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HISTORY OF A BRAHUI**

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**DENYS BRAY**

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VOL. IV.

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THE LIFE-HISTORY  
OF A BRĀHŪĪ

BY  
DENYS BRAY, I.C.S.

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## PREFACE

I SHALL tell the tale as it was told to me, jealously preserving its refreshing *naïveté*, its intimacy, and boldness of detail. Mirza Shēr Muhammad, who told it me, is himself a Brāhūi—a member of the Zahri tribe, and hence a Jhalawān. He began life, like several of his forefathers before him, in the service of the Khān of Kalāt, the head of the Brāhūi Confederacy; he is now in our Government service. He has travelled the length and breadth of the Brāhūi country, cunningly stocking his mind, wherever he went, with the curious lore of his people. His knowledge of all that concerns the Brāhūis\* and their country is remarkably rich; more remarkable to me are his power of giving expression to it, and the detached attitude he is able to adopt towards his own customs. He is, by-the-by, one of the very few Brāhūis who are literate.

The story, of course, was not told to me in the flowing form in which it now appears. It was told piecemeal and at odd moments, sometimes spontaneously, sometimes in answer to my questions. Though it has taken many months in the telling, it is not complete. How, indeed, could it be? The Brāhūis are scattered over a wide stretch of country. Little as we know of their

\* I have given some account of this Dravidian-speaking people of Balūchistān, and the curious problem connected with their language in "The Brāhūi Language, Part I. Introduction and Grammar," and in the Balūchistān Census Report, 1911.

early history, we know that they are not of one race, but a medley of peoples, inheriting divers traditions and customs from the various stocks from which they originally sprung. Moreover, in the East, much more than in the West, it is the woman who is the true guardian of ancient custom, and a Brāhūi himself cannot lift the veil save from the few women who live within the narrow circle of his family life. As my friend quaintly puts it, it would cost even a Brāhūi of tact considerable time and no little money to mix himself among the women of the country and win their secrets, by pretending to be a holy man versed in charms, a wise man cunning in herbs, or a grave and a pious man.

Yet if the story is incomplete, it is lengthy enough, but surely not wearisome to those who care for such things. To those who have practical dealings with the Brāhūis, it can hardly fail to be a document of singular interest, and it is with a godfatherly pride that I usher it into a wider world. There is one point on which I may be allowed to forestall and, if possible, to disarm criticism. The spirit of the story seemed to evaporate as soon as I attempted to couch it in the matter-of-fact English of to-day, and it became almost impossible to prevent my own comments from unconsciously creeping in. With the somewhat fanciful style I have adopted, these difficulties disappear. Whatever its disadvantages, it is at any rate akin to the homespun language of the original, and lends itself throughout to an almost literal translation into Brāhūi. Nor does it seem out of keeping with the subject. It helps, I think, to give a glimpse into the workings of the Brāhūi mind, not merely a peep behind the scenes of Brāhūi home-life. And, finally, it has enabled me to keep out of the story altogether, and to confine myself to the tasks of listening, questioning,

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arranging, repeating. At this stage I have attempted neither to analyze nor to explain, preferring to leave the story in its simplicity, undefaced by the jargon of science. But questions, suggestions, and criticisms will be alike welcome from any whose interest this essay in Brāhūi autobiography may awaken.

QUETTA,

*May 1, 1913.*





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