

The Oral History of the Darṃá Lineage of Indus Kohistan

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1. Introduction

Indus Kohistan lies on the western margin of the Shina-speaking zone, which includes the Gilgit and Kohistan Districts of Pakistan, the Kishanganga and Dras River systems of Indian Kashmir, and parts of Ladakh. Shina is classified as a member of the Dardic branch of Indo-Aryan languages,¹ 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.² The rock carvings³ 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.⁴

Linguistic evidence links 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. 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.⁵

Most ethnic Shin [*Ṣiñ*] speak Shina, but some non-Shin ethnic groups, such as the Yeshkun, also speak it. The origin legend discussed here belongs to the ethnic Shin of Palas in Indus Kohistan, which is an isolated valley lying approximately halfway between the modern Tarbela Dam and Chilas. The Shin of Palas have a tradition that they came from the town of Chilas, on the Indus River side of the Babusar Pass.

I became interested in Shina for linguistic reasons. Shina preserves a number of archaic linguistic features, including partial preservation of the Old Indo-Aryan sound system and a high percentage of cognates with Sanskrit. It also shows interesting phonological and grammatical innovations not generally observed in other branches of the Indo-Aryan family (for example, the development of pitch accent). Shina has been until the last few decades an unwritten language, thus its oral traditions have never been contaminated by competition with written versions.

1 Morgenstierne 1961.

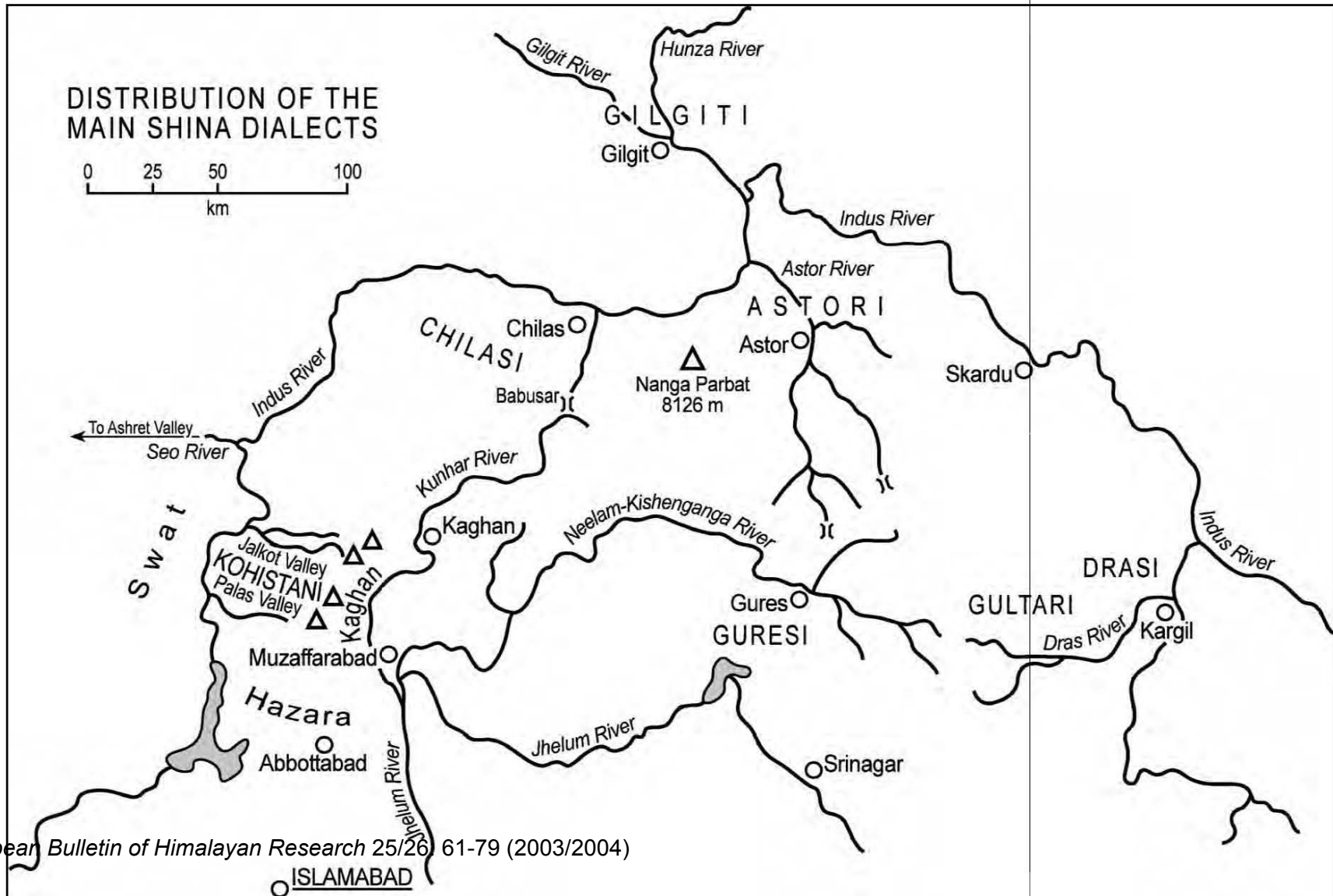
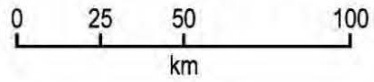
2 Vohra 1981: 53-66; Jettmar 1977: 411-433; 1989, 2: 114.

3 These petroglyphs date from prehistoric times until the 10th or 11th century.

4 Jettmar 1989, 1: xix.

5 Fussman 1989: 55-56.

DISTRIBUTION OF THE MAIN SHINA DIALECTS



Unfortunately, no Shina records or inscriptions trace the history of this region, and so we have to rely on oral history and linguistic evidence. Among the Darṃá lineages⁶ 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 *záats*, or lineages, in equal amounts.⁷ 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, Darṃá 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 *Šiṅ* lineages, claiming that their ancestors were originally artisans, such as carpenters or ironsmiths, or were merely found under a tree.

Not much is known about how legends contribute to defining local identity. Land tenure, feud histories and the cycle of seasonal migration are far more powerful shapers of local spaces than legend,⁸ and ethnographic work has focused on these. But legends and oral histories are associated with all these things, and help to give a higher profile to places of minor political or economic significance. Kaṇḍróṭ, in the hills above the village of Chórṭo near the Indus River, is supposed to be the ancient capital of Bóṭi Siṅg's kingdom. Rich treasures are said to be buried somewhere in Tiyáal, where he was captured. Summer pastures named Ledí and Muṛú are remembered as places where five of the Twelve Martyrs were killed. The cultural geography of Kohistan is a subject which could be further explored through legend, song and ritual, preferably by scholars with a knowledge of Shina.

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. There are however exceptions, notably the story of the Twelve Martyrs. In premodern times, a scuffle between two women of the Hakimá and Aztá lineages escalated into a thirty-year feud between these lineages, in which eleven men of the Hakimá lineage (including a *mulāna* or religious scholar) and one of the Cuthyá lineage, were killed in various tribal battles. The story is told in a blow-by-blow narrative, in which the names of all the participants, the weapons they used, and the circumstances of each battle are given careful attention. The victims attained the status of martyrs, and their tombs came to be treated as a shrine, at which people still stop to pray when travelling from Palas to Pattan. Gradually rituals evolved around these martyrs, such as offering food cooked in their names to the poor, and asking for their help in solving problems. However Deobandi Sunni influence in

6 The Darṃá are a *dal* or a division of the *Šiṅ* ethnic group living in Indus Kohistan.

7 Zarin and Schmidt 1984: 10-17.

8 Knudsen 2001: 69-146, 223-244.

modern Kohistan discourages worship at the shrines of saints, and these rituals are being given up.

In this paper I examine three versions of the origin legend of Palas in the light of historical data on Chilas, Kashmir and Hazara District, and of comparative linguistic analysis. The legend sheds only a hazy light on the recent history of Kohistan. It may however contain a memory of a kingdom dating back a millennium, the “Bhatta-Shâh” kingdom found in Chilas by Al-Biruni.

2. The founding myth of Palas

In Palas, “The story of Bóṭi 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. I have collected three versions of this story, which I 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 Bóṭi. Daṛóomo’s nephews, Tóolo and Dodoóko, are converted to Islam by another uncle, Soróom, who has secretly converted to the new religion. Tóolo and Dodoóko kill Dam Siṅg in Dáro (upper Palas) while Bóṭi Siṅg is away in Chilas, and keep a watch on Bóṭi Siṅg’s return route in order to kill him as well:

In those days, Dáro was ruled by a Sikh called Dam Siṅg and the population in lower Palas were farmers by profession. Jalkot was ruled by another Sikh whose name was Bóṭi. Tóolo and Dodoóko came down to Dáro and killed Dam Siṅg and escaped to their maternal uncles in lower Palas. Then they crossed the Indus River and went to their mother who lived in a place called Tiyáal in Jalkot. She treated them very well. Bóṭi was visiting Chilas at that time, and on his way back he heard the news. They kept watch on [Bóṭi’s] route with the intention of getting rid of the Sikhs, in order to bring the light [of Islam] to the region. They were doing so because they had already accepted Islam.

In the meanwhile, the ancestor of the Sormá [lineage], called Soróom, had gone secretly to the Sayyids of Króoṛ, in Swat, and had converted to Islam. This was not yet public knowledge. Tóolo and Dodoóko were the sons of his [Soróom’s] younger brother. Soróom constantly worked to make

converts among his relatives: Poëës and his sons, until they all converted to Islam.⁹

Razwal Kohistani has recorded another version of the same story from several sources. This version says that Bóṭi Siṅg lived in Jalkot and collected taxes from as far away as the Shina-speaking region above Seo on the Indus. Nothing is said about his being a Sikh, but he doesn't seem to have been a Muslim, as Tóolo and Dodoóko are said to be "the very first to bring the Faith to Kolai, Palas and Jalkot". In Kohistani's version, Tóolo and Dodoóko kill Dam Siṅg and Bóṭi Siṅg in revenge for their father Darákan, whom Dam Siṅg has murdered for failing to pay taxes:

At that time Bóṭi Siṅg was living in Jalkot. He used to collect taxes from as far as Şuṇaáki. One day Bóṭi Siṅg sent him a message that Darákan in Palas should be killed. Darákan was not paying tax to him. Darákan had a friend in Palas. His name was Haṇyaál. He was living in Śarkóoṭ. Around the onset of spring Darákan came down to meet him. He stayed a while. One day he set off for Jalkot via the Kharát path. Dam Siṅg had him attacked and killed by four or five men...

Darákan had two sons; they called one Tóolo and the other Dodoóko. In time they grew up. Taking leave of their mother, they came down to Śarkóoṭ. Haṇyaál arranged for a weapon and told them the way ... They climbed a tree and looked, and there sat Dam Siṅg on the rocky escarpment. He was smoking a water-pipe. Tóolo and Dodoóko were ready with the weapon. One drew the bow and fired an arrow. It struck Dam Siṅg's navel. Dam Siṅg died on the spot. Tóolo and Dodoóko took to their heels. After a while they killed Bóṭi Siṅg in Jalkot ... Tóolo and Dodoóko were the very first to bring the Faith [Islam] to Kolai, Palas and Jalkot.¹⁰

A third version of the myth is told by the elder Zar Jahan of Jalkot. In Zar Jahan's version, Dam Siṅg and Bóṭi Siṅg are Sikh commanders in Gilgit, who occupy Chilas, and from there, attack upper Palas (Dáro). Tóolo and Dodoóko join their uncle Daṛóomo in the battle and kill Dam Siṅg. Meanwhile Bóṭi Siṅg attacks Jalkot. Tóolo and Dodoóko enlist the support of the Khúka-Manká lineages of Kolai, and the tribal army confronts Bóṭi Siṅg's army at Tiyaál in Jalkot. Bóṭi Siṅg flees, but is caught and killed. The Darṁá of Palas ask Daṛóomo and his nephews for support against the Sikh regime, and the resulting tribal coalition of Darṁá, Khúka and Manká¹¹ makes numerous raids on Chilas.

⁹ Told by Ali Khan Haréq, 30 October 1980 in Lahore, Pakistan. Quoted from Zarin and Schmidt 1984: 6-7.

¹⁰ Quoted from Schmidt and Kohistani 2001: 138-141, and recorded by Razwal Kohistani from his mother in 1962, and also from Soṅgalií of Luuṇí Séer (1992), Peereé of Sharéd (1993) and Gul Séer of Páro (1996). According to Soṅgalií, Dam Siṅg's sister was married to Bóṭi Siṅg.

¹¹ All the Shin lineages of Indus Kohistan.

In Zar Jahan's version, Daṛóomo's ancestors were Afghans who first migrated to Gilgit during Afghan rule in Kashmir, and later to Chilas. Daṛóomo migrates to upper Palas (Dáro) with his men by a short route in the southeast, and later occupies lower Palas as well.

Bóṭi Síng and Dam Síng were actually Sikh commanders in Gilgit. They invaded Chilas and occupied it. From there Dam Síng attacked upper Palas. Tóolo and Dodoóko joined their uncle, Daṛóomo, in the battle and killed Dam Síng. In the meanwhile, Bóṭi Síng had also attacked Jalkot and reached a place, Tiyáal. His army was now located in another place called Kaṇḍróṭ on a hill near the Indus. The remains of their wine-presses still exist there.

Tóolo and Dodoóko came to know about Bóṭi Síng's occupation in Palas. They asked the Khúka Manká in Kolai for help and quickly moved to defend their land. Both the armies met near Tiyáal. Bóṭi Síng and his wife fled. However, Bóṭi Síng was captured at Bóṭi's Olive Tree. They gave his wife an offer to spare him if she gave them gold equal to his weight. She refused and they killed him. His wife was killed afterwards. Bóṭi Síng had the strength of twelve men.

The Daṛmá of Palas asked Daṛóomo and his nephews for assistance against the Sikh regime. As a result, the Khúka, Manká and their joint armies raided Chilas numerous times. At last they succeeded in conquering Chilas.¹²

My translations do not show the fictional devices in two of the original texts, such as repetition and rhyme. Also not shown is the quotative: 'they say', 'I have heard that', 'people say that' which introduces many statements. Some six generations have elapsed between the end of Sikh rule in Kashmir and the earliest recording of our legend, and even the oldest narrator, Haréq, who was 85 in 1980, does not claim to have heard it from an eyewitness. Nevertheless the legend is considered history, and references are made to a tree that Bóṭi Síng liked to rest under, the rock cauldrons which his army used to make wine in, and the flat boulder that Dam Síng used to sit on, and to Haṇyaál's land in Śarkóoṭ, all of which can allegedly be pointed out to the observer. Unlike the narration of a folktale, the audience may put questions to the teller or debate whether the events are true, although doubters are usually silenced by the audience.

The legend may shed light on some questions that ethnohistorians have sought to answer: Where have the Shina-speakers of Indus Kohistan migrated from? When was the region converted to Islam, and what was the previous religion? Where do they fit into the history of the wider region? But the legend introduces new confusions. Bóṭi Síng and Dam Síng are not mentioned in any written accounts of Chilas, and no historical source mentions Kohistan as tributary either to Ranjit Singh's empire, or to the

¹² Recorded by Manzar Zarin in Rawalpindi in April 2002.

Dogra empire which succeeded it in Kashmir. On the contrary, on the few occasions they are mentioned, the tribes of Indus Kohistan are described as “republics”.

In a later interview with Razwal Kohistani,¹³ I collected the following additional information. Dam Siṅg is said to have belonged to the Chiliis tribe, pointing to an origin in Chilas.¹⁴ Tradition says that the Chiliis migrated north from a place called Qarnáa (30 miles below modern Thakot on the Indus River) 900 years ago. Another tradition connects them with the juniper species (*chilíi*), of which there was an enormous specimen in Qarnáa. Their migration, under a chief named Dumáa, took them first to Kolai in Kohistan, and later on to Jalkot and Palas. Tradition says that between 1400 and 1500 they grew so powerful that the Darṃá tribe, to whom the regional elders belonged, decided to give them land in dispersed areas in order to weaken their power. The interested reader can follow a discussion of the Chiliis in Kohistani 1998, especially pp. 57-9 (where the origin of the Chiliis is discussed and the Dam Siṅgiyãã [Dam Siṅgite] lineage appears as a branch of the Chiliis), and on p. 81, which shows the major territorial groups to which lineages of Chiliis origin are everywhere attached; for example, in Kolai they are attached to the Manká tribe, but in Jalkot they are attached to the Darṃá tribe (*ibid.*, pp. 167-8). In short, whatever their religion, tradition says that the Chiliis were local people and not Punjabi Sikhs.

3. What do the stories say?

All of the stories agree that the main contestants in the struggle are Dam Siṅg and Bóṭi Siṅg on one side, and Tóolo and Dodoóko on the other. Two of the stories trace the origin of the Darṃá Shin to Chilas, and one traces it as far as Gilgit. In two of the versions, Dam Siṅg and Bóṭi Siṅg are rulers or military commanders. In the third, Bóṭi Siṅg collects taxes, implying that he was a *jāgīrdār*. That some kind of tribal revolt took place seems to be in little doubt, but whether it was a religious war or a tax revolt seems uncertain. None of the Kohistani names is Islamic, but we do not know their religion. Two of the stories assert that Dam Siṅg and Bóṭi Siṅg were Sikhs, and this is a recurring motif in local legend, however there is nowhere any mention of a connection to Sikhs in Panjab.¹⁵ The name Siṅg proves nothing, as Biddulph (1880: 99) mentions that many Muslim Shins had the surname “Siṅg”. It is also a Rajput name, and the earlier form *siṃha* is a frequent element in the colophons of the Gilgit Manuscripts (datable to probably not later than the 9th century A.D.). Even the mention of Sikhs

¹³ Interview conducted in November 2003 in Rawalpindi.

¹⁴ There is a phonetic problem with this folk etymology. The initial affricate in modern “Chilas” is not aspirated; *Ciláas* (چلاس), whereas the initial affricate in the name of the tribe is aspirated: *Chilíis* (چھلیس).

¹⁵ There are also echoes of Hinduism in Kohistan: there is a ruined settlement lying between Kolai and Palas (near Kuz Gaber) with the name *Hinduwáanodaar*.

must be taken with a grain of salt, as by the end of the 19th century, the word ‘Sikh’ had become a term of abuse.¹⁶

The repeated mention of Sikhs does nevertheless require us to examine the period between 1815 and 1860, as Sikhs are unlikely to have become a subject of legend before they became an expanding power, when Ranjit Singh established his empire at the beginning of the 19th century, and his erstwhile tributary Gulab Singh extended it into immense territories east, north and west of Jammu. I first return to Chilas, which was not always the backwater it is today.

4. Chilas in the first millennium A.D.

Lying on an important route from Central Asia through Gilgit south to Panjab or to Kashmir, Chilas has been a crossroad since prehistoric times, as testified by the over ten thousand rock carvings discovered there by Jettmar (1989, 1: xvi). These depict motifs and inscriptions dating from as early as “three or four millennia” ago, up through the Scythian, Achaemenid, Parthian and Kushan periods. Most noteworthy is a Brahmi inscription mentioning a “*śri palola śāhi surendrādityanandi*”, read by von Hinüber (1989: 64-5), linking Chilas to the Paṭola or Palola dynasty of Gilgit, ca. 5th to the 8th centuries, known also as Bolor. Jettmar (1989: 104-5) argues that sometime prior to the 10th century, the Dārada kingdom probably merged with this Paṭola 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 von Hinüber, and means ‘lord’, ‘master’. This suggests the reading *Bhaṭṭa Śāh* for the kingdom mentioned by Alberuni.¹⁷ The interpretation of *śāha* as ‘king’ is based on the reading of *śāhī* as ‘ruler’, with the Persian palatal sibilant treated as a retroflex sibilant in Dardic.¹⁸

16 Leitner 1893: Appendix IV: 10-11.

17 Sachau 1910: 207. See also Richard Strand’s (2001b) website on the *Bhaṭesa zip*, where he relates the ethnonym *Bhaṭ-* of the people of *Bhaṭera* (located in Indus Kohistan, across the Indus from Besham and well south of Palas) to CDIAL 9402, MIA *bhaṭṭa-*, ‘lord, noble’ < *bhārṭṛ* or CDIAL 9366 ‘mixed caste of bards’

(<http://users.sedona.net/~strand/lngFrameL.html>). The *Bhaṭṭas* seem to have been powerful in Indus Kohistan in former times.

18 Von Hinüber (1989) discusses the title *śāhī* twice, rendering it variously as the title of a family or the title of a dynasty: *kṣatraśāhī vajranandi* ... “might have been the son of the ruler” (p. 63); *śri palola śāhi surendrādityanandi* ... “This king should be identical with *surendrāditya* ... ruling approximately between 720 and 725 as the last ruler belonging to this dynasty” (p. 64). The title *śāha* also occurs, but von Hinüber finds no interpretation for it.

Vajranandi means “he who delights in the *vajra* [the thunderbolt]”, apparently a ruler’s name, as it points to Indra, the king of the gods (Lars Martin Fosse, personal communication, 1 November 2003). *kṣatrā* means ‘might, rule’ [√ KṢI] (CDIAL 3648), and is cognate with the Persian word *śāh* (Vullers (1855: 392) and Platts (1911: 719) give

The *Rājataranṅīnī* or *Chronicle of the Kings of Kaśmīr* contains numerous accounts of Dārada threats to Kashmir.¹⁹ The last cluster of inscriptions found at Chilas, dated to ca. the 11th century²⁰ seems to be associated with this expanded Dārada kingdom. We do not know why people stopped carving on rocks at Chilas, but as the second millennium begins we are now in the realm of legend. There are oral accounts from diverse sources of civil war in Chilas and migration out of the region, and these accounts are supported by linguistic data (see below, Section 7). Biddulph (1880: 16) records that:

The Chilasis relate that in former times a Hindoo Rajah, named Chachai, ruled in Chilas over the whole of Shinkari [the Shina-speaking valleys of the Indus], but that, dying childless, his country became divided into republican communities, as at present. In later days a disastrous civil war broke out in the community between two brothers, Bôt and Matchuk, which ended in the defeat and expulsion of all the partizans of the latter. The Bôte are now the most prosperous family in Chilas.

Strand (2000) and Cacopardo and Cacopardo (2001: 119-124) present evidence that a group of Chilasis, with an ancestor named Bôtâ, migrated to Chitral in the middle of the 17th century. This will be examined later, but first we ask whether the records show Chilas or Kohistan ever coming under Sikh or Dogra rule. This period is summarized in some detail, to show that by the mid-19th century Kohistan was hemmed in on three sides either by Sikh forces (in Hazara and Kaghan), or by Dogra and Sikh forces (in Chilas).

the Zend form *khshaya* [from the root *khshi*]). *kṣatraṣāhī* appears to be a translation-compound of two words meaning the same thing in different languages (a common phenomenon in multilingual regions): ‘ruler-ruling’. If so, *kṣatraṣāhī* can be translated: ‘ruler, of ruling lineage’. The retroflex sibilant seems puzzling at first glance, as OIA *kṣ* usually becomes *çh* in Dardic, and retroflex sibilants did not occur in Middle Persian (Fridrik Thordarson, personal communication, 1 November 2003). The inscription itself is the only evidence that it was pronounced that way, as Alberuni wrote in Arabic, which lacks a way to represent retroflex sibilants.

If *ṣāha* was indeed borrowed from Persian, there is no rule that states that a Persian palatal sibilant invariably corresponds with the Sanskrit palatal sibilant श (ś) (though in fact it does so in modern Shina, which also has a three-way sibilant contrast). Its treatment would have depended on the actual phonetic values of श (ś) and ष (ṣ) in Chilas at the time, and on the actual phonetic value of Persian ش (š) in the eastern Iranian zone. In fact, there are other examples of the Persian palatal sibilant ش (š) corresponding with Dardic or Nuristani ṣ: Pers. *bādšāh* ‘king’ > Khowar *bāça* ~ *bāṣa* ‘king’, Pers. *dānišmand* ‘learned’ > Khowar *daṣman* ‘maulvi’ (Elena Bashir, personal communication, 3 November 2003); Pers. *šahr* ‘town’ > Kamviri *šor* ‘winter (lowland) grazing ground’ (Richard Strand, personal communication, 2 November 2003). See also Richard Strand (2002), “Phonological processes on the Indo-Iranian Frontier”, at the website: <http://users.sedona.net/~strand/Phonology/IIFproc.html>. It appears that the tongue is backed in Eastern Iranian as one gets closer to the Indo-Iranian frontier, and that the palatal sibilant tends toward laminal post-alveolar in this zone.

19 Stein 1900.

20 Jettmar 1989, 1: xxv.

4. The Sikhs and the Dogras

From 1751 to 1819 Kashmir was part of the Durrani empire of Afghanistan, until Ranjit Singh annexed it and sent Sikh governors to rule it.²¹ Like the Mughals before him, Ranjit Singh sometimes paid his deputies by assigning to them *jāgīrs*, or the revenue of designated tracts of land. The hill state of Jammu, adjoining Kashmir, became tributary to Ranjit Singh in 1815, but prior to this, three nephews of Jammu's Rajput *rājā* joined Ranjit Singh's service as common troopers. One of them, Kishora Singh, was installed on his uncle's throne by Ranjit Singh. Another, Gulab Singh, was given a *jāgīr*. On Kishora Singh's death in 1822, Gulab Singh became *rājā*.²² Gulab Singh began to add new territories to his own domain, although if the occasion required he would bring his own forces to support the Sikh army. By 1843 he controlled all of what was to become "Jammu and Kashmir" except the valley itself, Gilgit, Rajauri and Punch.²³ By 1844 he became powerful enough to withhold revenues and negotiate terms for sending military support.²⁴

When war broke out between the British and the Sikhs in the winter of 1845-6, Gulab Singh remained on the sidelines during the decisive battle, tipping the balance in the favor of the British and emerging as a power broker.²⁵ The Sikhs had to cede Kashmir and Hazara to the East India Company, and recognize the independent sovereignty of Gulab Singh. The British then rewarded Gulab Singh by selling him Hazara and Kashmir.²⁶ The reduced Sikh empire remained independent only until 1849, when Panjab was annexed to the British empire. Gulab Singh, though nominally tributary to the British, was now *Mahārājā* of Jammu and Kashmir, *de facto* free to do as he wished. He now turned his eyes toward Gilgit, which had previously been occupied by the Sikhs, in ca. 1842. That war ended in a negotiated peace, with the kings of Gilgit, Hunza and Nagar giving a daughter to the Sikh commander, Nathu Shah.²⁷

In 1847, Nathu Shah transferred his services to Gulab Singh, and Dogra troops relieved the Sikh posts at Astor and Gilgit. Most of the soldiers, who were few in number, re-enlisted under Gulab Singh.²⁸ The Dogras were

21 Drew 1875: 18.

22 Grewal 1990: 106-107.

23 Drew 1875: 13-20.

24 Grewal 1990: 123.

25 Schofield 2000: 6-7, Drew 1875: 20.

26 In the second Treaty of Amritsar, Gulab Singh was awarded "all the hilly or mountainous country, situated to the eastward of the river Indus and westward of the river Ravee". There was no clause in the treaty preventing Gulab Singh from conducting his own diplomatic relations (Schofield 2000: 11) and no practical obstacle to his further expansion.

27 According to Drew (1875: 437) Nathu Shah was a [Muslim] Sayyid of Gujranwala, in Panjab.

28 Drew 1875: 437-439.

expelled from Gilgit in 1852, but retook it in 1860. In 1866, when the ethnologist Leitner first visited it, he found villages burnt down and the Gilgit valley deserted.²⁹ There is considerable confusion in Leitner's account as to whether the invaders are Sikh troops, Kashmir troops, or Dogras. For those who were conquered, it does not seem to have made much difference whether the troops were commanded by a Sikh or a Rajput Hindu.

Chilas now re-enters written history. It is still notorious for raids, now against Gulab Singh's territory: the Astor, Kishenganga and Gilgit valleys. Justification for the raids against Astor was claimed on the grounds that the Astoris were Shias and so religious enemies.³⁰ In ca. 1850 and 1851 Gulab Singh made punitive expeditions against Chilas, mentioned by the first British agent in Gilgit, John Biddulph (1980: 16), and described in detail by Leitner (1893: 80-87). In the first raid, the *Mahārājā's* Dogra troops were badly defeated by the Chilasis and their independent tribal allies (including forces from Kolai, Palas and Jalkot in Indus Kohistan). The following year the Dogras took and destroyed Chilas Fort, and the Chilasis had to agree to send an annual tribute to the *Mahārājā*, along with two hostages. Leitner's Sazini informant provides a wealth of detail, calling the attackers "Sikhs" and listing the names and homes of Kohistani participants, unfortunately Tóolo and Dodoóko are not mentioned.

In the last decades of the 19th century the British, worried about a possible Russian invasion, took a more active interest in the region, and in 1892 George Robertson burned Chilas and built a fortified position above it, to defend the new road across the Babusar Pass. In 1893 the Chilasis, with their usual tribal allies from the areas further down the Indus, re-occupied Chilas in what was called the Indus Valley Rising.³¹

There were thus several contests over Chilas, at a time when the inhabitants had evidently already converted to the Sunni sect of Islam, but European records are silent about any conquest of Indus Kohistan. If Kohistan did fall under Sikh rule, it probably did so before the British appeared on the scene.

6. The Sikhs in Hazara

Could Dam Singh and Bóṭi Singh have pushed up the Indus from Hazara, or over the watershed from the Kaghan valley? Hazara passed from Durrani to Sikh rule in 1818.³² The unsettled border between Sikh-ruled Panjab and Dogra-ruled Jammu and Kashmir lay in Hazara, and all the routes out of Kohistan pass through it except two: the route to Swat on the west, and the difficult and dangerous route along the Indus to Chilas.

²⁹ Keay 1993: 29-31.

³⁰ Leitner 1893: 80.

³¹ Keay 1993: 228-237.

³² Punjab Government 1883-4, *Gazetteer of the Hazara District*: 22-23.

The British administrators of Hazara after its annexation knew little about Kohistan, except that it was inhabited by a non-Afghan race “who by language and race are evidently closely allied with the people that holds the northern part of the Swát valley and the country from Gilgit to Chitrál.” They were rarely seen in the district capital, Abbottabad.³³

The Kohistanis were probably aware of the wretched conditions under Sikh rule to their south, since after the fall of Peshawar to Ranjit Singh in 1823, there arose a movement of resistance and religious fervor in the hills of Hazara, enlisting the Yusufzai and Khatak tribes and the people of Kaghan, in other words, all the peoples adjoining Kohistan. The movement’s charismatic leader, Sayyad Ahmad Barelvi, raised an army to wage holy war against the Sikh infidel, and succeeded in briefly retaking Peshawar in 1830. Although he was killed by Sikh forces in 1831, resistance continued, especially in the Black Mountain region of Hazara, immediately south of Kohistan, until the British pacified Hazara in 1892.³⁴

A glimpse of the depth of opposition to Sikh rule is afforded by the papers of Captain James Abbott, who was sent in 1846 to settle the border between Panjab and Jammu and Kashmir. Hazara had then been in revolt for over a year. Ignoring Abbott’s escort of Sikh troops, one tribal leader after another came to Abbott to beg the British Government to accept their allegiance and relieve them of the tyranny of Gulab Singh. Abbott found that Sikh rule in Hazara had been extremely repressive, with up to two thirds of crops required as tax, and public expressions of the Muslim faith banned.³⁵ *The Gazetteer of the Hazara District* (1883-4: 180-181) reports that in theory, the Lahore state was entitled to half the produce, but in practice, it took the highest amount the cultivator could bear, which might only be one third. The strain on cultivators might still be considerable in hilly regions with little arable land. Abbott and his assistants succeeded in detaching Hazara from Gulab Singh’s kingdom and returning it to the Sikh darbar in Lahore, from which it soon passed to British rule.

If *jāgīrs* had been granted by Lahore in Kohistan, there seem to be no records of them. However Hazara itself has been almost completely ignored by historians, so it would be surprising if we found records for Kohistan. What is clear is that by the 1840’s, Kohistan faced Sikh forces on the south and west (in Hazara and Kaghan), and Dogra and Sikh forces in the north (in Chilas). Opposition to them was widespread, but without Sayyad Ahmad Barelvi, it consisted mainly of guerrilla raids. Only on the west, where the Yusufzai Pashtun had extended their political control northward into Swat Kohistan,³⁶ were powerful allies against the Sikhs and Dogras to be found, and it is in that direction that Uncle Soróom goes to convert to Islam.

33 Punjab Government 1883-4, *Gazetteer of the Hazara District*: 173

34 Caroe 1962: 300-305; Punjab Government 1883-4, *Hazara Gazetteer*: 27-31; Nayyar 1988: 2-4.

35 Allen 2000: 130-135.

36 Cacopardo and Cacopardo 2001: 35; Lindholm 1982: 78.

Cacopardo and Cacopardo (2001: 35) find that generation counts cannot place the introduction of Islam to eastern Kohistan earlier than the late 18th century. Conversion may have begun in Durrani times, and accelerated after the expansion of Ranjit Singh's empire, when Islam no longer was the religion of invaders from outside. There is in Palas little trace of the original religion, except for many tales of spirits (*peerée*), witches (*ruúi*), fairies (*xaaprée*) and monster demons (*déo*).

7. Linguistic evidence

Schmidt 2002 compared lexical and grammatical data from four dialects of Shina: the Kohistani, Gilgiti, Guresi and Drasi. Unfortunately, data for the dialect of Chilas is not available, however Razwal Kohistani, who is familiar with it, describes it as closely related to that of Indus Kohistan.³⁷

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 margins) 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,³⁸ and suggests diffusion of Shina speakers east and west from a central zone stretching from Gures up through Astor to Gilgit.

Guresi perfective verbs, however, show no trace of the absolutive stem which Gilgiti, and to some extent Kohistani, perfective verbs preserve. This allows a second hypothesis, that the original dialect split is between Gilgiti and the ancestor of the remaining three dialects, with a subsequent separation of Kohistani from Guresi/Drasi, and finally the separation of 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 (Schmidt 2002).

An archaic form of Shina, called Palula (*paaluulaá*) is found in the Biyori and Ashret valleys of southern Chitral, and this language and its associated oral histories provide evidence for a migration from Chilas.³⁹ The similarity between Palula and the name of the 5th to 8th century dynasty, Paṭola or Palola, seems unlikely to be coincidental.

Strand⁴⁰ has collected the ethnohistory and genealogy of the people of Ashret (the Aṣar'íta or Shîng). Calculating 20 years to a generation, he reckons that the Aṣar'íta must have left Chilas in ca. 1640. The name of "the

³⁷ Schmidt and Kohistani 1994: 2.

³⁸ Jettmar 1977: 411-433; 1989, vol. 1: xix.

³⁹ Palula has been studied by Morgenstierne (1941), Strand (2001a) and Liljegren (2001 a and b).

⁴⁰ Strand 2000:

users.sedona.net/~strand/IndoAryan/Indus/Atsaret/AtsaretCulture/Atsaretgen.html

users.sedona.net/~strand/IndoAryan/Indus/Atsaret/AtsaretTexts/AtsaretHistory.html

first grandfather” is maCô’k, his son is Cô’k and his grandson is bôTâ. The Açar’îta themselves told Strand that they have been living in Ashret for “eight or nine hundred years as the Shîng tribe” and that from among the Chilasis, the Shîng tribe originated from Gilgit. Palula does not however seem to share the Burushaski influence that characterizes the Gilgiti dialect,⁴¹ nor does it appear to have a closer relation to Gilgiti than other Shina dialects.

The Cacopardos have also collected genealogies, in which the first three ancestors, Machoke, Choke and Bota, are identical with those in Strand’s. In one branch of the tribe, the name Shing appears: Shing Baro is a grandson of Bota, and Gilshing is his grandson; the latter name appears as girS’înge in Strand’s genealogy.⁴²

This introduces one final possibility: that Bôṭi Siṅg is a memory of a Bhatta-Shâh king, belonging to a Shing lineage. This would require not only correcting the transcription of Bhatta to Bhaṭṭa, but adding an accent: Bháṭṭa. The following sound change rules (shown below with examples from the Palas dialect of Shina) would apply:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| 1. <i>bh-</i> > <i>b-</i> | RV <i>bhaktá-</i> ‘meal, food’ > Ko. Sh. <i>baát</i> ‘cooked rice’; Skt. <i>bhávati</i> ‘becomes, is’ > Ko. Sh. <i>bó-</i> ‘be’. |
| 2. <i>-á-</i> > <i>-ó-</i> | RV <i>pánthā-</i> ‘path, road’ > Ko. Sh. <i>pón</i> ‘path, road’; Skt. <i>mástaka-</i> ‘head’ > Ko. Sh. <i>mótho</i> ‘brain’; Skt. <i>bhávati</i> ‘becomes, is’ > Ko. Sh. <i>bó-</i> ‘be’. |
| 3. <i>-ṭṭ-</i> > <i>-ṭ-</i> | OIA <i>*kaṭṭa-</i> , ‘young male animal’ > Ko. Sh. <i>káṭo</i> , ‘buffalo calf’. |
| 4. (hypothesis) | Skt. <i>bhártr-</i> ‘husband, lord’ > Bháṭṭa > Bóṭa > Bôṭi (see CDIAL 9402). |

Example 3 shows a counter example to the otherwise well attested rule, *á-* > *-ó-*, indicating the need for more detailed analysis of sound changes from Old Indo-Aryan to Shina. The final *-i* in *Bôṭi* is also unexplained, but might be a m.pl. suffix, referring to the king’s lineage.

Strand’s genealogy contains a bôTâ (= *bōṭā*), pointing to the central weakness of the linguistic hypothesis: we need to take into account regional variations for which we unfortunately have little data. The hypothesis can not be confirmed. But it points to the possibility that the memory of Bháṭṭa Ṣâh has become the archetype of an overlord, on which later experiences with overlords, whether direct or reported, have been calqued.

⁴¹ Fussman 1989: 56-57.

⁴² Cacopardo and Cacopardo 2001: 119-124.

8. Conclusion

If Bháṭṭa Śāh has indeed been transformed into a Sikh overlord named Bóṭi Siṅg, how did this happen? According to Eliade (1974: 43), a real personage survives in popular memory at most for two or three centuries, after which he is assimilated to a mythical model. Thompson (1978: 11-2) finds that when events pass beyond first and second-hand memory, they become simplified, restructured and stereotyped, and that they are more useful as evidence of values, than of facts. Anachronisms may be caused by the reordering of memory; most commonly, recent events are attributed to an earlier period, legitimizing them; but according to Vansina (1985: 177) events can also be made younger.

Bóṭi Siṅg and Dam Siṅg appear in the texts as stereotypes of oppressive overlords, whom it is acceptable to kill. In all the versions of the legend they are enemies: individual enemies, political enemies, or religious enemies. In two versions, they are associated with negatively-valued activities: collecting land taxes and drinking wine. In one version, they have the power of life and death over their subjects.

Princely states have long existed in the large river valleys of Gilgit, Yasin, Chitral and Astor, but in the remote and isolated valleys of Indus Kohistan, stateless political systems prevailed,⁴³ because their inaccessibility made it difficult for states to integrate these valleys. The Kohistani claim to have eliminated the need for a central government by borrowing from Swat the customs of *wesh*, or equitable land distribution, and the *jirga*, a council which allocates land and decides local disputes. In contraposition to this, Bóṭi Siṅg and Dam Siṅg stand for a system of autocracy. In the 11th century the nearest model for a centralized state was probably the kingdom of Bháṭṭa Śāh. In the 19th century the nearest models were the Sikh *darbar* and its *jāgīrdārs*, and the kingdom of Jammu and Kashmir. Linguistic change had already transformed Bháṭṭa to Bóṭi; when Siṅg is added, Bháṭṭa Śāh is reinvented as a Sikh.

It seems impossible to come closer to the truth than this, because the legend lacks an essential element of history: a chronology.⁴⁴ For the Palula-speakers of Ashret and Biyori we have a rough generation count, because their migration myths are embedded in genealogies linking the individual to an apical ancestor, who is also remembered in Chilas. But among the Kohistani Shin, the lineage genealogy serves primarily as the basis of the *wesh* or land distribution, and need only show the apical ancestor, the ancestors of moieties, and the present-day lineages.⁴⁵ It is not possible to trace an individual, such as Haréq or Zar Jahan, back to the apical ancestor, and thus no way to estimate how many generations have passed since Uncle Soróom went to Swat to convert to Islam.

43 Cacopardo and Cacopardo 2001: 40.

44 Vansina 1985: 173-185.

45 Zarin and Schmidt 1984: 44-46.

We can, however, make a reasonable guess. In the third decade of the 19th century, a movement of holy war and religious fervor swept Hazara, which took six decades to completely die down. By the fifth decade, the records show that Chilas had been converted to Sunni Islam, was attacking populations of Shia Muslims to the north and west, and now faced reprisals from Gulab Singh's Dogras. It would be surprising if this regional ferment did not strike a chord among the Kohistani Shin, who have never cared for central rule. I suggest then, that Daróomo and Soróom, who judging from their names were not converted under Durrani rule, came under the influence of Yusufzai missionaries during the third or fourth decades of the 19th century, and that Soróom's conversion was automatically associated with the then prevailing opposition to Sikh rule in adjoining areas.

Abbreviations

CDIAL	Turner (1966) <i>Comparative Dictionary of the Indo-Aryan Languages</i>
Ko. Sh.	Kohistani Shina
MIA	Middle Indo-Aryan
OIA	Old Indo-Aryan
Skt.	Sanskrit
RV	R̥gveda

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