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in Collaboration with
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A Grammar
of the Shina Language
of Indus Kohistan

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Preface

This grammar is corpus-based, that is to say the grammatical structures presented here have emerged from analysis of the following texts: (1) six short texts included in the *Shina Environmental Primer* (Kohistani and Schmidt 1996), (2) a collection of twenty-four proverbs made by Razwal Kohistani (see also Kohistani and Schmidt 1999), and (3) one long folktale, the *nesmânce qasâ* (“Poor man’s tale”), told by Ropi Jan on 14th June 2000, in Rawalpindi, Pakistan. This tale is discussed in Schmidt 2006.

To supplement this data, the authors have collected nominal, pronominal and verbal paradigms, and elicited examples to fill in lacunae in the corpus data. This elicited data has been carefully double-checked.

The authors have chosen as the basic form of the language Razwal Kohistani’s speech, which belongs to the Palas Valley. The speech of Manzar Zarin, who has lived in lowland Pakistan most of his life, has many forms that vary from Razwal’s even though both of them have Palas Valley Shina as their mother tongue. The readers of this grammar will find many competing (variant) forms. This reflects the reality that an unstandardized language varies from village to village and generation to generation. By choosing Razwal’s speech as the basic dialect, the authors have—although this was not their intention—taken a step toward standardization of Kohistani Shina. Speakers of different dialects may object to our analysis. This is the fate of all grammarians who work with unwritten languages.

To the extent permitted by time and resources, we have also made preliminary efforts to trace the historical roots of Kohistani Shina and its development, drawing on work by other scholars. Shina may be spoken largely by illiterates, but it is a treasure-house of information about Indo-Aryan languages, something its speakers should surely be proud of.

The authors wish to thank the following for supporting our work over the years: the Himalayan Jungle Project, Islamabad; the British High Commission, Islamabad; the University of Oslo, The Benneches Legat, Oslo; the Nansen Fund, Oslo, and the European Association of Lexicography. Among our friends and colleagues, Carla Radloff, Claus Peter Zoller and Lars Martin Fosse deserve special thanks for their advice and practical help.
1. The Geographic and Historical Setting

1.1 Location and dialect groups of Shina

Indus Kohistan lies on the south-western margin of the Shina-speaking zone, which includes Gilgit, Hunza, the Astor Valley, the Tangir-Darel Valleys, Chilas, Indus Kohistan, and also the upper Neelam Valley and Dras, and parts of Ladakh. Morgenstierne classifies Shina as a member of the Dardic branch of Indo-Aryan languages, and historians have long attempted to identify the speakers of Shina with an ancient ethnic group known as the Dārada. Classical Greek, Sanskrit, Tibetan, Chinese and epigraphic sources place the country of the Dards, or Dāradadeśa, in the Neelam/Kishanganga valley.

The rock carvings and inscriptions discovered by Jettmar in the Indus valley show that Chilas was between the 5th to the 8th centuries A.D. probably a frontier district of a Dārada kingdom with its seat in the Neelam/Kishanganga. A Brahmi inscription mentioning a “śrī palola sāhī surendrādityanandi”, read by Hinüber, links Chilas to the Pa/tunderdotola or Palola dynasty of Gilgit, ca. 5th to the 8th centuries, known also as Bolor. Jettmar argues that sometime prior to the 10th century, the Dārada kingdom probably merged with this Patola dynasty, becoming powerful enough to exert pressure on Kashmir. In the 11th century, Alberuni found “Shiltas” (Shilathasa) part of a “Bhatta-Shâh” kingdom whose people plagued Kashmir with their inroads. The title bhaṭṭa-, bhaṭṭāraka- appears in several of the Brahmi inscriptions read by Hinüber, and means ‘lord’, ‘master’. This suggests the reading Bhaṭṭa Śāh for the kingdom mentioned by Alberuni. The interpretation of sāha as ‘king’ is based on the reading of sāhī as ‘ruler’, with the Persian palatal sibilant treated as a retroflex sibilant in Dardic.

1 Morgenstierne 1961.
3 Jettmar 1989, 1: xix. These petroglyphs date from prehistoric times until the 10th or 11th century.
4 Hinüber 1989: 64-5.
6 Sachau 1910, p. 207. See also Richard Strand’s (2001b) website on the Bhataesa zip, where he relates the ethnonym Bhat- of the people of Bhajera (located in Indus Kohistan, across the Indus from Besham and well south of Palas) to CDIAL 9402, MIA bhaṭṭa-, ‘lord, noble’ < bhāṭṭrty or CDIAL 9366 ‘mixed caste of bards’. The Bhaṭṭas seem to have been powerful in Indus Kohistan in former times.
The Geographic and Historical Setting

Fussman cites linguistic evidence linking the Shina language with the Gandhari Prakrit of the lower Kabul and Swat River valleys, which is attested in the Ashokan (3rd century B.C.) and later inscriptions, and postulates that when this area was conquered by Pashtun tribes, between the 11th and early 16th centuries, groups of Shina-speakers may have migrated or been pushed north into the valleys tributary to the Indus.8

Bailey divides modern Shina into three main dialect groups: Gilgiti, Kohistani (including Kohistani and Chilasi) and Astori (including Guresi and Drasi).9 Strand classifies the Shina dialects into two main groups.10

The dialect around Chilâs in the east-west portion of the Indus valley above Indus Kohistan is probably the source of the speech that spread upstream along the Indus basin to form the Eastern Shina dialects and downstream to form the

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9 Bailey 1924: xii-xiv.
10 Strand 2001a.
kohistyõ dialect of Indus Kohistan. Another dialect centers on Gilgit, with an outlying Tibetanized offshoot (Brokskat) in Ladakh. In addition there are dispersed dialect enclaves to the west of the Indus: ušúj’u, spoken beside Torwâli in the Chail Valley of upper Swat, the archaic dialects palôlâ’ and Sâwi, spoken in enclaves off the Kunar-Chitral River, and perhaps KalkoTi, spoken in one part of KalkôT in Dir Kohistân.

Schmidt compared lexical and grammatical data from four dialects of Shina: the Kohistani, Gilgiti, Guresi and Drasi. The Guresi and Gilgiti dialects retain archaic features, and appear to occupy a central position within the Shina speech zone. The Kohistani and Drasi dialects (spoken on the western and eastern fringes) present different and unique innovations. This fits nicely with the placement of the ancient country of the Dards in modern Gures, north of the Kashmir valley, and suggests diffusion of Shina speakers east and west from a central zone stretching from Gures through Astor up to Gilgit. An oral tradition says that the Da/rumah lineages of Chilas and Kohistan migrated from Gures. A population of the Da/rumah lineage still exists in Astor.

Guresi perfective verbs show no trace of transitive verb perfective tense formation with the conjunctive participle (§6.3.3.3) which Gilgiti, and to some extent Kohistani, perfective verbs preserve. This permits a second hypothesis, that the original dialect split is between Gilgiti and the ancestor of the remaining three dialects, with the subsequent separation of Kohistani and Drasi. It does appear that Drasi, with its innovative grammaticalization of ‘come’, and Kohistani, with its innovative future tense, assumed their peripheral roles in fairly recent times.

An archaic form of Shina, called Palula (palôlâ’, paaluulaá) is found in the Biyori and Ashret valleys of southern Chitral, and this language and its associated oral histories and genealogies provide evidence for a migration from Chilas to Chitral. The similarity between Palula and the name of the 5th to 8th century dynasty, Pa/tunderdotola or Palola, seems unlikely to be coincidental.

12 As postulated by Jettmar 1989: xix.
13 The Da/rumah are a clan of the Šûn ethnic group living mainly in Indus Kohistan.
14 Called Gurâf in Indus Kohistan. The oral tradition was recorded from Razwal Kohistani November 2006 in Rawalpindi. In 1989 Schmidt played a tape of Kohistani Shina to a Guresi speaker. He understood it perfectly, but found it “quaint”.
15 Schmidt 2004: 52.
16 Palula has been studied by Morgenstierne (1940), Buddrus (1967), Strand (2001b) and Liljegren.
Unfortunately, no Shina records or inscriptions trace any of the migrations discussed here. The only Dardic language with a pre-modern literary tradition is Kashmiri. There are however many oral histories telling of migrations, and we shall hear three versions of the story of the migration of the Daṛmá to Kohistan.\footnote{A more detailed account of the oral history of Kohistan is presented in Schmidt 2003/2004: 61-79.}

1.2 The oral history of Kohistan

Among the Daṛmá of Indus Kohistan, oral history plays several important roles. It is used to validate claims of property ownership, since there are no written records of the wesh, or land distributions, in which land was allocated to ṣāats, or lineages, in equal amounts. It preserves the memory of feuds between different lineages, feuds which in some individual cases remain unresolved. Legends are cited to enhance the collective reputation of one’s lineage; for example, Daṛmá lineages point to their historic overthrow of the mighty adversary Dam Siṅg as testimony to their courage. Conversely, false histories are invented to discredit some lineages, claiming that their ancestors were originally artisans, such as carpenters or ironsmiths, or were merely found under a tree. Most Kohistani oral history has a secular character, even when the subject is the bringing of Islam to Kohistan, that is to say, the legends are considered history (tazkirá), and are not usually associated with any rituals.

In Palas, “The story of Bōṭi Siṅg and Dam Siṅg” is passed on from generation to generation, told by old men called qasmáar, on request from interested listeners. It describes the migration of the Daṛmá lineage of the Shin of Indus Kohistan from the north, and the invasion of Kohistan or overlordship of it by two men, usually said to be Sikhs, also coming from the north. We have collected three versions of this story, which we summarize here.

In an interview in Lahore in 1980, the Shin tribal elder Haréq told Manzar Zarin that Daṛóomo, the ancestor of the Daṛmá lineage, originally migrated from Chilas to Kohistan at a time when Sikhs ruled Kohistan, and the region still lay in darkness, i.e., the light of Islam had not reached it. According to Haréq, the Palas Valley was then ruled by a Sikh named Dam Siṅg, and the Jalkot Valley by a Sikh named Bōṭi. Daṛóomo’s nephews, Tóolo and Dodoóko, are converted to Islam by another uncle, Soróomo, who has secretly converted