

Matteo De Chiara *Toponymy of the Swāt Valley*

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Review of De Chiara, M. (2020). *Toponymy of the Swāt Valley: Linguistic Archaeology*. Lahore: Sang-e Meel, viii + 289 pp. + 54 maps. ISMEO Serie Orientale Roma 25; ACT-Field School Project Reports and Memoirs, Archival Studies 2.

Matteo De Chiara's monograph *Toponymy of the Swāt Valley: Linguistic Archaeology* offers a comprehensive collection of the linguistic and ethnic materials of the pashtophone region of the Swāt Valley. The goal of the volume is to shed some light on "an aspect of Swāt until now quite neglected: toponymy" (1). The Valley of Swāt River – located in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Northern Pakistan – is the renowned research field of the Italian Archaeological Mission, which is continuously working in the region since its foundation in 1955 by Giuseppe Tucci. The sensational archaeological discoveries made during the nearly seven decades of activity of the Mission spearheaded the studies on Swāt, especially in the historical-archeological fields of research. The aim of Matteo De Chiara's volume is to contribute to existing scholarship by addressing the issue of toponymy and opening the path to linguistic researches focusing on this uniquely interesting region. Indeed, as the Author himself reports in opening of the "Foreword", the Valley of Swāt "represents a paradise for scholars dealing with archaeology, history anthropology, linguistics... The chronological stratification of civilization, languages and cultures offers the possibility of developing endless research projects" (1). On this last point, the diachronic approach of De Chiara's research is intended to trace all the levels of linguistic "stratification" of the pla-



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cenames collected, adopting a *modus operandi* conceptually not far from the archeological stratigraphy method, which unveils one by one the *strata* or layered materials that were deposited over time. It is perhaps in the view of a similarity between the linguistic and the archaeological approaches that the subtitle *Linguistic Archaeology* appears in De Chiara's volume *Toponymy of the Swāt Valley*.

The volume was published by the historic Lahore-based publishing house Sang-e-Meel and was included in the *ACT-Series*, which since 2013 has published twelve volumes on archeology, history, linguistics, and ethnography of Gandhāra and the Swāt Valley.

The contents of the volume are preceded by a "Presentation" (vii-viii) by Adriano Valerio Rossi, president of ISMEO, who describes the genesis of De Chiara's work, its importance in the field of toponymy and linguistics, and summarises the achievement of 65 years of researches carried out by the Italian Archaeological Mission in the Swāt Valley. As director of the Mission, Luca Maria Olivieri contributes to the volume with a "Short Note on the Fortune of Toponymy Studies in Swāt and Gandhāra" (245-6) furnishing a concise but exhaustive overview on the history of toponymy studies in Swāt and the attempts made since the 19th century to locate the ancient toponyms (e.g. Bazira, Massaka, Aornos, Uḍḍiyāna) mentioned by the Alexandrographers and classical Latin, Greek, Chinese and Tibetan sources.

The volume opens with a "Foreword" (1-4) by the Author summarising in brief the contents of the work and the methodology adopted. The "Introduction" (5-50) is very exhaustive and provides some key notions about the Valley, accompanied by a rich colour printed cartographic apparatus (39-50). Here the Author discusses the "Location" (5-7) of the Valley, its "Geomorphology and Climatology" (8-11), the "Tehsil" - i.e. a local unit of an administrative division - (11-18) of Swāt, the "History" (18-21) of the region, its "Economy" (21-4) and "Ethnography" (25-6), the "Languages" (27) spoken throughout the Valley, some "Remarks on the Yusufzai Dialect of Swāt" (28-30), and the "Linguistic Features of Swāt Toponyms" (31-2). The "Conclusions" (32-8) of the "Introduction" offer interesting data regarding the Geonyms - i.e. the generic name of a place - which are in some cases of non-Pashto origins, and an overall list of these terms organised by semantic areas: "Mountains" (33-5), "Hydrology" (35-7), "Oronyms" (37), "Pasture, Passes and Village" (37-8).

A more specific "Glossary of Geonyms" (53-6) and a "Glossary of old Geonyms Incorporated in the Toponyms" (57), are available to the reader in the first part of the main section of the book, "Toponymical Atlas of The Swāt Valley" (51-236).

The main section of the entire volume is the "Gazetteer" (59-236). It contains a list - arranged in alphabetical order - of 1,375 place-names of the Swāt Valley, including names of cities, villages and towns, names of fields, pastures *et alia*. The Author firstly retrieved

these placenames from the maps of the Pakistani Government from 1950 and 1984 and later verified them in the 1977 maps of the Soviet Union and in those of the USA army. Lastly, all data were compared with information derived from Google Maps and Google Earth and complemented *in loco* consulting the Pashto-speaking residents of the Valley. In addition, the Author consulted some Pashto sources - e.g. Khushal Khan Khattak's *Swāt nāma* and Inayat-Ur-Rahman's *Folk Tales of Swāt* - and all English gazetteers from the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. All these data were finally compared and supplemented with the information collected during the more recent archaeological surveys conducted throughout the entire Valley. Having acquired all the placenames, the Author organised the data in alphabetical order adding for each toponym a descriptive geographical note, the references to the "Maps" (54 maps, p. 289 onward), and the phonetical transcription. The toponyms are also followed by some linguistic considerations, i.e. hypothesis of connections of these toponyms to Pashto, Persian, Turkic, Arabic, Dardic and Kafiri, Indo-Aryan languages and others. When available, the Author also relates the reference of a given toponym's mention in literary sources or in linguistic scholarship. A case in point is the entry "Barikot" (79-81, no. 147), a populous village located on the left bank of Swāt River and one of the major archeological site excavated by the Italian Mission. Under "Barikot", the Author reports the main studies concerning the hypothetical origin of the toponym and its identification with the ancient Bazira-*vajra* (and then Beira/Baira-*va(y)ira*) mentioned in classical sources and by the Alexandrographers.

The "Gazetteer" is followed by an "Appendix" (239-52) on "Microtoponymy of the Kandak and Nearby Valleys", the "Bibliography" (253-60), and the two "Indexes" (263-88). One of the indexes organises the toponyms according to their typology and the other according to their Thesil of belonging.

At the end of the book the reader finds a detailed and comprehensive Cartographic Apparatus - "Maps" (p. 289 onward) - featuring 54 monochrome maps drawn by the Author himself.

The volume *Toponymy of the Swāt Valley* represents an essential atlas for any scholar interested not only in linguistics, but also in geography, ethnography, anthropology, and history of a frontier region at the border between modern Afghanistan and Pakistan, and it is surely set to be a milestone in the studies of toponymy overall.

