

VIII. The Genealogies of the Balti Chiefs

Cunningham visited Ladakh and the neighbouring countries in 1846 and 1847, a short time after Ladakh and Baltistan had lost their independence. On his journey he collected the various pedigrees of the dethroned Balti chiefs. He does not tell us from what source they were drawn, but it is very probable that these lists of names were read to him from the historical books of the Baltis, which are written in the native alphabet of Baltistan. Possibly the historical books did not contain anything but lists of names. In my article 'Ten ancient historical songs from Western Tibet' (*Ind. Ant.*, 1909, pp. 57 sqq.), I remarked that all the lines of Balti chiefs were in all probability descended from one common ancestor. I stated that the present pedigrees of the Balti chiefs all date from Muhammadan times, and contain only partly reliable matter. With a view to a trustworthy point of chronology a note in the *La-dvags-rgyal-rabs* may prove useful. It is there stated that 'Alī-Mīr-Sher-Khān, who was apparently master of all Baltistan, invaded Ladakh. This 'Alī-Mīr-Sher-Khān is generally called only by one or two of his names, and can be traced in all the Balti pedigrees, which were collected by Cunningham. On p. 30, where the dukes (*dmag-dpon*) of Kha-pu-lu are given, we find as No. 58 a Sultan-Mir-Khan. On p. 31, among the dukes of Kye-ris, as No. 3, there occurs a Raja Ali-Mir-Sher. On p. 32, among the dukes of Parkuda, we find an Ali-Sher-Khan as No. 4. On p. 33, among the dukes of Shigar (Śi-dkar), as No. 15, an Ali-Mir is found. On p. 35, among the dukes of Sbal-ti-Skar-rdo, as No. 1, the name Ali-Sher may be read. On p. 37, among the dukes of Roñ-mdo, the name Ali-Sher occurs as No. 1. Thus we see that the same duke is found in the genealogies eight, nine, or ten generations before the year 1830 A.D. Only in the case of Shigar (Śi-dkar) are there thirteen names before 1830. Here a younger brother may have occasionally followed an elder brother. My belief is that all the present lines of Balti chiefs are descended from 'Alī-Mīr-Sher-Khān, who was master of the country from c. 1570-1600 A.D., and that there is no certainty about the names preceding him. Now I see that Cunningham was told practically the same thing by the natives themselves. He says on p. 28, 'The chiefs of Khapolor (Kha-pu-lu) and Keris, who both trace their families up from Bewán-cho, declare that all the chiefs of these countries are descended from Bikam, the tenth generation from Bewán-cho.' Now it does not make much difference whether we take Bikam or 'Alī-Mīr-Sher-Khān as the founder of the lines of Balti chiefs; for Bikam is 'Alī-Mīr-Sher-Khān's great-grandfather, according to the Kha-pu-lu pedigree.

The following is Cunningham's list (*Ladak*, p. 29) of Gyalpos (kings) of Khapolor (Kha-pu-lu):—