

The dictionary project

Work on the development and web presentation of this 1000-word sample dictionary began in 2005 and was funded as a pilot project by the Consortium for Language Teaching and Learning under a grant titled “Digital Dictionaries for Less Commonly Taught Languages of Pakistan”. James Nye, overall Project Director of the Digital Dictionaries of South Asia, has also served as Project Director for this sub-project of that larger effort. Elena Bashir acted as Co-Director for the project and carried out the field work, recording, and editing for the Khowar component of the project. The sound recordings were made at the studio of Radio Pakistan, Chitral, with the cooperation and facilitation of the Station Director Ghulam Muhammad and Producer Farid Ahmad. The equipment used was a TASCAM DA-P1 digital audio tape recorder purchased with Consortium funding for this project, and maintained with the help of the American Institute of Pakistan Studies. A few supplementary sound files for sentences provided but not recorded earlier were subsequently produced, using a mobile phone recorder, by Zahoor ul Haq Danish, a son of the late Maula Nigah. All sound files were subsequently digitized and converted to .wav format by the Language Lab at the University of Chicago. Incorporation of the sound files into the dictionary and computer programming work were carried out at the University of Chicago under the supervision of James Nye.

The second edition of the dictionary has been prepared for presentation and discussion at International Hindukush Cultural Conference-4, originally planned for September 2020 in Chitral but postponed until 2022 because of the coronavirus pandemic. In this second edition of the *Brief Khowar-English Dictionary*, responsibility for the Perso-Arabic spellings of the words and sentences in this dictionary remains with the editor, Elena Bashir. She has attempted to resolve as much as she could of the variation found in earlier versions and to adopt spellings that reflect both the usage of the two authors, Maula Nigah and Rahmat Karim Baig, and consistency based on several principles. These considerations are discussed in Bashir (2022) “Three Khowar dictionaries”, to be presented at the International Hindukush Cultural Conference-4. She realizes that Khowar orthography is still evolving, and hopes that this dictionary will make a contribution toward these efforts. She welcomes comments and suggestions from readers (ebashir@uchicago.edu).

The contributors

The contributors to this dictionary are Rahmat Karim Baig, retired Professor of English, and the late Maula Nigah Nigah, two prominent figures in educational, cultural and literary circles in Chitral. Both belong to village Zondrangram, Tehsil Mulkhaw, District Chitral. The Khowar of this more remote part of Upper Chitral is considered a conservative variety, as opposed to that of the town of proper Chitral, which has assimilated more varying influences. One of the aims of this short dictionary is to illustrate the language as spoken by two sophisticated speakers who come from the same village, in the hope of presenting a consistent picture of a single dialect of Khowar at a specific point in time (2005). Similar studies of other Khowar dialects remain for future work.

The late Maula Nigah held a B.Ed. and an M.A. (Urdu), both from Peshawar University. Starting in 1968 he served in the NWFP Education Department, and in 1991 was posted as Headmaster in Chitral High School. In 2006 he retired as Headmaster, Government High School, Hone, Chitral. He is a highly regarded poet in Khowar; who also composed poetry in Urdu and Persian, and participated regularly in the activities of the Anjuman-e-Taraqqi Khowar, Chitral. He was also talented as a folk singer and sitarist. Additionally, he was involved in social welfare activities including being a regular member of the Terichmir Council for Social Welfare, Terich. Later in life he was active in promoting both government and local efforts toward preservation of wildlife and the environment.

Rahmat Karim Baig holds an M.A. (History) and an M.A. (English), both from Peshawar University. He taught for more than twenty years as Lecturer and then Professor of English at Government Degree College, Chitral and Government Degree College, Booni. He is active in social and cultural activities, having served as Member of the Terichmir Social Welfare Council sponsored by the Social Welfare Office, Chitral, and as a field investigator in the Pak-German Culture Area Karakoram (CAK) Project in Ghizer District in their project on human geography. In 1988, he worked as field investigator on irrigation and water rationing systems of Village Khot, Tehsil Torkhow, Village Khosht, Tehsil Mulkhov, and Village Singur, Tehsil Chitral. In addition he has worked over the years as a free-lance tourist guide and more recently become involved in environmental issues. He regularly contributes articles to the English-language press in Chitral.

The editor, Elena Bashir, wrote her PhD dissertation on the Kalasha language in the Linguistics Department at the University of Michigan (USA). During the course of that work she became aware of both the many similarities and the differences between Khowar and Kalasha. Since then (1986) she has been researching and working on Khowar. Until her retirement in 2019 she was teaching at the University of Chicago (USA). She has published several articles directly related to Khowar, in addition to writings on other languages of Pakistan.