslide on the bank can not be carried away by a feeble current of water wherein it is lying” (Rajatarangini: VIII, 2467)

Soon after the two rivaling ministers, Viddasiha and Paryuka, concluded peace. Viddasiha, however, continued to harbour a grudge against the king of Kashmir. This resulted in the continued interference of the Dards in the affairs of the ruling house at Srinagar as well as raids into the valley as the events of the following decades inform us.

From the 10th century we have the itinerary in khotanese Saka which demarcates the route from the north via Saribol, Gilgit, Chilas and over the Madhuwati (ancient name Mahuvi or Mahwi) river into Kashmir. Mahwi is also the name used by Al-Birûni (Sachau 1910: 206) and in the Rajatarangini we find it often mentioned in place of the Kishanganga. The Madhumati (Mahwi) river at its junction with the Kishanganga must have played an important role as a place of pilgrimage to the Hindus as it represents one of the five shankracharyas of hindu India.

In the earliest part of the Rajatarangini we find a reference to the shrine of Sharada. It is said to be located on a hill above the junction of the Madhumati with the Kishanganga (Rajatarangini: I, 37). Its existence was known from ancient times and as Kalhana tells us the Gaudas of Bengal used this pilgrimage as a pretext to secure entry into Kashmir in pursuit of their plan of revenge (Rajatarangini: IV, 325).

This region was in the Dard area of influence as learned that the Kashmiri prince Bhoja, when fleeing from the Kashmiri troops, went past the sanctuary of the shrine of Sharada and after a few days' march reached a hamlet on the frontier of the Dard principality. Here Viddasiha gave him a welcome fit for a king (Rajatarangini: VIII, 2706-2716) and on his behalf took to assist in the invasion of Kashmir.

Many of the sites, the Dugdhatata fort and the camping ground for the forces, have been identified by Sir A. Stein in his *Map of Ancient Kashmir and Srinagar* (Stein: 1899). These clearly bring out the fact that Daratapuri of the Rajatarangini must have been located close to the Kishanganga river. That this region was controlled by the Daradas is evident from the “Puronic list of people” where Daratapuri is mentioned as located on the upper Kishanganga river (Sircar 1960: 25, f.n. 4). However we must not confine Daradadesa to the Kishanganga valley as at different times it must have occupied a varying geographical arena. Al-Birûni informs us that in the north of Kashmir lies the region of Bolor whose king is Bhatta-Shah and their towns are Gilgit, Aswina (Astor), and Shiltas (Chilas). Kashmir suffered much from their inroads. This king is most likely identical with Bulunishah mentioned three-quarters of a century earlier in the Islamic author's work *Hudud-al-'Alam*, written during the late 10th century (Minorsky 1937: 121).

Bolor is the appellation used by the Islamic authors for the region called Daradadesa by the Rajatarangini. The Chinese Annals name the region P'o-lii.

Today the Kishanganga Valley is approached from Srinagar after a two hour drive to Bandipur on the banks of Vulum



(Wular) lake. Tragbal is the village from which one crosses the Rajdhani pass and descends to Jatkushi, Kunukbal and then to Kanzalwal. A one hour drive from Kanzalwal brings one to the Malak Dal Bridge across the Kishanganga river where there is a shiv ling in front of a huge rock.

Further villages en route to Tilel are Neel, Khopri, Badwan, Wompur, Fakinpur, Khandil (up the nullah) and Dawar. After Mastan one reaches Markut where there is the fort from the time of Raja Hari Singh. The last village in Gurais is Chorwan and the first village in Tilel is Acchura. In Tilel the Gurais area is known as Gorai and Kashmir is called Kashir.

From the vicinity off Chorwan runs the route via Bunzil Nan northwards into the Shinaki area and Baltistan. An alternate route is via Kamni pass. If one follows the Kishanganga river towards its source one arrives at the last village Aldullan. From here one has a climb of two hours on foot to the pass and on the way to it one comes across the summer habitation of Masjid-dani. Upon crossing the pass one descends along the kaobal Gali San to Kaobal San, a take located at a height of 13590 feet. It is towards the end of July and mainly in August that the route through Kaobal Gali is traversable. From Kaobal one descends the Mashko Nan and reaches the deserted village at Batukulan which was populated recently. After that one passes through Mashko, Hullyal and Gason from where Dras is one kilometer away.

According to the local inhabitants of Gurais the Dras people used to come up to Gurais in the past to barter apricots and its kernels as well as seeds of turnips. In return they took back wool. Locally Dras is known as Hums.

EARLY SETTLEMENTS AND MIGRATORY TRADITIONS

Ancient Habitations: There are ancient cultivated fields in Bedaub nullah which even the great-grand ancestors claim never to have cultivated. When reclaiming some of this land burnt bricks, grinding stones (*chakki* stones) and stone spoons have been found.

According to one informant in Tilel while digging for the foundation of a house they unearthed a hearth, utensils and pottery remains. Similarly in Gujran, prior to 1947, while digging the foundations of a house, a millstone for grinding spices (Shina: *shil*) and an iron spoon were brought to light indicating an ancient inhabited site which had been buried. At Sardab in the Kot Goli old bricks were found when some new land was brought under cultivation.

In Tilel I was able to note down an early migratory tradition which accords thematically with traditions of migration from other Dard areas, in particular the one from the Buddhist Dard village of Da (mDa') (Vohra, 1982: 69-94). My informant Muhammad Anwar Khan of Gujran village is the first school teacher from Tilel area and has himself written an account of the region. He recounted an ancient oral tradition about Shelu of Gilgit who had two sons, Melu the younger and Telu who was the older one. The two brothers set out hunting and reached the area around Burnai village. They found that the area was fertile and wished to settle down there.

They started cultivation and established the first settlement in Purana Tilel. Later they returned to Gilgit and brought their families. They named the area Tilel after the name of the elder brother Telu. The descendants of Telu are khan and lone. The

Min and Bhatt settlers in Tilel are Kashmiri from Gandarba tehsil. In Gurais some of the inhabitants have migrated from Chilas. These are also khan and lone. The chilasi khan and lone have expanded to Purana Tilel in the villages of Badagon, Malan and Gujran.

Samu, Min and Sheikh are from Kashmir. The Bhatt came from Lar nullah and settled in Badaub. Some of the earliest inhabitants are the Mapnu (or Mapnoo) in the village Badiaol. They originally came from Chilas and still claim to have their relatives there. The Chilasi Lone came sometime taken. The Mapnu people are settled in the village Acchura, Wampura and Badaub. According to another informant the ancestral name of the Mapnu was Kuriyari.

The next phase about which we get some information is that of Chintu Raja, the Buddhist ruler of Skardu. At this time Bulbul Rinchen (1320-1323), a Ladakhi prince who converted to Islam, ruled Kashmir. Samod Khan Barnoei related that some 200 years ago three Brothers migrated from Gilgit due to land dispute. One of them, Sher Khan, first stayed a few years in Min Manik and later came and settled in Bannoei. Some of his descendants went and settled in Gujnon and Kilshe nullah.

The historically identifiable phase connected with the Chak rulers of Kashmir relates about the naming of the mountain range Hab Khatun. The Chak rulers ruled Kashmir during the 16th century though they migrated into Kashmir during the 14th century. According to local informants the Chaks came from Yagistan. The reason for their migration is not clear but it could have been a local blood feud. The road leading from Gurais to Tilel is known as Chak nullah road. The ridge (Mountain which divides Gurais region from Tilel) is called Hab Khatun (also Haldid). It is related that Hab Khatun, a woman from Maraz, went up the ridge and Subhan Min Chak followed her with an earthen pot. The earthen pot broke and he couldn't catch her. Even to this day there is a spring which descends from the hill and the hill is named after the woman Hab Khatun. Further information is available from the 19th and the 20th century. It is related that the Bote people from Yagistan used to invade the villages and were the cause of much harassment. During one of these raids the Malik of Bandipur was in Gurais. After the Bote people had eaten and were making merry the malik had grass strewn around the house and set on fire thus burning them inside. Some of them were able to make their escape. This incident put an end to their raiding expeditions. According to another informant, Gilgiti people raided and took locals as captives to work for them. Pzul Min tured to whom Raja Pratap Singh had given the area as Khandani Jagir for assistance and the Gilgiti forces were defeated near Chorwan bridge. The "Bdid", probably the leader, of the Gilgiti forces escaped but was later captured and killed.

SOCIO-RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

Dards are basically dependant upon their livestock for their livelihood and cultivation comes only as a secondary occupation. This equation has in many areas been altered due mainly to better communication with the outside world. Even if livestock rearing may be losing its predominant role in many areas its priority during winter months is evident. Winters are severe and special care needs to be taken in looking after the livestock. During the summer months the livestock is sent

away to the higher valley pasture grounds and in the villages the major occupation is cultivation and harvesting. In winter this preoccupation is reversed. The long winter months are through tradition divided into periods when certain work is done.

The winter calendar is divided into the "Three winds":

22 December + 40 days are called *Chile Kalan* = Very cold winds.

+ 40 days are called *Chile Khund* = Less cold winds

+ 40 days are called *Chile Vach-cha* = mild winds.

Each of these periods is regulated with a particular custom or preoccupation. Thus during the period of *Chile Kalan* no salt is given to the live stock as it causes them to drink too much water which in turn leads to the spread of disease.

After 40 days when *Chile Kalan* is over *sattu* (barley flour) is mixed with water and eaten with ghee and the festival of **Chishani Lun** is celebrated. At this time *chili* (Juniper) leaves are burnt and the whole house is purified. In earlier times the livestock was kept in the same room so that purification for the livestock was not done separately as it is done today. The purification power of juniper is widely believed among the Dard areas and with it associated religious connotations. Following the purification ceremony with juniper salt is once again given to the livestock.

The earlier importance attached to the livestock is evident from the fact that both the humans and their animals lived together. In olden times the house comprised of just one room in the center of which stood a tall mud-plastered pillar reaching up to the roof. About four feet above ground a small hole was dug into the pillar and plastered well with earth. In this hollow a fire was kept burning which provided warmth and light in the room. The livestock was kept upon a raised platform in the same room. The houses were made of wood and no other material was used. Even today many in Tilel live in houses with the old form of construction but the livestock are kept separate. The end of the severe winter period which is the cause of celebrating Chishani Lun is also when a goat is slaughtered and eaten within the family. On this occasion the utensils are cleaned and purified with juniper and no one is allowed to touch them except the family members. This day is also known as **Luni Dun**.

On the third day salt is once again given to the livestock and on this day **Sa-bdag** is celebrated. Food is put away for the *Sa-bdag* who is supposed to protect the livestock and increase their fertility.

In April the livestock is sent to the higher regions for grazing on fresh grass. Prior to the departure of the livestock *chili* (juniper) is burnt all around the village for purifying purposes.

During the first week of May, **Gini Dyon** is celebrated. This is one of the first festivals in spring when the graves are cleared of grass and weeds and flowers are planted upon them. It is believed that if the livestock eat the grass cleared from the graves the dead are blessed. **Jal-Gani** (= green-root grass) is also how this festival is known. On this occasion incense is burnt at the masjid. After the snow has melted and other outdoor activities have begun the graves are repaired and plastered with mud. Feasting occurs at the graves at this time.

Gungli is the festival when the time has come for sowing the seeds. A big *roti* (flat baked bread) of 2 to 3 kilos, *koshi* and *dal* are taken to the field and amidst ceremony distributed among the assembled.

Ninthyona is celebrated around the 2nd week of June when the wheat has grown. At this time weeding is done and *mulkbai* (also *mulakbai*) is made and eaten with ghee (clarified butter). In August is **Khatabet Thoeuni** when the cutting of the grass to store away for the winter begins. At this time too *mulkbai* is eaten with ghee. By the end of August the crops are ready for harvest and at this time the festival Koi-Nah is celebrated. No villager can begin harvesting until the celebrations of the festival Koi-Nah have been terminated, a custom which is common to many Dard areas (Vohra: 1982). The villagers take *mulkbai* and ghee to the fields where some of it is left at the edge of the field as an offering, called *usha ryon*, to the earth god called Rath. A bit of the offering is thrown into the field and the rest taken back and kept in the house as *yun*. Having done this the villagers can begin harvesting.

Khal-pharyohan is the separation of the grain from the chaff. *Khal* is the pace where this is done. *Haroth* is the wooden container in which the separation is done. *Lah Khalies* is the process of collecting the grain. During the collection of grain no one is allowed to speak. The grain is then put into bags made of goat skin called *Rata*. The bigger bags, made of two or three skins are called *raat*. These bags are then stored away in holes dug in the ground called *dhis*. *Dhis* represents an ancient method of storing grain and rancid butter. The *dhis* are made within the room of the house or in the store room. To make a *dhis* a hole is dug in the floor of the room and this lined with stones; a fire is then lit to dry out the *dhis*. When the *dhis* is completely dry it is lined with *bhoj* paper (bark of the *bhoj* tree) and the grain emptied into it. The *dhis* is then covered with a wooden plank and sealed with earth.

Pajilo Thola is done on each occasion when fresh supply food is taken out from the *dhis*. *Pajilo* is the grinding of grain required for use. This is done in a hollowed tree stump. On all these occasions *chili* (juniper) is burnt to purify the atmosphere. The same is also done at the place where the livestock is kept.

Once a woman becomes engaged to be married she is not permitted to enter the place where the livestock is kept or come into contact with the herd. No strange woman is allowed to go into the shed of the livestock except for relatives as it could affect the health and fertility of the herd. It could lead to the livestock becoming afflicted with disease or cause them to yield less milk. If an animal dies then they believe that *rasth* (*rash*) is annoyed. To avert any future mishap offerings of *mulkbai* and ghee are placed on the central pillar (*tham* or *thun*) of the house and this way prayers are offered. *Chili* (juniper) is also burnt to purify the atmosphere. It is believed that *Rasthi* (*Ratshi*) dwells within the leader of the herd which is why it is fed with *mulkbai* and ghee.

There is also the belief in *Ali Dar* which lives with the hearth. It is born from a goat but looks like a human and has a beard. It keeps company with the livestock while it is grazing and helps to increase its fertility.

RITES DE PASSAGE

1) After a woman has given birth to a child she must live separately and use separate utensils for 40 days. 7 days after birth the mother takes a bath. Following this the relatives from the village visit with a gift but do not enter the house.

The hair cutting ceremony is a custom which is observed with great regularity. This custom is not particular only to the Dards

KINSHIP TERMINOLOGY : A COMPARATIVE VIEW

Genealogical Referent	Kishanganga Kinship tern	Buddhist Dard Kinship Term	level
01) Grand Father	Dadu	Dado	+2
02) Grand Mother	Dadi	Dadi	+2
03) Father	Babo (or Manlo)	Bo	+1
04) Mother	Aij	Ai	+1
05) Wife's Father	Sher	Shor	+1
06) Wife's Mother	Shas	Shas	+1
07) Fathers Sister	Phipi	Pepe	+1
08) Mother Sister	Masi	Shma	+1
09) Mother Brother	Momo	Momo	+1
10) Husband	Baraji	Baru	0
11) Wife	Chai	Thega	0
12) Elder Brother	Kaku	Bayo	0
13) Younger Brother	Ra	Ra	0
14) Elder Sister	Sas	Kake	0
15) Younger Sister	Sas	Sas	0
16) Wife's Brother	Sajni	Sajni	0
17) Wife's Sister	Saryuni	Sajri	0
18) Son	Put	Byo	-1
19) Daughter	Molei	Molei	-1
20) Wife's Sister/ Brothers son	Sazii	Sazo	0
21) Wife's Sister/ Brothers Daughter	Sazoi	Sazoi	-1

but is observed by the Baltis. In the Tilel area, the head is shaved bald one year after birth, leaving only a small fringe all along the edge of the forehead. The *maulvi* is present on this occasion which is known as *jakhu-thon*. In the case of boys, after the age of three years, the front fringe is shaved off while the back hair is allowed to grow long. In the case of the girls, until the age of seven years the fore fringe is allowed to grow while the rest of the head is shaved bald. When the girls pass their seventh year their hair are then allowed to grow. In the case of the boys and also the adult males the custom, until not too long ago, was to shave only the front part of the head while the back hair was allowed to grow long.

2) The engagement ceremony (*namzadi*) is particularly interesting as the same custom is observed among the Buddhist Dards of Ladakh. In Tilel the engagement is sealed by passing a thread through the needle. The boys father also takes a *roti* (flat baked bread) two feet in diameter, called *makhur* to the girl's house. The girls father makes a deer, called *mayaru*, out of 3 to 4 kilos of dough and this is given to the boy. Later small pieces of this deer are distributed among the relatives in the village. During the marriage celebration the boy wears a cap (*koti*) and a long black gown (*pheron*) and his face is covered. The bride wears a white gown (*pheron*). The cap of the bride consists of a ten yard cloth which is first wrapped around a bowl and then placed upon her head. The cap is then decorated with several needles and beads of silver

The bride wears three kinds of ear rings: a) *kan waji* b) *jhum-kai* c) *boli*.

Around the neck the bride wears a silver *khantmal*. In old times there was just one trouser which was worn by all the brides of

the village during marriage.

3) Upon death the body is bathed in water to which a perfume (*khaphun*) has been added. The body is then wrapped in a white cloth. In case a man has died then no woman will sit in front of the body and the reverse in the case of the death of a woman.

For the first three days after death *matam* is celebrated. At this time the entire village is feasted by the house where the death has occurred. This feasting ends on the third day which is known as *nashi*.

Two weeks after the death the house cuts a goat and once again feed their fellow villagers. On this occasion prayers for the dead are offered at the village mosque.

40 days later another feast occurs and again a goat is slaughtered. The last feast for the dead occurs one year after when once again a goat is slaughtered and fed to the villagers. This occasion is called **Vahravari**.

REMARKS ON EARLY HISTORY OF LADAKH

Rock carving and Tibetan Inscriptions of late first millennium and early centuries of the second millennium A.D.

Among the rock carving in Ladakh we come across as great variety of stupa drawings. These demonstrate the earliest traits in the development of Stupa art to those more sophisticated and artistically skilled later ones. These and the deep carvings of Chamba (Byams-pa) images have been dealt with elsewhere¹. The three-point crown on the bas-relief from Kartse in the Suru valley (Snellgrove & Skorupski 1980: 10) and the one photographed by me below the Hambuting la in the old chiefdom of Sod, Purik (Photo 3, p. 134) are examples of early masterly works belonging to the late Gupta period. These belong to a group which includes the Maitreya at Maulbeck and the Maitreya at Naupur near Gilgit. These are close in the mastery of artistic skill and could have already begun to be carved about the 6th-7th century. Other such images carved on rock which are shallow carvings could also date from the 8th-10th century when the Tibetan empire extended up to Baltistan. These latter images are often accompanied by ancient Tibetan inscriptions. Some such examples are Maitreya at Satpura (near Skardu in Baltistan), the image of Manla (sMan-la) bet-

Photo II: Khalatse Balu-mkhar



Photos de l'auteur

ween Choklamsar and Shey, the five Buddhas carved on the rocky defile upon arrival at Shey as well as the carvings of stupas on the rocky defile upon arrival at Shey as well as the carvings of stupas on the rock wall of Balu Khar (Ba-lu mkhar) near Khalatse (or Khalsi Photo II).

A.H. Francke in the collection of Tibetan inscriptions from Ladakh remarked about them (*I. A.* April 1904: 95-96) and attempted to provide an approximate dating according to the various archaic characteristics they possessed.

Without going into the details of the orthography, which is beyond my competence, I would like to consider here the inscriptions which provide names of the last Darada rulers before a branch of the Tibetan dynasty, descended from Nimagon (Nyi-ma-mgon), extended its influence up to Khalatse (or Khalsi).

1. The inscription of “rGyal-po c'en Shirima” (Francke's transliteration)

This inscription is found on a boulder on the left bank of the Indus. Near this boulder is another inscription mentioning the

construction of a bridge. The name of the king is not legible but carries the title *rgyal-po chen-po* and mentions the *blon-po chen-po* Garka who made the bridge. Francke, on the basis of the mention in the Ladakhi Chronicles of the construction of a bridge by Lhachen Nag-lug at Khalatse, felt that the inscription belonged to this king. The name of the minister in the inscription is non-Tibetan and sounds Dardic. Francke also provided an account of the local traditions regarding the various bridges at Khalatse.²

2. In the neighbourhood of the preceding two boulders is found a third which is orthographically similar to the first.

It mentions “rGyal-po c'en-po rGya-shin- sk u-yzhon of Khala tse” (Francke's transliteration)

These record the last Dard rulers of Khalatse who had been partially Tibetanised. The Tibetan influence in the area possibly began during the 8th century and though the Darada rulers continued to maintain their small chiefships they must have begun to adopt Tibetan cultural traits wherever they came in contact with them. The Tibetan expansion was aimed at the control of the “Four Garrisons” on the silk route.³



Photo IV: near Alchi mkhar-gog

The contact with the local Darada chiefs would have taken place where, geographically, the most conducive route into Baltistan offered itself.

There could have been armies stationed over a long period of time and perhaps in the inscriptions below we find their existence testified.

In this context the inscriptions close to the ancient fortification of Alchi (Al-chi mkhar-gog) can be mentioned. As regards the traditional lore about the construction of Alchi mkhar-gog it was during the rule of an ancient king Bandel (or king Bahand) probably of Dard origin (Francke Dec. 1906: 325).⁴ Though according to Francke the dating of these inscriptions is post-first millennium A.D.⁵ we can see in the stupa drawings the same style as the ones from Punyal near Gilgit drawn in Jettmar's work (1975: 279). Next to these are the carving of ancient stupas, possibly of *bön* origin, where there is the mention of the names of "army commanders" of various ranks who Tibetan army.

"Om, in the tiger-year by the 'brog-pa Bo-na Kharo-go".⁶

The Dards of Da (mDa') and Garkun are even today referred to as "*brog-pa*" and in the inscription we find the commander who was the leader of the *drokpa* (*'brog-pa*) Dard contingent. There are over 50 inscriptions many of which mention Tibetan commanders (Photos III & IV).

3. One can also mention the Buddhist ruler of the Satpur-Skardu area, "Lag-c'en Maha-bahu" whose name is mentioned in one of three inscriptions near the Satpur bas-reliefs (Francke: 1926). He possibly ruled prior to the 10th century.

According to the *Chronicles of Ladakh* the ruler Lha-chen Nag-lug built a palace at Wanle (Wam-la) in the Tiger Year and a palace at Khalatse (Francke: 1926). According to the chronology adopted by Petech we can date Nag-lug to the 12th century or a little before. His predecessor Lhachen Utpala has a Sanskrit name and

was most likely a Darads belonging to the Aryan-speaking clans (Petech 1977: 19; Pal: 1982). Here we must distinguish the portion of Ladakh under the newly established Ladakhi dynasty of Tibetan descent which had probably had considerable infusion of Aryan blood by this time. The rules in the regions west of Khalatse were still independent Dard chiefs who maintained control of their small principalities. Evidence of survival of some of these chief ships until the 19th century is provided by Csoma de Cörös who mentions in the "*Geographical Notice of Tibet*" (1932: 125) among others the chief of the "Minaro" (i.e., the name of the ancestors of the Buddhist Dards of Da-Garkun area). Here can be mentioned the inscription of Khri-rgyal who was a petty chief of Kartse.⁷

Similarly we have the information about the rules of the kingdom of Sod who traced their genealogy from Gilgit (Francke 1921: 145-146).

The traditional folklore of the region gives ample evidence to conclude that the local chief of Sod, Chigtan Paskyum, Kartse, Wakha, Maulbeck, Dras, Shigar-Shingo, etc. trace their descent from Gilgit (Hashmatullah Khan 1939: 676-728) and maintained their independence at least until the 17th century. The massive fortification at Chigtan leaves no doubt that once the rulers were a power of considerable importance between the *gyapo* (*rgyal-po*) of Ladakh and the rulers of Skardu.

Photo III: near Alchi mkhar-gog



NOTES

1 « Ethno-historicity of the Dards in Ladakh-Baltistan: Observation and Analysis ». Paper delivered at the IVth International Seminar on Tibetan Studies, Schloß Hohenkammer, München, July 1985. Here I have included only that data which was not presented in this paper delivered in 1985.

2 The first bridge was at Balu Khar (Bal-lu mkhar) to reach which merchants had to travel for four miles along the left bank of the Indus over very uneven ground. The king of khalatse (Khalsi) therefore built a second bridge below his castle to save the four miles of bad road. The king of Leh who made Khalatse into a Tibetan town built a third bridge on the present site and saved the trying journey on the left bank altogether. Though the Bal-lu mkhar bridge decayed the castle seems to have continued in use until the Balti invasion in 1600 (Francke Sept 1906: 238-239). In another place Francke is rightly of the opinion that at the place of the present bridge there was possibly from the earliest times an old settlement or a monastery as there are Kharosti and Brahmi inscriptions on both banks of the river. Later a Dogra fort was constructed at this place (Francke ZDMG 1907: 593,597-599 & 602)

3 The « Four Garrisons »: Kutcha, Kashghar, Khotan and Karashar (or Tokmak) (Chavannes 1903:150 footnote 4, 113 footnote 2). The geo-physical conditions in the area would have prohibited any kind of long lasting control. The inaccessible mountainous terrain would have been conclusive to fixeporous tendencies so that survival of acephalous « valley Republics » or self-sufficient petty chieftanships are a more feasible answer rather than direct administrative control over the region under consideration. Independent « Valley Republics » would have been particularly conclusive in the area where glaciating has left a wide valley floor and where at the lower end there is a narrow ravine like opening which would allow safe settlements from the defensive point of view. This sort of situation is not restricted to the Ladakh area and its extension into Baltistan and Gilgit is conceivable when one takes into consideration the little evidence available. The Tibetan intention was not total colonisation. They only garrisoned the main routes for their ultimate control of the nodal point along the trade routes of Central Asia, i. e., the « Four Garrisons ».

4 When the people of Maulbek speak of their past they divide it into three separate periods: 1) dog-dus (br-dus) of Dard times when the people used to be Dard; 2) *gyaldu* (*rgyal-dus*) the time of Tibetan Ladakhi kings; 3) *jambupedus* (*jam-bu-pa'i dus*), or the reign of the kings of Jammu (Francke March 1906:72).

5 Francke, I.A. Sept 1903: Plate VIII, No. 13; I.A. Dec 1906 Plate II and III

6 Francke, Dec 1906, No 16, P. 326 and 328; In another context I had noted the meaning of the word « *khrom* » in *drokskat* ('*brog-skad*) is « great » and « *go* » as leader or head (*mgo*). If this reading should be applied then the last letters would mean « Great leader ». Francke translated « *khrom-mgo* » as anger-head (Francke Dec 1906: 328).

7 Francke, March 1906: 77-78; ZDMG 1906: 599-600, mentions a local king'-od of Khalatse; also see *rgyal-khri* inscription from Saspol (Francke Dec 1906: 326 No 11 & 328).



Photo VI: near Khalatse bridge

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Photo V: near Khalatse bridge



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RESUMÉ : Les débuts de l’histoire du Ladakh ont toujours été plongés dans l’obscurité. Afin de jeter quelque lumière sur cette période, l’auteur s’est intéressé aux sculptures rupestres de cette première période, sculptures qu’il compare à celles, analogues, de Gilgit et du Baltistan. Il s’intéresse aussi aux traditions orales, aux inscriptions et à l’orthographe archaïque mentionnant les souverains antérieurs à l’établissement de la première dynastie ladakhi. Les pièces à conviction, présentées ici, devront être examinées par des historiens de l’art qui pourraient y apporter des éléments de chronologie en fonction du style et de l’iconographie. Les éléments épigraphiques et les sculptures rupestres devraient être systématiquement photographiées et analysées afin de pouvoir être datées.

SUMMARY: It has been difficult to scientifically reconstruct the early history of Ladakh. In order to make an attempt in this direction data on the rock carvings of the early period has been put forward and compared with similar sculptures from Gilgit and Baltistan. Oral traditions and inscriptions with archaic orthography mentioning rules, prior to the establishment of the first Ladakhi dynasty, have been dealt with. These pieces of evidence which are presented here need to be examined by art historians to provide a chronology on the basis of artistic skill and iconography. The epigraphic records and the rocks carvings need to be systematically photographed and scientifically analysed for them to provide chronological dates.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG: Es ist nicht einfach, die Geschichte der frühen Perioden Ladakhs wissenschaftlich zu rekonstruieren. Der vorliegende Versuch basiert auf der Präsentation von Felsreliefdarstellungen aus den frühesten Epochen dieser Region, die hier mit ähnlichen Felsskulpturen aus Baltistan und Gilgit verglichen werden. Behandelt werden orale Tradition und Inschriften mit frühzeitlicher Orthographie, in denen Fürsten erwähnt werden, die vor der Etablierung der ersten Dynastie Ladakhs herrschten. Die hier vorgelegten Beweisstücke müssten von Kunsthistorikern untersucht werden, um eine chronologische Darstellung bezüglich der Stile und der Ikonographie zu liefern. Die epigraphischen Elemente und die Felsskulpturen müssten systematisch fotografiert und wissenschaftlich analysiert werden, um datiert werden zu können.