

ISMEO SERIE ORIENTALE ROMA VOL. 25  
ACT-FIELD SCHOOL PROJECT REPORTS AND MEMOIRS  
ARCHIVAL STUDIES, 2

# TOPONYMY OF THE SWĀT VALLEY

## LINGUISTIC ARCHAEOLOGY

MATTEO DE CHIARA

PRESENTATION BY

ADRIANO V. ROSSI

WITH A NOTE BY

LUCA M. OLIVIERI

ISMEO – ASSOCIAZIONE INTERNAZIONALE DI STUDI SUL MEDITERRANEO E L'ORIENTE  
ITALIAN ARCHAEOLOGICAL MISSION IN PAKISTAN

## CREDITS

The publication of the research was funded by a contribution from  
ISMEO – ASSOCIAZIONE INTERNAZIONALE DI STUDI SUL MEDITERRANEO E L'ORIENTE



PROGETTO MIUR “STUDI E RICERCHE SULLE CULTURE DELL'ASIA E DELL'AFRICA:  
TRADIZIONE E CONTINUITÀ, RIVITALIZZAZIONE E DIVULGAZIONE”

INALCO – INSTITUT NATIONAL DE LANGUES ET CIVILISATIONS ORIENTALES



CERMI UMR 8041 – CENTRE DE RECHERCHE SUR LE MONDE IRANIEN – CNRS

2020  
Published by:  
**Afzaal Ahmad**  
Sang-e-Meel Publications

954.9122 De Chiara, Matteo  
Toponymy of the Swat Valley /  
Matteo De Chiara. – Lahore: Sang-e-Meel  
Publications, 2020.  
354 pp.  
1. Geography - History.  
I. Title

ISBN-10: 969-35-3298-8  
ISBN-13: 978-969-35-3298-2



## Sang-e-Meel Publications

25 Shahrah-e-Pakistan (Lower Mall), Lahore 54000, Pakistan  
Ph. +92-423-722-0100 / +92-423-7228143  
<http://www.sangemeel.com> email: [smp@sangemeel.com](mailto:smp@sangemeel.com)

Cover: The lower Swāt valley (Photo by L.M. OLIVIERI)

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LINGUISTIC ARCHAEOLOGY  
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N.B.: Superscript numerals indicate the year of the edition: the first editions was printed by Sang-e-Meel Publications (Lahore). The second digital edition is published by BraDyPus.Books (Bologna)\* and by Sang-e-Meel Publications (Lahore)<sup>◊</sup>. ◊ = Online publication (ebook) by Sang-e-Meel Publications (Lahore).

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## PRESENTATION

By Adriano V. ROSSI, President, ISMEO

Giuseppe TUCCI, in his book *La via dello Swat* (Roma 1978<sup>2</sup>, pp. 24-31), describes his first feelings when he arrived for the first time to Saidu Sharif. Over 60 years later, the researchers working on the steps of Giuseppe Tucci have still the same feelings. This year the Mission of the ISMEO (now ISMEO-Ca' Foscari) in Pakistan – sponsored, like the other ISMEO Missions in Asia and Africa, by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation – completes its 65th year of continuous archaeological activity. The Mission's fieldwork and archaeological campaigns in Swāt (from Butkara I and II, Udegram, Loebanr, Katelai to Saidu Sharif, Barikot etc.), are reflected in countless contributions on the art and archaeology of Gandhāra, the prehistory, palaeobotany, etc., published in the volumes of "Reports and Memoirs", and, more recently, also in this Series with the historic Pakistani publishing house Sang-e Meel.

Over the past decade, the Mission, thanks to the tireless enthusiasm of its director Luca Maria OLIVIERI, has completed the study of the areas around Bir-kot-ghwandai, where hundreds of new archaeological sites have been identified, almost all Buddhist, including dozens of new painted shelters, which confirm the importance of the area for the knowledge of rock art of Swāt. Thanks to the studies on Buddhist rock art, an ample corpus of sculptures has been surveyed and interpreted, which not only return a previously unknown image of late-ancient Buddhism in the region, but have paved the way for similar research in adjacent areas, from Baltistan to Ladakh, today conducted by international research groups. An important project of the Mission, connected to these materials, was conducted together with the University of Padua, and regarded the restoration of the Buddhist rock sculptures of Jahanabad damaged by the Taliban during the uprising of 2007-2009.

The ISMEO (now ISMEO-Ca' Foscari) Mission is internationally known for the role it played in the study of Gandharan art and archeology, of the settlement and of the funerary archeology from proto-history to the Islamic era. A recent development of its activities is the study of genomics and bio-archeology in collaboration with the Harvard Medical School and the Max Planck Institute. Swāt, with its data on the human genome, is among the areas of the ancient world best studied from the point of view of DNA. An exceptional article on this topic was published in *Science* in September 2019.

I would like also to point out here that the main excavation site of the Mission, the archaeological site of Barikot, has recently seen a strong financial intervention from the Government of the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, to which we must all be grateful. The Government has acquired for the community the land where the ancient city stood, as a heritage for future generations. As Matteo DE CHIARA emphasizes, the present book deals with an aspect of Swāt until now quite neglected: toponymy. Indeed, notwithstanding the abundance of publications on the archaeology of the Swāt Valley (see the references cited in this book, and OLIVIERI 2006a for the previous bibliography), much work still remains to be done in this specific field, and many others related to the main archaeological research.

The main goal of this work is to offer new materials on the linguistic and ethnic situation of Swāt from a diachronic point of view. Therefore, the book does not provide a full synchronic description of all toponyms: it tries to provide instead a general presentation of every item,

its geographical position, previous mentions, a summary description, and an abridged etymological analysis of the items, to the extent that it can be proposed within the framework of today's knowledge.

Swāt toponyms have always attracted the attention of travelers and scholars, and have been treated in many sources since the 17th century, starting from the descriptions contained in KHUSHAL KHAN KHATṬAK's *Swāt nāma*. Several archaeological surveys were used in this book, especially for the maps attached in the appendix (STEIN 1929 and 1930, TUCCI 1958, OLIVIERI ET AL. 2006, FILIGENZI 2015 and OLIVIERI 2015a). All the above-mentioned archaeological and historical works show a strong interest in the etymology (sometimes folk etymology) of toponyms, thus confirming the importance of this approach. The Author even consulted HAKIMZAY's *Daya zmunğ kəlay day* (1997), a small neglected volume on Swāt toponymy, which nevertheless contains many useful and interesting remarks.

All toponyms have been originally collected from the maps of the Pakistani Government (printed in the period from 1950 to 1984), later verified on the 1977 maps as produced by the Soviet Geographical Services and on those produced by the US army, which were consulted and used to integrate the cartographic base, and lastly, with data retrieved from Google maps and Google Earth. Confirmation, correction and additional data have been checked with Pashto speakers and residents of the Valley, by virtue of the long association of the Author with the Pashto speaking inhabitants of the region (I would like to remind here that the first variety of Pashto learned and spoken by the Author has been the Pashto variety of Swāt).

It is another reason for my great satisfaction that this work was conducted in collaboration with CNRS and INALCO, a great institution with which, since more than thirty years, L'Orientale University of Naples and ISMEO/ISMEO collaborate closely, especially for Indo-Iranian and Central Asian languages, literatures and cultures.

In conclusion, I hope I have managed to give at least an idea, on behalf of ISMEO – an international association that today unites over 300 scholars from all over the world in the same project of a scientific network conceived almost a century ago by Giuseppe Tucci, which reveals itself more and more valid every day – of what the presence of Italian research, in a context of great political sensitivity but also of great cultural significance, begun to enhance in a pioneering way over 60 years ago, and which today, with the efforts of researchers and institutions of numerous countries – among whom certainly not secondary those of the *new Pakistan* – has perhaps finally managed to bring back the attention of world culture.