

Landscape, spatial coding and semantic extensions in the Hindukush with special reference to Indo-Aryan Palula

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Palula [phl] is an Indo-Aryan language spoken by a community of 10,000 in the southern part of Chitral Valley in northern Pakistan (Liljegren 2008; Liljegren & Haider 2015), an environment characterized by sharp altitude contrasts (the permanent settlements located at 1,300-2,000 meters above sea level), and where the traditional economy was dominated by animal husbandry, involving transhumance, i.e., the taking of one's sheep and goats to cool and green pastures at a considerably higher elevation for several months at a time, and with a subsequently high dependence on spatial orientation and a shared and detailed reference system encompassing various spatial dimensions. The present study aims at describing the rich and fine-graded coding of places, directions and distances in a number of linguistic subsystems of Palula, such as those found in deictic expressions (including degrees of remoteness, emphasis and visibility), sets of locational adverbs and postpositions (with horizontal and vertical – or as-the-river-flows – specifications), and verbs specified for direction and verticality. The extended use of such coding in temporal and discourse-related differentiation is also noted and discussed. These findings are further related to and compared to previous descriptions of similar phenomena in individual neighbouring languages (Bashir 2000; Heegård Petersen 2006) as well as to features that are tentatively identified as of wider areal significance in an ongoing areal-linguistic investigation of the 50+ language varieties spoken in the greater Hindukush-Karakoram region, the mountainous area at the north-western fringe of the Indian subcontinent.

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