

Irmtraud Stellrecht (ed.), **Karakorum – Hindukush – Himalaya: Dynamics of Change**, part I & II, University of Tübingen, Germany; Rüdiger Köppe Verlag Köln, 1998; ISBN 3-89645-154-5; (1286 pp.).

The two-volume book “Karakorum – Hindukush – Himalaya: Dynamics of Change” is the fourth part in the series entitled *Culture Area Karakorum. Scientific Studies*, the aim of which is to present in English and German selected results of the Pakistan-German Research Project “Culture Area Karakorum” (CAK).

When in 1978 the Karakorum Highway (KKH), a new geo-political link connecting Pakistan and China was initiated, a vast, new area, until then inaccessible for any advanced research, stood wide open for scholars. The highway runs along the river Indus and continues later to the Gilgit and Hunza valleys, reaching the highest attitude of 4600 m. at the Khunjerab Pass. The multiple effects of the highway have started to transform the indigenous mountain societies, introducing to them a wide range of new goods and ideas. The CAK Project, carried on in Northern Pakistan since 1989, intends to study and to explain the relationship between peo-

ple, their culture, and their environment in a situation of such intensive change.

The present publication is a collection of papers and articles, presented during the international symposium "Karakorum – Hindukush – Himalaya: Dynamics of Change", held from 29 September to 2 October 1995 in Islamabad, Pakistan, which was organised to sum up the research being conducted in the high mountain regions of the Karakorum, Hindukush, and the Himalayas, in Pakistan and in adjoining countries. It had been preceded by four pre-symposium excursions to the mountain regions of northern Pakistan, to Chitral, to Hunza, to Baltistan and to the Nanga Parbat area, which created for the individual scholars better possibilities to confront their studies and analysis with field reality.

The 73 papers gathered in the voluminous proceedings resulting from the symposium, have been ordered thematically into ten blocks, according to the specific topics of the participating researchers. The blocks are as follows: A. *Processes of Landscape Formation*; B. *Vegetation and Climate*; C. *Environmental Risks and Utilisation of Resources*; D. *Hydropower and Energy Supply*; E. *Processes of Settlement*; F. *Highland-Lowland Routes and Relationships*; G. *Development Strategies and Conflict*; H. *Historical Dynamics*; I. *Dimensions of Culture*; J. *Language and Literary Tradition*. The contributors represented not only Germany and Pakistan but also other European (France, Norway, Russia, Switzerland, U.K.), and Asian (Bangladesh, China, India, Japan, Nepal) countries, the USA and Canada. A list of addresses of the contributors is given at the end of both the volumes.

The first chapter, dealing with the process of landscape formation in the discussed area, comprises four papers devoted to various dilemmas connected with the Glacial and Post-Glacial Era: the role of glaciers and mass movements in the Holocene development of the upper Indus streams, the Ice Age glaciation of the East Pamir Plateau, the reconstruction of older Post-Glacial stages in the Northwest Karakorum and the typology of Post-Glacial debris accumulations in the Karakorum and Himalaya Mountains.

Eleven contributions to the second chapter cover the vast range of questions related to vegetation and climate, e.g. the interdependence of vegetation patterns and climatic humidity in the Western Karakorum, a comparative study of the altitudinal belts in the Karakorum, the biodiversity of the Deosai Plateau, a floristic analysis of the alpine region of the

Tibet Plateau and a description of the medicinal plants in the Kunlun and Chinese part of the Karakorum, the longitudinal distribution patterns of freshwater hyphomycetes in the Northern Areas etc.

Environmental risks and the utilisation of resources are the subjects of the third chapter. Nine papers collected here present, and discuss, a variety of natural and human hazards occurring in the analysed areas, such as earthquakes, avalanches, floods, storms and winds, forest degradation, environmental changes and damage to ecosystems brought about by these changes, slash-and-burn agriculture.

The next, fourth chapter contains three papers dealing with the issue of hydropower and energy supply in Northern Pakistan and the Northwest Himalayas.

The fifth chapter, devoted to processes of settlement is at the same time the last of *Part I*. In the six articles gathered here one can read about the history and dynamics of urban development in various regions of Northern Pakistan, the impact of tourism and development projects on traditional house building, the abandoned and inhabited sites in the Shöyul area or the traditional architecture of the Kalashas (Chitral).

Part II starts with chapter six, comprising five papers, in which communication and interaction between the highlands and the lowlands are analysed from the economic, historical and political point of view. Here one can also read about the ancient routes running across the Pakistani Northern Areas as well as about those preceding the Karakorum Highway – routes that for centuries connected the isolated mountain regions with the neighbouring areas of Central Asia and played an important role in the process of their cultural and economic development.

The ten articles which make up the seventh chapter deal with the question of widely understood development, advantages and profits resulting from it on the one hand, harms and damages inevitably accompanying it on the other. ‘Conflict of interests’ is the main subject discussed in this chapter – the conflict between traditional society and the modern state, between wildlife ecology and current agriculture, between human needs and environmental protection. Some demographic issues have also been touched upon here.

The eighth chapter has been devoted to the history of the area. In the seven papers included here we can trace the past of the individual regions (the Northern Areas of Pakistan, Karakorum and the Eastern Hindukush, Ladakh, Baltistan and Kashmir) – from prehistory, as shown by the ar-

chaeological findings, through the Hellenistic age, the epoch of the spread of Islam, pre-colonial and colonial times, up to the modern period.

The twelve contributions incorporated in the ninth chapter focus on different aspects of culture. In comparison with the rest of the book, they probably discuss the vastest spectrum of subjects. Here one can find e.g. an ethnographical investigation of ethnic groups in Gilgit, diversity of lineages or the phenomenon of blood enmity in the Pakistani Northern Areas; sociological research on village communities in the process of their transformation and analysis of the situation of old people affected by the cultural changes brought about into this region by civilizational development; gender studies describing the role of women in the traditional communities as well as the possibilities and limitations imposed on them by traditional rules; information on the traditional healing system and treatment in Baltistan, etc.

The tenth chapter, which is also the last in the volume, comprises six articles dealing with linguistic and literary questions. Their authors discuss in turn such issues as placing the Balti Tibetan language in a historical linguistic context (which is only a part of a bigger and most interesting project on the historical comparative grammar of Tibetan, carried out at Berne University); defining language as a phenomenon of social change (on the example of Khowar); analysing the problem of the Pashto-speaking community living in the multilingual environs; presenting the legacy of Bābā Siār, the famous Sufi poet and historiographer from Chitral; trying to find the historical reality underlying the well-known Gilgit folk tale about Sri Badad and, finally, examining the texts of Burushaski songs of social criticism.

Even at first glance one can see that whence *Part I* has a rather scientific character, *Part II* is devoted to the humanities. For me, as a philologist, the most attractive are of course the “humanistic” chapters; I do not feel competent to evaluate the contents enhanced in the five chapters of *Part I*, together with the economical and political chapters of *Part II* – neither can I fully appreciate them. But there are many articles in this book, which – although not devoted to philological or historical issues – I have read with great interest and pleasure. Needless to say, the reviewed book is a precious source of information as well as inspiration for all those who are interested in the still little known region of Karakorum, the Hindukush and Himalayas.

Of course, the contributions included in these two volumes do not cover all the subjects neither do they answer all the questions. But they are

undeniably an important and stimulating beginning for extensive, interdisciplinary studies on this part of our world, which is so inaccessible. Let us hope that these studies will be continued successfully also by other scholars. For – as I. Stellrecht rightly states in the *Preface* – such an interdisciplinary approach involving the cultural and environmental sciences offers an opportunity to arrive at a deeper understanding of the relationship between the high mountain environment, man and culture as well as the changes occurring in the past and present.

[reviewed by Agnieszka Kuczkiewicz-Fraś]