

A Linguistic Survey of Communities in the Neelam Valley of Azad Kashmir

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Keywords: Linguistic Diversity, fieldwork, Line of Control, understudied , dialect, variety

This paper presents an overview of the linguistic diversity found in the Neelam Valley region of Azad Kashmir, Pakistan. As an area located along historical trade routes with difficult terrain, the Neelam Valley is home to a variety of ethno-linguistic communities speaking distinct yet interconnected languages. Through recent fieldwork and analysis of word lists, the paper identifies the main languages and language varieties spoken in the region. These include Hindko, Gojri, variants of Shina and Kashmiri, as well as the severely endangered language Kundal Shahi. The paper discusses the origins and characteristics of each variety, such as the retention of aspirated voiced stops in the local Hindko dialect and contact induced changes in these languages. Given its location along the Line of Control, the Neelam Valley offers insights into the linguistic effects of political division over time. This preliminary survey aims to document this understudied linguistic landscape and encourage further comparative study of related varieties on both sides of the border.