

Book Reviews

Ghulam Husain Suhrawardi Nur Bakhshi. *Ta'rikh-i-Baltistan*. Mirpur (Azad Kashmir: Virinag Publisher, 1992) 197p. Price: Rs. 80.00 H.B.

The book is a modest account of religions in the Northern Area of Pakistan, with particular reference to the advent and propagation of Islam in Baltistan. The area included in this study is tucked away in the highly mountainous regions of the Karakorums and has received scant attention from writers and scholars due to its inaccessibility. The author has the advantage of being a local and although obviously handicapped by his lack of access to original material, which is understandable, yet within his limited resources, he has made a commendable effort in reaching out to whatever could be available. No book on the history of this area would be complete without relating in some detail the highly developed Buddhist civilization of this and the surrounding areas and how it disappeared in a comparatively short time, partly through the ravages wrought by natural processes but mainly through the advent of Islam. It is a fascinating story by itself but by the complete absence of this historical background in the book under review, the author forfeits his claim to call it a book of history. At the most, it is an account of the advent, propagation and evolution of Islam in the area.

The book starts with a sketchy and somewhat disjointed account of the social structure and civilization of the area and goes on to describe the advent of Islam and its development, a very brief mention of some other religions and ends up with a biographical account of the three Muslim luminaries responsible

for the preaching of Islam in Baltistan. The book is illustrated with about two dozen pictures, half of which have little relevance to the main theme of the book and about a dozen pages are devoted to advertising other books, both of which could be attributed to the enthusiasm of the publishers rather than that of the author.

The period is the later half of the fourteenth century. Resurgent Islam had already reached Iran, Mawarā'al-Nahr, Chinese Turkestan and large tracts of the Indian Subcontinent. Buddhism from Gandhara had already disappeared. In Chinese Turkestan the so far firmly entrenched and highly developed Buddhism was being eroded by the inevitable laws of nature. The great oasis cities on the fringes of the Takla Makan desert were under attack from glaciers, which were changing their course and denying their life-giving waters to the cities and the ravages of the sands of the desert were doing the rest to complete the destruction. Muslim zealots and religious divines from the converted areas of Iran and Central Asia were flocking to the infidel lands to deliver the message of the Messenger of God to the non-believers. It is from here that the book under review takes over.

Mir Sayyid Ali Hamadani, after receiving early religious education in his native land arrived in Kashmir in 1372 A.D. and after preaching for some time went back to Iran. He paid two more visits to Kashmir and on the last occasion, in 1383 A.D., went across to Baltistan for preaching. He travelled and preached extensively, along with 70 disciples, constructed many mosques and *Khanqahs* and is reverently and affectionately known in Kashmir as the Shah-i-Hamadan. He authored many books, some of which have been traced by the author of the book under review.

65 years later, another religious luminary, Sayyid Nur Bakhsh, arrived in Baltistan from Iran to preach Islam and laid the foundation of a new sect which was named after him, and to which the author of the book under review belongs. He has been mentioned as a disciple of Sayyid Ali Hamadani.

Half a century later, another religious divine, Mir Shams al-Din Iraqi came to Baltistan to preach Islam with great success. Initially, he spent eight years in Kashmir after which he returned to Iran but came back to Kashmir where he died at the ripe old age of 99 years.

The author is doubtful whether these Muslim divines were Shi'a or Sunni but he is certain that all three were *Sufis* and all three achieved great success in the preaching of Islam. He himself is a Nur Bakhshi but has not clearly stated what exactly are the beliefs of this sect except that this *Fiqh* takes a middle line between Sunni'ism and Shi'ism.

The book under review compares favourably with contemporary books like, for example, Banat Gul's *Baltistan in History*.

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Noor ul Haq. *The Making of Pakistan*. (Islamabad: NIHCR, 1993). 225 p. Price: Rs. 150/-.

Dr Noor ul Haq's study under review reflects deep understanding of psycho-social and politico-military perspectives of the Pakistan Movement. It brings into bold relief those areas which normally remain hidden from the researcher's eyes. It aptly brings out the role of the Muslim component of the Indian Armed Forces and asserts that judged by any standards, this component richly contributed towards enhancing the image of Muslim soldiers. The author explores, during the course of his analysis, the triangular tug of war between the leaders of the Muslim League, the Congress and the British. He then examines the impact of the changing military situation on the evolution of the political scene.