

# *Economy and Society in the High Mountains of Northern Pakistan*

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In no other part of the world, probably, is there to be found such a large number of lofty mountains within so confined a space.

## I

THIS paper describes certain features of the economy in an extreme mountain environment where two contrasted forms of traditional political organization have survived into the twentieth century. It attempts to show that these forms of organization not only have had implications for the agricultural economy in the past, but are now influencing economic behaviour in the face of new situations and opportunities.

The region that is being considered is the most northern and most mountainous part of West Pakistan, and comprises the present Chitral State, the Gilgit Agency, Dir Kohistan, Swat Kohistan, Indus Kohistan and a small part of Hazara District. It thus lies to the north of the areas that are populated by the Pathans and Kashmiris. Most of its inhabitants speak languages that belong to the so-called 'Dardic' group of Aryan languages; but there is exceptional heterogeneity, and no comprehensive, consistent linguistic or ethnic classification exists that is helpful in the present discussion. The total area of the region is 27,000 square miles, and the total population in 1961 was about 350,000.<sup>2</sup>

Physically it differs strikingly from areas to north and south in its very high spectacular mountains, extensive permanent snow and ice, and deeply-cut arid valleys. The lower valley sides are barren, but at

<sup>1</sup> J. Biddulph, *Tribes of the Hindoo Koosh*, Calcutta, 1880, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> The region is little known to the outside world, although valuable descriptive and historical accounts were published by travellers and political officers during the nineteenth century. A few excellent studies have also been published during the twentieth century, mostly concerned with the linguistics, ethnology, or glaciology of particular groups or localities. Quantitative data are few and fragmentary, both for the past and the present: even though certain official data are now collected for all parts of the region (for example, during recent population censuses) many of these data are 'classified' and hence not available. This paper is largely based on material that the author collected in the region at various times between 1962 and 1966.



higher altitudes there may be scrub or trees, and between 11,000 ft. and the permanent snow-line at about 16,000 ft. there is some summer pasture. Cultivation is found only where melt-water from the snow and ice of the highest altitudes can be brought to the small and scattered patches of flat land at altitudes low enough for grain crops to ripen. Thus villages are situated in the valley bottoms, often at the mouths of tributary valleys, and typically consist of 10–100 houses surrounded by a clearly-defined area of cultivation—by an oasis, in fact. However, suitable land and a practicable source of irrigation water rarely occur together, and so probably not more than 1 per cent of the total area is cultivated.

Agriculture is the main economic activity and irrigated land the main productive physical resource. The criteria for rights to land and the distribution of land among the region's inhabitants are therefore essential considerations in any study of the organization of agriculture. Most of the inhabitants are farmers with 2–5 acres, but a few individuals have as many as 100 acres. There are also landless labourers, especially in the south. The main crops are grains, and in villages below about 7,000 ft. two successive crops per year can be grown, generally wheat or barley followed by maize or millet. Almost ranking in importance as staple foods in some valleys are walnuts and apricots; other grains and fruits, pulses, fodder crops, and vegetables are grown locally. Cultivation methods are traditional and labour-intensive, and most implements are made of wood without moving parts.

Farmers generally have livestock—two or three cows and bullocks, one or two dozen goats and sheep, perhaps a donkey, and exceptionally a horse—but, with the exception of a few landless summer nomads, no farmer relies on livestock-husbandry alone. Most of the animals are taken up to the mountain pastures during the summer, and are brought down to the villages in winter for stall-feeding. They provide not only milk products, meat, wool, hair, leather, transport and draught-power, but also dung, which accumulates in the winter stalls and is applied to the fields. This heavy manuring, together with the indispensable irrigation and generally high labour inputs applied to small holdings, helps to account for average grain yields that for much of the region in 1960–65 were twice those for West Pakistan as a whole. The agriculture gives a general impression of close adaptation to the environment and its resources.

In addition to the farmers there are small numbers of low-ranking artisans—such as blacksmiths, musicians and ferrymen, of various ethnic groups—in most parts of the region, but they also depend partly

upon a plot of irrigated land or upon additional employment as agricultural labourers.

The extreme relief of this region and the consequent difficulties and dangers of travel have been a favourite theme of visitors and writers for centuries. To go even from one valley to the next often involves crossing a high snow-covered pass which may be negotiable for only three or four months in summer, and which—besides being arduous—may be dangerous, especially where the route traverses crevassed ice or is swept by avalanches. When the passes are successfully crossed there remain the difficulties of travelling along and across the valleys, where rivers and melt-water spates may be obstacles as great as the mountains. Many of the tracks along the valleys are still passable only on foot. The barriers to movement have resulted in the physical isolation, both of the region from the outside world, and also of one inhabited valley from the next and of each village from its neighbours. The agriculture thus has been further characterized by self-sufficiency.

It is not only the physical features of the region and the pattern of settlement and agriculture that give it unity and homogeneity, but also certain features of the population itself. Despite their physical isolation, communities share much of a common history and culture, and they also identify themselves with one another and differentiate themselves collectively from adjacent peoples such as the Pathans and the Kashmiris.

Nonetheless the mutual isolation of so many villages and valleys has permitted the survival of an extreme linguistic and ethnic heterogeneity. As many as two dozen languages are spoken, mostly representing ethnic groups which have been resident for several centuries at least. Moreover some groups that are homogeneous linguistically are subdivided by 'caste' distinctions, at least some of which are ethnic in origin, and which are generally maintained by the hypergamy of women.<sup>3</sup>

That the population of the region was also subdivided into various political units was observed by nineteenth century travellers, several of whom described the main features of two widely-differing forms of political organization for which they used terms such as 'rajaships' and

<sup>3</sup> Some of these 'caste' distinctions represent the subjugation of an established population by an invading group; some are associated with the artisan groups and with the provision of specialized services; while others probably represent former stages in the conversion to Islam, when those members of the population who were already Muslim were prevented from giving women in marriage to those who remained non-Muslims. For examples, see Biddulph, 1880, p. 36; D. L. R. Lorimer, *The Dumaki Language: Outlines of the Speech of the Doma, or Bericho, of Hunza*, Nijmegen, 1939, p. 9; and Fredrik Barth, *Indus and Swat Kohistan: An Ethnographic Survey*, Oslo, 1956, p. 42.

'republics'.<sup>4</sup> Much later—by which time political organization and administration in the region had themselves changed—the agricultural and other economic consequences of these political differences have been recognized. Indeed it is only with the development of communications and the growth of an exchange economy, especially during the last two decades, that some of the economic consequences—such as differences in entrepreneurial behaviour—have appeared. Meanwhile the agriculture remains largely unchanged in organization and practice, and still reflects traditional circumstances.

The early travellers found that the populations of the valleys in the north of the region were divided among seven well-established princely states (hereinafter called 'principalities'), whose boundaries were related to the relief and to some extent to ethnic and linguistic distribution. Each was governed by a hereditary autocratic ruler, with the support of an aristocracy and a complex 'revenue' system. Social organization was by classes, but there was some social and economic mobility. The principalities were largely autonomous and were frequently involved in internecine warfare. The more important ones during the nineteenth century were Gilgit, Hunza, and most of what is now southern Chitral, which was then ruled by the Katore dynasty; the others were Nagar, Astor, Punial, and the upper Gilgit and upper Chitral valleys which were then ruled by the Kushwaqt family. (See map) Altogether the principalities accounted for just over two-thirds of the region's total area and population.

Although the nineteenth century travellers were more interested in the valleys leading up to the northern watersheds—the 'natural boundary' of British-India—they also described the contrasting political organization of the southern valleys. They termed it 'republican' because there were no ruling dynasties or centralized administrations, but instead, assemblies of representatives of the inhabitants whose functions were to make communal decisions and settle disputes. The assemblies were known as *jirgas*, and were convened at different levels, that is, for a village, a group of villages, or for a whole valley. Membership of the *jirga* was restricted to the dominant land-owning castes, who made up 60–90 per cent of local populations, while members of other castes had hardly any rights, political or economic. There was no formal economic reward for members of the *jirga*, no administrative expenditure, no internal taxation, and little provision for co-operative enterprise. Social and economic status was largely determined by reference

<sup>4</sup> E.g., Frederic Drew, *The Jummoo and Kashmir Territories: A Geographical Account*, London, 1875, pp. 456 ff.

to descent group and 'caste', and there was social and economic immobility. The relative status of individuals of equivalent descent was determined by personal qualities—for example by courage in fighting and skill in oratory—and by competitive feasting of the community and other procedures.<sup>5</sup> While the *jirga* system may once have made for peaceful and effective administration, the introduction of firearms in the nineteenth century encouraged more lethal conflicts and hereditary blood-feuds became universal and uncontrolled. Barth terms these communities 'acephalous', which name is used here.<sup>6</sup> Within the region there were six major acephalous communities during the nineteenth century—Chilas, Gor, Darel, Tangir, Kalam and Kandia—and many smaller ones. (See map)

The nineteenth century travellers also recorded traditions that several of the acephalous communities had once been principalities, and they and subsequent writers have suggested reasons for the change from centralized to acephalous government:<sup>7</sup> it now appears, however, that the main reason was the conversion to Islam.<sup>8</sup> At first sight this may seem surprising, but a closer look at the circumstances of conversion in different parts of the region provides an explanation, not only for the differences in political and social organization, but also for certain related agricultural and other economic features.

Although the exact date of conversion may not be known, the name, sect and origin of the first Islamic missionary is remembered in most localities. For example, it is told that the first Muslim to enter the Hunza valley was the miracle-working Syed Shah Buria, who came originally from Shi-ite Persia. He is assigned by local informants to the sixteenth or seventeenth century, and from him is traced the Shia influence, still dominant in Nagar but subsequently displaced in Hunza by Ismailism. The Ismaili influence, which is dominant also in the upper Gilgit valleys and in most of the upper Chitral valleys, is traced to Turkistan and Badakshan.<sup>9</sup> Thus the missionaries to the north of the

<sup>5</sup> Traditional peaceable procedures for settling disputes and attaining rank are described by Ghulam Muhammad in 'Festivals and Folklore of Gilgit', *Memoirs of the Asiatic Society of Bengal 1905-1907*, I, 1907, p. 103. See also *Frontier and Overseas Expeditions from India*, I, 'Tribes North of the Kabul River', Simla, 1907, pp. 36-7.

<sup>6</sup> Barth, 1956, pp. 79 ff.

<sup>7</sup> *E.g.*, Barth, 1956, pp. 79-86.

<sup>8</sup> This has already been suggested by Karl Jettmar in 'Ethnological Research in Dardistan 1958: Preliminary Report', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 1905, I, 1961, p. 85.

<sup>9</sup> The Sunni predominance in the southern part of the main Chitral valley is the result of secondary missionary activity. Local differences in the codes of the three sects are directly reflected in the agriculture; for example, in the distribution of cannabis-cultivation in Chitral, and in the growing of fruit for wine elsewhere.

region came from countries where centralized autocratic rule was well-established: conversion was peaceful—in some cases the first convert was the ruler himself—and the people of the northern valleys continued to be governed centrally.

On the other hand the people of the southern valleys were converted—probably during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and in many cases by force—by Sunni missionaries mainly from the Swat valley to the south. They were therefore subject to strong Pathan influences, especially from the Yusufzai who then occupied the lower Swat and Dir valleys. The conversion was accompanied by the overthrow of local dynasties and the establishment of a *jirga* form of government. At the same time a new settlement pattern and the particular land-holding system then current among the Yusufzai were introduced. The contrast between this land-holding system and that of the principalities is especially striking. These systems are described in turn below.

## II

The longest-established and most highly-organized of the principalities appear to have been the Katore State and Gilgit. Since the Katore administration is better remembered and better documented it is used here to illustrate certain features of the principalities.

The rulers—or *mehtars*—belonged to the Katore dynasty, tracing descent from the Timurids and relationship with the Moghuls. The state officials—*wazirs*, officers of the *mehtar*'s bodyguard, ambassadors to neighbouring rulers, and the hierarchy of administrators from provincial governors to village headmen—were drawn from the aristocracy, or *adamzada*. Many of these posts were in practice hereditary, but as a class the *adamzada*'s obligations to the state were to serve in any appropriate capacity and to remain loyal to the *mehtar* during his lifetime.<sup>10</sup> The *adamzada* owned land, occasionally as much as 100 acres, which was cultivated either by share-cropping tenants or by servants and labourers under the supervision of a steward.

<sup>10</sup> There was no rule of succession, and on the death of a *mehtar* his brothers and sons fought among themselves until all but one were killed or forced into exile. These periodic struggles seem to have been largely confined to the upper class and to the capital and did not necessarily result in disruption of the administration. On the accession of a new *mehtar* provincial and other officials were expected to transfer their allegiance, hence the proverb which has often been misunderstood by foreigners: 'He who rules my country is my king.' During the nineteenth century at least, the Katore *mehtars* effectively kept the peace within their own territory, and the relative security of life and property there was remarked upon by several of the early travellers.

Below the *adamzada* came a large class of farmers with holdings of 1–10 acres which they worked with their own hands. As land-holders they were 'entitled to consideration', but their rights to the land were qualified by a system of obligations attached to particular plots: in the last analysis all the land belonged to the *mehtar* who had the explicit right to evict farmers who did not fulfil the obligations. These involved giving local and specific services—for example, providing food for officials who visited the village, scaring the birds off crops growing on the *mehtar's* own estates nearby, or performing communal tasks such as the upkeep of tracks—and thus allowed a complex administration to function without the use of currency and without uneconomic transport of bulky agricultural produce.

Below came the lowest class, consisting of various artisan and immigrant groups whose members had land, and of other individuals (some with the same ethnic origin as the land-holders) who had lost their land through some natural disaster, excessive fragmentation, or personal misfortune. Those without land generally worked as tenants, servants and labourers for the *adamzada*. Under the Katore many members of the lowest class, besides fulfilling specific obligations, were further obligated to the state in that the *mehtar* could seize and sell them abroad in the slave markets of Central Asia.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> One group particularly liable to enslavement was the Kalash, a conquered but non-Muslim people inhabiting parts of the southern Katore territory. In addition to the Katore, the Kushwaqt and the rulers of Gilgit (i.e. in those principalities where centralized rule was long-established) used to sell their own subjects into slavery. Their right to raise revenue in this manner was apparently explicit, and largely by this means they paid for the import of costly luxury goods that were used on formal occasions. Men, women and children were in fact a major exportable resource, with the advantage of being relatively easily moved over difficult terrain. See, *inter alia*, William Moorcroft and George Trebeck, *Travels in the Himalayan Provinces of Hindustan and the Punjab: In Ladakh and Kashmir; in Peshawar, Kabul, Kunduz and Bokhara; from 1819–1825* (ed. Horace Hayman Wilson), II, London, 1841, p. 270; Algernon Durand, *The Making of a Frontier: Five Years' Experiences and Adventures in Gilgit, Hunza, Nagar, Chitral, and the Eastern Hindu-Kush*, London, 1900, pp. 51–2; P. A. Vans Agnew, 'Diaries of Mr P. A. Vans Agnew, Assistant to the Agent, Governor-General, North-West Frontier, on deputation to Gilgit—1847', *The Political Diaries of the Resident at Lahore and his Assistants 1846–1849*, VI, Lahore, 1915, p. 288. Even in those principalities where the local inhabitants were spared, battle and foray prisoners were sold into slavery. The rulers of Hunza augmented their revenues by organizing raids upon the Khirghiz and upon the trade caravans that passed to the north of Hunza between Ladakh and Eastern Turkistan. Plundered goods and captives became the property of the ruler, who usually distributed some of the goods among his officials and courtiers and sold the remainder and the captives abroad. See Ralph P. Cobbold, *Innermost Asia: Travel and Sport in the Pamirs*, London, 1900, p. 22; Marquess Curzon of Kedleston, *Leaves from a Viceroy's Note-Book and Other Papers*, London, 1926, pp. 181–2. There was very little else that was suitable for export from the principal-

In addition to their nominal ownership of all land the Katore *meh-tars* and other rulers had direct control over estates in different localities, the usufruct of which could be granted to senior state officials, powerful supporters, or personal confidants as rewards for their services. By this means—and also through the distribution of valuable imported luxury goods for personal display, and by changing the order of precedence on court occasions—the *meh-tar* could advance or retard the fortunes of particular families.<sup>12</sup> Since land, income, wealth, and social status were closely linked, these procedures were important in promoting social and economic mobility. At a lower level in the social scale *adamzada* likewise rewarded long-serving and loyal retainers with the grant of a piece of land: thus many of the landless had at least some long-term prospect of obtaining land of their own.

Barren but irrigable land was also in the gift of the rulers. Sometimes a ruler himself or the state organized the building of an irrigation channel, in which case the land became the property of the ruler or the state. In other cases a nearby village was granted the land for distribution among those, including the landless, who helped to build a channel. Alternatively the land was given to a group of immigrants in return for some service—perhaps support in a succession struggle, or the practice of some craft for the benefit of the state, the court or the public. Whatever the exact circumstances, the political organization of the principalities, with its hierarchy of local officials, was well-adapted to the assembling and feeding of the large labour forces required for channel building. It is unlikely to be a coincidence that in Hunza the largest and technically most difficult channels were constructed under the personal supervision of the *wazirs*. Moreover, the irrigation of barren land was clearly in the interests of the rulers and their states,

ities—a little gold dust washed from the river sands, woollen cloth, nuts, kernels, dried fruits, clarified butter, and falcons—and this trade likewise was largely in the hands of the rulers.

<sup>12</sup> The imported goods that were prized were the costly but durable luxuries of Central Asia—precious stones, knotted carpets, rich horse trappings, 'cloth of gold', silk, brocade and velvet robes, and jewelled weapons—and also horses and hunting dogs. The distribution and display of such items was an important feature of administrative and court procedures. At the daily Katore *mahraka*, *adamzada* attended in order of precedence in their formal regalia while the *meh-tar* rewarded and honoured state officials, visiting dignitaries, and prominent supporters with gifts appropriate to their status and deserts. Afterwards there was recreation—polo, exhibitions of horsemanship, falconry and hunting—when again the costly apparel and trappings were displayed, and the triumphs of men and animals were praised and rewarded. Apart from their social attributes many of these goods had an additional economic character as value-retaining and portable liquid assets—a consideration for any prince who might have to flee his country.

increasing both their revenues and their political and military strengths, and in some cases helping to secure their borders. In the Katore State—and its successor, Chitral—several groups of immigrants have been given land on the more remote borders on condition that they prevent kinsmen across the border from raiding and stealing livestock. Thus many immigrants, some with special skills and some without, were allotted land in the principalities and as a concomitant were absorbed into the internal political and social structure.

Circumstances have changed now. Rulers, where they still rule, no longer have paramount rights to all land, and can no longer allocate state or barren land to whom they choose. Nonetheless the traditional distribution pattern remains largely intact: disputes and rivalries over the occupation of state land still persist in Chitral, and in Hunza and elsewhere servants are still rewarded with grants of their masters' land. A few immigrants continue to settle in the principalities where land is available, and although they may now have to buy the land, the fact that they can occasionally do so—and the landless too, if they can afford it—is another reminder of the older processes by which strangers were absorbed and land was distributed throughout the population.

The situation in the acephalous communities was different. Political power and rights to land belonged, and still belong, exclusively to the dominant castes, and it has been exceptional for others to obtain land. Xenophobia and what the nineteenth century writers described as the 'unsettled state of affairs' discouraged even travellers and traders, let alone would-be immigrants.<sup>13</sup>

Within the acephalous communities themselves the inflexibility of the

<sup>13</sup> It was not until 1913 that any scholarly investigator was able to visit Darel and Tangir without disguise (and then only because of an interval of centralized rule—see note 14 below), and it was not until 1941 that one visited Indus Kohistan. Both times it was Sir Aurel Stein, who described the journeys in *Innermost Asia: Detailed Report of Explorations in Central Asia, Kan-su and Eastern Iran*, I, Oxford, 1928, pp. 1 ff.; and 'From Swat to the Gorges of the Indus', *Geographical Journal*, 100, 2, 1942, pp. 49–56. In traditional saving and consumption behaviour the acephalous communities presented a further contrast with the principalities. In place of the hoarding and display of luxury goods characteristic of the upper classes of the principalities, members of the dominant castes accumulated agricultural surpluses for periodic competitive feasting of the community. At one time such feasts were probably more formally associated with political, social and religious procedures (see note 6 above) but even during the Islamic period they have been associated with individual status, with election to the *jirgas*, and with support in the almost universal inter-family feuds. Death ceremonies are now the occasion for the most lavish provision of food, chiefly bread, meat, and clarified butter. Such feasts are traditionally almost the only expression of personal wealth in the acephalous communities; there are no robes nor regalia, no precious stones nor carpets, and traditionally no horses nor sporting recreations. Karl Jettmar has mentioned how personal ostentation would be regarded

criteria for rights to land—together with rights in common among those who did satisfy the criteria—prevented re-arrangements of the kinds seen in the principalities. Thus there was no mechanism whereby the landless could irrigate barren land; and there was no possibility of a member of a land-owning group giving land to a servant. Even when a member of one of the land-owning castes proposed to irrigate barren land on his own account he had to obtain the consent of all others with equal rights to that land and to offer compensation. Similarly immigrants could obtain land only if they had the consent of every member of the land-owning castes to a diminution in his own share: in consequence only a few individuals of saintly status (mostly descended from the Islamic missionaries) and small numbers of artisans have been allotted land.<sup>14</sup> The artisans have been tolerated on account of their special skills and services, but even after generations of residence they often have no permanent rights. Agriculturist immigrants have recently been admitted, but only to some communities, and only as labourers and pastoralists.

Paradoxically this inflexibility was strengthened by the Islamic missionaries' system for the periodic re-allocation of land, which originally attempted to distribute resources more equitably. It was modelled on the *wesh* system then operating among the Yusufzai, and Barth has described how it worked in Kandia and the neighbouring communities of Indus Kohistan:

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

as a provocation, in his 'Soziale und wirtschaftliche Dynamik bei asiatischen Gebirgsbauern (Nordwestpakistan)', *Sociologus*, 10, 2, 1960, pp. 127, 132.

<sup>14</sup> The exception that proves the rule is a small number of immigrant pastoralists who have been settled on land at the head of the Darel valley for two generations. This came about during the brief reign of a member of the Kushwaqt family who managed to establish himself as ruler in Darel and Tangir and who granted those particular immigrants their right to settle. See Jettmar, 1960, p. 133. Some pastoralists also settled in Swat Kohistan on unclaimed land between Kalam and the neighbouring communities.

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

The tendency in the Kohistain area has been towards more and more permanent settlement and division of land. Thus, shortly before the memory of the older informants, all land was held on this temporary basis; while . . . [by 1948] . . . only a part of the agricultural area—but all the summer grazing areas—were subject to re-allotment.<sup>15</sup>

*Wesh* in its original form is seldom practised now, but it survived in Darel until the 1930s, and there are remnants of it, and of the settlement pattern that also was introduced by the missionaries, in Tangir.<sup>16</sup> In Gor the drawing of lots for irrigation water continues to suggest a system for the equitable distribution of resources. If, as it appears, *wesh* was introduced almost as a part of the new religion, then it probably operated in other communities subject to the same missionary influences, although there is no trace of it in Kalam.

The deleterious consequences of *wesh* in the lower Swat valley, especially for the long-term improvement of holdings, have already been mentioned by Stein and others.<sup>17</sup> Similar consequences in the acephalous communities, together with those of the inflexible land-holding system there, have been exacerbated by the factionalism and feuding that has discouraged both communal enterprise such as channel building and cultivation by individuals.<sup>18</sup> The increase in lethal feuds is reported to have encouraged changes in the allocation of labour

<sup>15</sup> Barth, 1956, p. 32. It was partly on account of its disadvantages for agriculture that *wesh* was stopped when the lower Swat valley, and later Indus Kohistan also, came under new government. Similarly the Kushwaqt prince who briefly ruled in Darel and Tangir sought to stop it. See Jettmar, 1960, p. 134.

<sup>16</sup> Jettmar, 1961, pp. 85–6.

<sup>17</sup> Sir Aurel Stein, *On Alexander's Track to the Indus: Personal Narrative of Explorations on the North-West Frontier of India*, London, 1929, pp. 52, 101–2, 109; Bruno Fautz, *Sozialstruktur und Bodennutzung in der Kulturlandschaft des Swat (Nordwesthimalaya)*, Giessen, 1963, pp. 95 ff.

<sup>18</sup> Arthur Neve, in his *Thirty Years in Kashmir*, London, 1913, p. 118, remarked that the ' . . . chaotic republicanism . . . is a source of utter paralysis as regards any concerted policy or action . . .'; while Tom Longstaff in *This My Voyage*, London, 1950, p. 217 wrote that since the introduction of the modern rifle ' . . . a threatened man hardly dare cultivate his fields'. The only 'concerted action' of the acephalous communities comparable with the more elaborate channel building of the principalities was the construction of remarkable wooden mosques, with beams and pillars of colossal dimensions and intricate decoration. However, traditions about the main mosque in Kalam tell that each faction carved its own pillar—hence the variety of their decoration—and that the actual construction was made possible by a period of internal truce imposed by the Islamic missionaries.

in some communities in recent decades, so that land-owners and their families no longer tend their crops, but instead travel with their livestock to the summer pastures, leaving the cultivation to landless labourers.<sup>19</sup> The labourers simply water the crops at intervals and, being poorly paid and often heavily in debt to their employers,<sup>20</sup> they have little incentive to increase production. In the principalities on the other hand, except for the aristocracy, farmers cultivate their own land with the help of their wives and children.

It can be observed immediately that there are differences between the principalities and the acephalous communities in the extent and quality of cultivation. One of the most conspicuous is the failure of the acephalous communities to use land that could be readily irrigated with the existing technology and resources. In parts of Chilas, for example, irrigation could be extended in three-quarters of the villages, yet this has not been done although up to 45 per cent of households have no land. This may be compared with Hunza where, with the progressive extension of irrigation, the same technology has been applied to increasingly difficult terrain 'up to the limits of possible cultivation' so that 'not a yard of land is wasted'.<sup>21</sup> Many observers have commented upon the feats of surveying and engineering represented by irrigation channels in the principalities.<sup>22</sup> Another improvement seen in some, though not all, of the principalities is the terracing of sloping fields and the removal of stones and boulders; this is seldom undertaken in the acephalous communities.<sup>23</sup> Another contrast is the virtual absence of fruit trees in many acephalous communities, whereas in the principalities fruit trees are almost universal, are of many different species and varieties, and make a substantial contribution to productivity and to diets.

Differences between the principalities and the acephalous communities are similarly seen in annual cultivation practices: again the same

<sup>19</sup> Stein, 1928, pp. 11-12, attributed the development of this transhumance to the ending of inter-community warfare, which enabled most of the population to escape during summer from the extreme heat of lower altitudes. See also Jettmar, 1960, pp. 128-9. Jettmar also suggests, pp. 132-3, that the spread of maize in place of millets is associated with the change, and that maize cultivation is itself a non-intensive feature.

<sup>20</sup> Jettmar, 1960, pp. 125-6.

<sup>21</sup> *Census of India 1941*, XXII, Part III ('Village Tables and Housing Statistics' by R. G. Wreford), Jammu, 1943, p. 528.

<sup>22</sup> *E.g.*, Durand, 1900, pp. 161-2.

<sup>23</sup> Nonetheless elaborate and extensive terracing is found in some acephalous communities; this anomaly can be explained by the terracing having been completed before the Islamic conversion, that is, probably under centralized rule. See Barth, 1956, pp. 19, 95-6.

techniques are employed all over the region, but the extent to which they are employed varies. Thus more attention is given in the principalities to the collection and application of dung, to the use of other natural vegetable and mineral fertilizers, to the systematic weeding and thinning of growing crops, and to the raising of vegetables. A more striking illustration is provided by the intensity of cropping. The upper limit of double-cropping varies between 6,000 ft. and 8,000 ft., depending upon the choice made between crops which mature at different rates, all of which are known throughout the region. In Chilas the limit is as low as 6,000 ft., and the change is from slow-maturing wheat followed by slow-maturing maize to maize as a single crop. In the principalities, however, the extension of double-cropping up to more than 7,000 ft. is achieved by growing fast-maturing barley followed by maize, or wheat followed by fast-maturing millet. In Hunza the process is furthest-developed, with two successive fast-maturing crops being grown as high as 8,000 ft.

There are many other variables both physical and human that should also be considered, but this would require much fuller and more precise data than are available. In the case of the upper limit of double-cropping, for example, it is likely that length of snow-lie is a complicating factor. The variation of population pressure between and within valleys is another important consideration that affects both the extent and intensity of cultivation. Nonetheless enquiries in the field make it clear that the differences in political organization, and more particularly the differences in the systems of land-holding affecting both communities and individuals, are crucial determinants of the response to agricultural opportunities. It is also perhaps characteristic of the difference in ethos that in the acephalous communities any unusual success that individual farmers have with their crops or livestock is attributed simply to luck, while similar individual success in the principalities is attributed to skill and effort.

### III

The distribution of land and the agriculture itself remain essentially as they were in the nineteenth century, although the region has gradually come under external rule—most of it during the 1890s, but some as late as 1952. Nonetheless many of the traditional administrations, both those of the principalities and of the acephalous communities, were allowed to continue functioning although they have been subject to increasing supervision, especially since 1947.

The establishing of overall British-Indian control had important consequences. One of these was the ending of the dynastic wars, the fighting between communities,<sup>24</sup> the raids on caravans, and the trade in slaves; this was doubtless a cause of the rapid increase in the region's population, which approximately doubled between 1911 and 1961. Health services which, together with secular education, were started after the 1890s must also have contributed to this population growth. During the same period progressive improvements were made to the tracks along the main valleys and over the passes to the south. Work has continued since 1947, until there are now about 600 miles of 'jeep-able' road along the main routes; furthermore, daily air services now connect Rawalpindi and Peshawar with the administrative centres in Gilgit and Chitral. Even so, the region as a whole and most villages within it remain isolated: travel is still arduous and is sometimes dangerous, and transport is slow and expensive.

The traditional external trade links of the region—such as they were—had been between the principalities and countries to the west, north and east, but during the early decades of the twentieth century the ancient trade in the luxury goods of Central Asia declined as wealth was put to other uses, and subsequently as Russia and China closed the Turkistan frontiers. During the same decades trade with areas to the south was encouraged by the growing political connection with Kashmir and British India, and also by the improved southerly communications and the greater safety from attack on the main southern routes. By the 1920s there were small bazaars in several of the larger villages but, like the trade itself, they were concentrated in the principalities. The traders and shopkeepers were 'outsiders', mainly Kashmiris and Pathans, and most of the goods they sold were produced in British India.

At first these goods were consumed only by members of the wealthy upper classes who had surplus agricultural produce suitable for export from the region. Furthermore the upper classes were already familiar with certain imported goods, and—initially at least—were able to use the new cotton cloth and tea as 'status goods' in place of the older ostentatious luxuries. However the relative social flexibility in the principalities and the gradual blurring of the traditional social distinctions have favoured the subsequent spread of the new tastes to all classes, until almost every household now possesses cotton clothes, metal utensils, matches, and a little store of tea for guests, while many also have

<sup>24</sup> But not *within* the acephalous communities: indeed Jettmar, 1961, p. 86, suggests that internal bloodshed may have actually increased.

cotton quilts, soap, two or three teacups, and a kerosene lamp. Many of these goods were first imported into the region within living memory, and although limited in range and quantity, their consumption by farmers represents an important change from the traditional situation where self-sufficiency was almost complete and locally even salt was leached from the soil.

Circumstances in the acephalous communities have been different: there was no tradition of trade, or of the use of imported goods; nor were there leaders in a position to introduce new ideas. Xenophobia prevented traders from settling and opening shops, and even discouraged them from venturing off the main routes. Moreover, with the characteristic competitive feasting, there was no surplus agricultural produce for exchange. The only imported goods widely used in the acephalous communities have been cotton cloth and rifles.

The spread of new tastes and trade in the principalities has been closely associated with another process there: the gradual outstripping of the irrigated area by the growing population. Even at the beginning of the century some local grain deficiencies occurred but for some decades these could be made up from within the region. Now, however, despite the continuing orientation towards self-sufficiency in staple foods, an increasing number of villages in many parts of the region are becoming deficient, and the region itself is exhibiting a small overall deficiency. In many deficient villages in the principalities the scope for increasing agricultural output with the existing resources and technology is practically nil: already opportunities are being fully exploited. Elsewhere, especially in the acephalous communities, there is considerable scope for increasing output but—as has been mentioned—a response is lacking.

The concomitant of the import of grain—whether into a village, a valley, or the region as a whole—has been a third process: the seeking of non-agricultural employment away from home, that is, the 'export' of labour. In the earlier decades there were sufficient employment opportunities within the region itself, while the British-Indian administration and its services were growing, local militias were being raised, and roads were being constructed and maintained. Since 1947, however, there has been insufficient employment within the region for the increasing numbers seeking it; and more and more young men from the middle and lower classes of the principalities now travel south, out of the region, in search of jobs.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Travel in itself is an important change from the traditional isolation, which was so complete that only eighty years ago some 'leading men' of the principalities who

Some hundreds are semi-permanently employed in the cities of West Pakistan in such jobs as watchmen, factory-hands, and aircraft loaders, and thousands more are making an annual winter excursion for temporary employment as labourers, returning to their cultivation for the summer. Data collected in parts of Chitral State suggest that one man from every two households seeks winter employment outside the region. Two circumstances are facilitating this seasonal migration: one is the improvement in communications and the consequent saving of time spent travelling, and the other is a phase of construction in West Pakistan for which large labour forces are required at Islamabad and on the new dam sites.

Enquiries show that those who are now going out for winter work from the principalities are not necessarily inhabitants of deficient villages seeking the means to buy grain, but that they may be from self-sufficient or grain-surplus villages taking additional employment in order to afford more of the new consumption goods. Moreover, many men who already have the means to satisfy their tastes for these goods are seeking opportunities to save for additions to their houses, for the education of their sons, or—perhaps more important—for productive investment.

Developments of this kind are rarely seen in the acephalous communities. Even where a local grain deficiency has occasionally occurred, members of the land-owning castes have remained self-sufficient or have been able to exchange animal products for grain, and it has been the landless labourers who have been deprived. Jettmar has described how, for some years at least, labourers may borrow grain repeatedly from the land-owners and be gradually reduced to a state of 'debt-slavery'.<sup>26</sup> Alternatively they too may seek winter employment, and in recent years some have worked on the construction of the new Indus valley road, but very few travel far afield. Neither do they have new tastes to provide for, nor perhaps—even if they had the means—would they be permitted by the land-owners to gratify them.

For fifty years the bazaars and trade in the principalities remained almost entirely in the hands of Pathans and Kashmiris, but in 1947 most of the latter returned to the Vale of Kashmir and the region was

were being taken on a tour of British India were astounded upon seeing a flat landscape for the first time in their lives. See E. F. Knight, *Where Three Empires Meet: a Narrative of Recent Travel in Kashmir, Western Tibet, Gilgit, and the Adjoining Countries*, London, 1895, p. 527. Even now very few heads of households in the principalities have travelled outside the region, and many have not been beyond the boundaries of their own principality.

<sup>26</sup> Jettmar, 1960, pp. 125-6.

subsequently cut off from the Vale by the cease-fire line. Since that time inhabitants of the principalities have been entering trade in increasing numbers until they now exceed 'outsiders' in every bazaar. Similarly most of the contracts, both Government and private, are now taken by regional inhabitants, many of them members of the still-influential ruling families of the principalities. In the acephalous communities there is again a contrast. Even in Chilas village, where there has been a bazaar for many years because it has been a garrison centre and staging post on one of the southerly routes, the 'outsiders' have been replaced by shopkeepers from Gilgit and Hunza, but not by inhabitants of Chilas.

The process of displacement of 'outsiders' from trade has proceeded even further in recent years, as farmers from the principalities who have worked outside the region during the winter have returned with collections of goods for sale, and have set up part-time shops in their own houses. Even the smaller villages in the principalities now have a shop or two of this kind. Indeed shopkeeping as a whole appears to have reached a stage of over-expansion: not only are the longer established bazaars suffering from the competition of the new village shops, but many of the latter prove to be less profitable than their owners anticipate and are abandoned after a few months.

Such experiences illustrate the current dilemma of some inhabitants of the principalities who have saved from their earnings outside the region, and who are seeking opportunities for productive investment within or near their own village. Already-irrigated land is rarely obtainable, and few villages in the principalities still have irrigable barren land. Increase in livestock is generally limited by shortages of pasture and fodder. Farmers therefore turn to trade—almost the only other practicable economic activity known to them—but that also is found to have strictly limited possibilities within the region.

A new tendency in recent years—which perhaps suggests the immediate future also—is for those who have earned and saved outside the region to invest outside it: for example, several men from the principalities have opened tea-shops in Lahore and Peshawar. These men, who are accompanied by their wives and children, appear to have migrated permanently and they return to their ancestral villages only occasionally. With the increase in employment-seeking and with better opportunities elsewhere, it seems possible that the present pattern of temporary winter migration from the principalities will change to longer-term and permanent migration, and perhaps even to depopulation in some valleys. Such a process has occurred in the Alps

within the last hundred years and several of the parallels are striking.<sup>27</sup> However, it must be remembered that Government activity in the region is increasing and that much of this activity is not based upon economic considerations; the jeep roads and the subsidies for imported grain are only two examples.

It would be easy also to over-emphasize the continuing nature of the differences between the principalities and the acephalous communities. Before the Islamic conversion—surely one of the most important historical events for the region as a whole—political and agricultural organization was probably less varied; and as Government services and improved communications are brought more closely into contact with every part of the region, and as an exchange economy develops further, greater homogeneity may again be expected.

Nonetheless the present differences in agricultural organization and in response to new economic opportunities are striking; they have some important implications for economic planning and other Government activity; and they are evidence for the general argument that economic organization should be considered, not in isolation, but in its historical, political and social setting.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Raoul Blanchard, 'Essai d'une Synthèse', *Les Alpes Occidentales*, Vol. 7. Grenoble, 1956.