

## Book Review

V.C. Srivastava: *Historical Probings in Afghanistan*. Varanasi: Department of Ancient Indian History, Culture and Archaeology, Banaras Hindu University, 1997, Rs. 100.

The historical process in the state of Afghanistan has gone through many phases of great significance. It has been a meeting place of cultures in the past and has rightly been identified as cross-roads of civilizations. As a platform of interactions arising out of movements of peoples and ideas from various quarters, few countries can compete with it. The geo-cultural proximity of Afghanistan with the Indo-Pakistan sub-continent has led to such close relations between the two areas that understanding of the historical process of one is incomplete without that of the other. But unfortunately Indian scholarship has not paid much attention to the study of the history of Afghanistan. It is encouraging, therefore, to find in the book under review an attempt to do so by a senior Indian scholar who spent some time in Afghanistan and acquired first-hand knowledge of the sources.

This book of a little more than a hundred pages covers some of the most important topics to highlight the interactive role the pre-modern Afghanistan played. This is clear from the eight chapters of the book:

(i) Indian Culture in Afghanistan: A Perspective; (ii) Hellenism in Afghanistan: Problems and Perspectives; (iii) Buddhism and its Interaction with other Cultures in Afghanistan: Problems and Perspectives; (iv) Kushan Archaeology vis-à-vis Kushan Civilization in Afghanistan: Problems and Perspectives; (v) The Great Kushans and Urbanization in Afghanistan; (vi) Buddhist Archaeology in Afghanistan; (vii) Maitreya on the Silk Route; and (viii) Hakim Sanai and Historical Milieu: Two Dimensional Study.

The contents of these chapters are in keeping with the author's plea for 'problem-oriented research'. It is also noteworthy that the author has given importance to 'perspectives' in four out of eight chapters of historical probings. These 'probings' lead the author in presenting a lucidly written introductory and analytical survey of some of the key issues which engage the students of the history of Afghanistan until eleventh-twelfth century. This takes into account recent discoveries and examines the new input to our knowledge. In discussing

the problems and perspectives the author has indeed provided incentive for further research.

The reviewer need not point out the typographical mistakes which are unfortunately not uncommon in our publications for which proof-readers alone may not be blamed. But he would like to draw attention of the author and readers to some recent publications including those of the reviewer (see for example "On some Greek Inscriptions from Afghanistan", in *Annali*, Vol. 47 (1987): 267-92. Also in *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XLII: 125-45, "The Earliest Brahmi Inscription outside India", in *JAOS*, 106.4 (1986): 798-801; "Notes on some Inscriptions from Al-Khanun (Afghanistan) in *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*" Band 69, (1987): 277-82; "On the Foundation and chronology of Ai Khanum: a Greek-Bactrian city", in *India and the Ancient World*, ed. G. Pollet, Leuven 1987: 115-30; "The Greeks of Bactria and India", ch. 11, in *Cambridge Ancient History*, vol. VIII (1989): 388-421 and several others) which appear to have escaped the notice of the author but which are seriously critical of the conclusions arrived at by P. Bernard and others on Ai-Khanoum findings upon which the author has relied for his conclusions. So also the reviewer finds it difficult to agree with certain aspects of author's 'perspectives'. But these are only indicatives of the importance of the subject and author's contribution and the reviewer strongly recommends the present book to scholars and general readers alike for this is a well-argued and well-written work.

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