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CHILAS
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CHILAS, township in the upper Indus valley in Pakistani-controlled Jammu and Kashmir, almost directly south of Gilgit and located on the new Karakorum highway between Pakistan and China. In late antiquity there was a considerable Iranian presence in the surrounding area.

The Sakas formed an important ethnic element along the entire length of the Silk Road beginning in the Chinese hinterland; they entered India both from the west through what is now Afghanistan (following the earlier route of the Parthians) and across the high passes in the Hindu Kush and Karakorums. According to the history of the Han dynasty, *Ch'ien Han shu*, the king of the Sai (Sakas), after having been defeated by the Tokharians in the 2nd century b.c.e., led the survivors of his royal tribe south across the mountains to Ki-pin (Gandhara), where they established several smaller states (see *Camb. Hist. Iran* III/1, p. 192 and n. 1; Fussmann, p. 22 n. 9). The Kharosthi inscriptions studied by Gérard Fussman (1980, pls. I-IV) attest the presence of dynasties of Saka (Indian Saka) ancestry in the foothills of the westernmost Himalayas between ca. 100 b.c.e. and 100 c.e. They accepted Indian titles and names but preserved their traditional art, characterized by the "animal style" (Jettmar, 1967); proclaimed Buddhism as their faith; and soon became loyal feudatories of the Kushan emperors, protecting trade and political emissaries passing through their territory (Fussman, 1982).

A period of Buddhist dominance in the interior of the mountains is indicated by manuscripts written in Brāhmī script between the 5th and 7th centuries c.e. They were found in a "hollow" stupa at Gilgit and were recognized as part of

the library of a monastery under the special protection of a local dynasty, the Paṭola-ṣāhis. The colophons of these manuscripts (von Hinüber, 1980) reveal that Iranians were well represented among the dignitaries who sponsored the copying of the texts; not all of them, however, were Sakas.

Since 1979 a German-Pakistani survey group directed jointly by Karl Jettmar (Jettmar and Thewalt, 1987) and Ahmad Hasan Dani has discovered several thousand rock carvings and about 2,000 inscriptions in the main Indus valley south of Gilgit, on rocks covered with desert varnish. Most of the inscriptions were made either by order of local nobles or by foreign visitors. From the personal names found in them, it can be inferred that traditional cults persisted, even though the official religion was Buddhism. Both Kharoṣṭhī and the two variants of the Brāhmī script were used. In addition, 450 short Sogdian inscriptions and some additional examples in Iranian and Indian languages were found in a very small precinct near Shatial bridge, west of Chilas. Altogether these inscriptions attest that Chilas was an important stage on the trade route through the mountains at that time and that Iranians formed an important component of the mountain population.

According to Nicholas Sims-Williams (1989a), all the Sogdian inscriptions are of a later date than the 4th-century "Ancient Letters" but earlier than the 8th-century documents from Mt. Mug in the region of Zeravshan,120 km east of Samarkand, in Sogdia itself. In most instances only the names of Sogdian visitors and those of their fathers are mentioned. Many names are theophoric (Humbach, 1980), with heroic allusions.

Jettmar (1989) concluded that a trade route from Sogdia crossed the Indus near the village Shatial and terminated in an emporium on the southern bank; the same power that had controlled the long access road through the Pamirs (perhaps one of the Chionite kingdoms; see chionites) had a stronghold nearby. At this meeting place the Sogdians traded with Buddhist merchants (with Iranian names) from the south, who could move more freely through the territory of their respective protectors on the southern bank. Occasionally, less official points of contact were preferred, for instance, Thor (halfway between Shatial and Chilas), Oshibat (a few miles upstream from Thor), and Dadam Das (opposite Chilas), where a small group of Sogdian inscriptions was found, as well as ten Bactrian, two Parthian, and two Middle Persian inscriptions (see map in Sims-Williams, 1989a).

This period of intense relations with other parts of the Iranian world is

documented by figural petroglyphs as well (Jettmar, 1986); many foreigners announced their temporary presence in the Indus valley by means of petroglyphs reflecting the motifs and style of their homelands. For example, fire altars, religious symbols from the Near East (e.g., the baetyl), motifs known from Sogdian and Sasanian metalwork, and several *tamḡa*s (brand marks of nomadic tribes), which were used as heraldic symbols by the nobility of the Sogdian towns, are depicted. Very finely engraved horses are shown with bridles of western (Sasanian) origin. There are also images of worshipers wearing Iranian dress (see clothing v), as well as scenes known from the wall paintings in Sogdian towns. Iranians from the west and north certainly comprised the largest group of travelers who left such petroglyphs, but not all were transient visitors; some had settled and achieved high positions.

Clear evidence of Iranian influence in the area of Chilas is rare after the middle of the 8th century, when the Indus valley came under Tibetan rule for some time before being incorporated in the Darada kingdom (Stein, vol. 2). The production of petroglyphs declined and had come to an end even before the ultimate victory of Islam. The last datable monuments are from the 11th or 12th century (Jettmar, 1986).

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