The Supernatural in the Popular Belief of the Gilgit Region [1]

By Lieut.-Col. D. L. R. LORIMER, C.I.E.

GILGIT offers a rich field to the student of Folklore, and one which up to the present has been only partially worked.

Colonel John Biddulph was first on the scene with his *Tribes of the Hindoo Koosh*, published in 1880, which provided valuable information regarding the beliefs and customs of the people of Gilgit.

Some stray facts can be gathered from the discursive linguistic works of Dr. G. Leitner; and in his last work—*Dardistan in 1866, 1886, and 1893*—he gathered together a mass of miscellaneous material which he describes, somewhat ambitiously perhaps, as "An Account of the History, Religions, Customs, Legends, Fables, and Songs of Gilgit, Chilas, Kandia (Gabrial), Yasin, Chitral, Hunza, Nagyr, and other parts of the Hindu Kush".

Lastly there is Munshi (now Khan Bahadur) Ghulam Muhammad's interesting article: "Festivals and Folk-tales of Gilgit," in the *Memoirs of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, vol. i, 1905–7, pp. 93–127.

These are the only important contributions to the subject with which I am acquainted, and it need scarcely be said that they are far from exhausting the field of research.

Chance and the exigencies of the Service took me to Gilgit in 1920, and kept me there till 1924. Unfortunately I am neither a scholar nor a folklorist, so all I can hope to do is to offer some additional information from this somewhat neglected region and leave others to make what use of it they can.

[1] A paper read in part at the Seventeenth International Congress of Orientalists held at Oxford in 1928.

The matter I have to present came to me largely fortuitously. My own interests lay in matters linguistic, and my immediate object was to obtain knowledge and specimens of the local languages. These languages are, of course, unwritten.

My principal method in such cases has been to get the people to tell me current popular tales and legends, and to give me accounts of local customs and beliefs, and to write them down to their dictation.

The content of my language material may therefore present subject of interest to folklorists, but it has not been collected with the critical knowledge or care of an expert folklorist.

Material thus casually collected is bound to present contradictions, ambiguities, and possibly misunderstandings, when it is not set in the firm frame of a story.

In regard to the terrain with which we are concerned, it is enough to recall that it is situated in the extreme north of India, to the north-west of Kashmir, in one of the loftiest mountain tracts of the world: the meeting point of the Hindu Kush and Karakoram ranges, where peaks and even ranges of 20,000 feet are a commonplace. The physical features are such as to favour isolation, a condition difficult of attainment in a continental country. Access for foreign influences must always have been difficult and restricted.

Even in recent times with the advent of the Pax Britannica, the partial establishment of foreign administration, and the construction of traversable roads, there has been no overwhelming inflow of exogenous influences, only a gradual infiltration. Thus old-standing beliefs and customs have not been subjected to any violent assault by modern disintegrating forces.

Isolation, however, is never more than relative.

In the case of Gilgit, at some unknown time, probably not more than 500 or 600 years ago, Islam gained admittance and sooner or later became the sole recognized religion in the region. Islam is a whole cultural system in itself,

providing everything from popular tales and domestic ritual upwards, and its effects on the outlook of any uncultured people must be immense.

Again a new period of foreign influence opened in the nineteenth century, first with the incursions of the Dogra rulers of Kashmir, resulting in partial occupation and administration, and later, in 1892, by the establishment of British general control in the rest of the country.

There are three principal languages in use in the Gilgit area: Burushaski, Ṣhiṇa and Khowar. Burushaski is the language of the people of Hunza Nagir, and a dialect of it is spoken by the inhabitants of Yasin. Ṣhiṇa is the language of the majority, current, in various dialects, over the greater part of the Gilgit Agency, as well as in Darel and Tangir to the south. It is an Aryan language. Khowar is also of that stock and is the language of Chitral. It is spoken in the western districts of Gilgit, Ghizer, and part of Kuh, and as a secondary language in Yasin.

How far there are to-day any definite ethnical distinctions in the population corresponding to these different languages is an open question. There has certainly been considerable mingling through intermarriage and individual migration, but there are at present insufficient data for solving the ethnological problems of the Gilgit region. When in Gilgit I secured anthropometric measurements of some 600 men from the various districts, and it is possible that if these are ever worked out by some competent anthropologist they may afford grounds for intelligent guessing.

The material of which I am going to make use reached me chiefly through the medium of Ṣhiṇa: that is, it represents the beliefs of the Ṣhiṇ and Yashkun speakers of Ṣhiṇa. To a lesser extent I shall be able to refer to corresponding beliefs existing among the Burushaski speakers of Hunza and Nagir. It is significant that the names of several of the principal Supernatural actors are different in the two languages, for this means that even if the two linguistic communities derive

from a common racial source these supernatural beings have been long enough in the possession of each to acquire independent existence in its language. This of course probably represents an inversion of the facts. It is safer on the whole to assume independent origins and gradual assimilation through contact and social fusion.

It appears to me not an impossible theory that of the two great sections into which the Ṣhiṇa-speaking population is divided, the socially inferior Yashkuns represent the earlier population who probably shared the language and culture of the surviving Burushaski-speaking peoples, while the Shins were an invading and conquering race who imposed on the Yashkuns their language and probably took over from them some of their beliefs.

The Khowar in the western districts is due probably to the extension of the Chitrali population beyond the political and natural borders of Chitral, reinforced by intermarriage which goes on at the present day, and in part to political domination in the past, which in quite recent times amounted to actual rule. Punial and Yasin are still governed by members of the Khushwakht family of Chitral whose mother tongue is Khowar.

In order to facilitate the arrangement and handling of the material with which we have to deal, it is necessary to adopt some system of classification of the Supernatural. I am not in a position to offer any scientific scheme, but a very rough grouping will suffice to serve our needs.

From one point of view we may regard the Supernatural as represented :—

1. By Animate Beings possessing certain supernatural powers or qualities, e.g. demons, witches, etc.

2. By Qualities or Virtues pertaining to, or affecting inanimate objects, exhibited in magical or irrational processes and properties.

With the latter category, comprising examples of sympathetic and contagious magic, the working of the evil

eye, rain-making, cures, and so on, I shall not here attempt to deal.

The first or animate category may be analysed as including :—

1. Beings whose supernatural operations are observable in ordinary daily life—the LIVING SUPERNATURAL. These may be superhuman or non-human beings, or they may be ordinary human beings.

2. Beings whose operations are chiefly found embalmed in folk tales—the "LEGENDARY" or "LITERARY" SUPERNATURAL. These may be regarded as superhuman or non-human.

At the top of the scale of the Superhuman, the GOD of Islam under his Persian name KHUDA appears to have ousted all rivals. Only among the Burushaski-speaking peoples are there traces of more primitive animal spirits, or spirits assuming animal forms, treated as objects of reverence or worship. The name under which their memory has been preserved is Bōyo. This I believe to be the plural of a singular form Bō.in, but I should just mention that this is a point on which doubt is possible.

Among the Ṣhiṇa speakers the principal forms of superhuman being are sometimes referred to collectively in a phrase of association as "Jinn, dē.ū, peri".

Jinn as a foreign (Arabic) word of Islamic origin is given rather a wide and vague application, but Dē.ūs and Peris can be roughly differentiated as demons and fairies.

The term Rāçḥ is generally used of inanimate protective objects, which belong to the impersonal side of magic, but in the form Rāçḥi it possesses also a personal significance.

Çḥèçḥ is the name of an important type of apparitional supernatural.

Whether Ghosts, the Spirits of the Dead, are to be reckoned as human or superhuman is a nice question. They are, I suppose, in fact sub-human. They seem to be recognized under the foreign (Arabic) title of Arwāḥ, but to play no very active part in popular belief.

Yaḍ and Yaḍōlo still receive attention in some localities as beings capable of affecting, at least prejudicially, the prosperity of the crops.

Turning now to purely human beings gifted with supernatural powers we find two principal representatives of the class: the Rū.i, a woman displaying some of the powers and proclivities of the western witch, and the Daiyāl, a person of either sex endowed with some of the abilities of the Seer and the Prophet.

There are also the possessors of the Evil Eye, voluntary or involuntary, and there are persons who have acquired powers of magic (ḍhíla).

These are the principal Dramatis Personæ of the Living Supernatural, and we may now examine their peculiarities in somewhat greater detail, paying particular attention to the Bōyo, the Ḍhèḍh and the Rū.i, partly because of their peculiarly local character, as signalized by their purely local names, and partly because of their intrinsic importance.

The Bōyo

From what I have heard I very much fear that the Bōyo are as extinct as the Dodo, though their extinction is of quite recent date. Perhaps they still enjoy a tenuous existence in the phantasies of some elderly minds, but their day of power and awe is gone, their cult is dead, and their worshippers departed.

From the little information I possess it appears that the Bōyo lived in holes at the foot of trees and rocks; and that the cult consisted in placing offerings of food, at any rate of slaughtered animals, at the foot of the trees, i.e. presumably in front of the holes. The Bōyo themselves are described as puppies, or animals like puppies, so this simple form of worship was probably acceptable to them. At any rate they condescended to eat the offerings.

There were Bōyo in residence at a spot on the Dadimo Lat a little above the fort at Hīndi, and the cult was maintained

there by the local people till a few years ago, when it was stopped, I think, by the orders of the Mīr of Hunza. Animals were slaughtered there " in the name of the Bōyo ".

From a story of Hunza tribal history it appears that the Bōyo were regarded as the avengers of broken oaths taken in their names. In a dispute about the ownership of land between two brothers Khuru and Khamer, Khamer proposed that the case should be decided by their taking oath. Khuru, the weaker party, who was also incidentally in the right, agreed and said: " O brother, the Sahāla Bō.in and the Hālasa Bō.in are very powerful and they are quick to wrath." But Khamer, who meditated a ramp and had no mind to be caught in this way, would not even hear this proposal out. " If we swear by them," he said, " they will work us evil." So the idea was dropped and with it disappeared our chance of learning the methods of taking oath by the Bōyo.[1]

The Bōyo now bear the stigma attaching to the gods of a superseded religion. " Bōyo-worshipper " (bōyo ū.ilikinas) is now used in the sense of *heathen, pagan.*

There seems to be a special association between the Bōyo and trees, and the trees share in their sanctity. Whether they each have their own independent virtue, or whether the one owes its worshipfulness in any measure to the merits of the other it is impossible to say.

In the two remaining texts in which I have references to the Bōyo the associate tree plays an important part. In a statement made in Ṣhiṇa by Ṣūbahdār Sulṭān 'Ali of Nagir regarding certain popular practices at Chaprōt he said: " Further they say that all the people used to assemble to do worship to a pine-tree that was there. They used to take a grey goat and slay it at the foot of the tree and a great

[1] I have here accepted the relation of Bō.in and Bōyō as singular and plural which is morphologically quite in order, and is asserted by some, though denied by other, authorities. The word bō.in seems to survive in bō.indūrgas (pl. bō.in dūrgasho) which was explained as arwāh—the spirits of the dead. Dūrg-, occurring in other compounds, appears to refer to a dead person.

number of puppy-dogs used to come out from below the pine-tree to drink up the blood. Then the people used to return rejoicing to their homes, and they used to say among themselves: 'Thanks be! Sickness has now been banished from the country.'"

Here it is stated that the tree is worshipped, but that the puppies, who are doubtless the Bōyo, benefit by the sacrifice. The Ṣḥina word (šilō.iki) translated "worship" means to *appease, placate, propitiate, do reverence to.* It corresponds, I think, exactly to the Burushaski *-īlikinas.

The other story, in which the tree also plays the chief rôle, is briefly as follows: From ancient times there was a juniper-tree in the garden of a man called Keramo Derbēsh, living in the Dirāmiting territory. It was called the Bōyo Gal ("the Bōyo juniper"). It was said that formerly animals like puppy-dogs used to come out from under it. The people of Hunza used to propitiate them (worship them) and called them Bōyo. One, Bagher Tham, cut the tree down and he promptly died. Two stems grew up again from the stump and a man cut one of them. He became paralyzed and an idiot. A man called Māmad Shāh cut down the remaining bough and he fell down from a cliff and was killed. After this people were afraid to meddle with the tree and left one bough (not previously mentioned) unmolested. Last year and the preceding year (1923 and 1922) this bough was still *in situ.* Then a man Yaqīn, obtained permission from the owner (Keramo Derbēsh) and cut it down and took it to his house. But he had a dream in which a number of women appeared to him and asked him why he had cut down their juniper-tree, and intimidated him. In view of past history he became alarmed and returned the juniper bough to its original owner, Keramo Derbēsh, in whose house it now lies, for no one will venture to burn it.

Here we are left wondering whether there was any connection, other than topographical, between the juniper and the

Bōyo, and whether the ladies who resented the ill-treatment of the tree were an original dream-invention of Yaqīn's or were personages already known to the public.

This is all the information I can give about the Bōyo. As far as I know they have no counterpart in the present-day beliefs of the Ṣḥiṇa-speaking peoples.

We next come to the association of the JINN, DĒ.Ū, PERI. The name Jinn, as already stated, is not an authentic local title, but has been derived from Islamic sources. It is used rather vaguely for all beings of the apparitional order. The popular mind is probably not very clear about the exact nature of all the supernatural phenomena which it encounters, and welcomes a non-committal term carrying all the flavour of high religious sanction. There are many stories in which Jinn appear, and it is probable that the foreign name has brought with it some foreign conceptions and associations. I am inclined to regard them with suspicion, though in the main I believe them to be merely re-christened Ċhèċh and perhaps Dē.ūs.

Another foreign (Arabic) term, Balā, seems to be used even more vaguely for evil spirits or demons whose presence you suspect or perceive, but whom you have not yet clearly seen and to whom you cannot put a name.

On the other hand a third foreign (Arabic) name, Shaiṭān, seems to carry with it a more definite personality. Shaiṭān is a leader among malignant and malicious spirits, at least a demon with an individuality, the Devil, Satan. He is probably a foreign intruder. On these foreign or denationalized Devils whose antecedents are somewhat suspect I shall not here spend time.

I may just mention by way of illustration that if after "concocting" magic, a process which takes forty days, you then sit down in the open and draw a line round yourself on the ground, a Jinn will appear and try to frighten you. If you keep up your courage other Jinns, Dē.ūs and Peris will come and try to frighten you. Finally if you remain firm

the King of the Jinns, Dē.ūs and Peris himself appears, confesses that he is in your power and enquires your wishes —and so on.

I think it is a pure coincidence that where I have the term Balā it occurs usually in conjunction with horses. A groom and a horse—both later in my service—had a thrilling experience with a Balā which it would take too long to relate here, but the principle involved was elsewhere stated to me as follows: "If one mounts a horse at night and rides anywhere, then if the horse sees a Balā it will refuse to go forward. If at this moment the rider looks over the horse's head between its ears the Balā will be visible to him."

The more frivolous character of the Devil, Shaiṭān, is shown in the following: If in certain circumstances you can snatch the cap off the Devil's head and take refuge in a masjid and avoid his efforts to seize you by the seat of your trousers and go off with them, then if you put on the Devil's cap you will be able to see him, but he will not be able to see you and others will not be able to see either you or him—a piquant if not very useful situation.

If these foreign—Arabic—names could be eliminated, as I confess I should like, I think it would be found that most of the beings rendered innominate, would readily gain admittance to the ranks of the Ḍẖèḍẖ and the Dē.ūs.

Dē.ū

The name Dē.ū, akin to the Sanskrit *dēva-*, may be regarded as a legitimate Ṣḥiṇa word. At any rate, its source need not be sought in Islam or Islamic influence.

Dē.ūs play a prominent part in the folktales of the country as demons, ogres, etc., usually of maleficent proclivities, but they also descend into legendary history. In the latter situation they probably represent a once locally dominant race which has died out or been absorbed. But that is probably only a later identification. Their origin must lie in or before the Folktale period which is presumably much

earlier. This, however, is not the place to deal with the Dē.ū of myth or legend.

The Dē.ū of to-day is a shadowy and illusive being, scarcely to be isolated from the group of Jinn-dē.ū-pēri. He is evidently not endowed in the popular consciousness with a very definite or vivid personality. Demonic possession is usually attributed to Jinns, but it is noteworthy that there is the expression *dēwē.i dakhal ṣhātin*, denoting possession by a Dē.ū.

We know something of the general habits of the Dē.ū, which they share with their supernatural colleagues the Jinns and Peris. For instance, I have the following note among others: "At the time when the mulberries are ripe people do not eat them at midday. They say that Dē.ūs and Peris throw people down (from the trees at that hour)."

It should be explained that people, especially children, climb into the trees to eat mulberries and other fruit, and that there are often accidents and broken limbs due to their falling down.

Again: "In summer-time Jinns, Dē.ūs, and Peris live in the open country. In autumn they come to inhabited places." And: "At the time when a woman has given birth they do not keep an adze close by in the house. If there is an adze at hand, and if it goes by night and opens the door and brings the Dē.ūs, Peris, and Rū.is into the house, then the woman suffers injury." Why adzes go and open the door is duly explained (cp. p. 529).

It is possible by the "concoction of magic" followed by other rites to make the Jinns, Dē.ūs, and Peris subject to one. There was a man known as the Chīlègi Saiyid living a few years ago, and probably still alive, who had achieved this.

Such general facts could be multiplied, but I can recall no Ṣhiṇa account of any definite individual Dē.ū taking part in any actual exploit at the present day.

In Burushaski there is a word Pfūt (plural Pfūtū or Pfūtants) which is interpreted as Dē.ū or Jinn.

In a long story the titles Būrum Pfūt and Dī.u Safīd, the "White Dīv", are used indifferently for a beneficent Dīv, but the story itself must be regarded as a foreign importation.

There is, however, another genuine local story in which Pfūtū play a principal part. The narrator explained them as Jinns, but the story must go far back to long before the time when the word jinn was known in the country, and Dē.ū would seem to be a more appropriate rendering. In this story a man had lost his goat and in searching for it he saw a light and came upon a party of Pfūts engaged in revels. He joined in their dancing and in the feasting which followed it. After the feast the Pfūts collected the skin and bones of the animal which they had eaten. The man concealed the rib which had fallen to his share and the Pfūts replaced it by an artificial wooden rib. Then they shook the bones up in the skin and a goat came to life. The man recognized it as his missing property. When he got home he found the goat awaiting him there, and when he slaughtered it he found it had a wooden rib. During this experience he learnt one of the Pfūts' tunes. It is still known and played in Hunza.

One curious point about this story is that the Pfūts were either indifferent to the presence of a human being, or oblivious of it, and there is no clue to their usual attitude towards man.

The Burushaski Dangalaṭas, and, in some aspects, the Bīlas, are probably to be regarded as female Dē.ūs.

Peri

When we come to the Peris we are on somewhat firmer ground. We know a good deal about their characteristics, and they do still on occasion enter into relations with human beings.

The resemblance of the word "Peri" to "fairy" is of course purely accidental, but there are actually points of similarity between Peris and western fairies, whether or not there is

any blood relationship. The name is identical with the Persian word represented in Avestan by *pairika* to which there seems to be no recorded parallel in Sanskrit, but it is conceivable that in Ṣhiṇa it is an original and not a borrowed word.

However this may be, the Peris are quite firmly established under that title in popular belief in Gilgit, Chitrāl, and among the Paṭhans. The word is known in Burushaski, both in foreign stories and as a complimentary epithet for women and boys, but I have come on no Peris in the definitely local stories of Hunza and Nagir.

The Peris of the Ṣhiṇa-speaking peoples are of both sexes. The female is called a Peri and the male a Periān. They are not spoken of as "little folk", and appear in general to resemble human beings. They eat "pillau", as is attested by Pashūs (anti-witches) and others who have seen them. Their eyes are said to be vertical, that is with the axis set vertically. I fancy they have only one eye placed in the middle of the forehead as is recorded of Jinns and others, but I cannot quote authority for this. They can fly; but if cow-dung is thrown on a Peri, or if its clothes are held in the smoke of a cow-dung fire it becomes unable to move. This point is illustrated in a Burushaski story, which is, however, of foreign origin. I have only one instance of a Peri with a name: a Peri called Mādi is said to live on the mountain of Diāmer (Nanga Parbat).

Peris wear green clothing and consider that they have exclusive rights in that colour. Hence we are told: "If anyone puts on green clothes it is said that the Peris get angry and snatch at the man and crush him. The reason is this: the Peris say: 'Green garments are our clothing. Why have they put them on?' and they become angry."

This claim is supported by their human confidants, the Daiyāls. As witness: "Daiyāls say that when a Daiyāl dances the Peris come flying through the air and remain watching the people. The Daiyāls say, 'We understand

what the Peris say. We communicate it in songs to the people.' If the Daĭyāl sees anyone wearing green clothes he gets angry. The reason for this is that the peris wear green clothes, they say, and therefore if any earthly being puts on green clothing the peris become angry and do him injury."

The attitude of the Peris towards ordinary mortals cannot be described as cordial or benevolent. For instance: "They say that if anyone goes to the desert at midday the peris will snatch at his eyes and make him blind."

If a new house proves to be poor or unlucky it may be due to the adverse influence of a Periān. Again: "When a woman, all of whose children have died, gives birth to a child the mother cuts the umbilical cord and licks the blood that comes from it. The reason for this is that over every woman there is a Peri woman. The Peri woman says, 'Now that this woman has drunk the blood of her child she will never do me any good,' and fearing the woman the Peri clears out."

Here the reluctance to relinquish power over a human being indicates how such power is prized. Various methods are employed to obtain it even to the point of stealing or carrying off children or adults. In this we have an important resemblance between the Peris and the fairies of the West. The following notes are relevant in this connection: "A *dernīji mā* (i.e. 'outside mother') is a fairy in the jungle who gives milk to a child and rears it. When the boy grows up he is a good mountaineer." In one known case the peri-fosterling says he only sees his Peri mother when he is alone.

"Ten or more years ago (i.e. counting from 1922) a boy was carried off by the Peris from Nāpur. His clothes were found on the hills but he has never returned again."

One of the grooms of the Assistant Political Agent, Chilās, made the following statement: "Every day (i.e. always) at the (end of the) dark period of the moon the peris carry me off. I see them and they see me. They say to me, 'You stay with us and we'll look after you well. If you don't

stay we'll throw you down from the mountain.' They thus put me in great fear and then I promise to stay." So far, however, he had apparently successfully evaded either staying or being thrown down from the mountain.

Of the common motif of a man marrying a fairy wife I have only one example, and it does not contain the usual feature of the fairy wife imposing a prohibition on the man which he breaks to his undoing. In the Ṣhiṇa story the parties are more equally matched than usual, for the husband is a Daiyāl. Still he had the worst of it in the long run.

A Daiyāl of Herāmosh bewitched a peri and casting a spell on her hair tied it all up in knots. Then he married her and in due course they had a daughter. When the daughter grew up her father instructed her that if her mother ever asked her assistance in dealing with the population of her hair she should give it, but on no account should she undo the knots. One day when the mother and daughter were out with the goats the anticipated situation arose and the girl played her part. The mother then explained that her husband had been angry with her and had tied her hair in knots and she appealed to the girl as her daughter to undo them. In a moment of sympathy and forgetfulness the girl performed the service. Immediately the Peri slew all the goats and flew away carrying her daughter with her. The Daiyāl, on discovering his treble loss, remained where he was weeping and beating his breast.

I think it was in 1922 that Rājā Sifat Bahādur, Governor of Yasin, married a peri lady, presumably *in absentiâ*, but doubtless with all due ceremony. I believe that to his intimates he claimed to have seen her, but a youth, who was probably an epileptic and certainly a scoundrel, acted as go-between and the Peri's agent in the affair. The Rājā cannot have proved a wholly acceptable husband, as shortly after the wedding he had a fall at polo and broke some ribs. Later, I think, he damaged his knee, and before two years were out he was assassinated in Independent Territory.

I have recorded instances of human-peri marriages in Chitrāl, but that lies outside our present beat.

RĀÇḤ

The term rāçḥ, cf. the Sanskrit root *rakṣ-*, "to protect," is usually applied to material objects, which exercise protective powers over human beings. Among such objects are included articles worn as talismans. It is also said, however, that everyone has a guardian spirit in the form of a small girl—Rāçḥe Mulai.i, or Rāçḥi. There may be two of them. These Rāçḥi communicate with the Pashū or Anti-witch when their protégés are in danger.

Again, if a bad woman rides on a horse the horse's Rāçḥi is depressed. Here the Rāçḥi was explained as the *sitāra*, "star" or "fortune", but it is not therefore to be assumed that it is an impersonal abstraction. The conception of a man's "luck" or "fortune" as a living being who is sometimes asleep and sometimes awake is very common.

In a Burushaski story there are three women who are the "Guardians" (rāçḥakūyo) of a king of Irān. They know his fate beforehand and how he can escape it, but are not in direct communication with him. This story, however, is obviously of foreign origin, at least in its existing form, and the guardian women are an integral part of it and could hardly have been introduced as an afterthought.

ÇḤÈÇḤ

We now pass to a very active and vital group of the Living Supernatural—the Çḥèçḥ. The name is not identifiable as a foreign loan-word and has all the appearance of being good Ṣhiṇa. If I am right in believing the ch's to be cerebral, they would ordinarily correspond to Sanskrit kṣ or tr, but I cannot suggest a derivation.

Çḥèçḥ appear to me to present features of interest and originality, but they may be commonplace to the instructed folklorist. I shall first mention some of the chief characteristics and then illustrate them by specific examples.

A Ṭẖèçẖ is a sort of bogle which usually appears at night. It is said to "fall"—*ṭẖèçẖ dijen*. A sound is sometimes heard and the Ṭẖèçẖ appears in the form of some animal, such as a horse, donkey, or cow, but sometimes as a human being. Sometimes it appears as a tall figure which reaches up to the sky and is swathed in white clothing—a guise which is also sometimes adopted by Jinns.

When a man sees a Ṭẖèçẖ he may faint with fear and fall to the ground. If, however, he can manage to preserve his courage and presence of mind and repeat the Call to Prayer (aẓān) the apparition will disappear. The people then reckon them to be Jinns.

Ṭẖèçẖ are commonly attached to particular localities, from which it appears they do not wander. There are many such Ṭẖèçẖ-haunted places in Gilgit proper as well as outside.

A Ṭẖèçẖ is known to frequent the garden of the Political Agency office. Another haunts the neighbourhood of the P.W.D. Staff Bungalow and has been seen by many people. Its beat extends from there to the Political Agency Office, a distance of a few hundred yards. Another haunts a tree in the garden of the Divisional Engineer's house in the same area. Some deserted houses above the Ranbīr Bāgẖ are the home of another.

A Ṭẖèçẖ has been seen by many near the European cemetery. My informant's brother once saw a man wearing black clothes in the cemetery. This apparition pursued him, kicked him, and flung him into an irrigation channel.

Ṭẖèçẖ, like ghosts, are rather addicted to graveyards. Many other Ṭẖèçẖ-haunted places could be mentioned.

The following are one or two well-authenticated stories of Ṭẖèçẖ and their doings. One night Ghulām Muhammad, Chaukidār (night-watchman), was sleeping in pursuance of his duty with his brother in the verandah of the Political Agent's Office in Gilgit. The brother used to give the following account, reported in slightly differing versions, of their experiences: "We were sleeping in the verandah of

the office. I awoke at midnight and found a horse sitting beside me. It had an English saddle on. I thought it must belong to some visitor and have strayed. So I tied it up to a tree and kept my eye on it. Presently I saw that it had turned into a donkey, and it came and sat down beside my head. My big brother beat it and it went and sat down on the road and turned into a bull. My brother repeated the Call to Prayer and it disappeared."

Sarfarāz, Chaprāsi of the Political Agency Office, told me the following, which is compounded of two slightly differing versions: "There is a lot of earth near the door of our cow-house in Amperi, Gilgit. They say that there were formerly there a mother and six daughters. They are not there now. My father's younger brother says he had seen them himself. About the year 1915–16 one day the (elder) brother was going at night to another quarter. By the path he saw a thin little girl sitting on a big stone. He felt an instinctive fear of her. He said: 'The child came down to the path and caught hold of my hand. I pulled in the direction of my house, and it pulled in the direction of the byre. At last with a great effort I got my hand free and went on to my house. The girl said, "Go now, O man, your luck is great. You have escaped from me, otherwise I should have killed you here." She pointed out to him a spot, a few hundred yards further on and said her beat extended up to there. She said that she had a mother and six (five ?) sisters."

Sarfarāz, continuing, said: "My uncle returning thence to the house lost consciousness. They burned a lot of talismans and gave the Ākhund what he demanded, and my uncle recovered." Owing to this misadventure, however, none of the children of this senior brother survived, and on his death his land came to Sarfarāz. People advised him not to continue to live there, so he built a new house. At midnight a noise of cats is sometimes heard, but no cats are ever seen.

Here is another episode. "They say that a Çhèçh appears

at the Balbè Gīri on the way to Nōmal. Several times the men who carry the mails have seen it. One time when a zamīndār, Shukur Khān by name, carrying the mail approached the Balbè Gīri, a Balā came out on to the road and would not let him pass. Shukur Khān says: 'I remembered and prayed to God and blew on my body and said the Call to Prayer. Immediately the Balā left the road. I noticed its eye was in the middle of its forehead. I went along the road and it went up to the mulberry-tree at the roadside, and when I looked it disappeared. I spent the night at Nomal and early next morning came in to Gilgit.' Shukur Khān told the above story to his family."

There are other similar stories in which the apparition is called a Jinn, but it seems clear that the Jinn is of the Ç̣hèç̣h variety. They merely did not happen to be related as instances of ç̣hèç̣h phenomena.

It is possible that Ç̣hèç̣h is in fact a sort of abstract term denoting something like "apparition" or, possibly, "fear." The use of the verb "fall" with it suggests such a significance.

Arwāḥ

Ghosts, or Spirits of the Dead, whether they rightly belong to the category of the Superhuman or not, may be disposed of here. I have only two notes regarding them, both recorded in English. Ç̣hèç̣h, I was told, are often associated with graveyards and so also Arwāḥ (Spirits of the Dead), who are said to come out and hold meetings. At one of these re-unions they were dividing up some food. To one of those present they refused any share on the ground that his relatives on earth gave no offerings of food for the dead. The ghost so penalized repudiated responsibility. He said he had a son living and they should refer to him on the subject. One wonders whether after this the son had a Ç̣hèç̣h or ghost experience.

I was further told that the Spirits of the Dead come and

carry you far away and do you injury. They enter into the skins of dead persons and so make their appearance.

Possibly ghosts sometimes figure as Çḥèçḥ or Jinns or are confused with them. There are tales of how people have had dealings with jinns masquerading in the forms of known human beings, but these are rather cases of the impersonation of actual living people.

YAÇḤ

The name Yaçḥ corresponds to the Sanskrit *yakṣa-*. Yaçḥ are probably to be regarded as a class of Dē.ū who are in some way interested in agriculture. I was given the following statement: "At the time of the removing of the crops (from the fields) the people make *mūl* in a dish and prepare a flavouring of bitter kernels which they add to it. They do this in the name of the Yaçḥ. They then add ghee to the mūl and eat it. They say 'The Yaçḥ is eating the Yaçḥ's mūl.' If they didn't prepare the Yaçḥ's mūl they say the Yaçḥ(s) would carry off the grain and not make it prosper." The last word rendered "Yaçḥ(s)" is peculiar in form and somewhat resembles the word for "bear", but the rendering given is probably correct.[1]

A note is given that the Yaçḥ will become unconscious if it eats a bitter thing. Hence no doubt the bitter kernels.

The Yaçḥ, so far as this custom goes, might be regarded as little more than an abstraction, a fertility, or anti-fertility, spirit of some kind, but there is one story told of a very active and practical Yaçḥ. It was given me as follows: "There is a man of Gurikōt (a place near Astōr) called Rozāli. They say that a Yaçḥ has formed a friendship with the wife of Rozāli. The Yaçḥ brings grain and goods from one place and another and collects them in Rozāli's house. They say if Rozāli scolds his wife or beats her some live stock or other in his house dies. For this reason the man does not scold his wife. If anything in the house goes astray or gets lost

[1] Cp. Yaçḥōlo, p. 527, n.

he keeps quiet. The man has children, their appearance they say, is ill-favoured, like that of a Yaçḥ. The Yaçḥ lives in his house and he (Rozāli) is superior, they say, to all the Astōris in wealth. They say that the Yaçḥ is in Rozāli's house in the skin of a cat. They say that his wife's food every seven days is 24 eggs and 2 seers (4 lb.) of ghee. This matter is publicly known to all the people. A number of Astōri people have told us this story." The wife's diet seems rather limited in kind, but bread and vegetables are perhaps taken for granted.

YAÇḤŌLO

The Yaçḥōlo,[1] by his name, must be some sort of cousin of the Yaçḥ, but he is a shadowy personage whose only known interests are agricultural. Here is all the information I have about him: "At the time of the reaping of the wheat and barley, in the name of the Yaçḥōlo they put some mūl (gruel) in a dish and carry it to some place in a field where there is a big stone and where they say the Yaçḥōlo is. The reason is this: they say, 'if we propitiate the Yaçḥōlo our wheat and barley will be plentiful.' Nowadays they do not do this in Gilgit (proper), but in Shināki places, e.g. Bagrōt, at places on both sides of the River (Sherōt, Shakiōt, and Bārgo), and at Herāmosh, in these places they do it."

We may now pass on to the Human Supernatural, of whom the Rū.i and the Daīyāl are the chief. The term Rū.i is Ṣḥiṇa. The Burushaski equivalent is Bīlas, but the word has also, I think, wider application. In Khowār the idea is, I believe, covered by the word Gūr.

RU.I

The Rū.i is perhaps the most interesting of the whole Gilgit cast, and of her I happen to have particularly full

[1] I have lately come on an isolated note: "Yaçḥōl, a demon like a bear."

information. I might have devoted the whole of this article to her but decided that it was preferable to cover as wide a field as possible. All I can do in the available space is to mention briefly her chief characteristics and her methods.

Rū.is are witches with a limited repertory. They are ordinary women possessing some specialized tastes and gifted with some extraordinary powers. Their master-taste is an appetite for human flesh which they indulge at the expense of their less gifted neighbours.

Briefly stated, their procedure is as follows : a Rū.i disables and seizes a victim and bears him off, flying through the air to some tryst where the whole Rū.i community is assembled. There they slaughter the victim, after which they chop him up into bits and distribute portions to all present. The company then partake of the feast so furnished and return again to their homes as they came. Meanwhile the victim, whose visible and material body has to all appearance remained at home unaffected, presently falls ill and dies.

A few details may be given regarding the various episodes in this drama. It appears that normally a particular Rū.i is told off by the group to provide a victim for the next assembly. The duty falls on the various members in succession. At the same time one may consider it unlikely that a Rū.i would ever see a favourable opportunity and let it slip. The process of capture is facilitated by her ability to change into any animal form she pleases. Like the Ċhèċh she may do a series of lightning changes. So she may appear as a cat, donkey, magpie, etc., or simply as a woman or as one after another in succession. Rū.is hunt alone or sometimes in couples.

If the intended victim detects the Rū.i and divines her mission, and can keep his head and do her a physical injury, he escapes her clutches and she it is who suffers. She appears at home bearing the injury which she sustained, it may be when in animal form, and unless her victim can be brought to visit her sick-bed she dies. If through ignorance or

weakness he does come to her, she recovers and he in his turn dies.

When the Rū.i succeeds in her attack she flies off with the victim to the Rū.is' meeting-place. Rū.is fly mounted on boxes or on spinning-wheels. They are debarred from the use of the broomstick, for that is an implement of Western civilization unknown in Gilgit. The victim is carried slung in a sheet. As it is stated that at certain places Rū.is are sometimes *heard* flying through the air, one may conclude that they are not visible when they fly and that they conduct their revels in spiritual, immaterial forms and not in their everyday fleshly bodies. Similarly with the victim, for his bodily presence remains to all appearance safe in his home. What the Rū.i secures is only some spiritualized, but still edible, presentation of him.

A Rū.i in action has to look where she is going and to mind her steps, for if her foot touches water or a graveyard she can proceed no further.

When the victim has been safely conveyed to the place of assembly where all the Rū.is of the district are collected, it simply remains to chop him up and distribute him in fragments to the company. The chopping-up is effected with an adze. Hence, incidentally, the adze has acquired a taste for human flesh and is a dangerous house-mate for a woman at child-birth as it is apt to go and open the door to give admittance to Dē.ūs, Peris, and Rū.is (cp. 517).

No time is wasted on cooking or dressing the flesh, for the Rū.i likes her meat raw. Nor does dancing, so far as my information goes, enter into the order of the day. This is curious in view of the procedure at the Sabbats of the Western Witches and the popularity of dancing on festive occasions in Gilgit at the present day.

I have mentioned physical obstacles which may intervene between the Rū.i and the indulgence of her tastes, but she has other more active interference to reckon with.

There are two kinds of human ANTI-RŪ.I, whose business

and pleasure it is to come between the Rū.i and her prey. These are gifted with superhuman faculties of perception and with powers of locomotion not inferior to the Rū.i's.

The PASHŪ—the word belongs to the root *pash-*, "to see"—is a "seer", a man or woman who sees what ordinary people cannot see. The Pashū can see not only Rū.is in action but also Dē.ūs and Peris.

By one means or another the Pashū gets to know that someone has been carried off. We have it generally stated that people's guardian spirits—Rāçḷi—inform the Pashū when their protégés are threatened; but in one case a Pashū told me that the Rū.is themselves informed him, when he was asleep, that they were carrying off a victim and invited him to come along: a sporting action on their part, for the Pashū's function is to baulk them of their prey.

The moment the Pashū learns of an abduction he starts off in pursuit. He also flies through the air no less swiftly than the Rū.is, a feat which is all the more remarkable in that he flies in his proper person and not only in an immaterial semblance. When he is absent on a mission of rescue his place at home is empty.

Having come up with the Rū.is at their meeting-place the Pashū demands the surrender of the victim, but if the latter is already dead his labour has been in vain. If the victim is still alive he enters into negotiations with the Rū.is and as a rule succeeds in striking a bargain with them. For a ransom, in the shape it may be of a goat or an ox to be delivered within a certain period, they relinquish their prey.

All then return apparently to their various homes.

The Rū.is are not above making attempts to deceive the Pashū by concealing their victim in the skin of a goat, cow, or other animal.

A practising Pashū, who told me that he was peculiarly successful in rescue work, claimed that in two years he had had 200 successes against 100 failures. He had gone as far afield

as India. In his flights he was unconscious of mountains or other obstacles, but it is probable that like the Rū.is he must not touch water or a graveyard.

The other Anti-Rū.i is the MITŪ. I am unable to give any explanation of the name. Mitūs appear to be always men. The Mitū is a more ambiguous person than the Pashū. He is professedly an antagonist of the Rū.is, but he seems to slip very easily into the rôle of aider and abettor. Ostensibly his functions and practice are similar to the Pashū's, but he appears to have less authority and less firm moral purpose. When he fails, he yields to pressure or persuasion by the Rū.is and allows himself to be used as a sort of human anvil on which the victim is dismembered, or else he himself chops him up. He still, however, retains some of his original better feelings, for he refuses to accept a share of the victim's flesh.

Some doubt is cast on the Mitū's original good faith by a statement made to me by a Pashū : that the Mitū accompanies the Rū.is carrying an axe with him ; but perhaps this imputation is due to professional jealousy.

I must confess to some doubt as to the use of the Mitū as a chopping-block. It is a curious idea and I have no actual vernacular text to support it, only notes made in English of what I understood at the time was told me.

The Mitū is unconscious when travelling on his errand of mercy, but if his foot touches water he returns to consciousness, is unable to proceed further, and returns home.

Mitūs are found in Nagir and Bagrōt, but there are non in Gilgit proper.

It may perhaps be useful to offer a few more facts about Rū.is. Rū.is are numerous and ubiquitous in the Gilgit area. They are found in Puniāl, Hunza, Nagir, and other districts, as well as in Gilgit proper.

My Pashū friend told me that in Gilgit there were some 300 of them, but this I can only take to be a gross exaggeration. I fancy he was something of a misogynist, for he also

informed me, with all the seriousness that the statement deserved, that there is a trace of the Rū.i in all women.

All women in fact are potential Rū.is—a truly terrible thought.

Fortunately, in practice Rū.is are products of heredity rather than education. The potential Rū.i does not seem as a rule to pass spontaneously into the practising Rū.i, but if a woman is a Rū.i her daughter will also be a Rū.i.

As regards their external distinguishing features the infallible sign of a Rū.i is that her feet are turned backwards. This must only be when she is functioning as a Rū.i, and even then it is noteworthy that when she is in animal form the animal's feet are not reversed in this way. Rū.is' hair and clothes are said to be repulsive. Their hair stands up on end. Their mouth is red (query—with blood ?) when they have been maltreating anyone and at night they vomit. People then say, " Perhaps she has killed some one to-day."

It is a very remarkable thing that Rū.is and their doings do not seem to arouse any active resentment either in the public or in private individuals. There are many women who are notorious as being practising Rū.is, but they do not appear to be subjected to any form of persecution. I have heard of no case of Rū.i-baiting.

Tests and ordeals, such as ducking, may be unnecessary where the quality of at least the most important Rū.is is known to everyone and is beyond dispute, but then one would expect that they would be dealt with summarily and drastically by the irate relatives of their victims.

The above is a dry summary of the main facts about Rū.is. It would be possible to support it by many actual instances, but that would take too much space. I will, however, quote just a couple of stories which illustrate some of the main points.

The following is the story of a Nagir Rū.i which I recorded in English : " Two young men in Nagir one day wanted water. There was a shortage of water so they went to the head of an

irrigation channel where it entered a field. The men both saw two cats going along in front of them. The cats kept looking back at them and fire was issuing from their mouths. The elder of the young men threw stones at the cats, on which they both turned and seized him by the leg. Being strong-minded he preserved his senses and did not fall down but beat the two cats with a stick. The two cats then turned into a donkey. The youth, thinking that the donkey was perhaps someone's which had strayed or been left behind, mounted it.

"When they had gone on some distance he dismounted from the donkey and saw that it had turned into a magpie. He threw a stone at it and it turned into two women. With a stone he broke the head and upper jaw of one of the women, and both women vanished. In the morning the young man returned to his home and lapsed into unconsciousness.

"Meanwhile the woman who had been wounded went out on to the roof of her house, fell down from it and broke her head and her jaw, which accounted for the results of her previous misadventure. The people carried her into the house and she not unnaturally developed symptoms of indisposition. She told her people that a certain man had cast the evil eye on her and said that he must be sent for. The man accused was of course the youth who had broken her head when she was playing the Rū.i. They went off and called him, but he refused to come. The woman died. The other woman who had been with her, and the man, are still living."

The following is a statement made to me by the experienced Pashū already referred to: "Four days ago when I was asleep the Rū.is came and informed me by word of mouth: 'We have taken So-and-So, you come.' They then bore off their victim like stones carried by the wind. I said: 'I'll rescue him,' and started off after them. I caught them up at Bāldas, a big boulder in the direction of Herāli. I told them to let him go. The boy's mother was among the Rū.is. She let go the sheet in which he was tied, and I raised it up. The boy was dead. If a victim is freed when still alive all is well,

but if he dies then his real self at home dies in a day or two. On this occasion there were present many Rū.is from all quarters."

In taking leave of the Rū.is it is, I presume, superfluous to lay stress on their similarity to the witches of the West. Almost every point that has been mentioned above can be duplicated from European records of witches.

The Daĭyāl.

We now come to the Daĭyăl, the last of the characters whom I propose to treat of here. Daĭyāls are superhumanly endowed human beings, who at the present day chiefly exhibit their powers by furnishing answers to recondite questions. They supply on request information relating to what lies outside the scope of the ordinary senses of sight and hearing, and regarding what is going to come to pass in the future.

Their sources of knowledge are hidden, but there is nothing obscure about their procedure, for they exhibit their powers before all the world in broad daylight.

The public attend on the local polo ground, which corresponds to the village green. At one side sit the local band of drums and pipes and the Daĭyāl enters the circle formed by the spectators. There he primes himself by inhaling the smoke of burning juniper twigs which has some sort of intoxicating effect on him. After this he divides his time between stooping over and listening to the drums, dancing round the circle in various measures and posturing in the middle of it.

At certain points he may be asked questions by members of the general public, the answers to which he ostensibly obtains by listening to the drums or by watching the behaviour of some grains of corn thrown on the vibrating parchment of a drum. His answers are couched in language which is really I think unintelligible, but which someone eventually is always found to interpret.

An account of a Daĭyāl display has been given by Colonel A. Durand in his " Making of a Frontier ", so I need not elaborate the matter here. It will be enough if I contribute a few more general facts about Daĭyāls themselves.

In Burushaski the equivalent of Daĭyāl is Bītan (plural bitaiyo). Daĭyāls may belong to any class of the population and to either sex. In fact they are nowadays, I believe, confined to a few special families. The chief, perhaps the only seat of Daĭyāls at the present day, is the small side valley of Bagrōt.

I have seen exhibitions by two female Daĭyāls in Hunza, but to the best of my recollection they were said to belong to a family which originally hailed from Bagrōt. Similarly the performer at a specially arranged display at Gilgit Headquarters, in this case a man, had been brought from that place for the occasion.

There is a possibility, however, of fresh recruitment to the ranks of Daĭyāls. " A certain number of people," I was told, " become new Daĭyāls." On the other hand, one may withdraw temporarily or permanently from the faculty.

Daĭyāls possess, or at any rate have in the past possessed, more than the mere powers of second sight and prophecy. They are on more intimate terms with the supernatural world than ordinary folk. In talking of the Peris I have already quoted the statement that the Peris come to watch the Daĭyāls' performances and that they are the source of the Daĭyāls' knowledge ; and again that it is on their account that the Daĭyāl objects to the use of green clothing by the laity.

At an actual performance I was warned that they disliked anything red, and that they were liable to lose self-control and to attack anyone wearing or displaying it. We nervously took stock of our belongings, for the wild-eyed officiating Daĭyāl looked only semi-human and capable of anything whether in his mind or out of it. But why should red be objectionable, except as the complementary colour to green ?

In the past Daiyāls have had the power to "bind" superhuman beings, as is shown by the well-known story of the Daiyāl who bound the Gilgit Yaçhini. We also have the Daiyāl of Herāmosh and his Peri wife which I have already recounted (v. p. 521), and the great Hunza Bītan, Shon Gukur, bound the cannibal Bīlas, Dadi, and her seven daughters.

Whether or not present day Daiyāls can "bind", they can at any rate be "bound" at least with their own consent, when presumably they are inhibited from the use of their special talents. The procedure was described to me, not very lucidly, as follows: "When a Daiyāl thinks of having himself bound, they twist an iron bracelet and place the Daiyāl in the hands of a man. Then they breathe on the bracelet and bind the Daiyāl (with it?). If the bracelet gets lost then the man again becomes a Daiyāl."

Once a Daiyāl, by no means always a Daiyāl, for apart from having himself bound the Daiyāl may definitely abandon the career. My Pashū friend told me that his family on the father's side had originally been Daiyāls, but that his grandfather, under priestly influence had given up being a Daiyāl and had become a Pashū. My friend's father, however, had wished to continue as a Daiyāl, but the opposition of the family had been too strong for him, and though he quarrelled with them on the head of it, he too became a Pashū.

I very much fear that Daiyāls in these evil days, whether of religion or scepticism, are losing credit and esteem, and that this interesting college of soothsayers may presently die out and their valuable gifts be lost to the world.