

## A Comparative Note on Kashmiri and Shina Phonology

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*Language is not the neutral tool of an honest desire to tell the truth but an instrumental tool for constructing history and inventing realities.*

*Edmondo O' Gorman*

Kashmiri is the native language of Kashmir province of the state of Jammu and Kashmir State in India. The 2001 census puts its speakers at 5,362,349. Besides Kashmir valley, it is spoken in many regions of Jammu province and Dras in the Ladakh province of Jammu and Kashmir.

Shina is the language of Shins who inhabit primarily the Gurez and Tilel valleys of Kashmir province and Dras in the Ladakh province of Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir. The number of Shina speakers in the 2001 census is 34390. However, majority of the speakers of this language are found in Pakistan Administered Kashmir.

“Shina languages of the Dard group are spoken in Gilgit, Gurez, Chilas, Kargil, Dras, Swat Kohistan and the Indus valley. It has six dialects namely Gilgiti, Astori, Chilasi, Gurezi, Brokpa. While Gilgiti, Astori and Chilasi dialects are spoken in Pakistan-administered- Kashmir, Gurezi, Brokpa and Brokskat are spoken in Jammu and Kashmir” (Kumar, 1992:4386).

In Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir, Gurez has the highest number of Shina speakers. Radloff (1992: 93) puts the number of speakers of Shina to around 0.5 million out of which some 20000 Shins are living in Jammu and Kashmir. Schmidt and Kohistani (1998: 107-108) estimates that there are about 3 million speakers of this language worldwide.

Kashmiri and Shina have both been classified by Grierson (1919) as belonging to the Dard sub-group of the ‘Dardic’ languages. Turner (1927: 533), while comparing Shina with its neighbouring languages reports that;

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“Shina is closely related to Kashmiri”. Colin P. Masica in his book *The Indo-Aryan Languages* (1991: 297) reports: “There is nothing special beyond Kashmiri: only Shina and its offshoot Phalura show gender in pronouns”. Under Dardic Grierson includes the Kafir languages of Afghanistan and the Khowar and Dard group of present day India and Pakistan. The Dard group of Dardic includes Shina, Kohistani and Kashmiri. The present paper aims to highlight some points of similarity between Kashmiri and Shina at the phonological level. The data for Shina has been taken from speakers of *gurezi* dialect of Shina and, therefore, most of the examples in the paper would be from the *gurezi* Shina.

There are many similarities between Kashmiri and Shina at the phonological level but it must be noted that there are a significant number of dissimilarities as well. Both Kashmiri and Shina have a high number of vowels among the Dardic languages. This feature is solely present in these two languages and not in the other Dardic languages except Kalasha which has a twenty vowel system. Kashmiri has fifteen vowels (Koul and Wali 2009:10) while as twenty vowels have been posited for Shina by Bailey in his monumental work *The Grammar of Shina Language* (cit. Masica 1991:113).

The central short vowel [i] peculiar to Kashmiri is also found in the *gurezi* dialect of Shina.

<b>Shina</b>	<b>Gloss</b>	<b>Kashmiri</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
/asil/	good	/k <sup>h</sup> arič/	expenditure/expenses
/marič/	chillies	/tir/	strip/rag

Schmidt and Koul (1984:18) report that: “Kashmiri, Poguli and Kishtwari have developed both central vowels [i] and [ə]”. This [i] vowel is also present in Brokskat- “considered as a member of the Shina sub-group of languages” (Ramaswami 1975:1), though the presence of this vowel may be an areal feature, rather than a specific contact feature (Schmidt and Kaul 2008: 233).

Kashmiri spoken in the valley has only one example of the back-mid long vowel [ɔ:] in /sɔ:d/ for ‘one and a quarter’ fraction. However, the other

dialects of Kashmiri like Kishtwari and Poguli report this long vowel quite often.

<b>Poguli</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
/gɔ:š/	light
/sɔ:s/	ashes
<b>Kishtwari</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
/gɔ:ray/	will tell you
/jɔ:n/	good
/gɔ:D/	cowshed.

The word /sɔ:/ meaning 'ashes' is used in Kashmiri spoken in Batara- a village some 30 odd kilometers away from Bhaderwah town in Doda district of Jammu and Kashmir.

Shina spoken in Gurez has the vowel [ɔ] but only in loan words (Masica 1991: 113), with these words being mostly from Kashmiri. According to Grierson (1919), there were front-rounded vowels in Kashmiri which, however, in the opinion of Bailey (1937), Handoo (1973) and Kachru (1973) are unrounded central vowels [i, i:, ə, ə:]. Kachru and Handoo thus bring the number of vowels to sixteen in Kashmiri though this does not in itself build up the case for the inclusion of [ɔ:] in the list of vowels of Kashmiri. But since [ɔ:] has been reported in the speech of Poguli and Kishtwari and also in certain regional varieties of Kashmiri, for example Khah, spoken in upper reaches of Banihal town, and Neel and Khari<sup>1</sup> areas, it may not be naïve to say that the number of vowel phonemes in Kashmiri is sixteen.

Munshi (2006: 283) notes that Kashmiri has a vowel inventory comprising of sixteen vowels. However, the author includes [ɛ] rather than [ɔ:] in the list. Similarly Kelkar and Trisal (1964) argue that "the vowel list" [of Kashmiri] "should be augmented with [æ:] which occurs as a free variant

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<sup>1</sup> This is part of the findings of the project *Survey of Kashmiri Dialects (Part-II)*, taken up by the Department of Linguistics, University of Kashmir, Srinagar in collaboration with Urdu Teaching and Research Centre, Lucknow and Central Institute of Indian Languages, Mysore.

of [ə:] in English loan words". Kashmiri so-called *matra* vowels which have been reported to be lost entirely leave effects on preceding consonants and vowels- e.g. palatalization, umlaut- that may make it analytically convenient still to posit them. In the same way as Saksena (1971: 74-7) notes the whispered vowels of the western dialects of Awadhi 'not making a syllable', Hook (quoted in Masica 1991: 121) notes that the ultra-short final vowels in Shina also do not make a syllable (Masica 1991: 121-2). Bailey (1924) too has also mentioned a very short final vowel [ē] in Shina. Bhat (2008: 43) also posits an extra short [ī] for Kashmiri. This vowel, he believes, precedes a palatalized consonant of a word to show grammatical change in number. Bhaskararao et al. (2009: 3), while commenting on Bhat (ibid) note that the author "does not either refer to Grierson (1911) or to Kelkar and Trisal (1964) who had distinctly mentioned about a vocalic segment in the same place where Bhat (2008) posits the extra short [ī]".

Schmidt et al. (2008: 25), while describing the Shina of Indus Kohistan, report that the "final unaccented short vowels are whispered and not voiced, which the native speakers can hear even though foreigners cannot". These short unaccented vowels at final position are shortened to palatalization. Schmidt et al. (ibid) cite the example; /báli/ which is phonetically viewed as [ˈbʌɕlʲ] where [ɕ] represents palatalization but not /balí/ whose phonetic output remains [bʌˈli]. These short vowels, common to both Kashmiri and Shina, seem to be the precursors of palatalization and also are not audible like the pure vowels. "We also meet the half pronounced <sup>u</sup> and <sup>i</sup> at the end of the word which are so common in Kashmiri, and which are found in some languages of eastern Hindustan. These are represented by small letters above the line; /do:n<sup>u</sup>/ 'a bullock', /āšip<sup>i</sup>/ 'horses' etc" (Wilson 1899: 93-94).

However, palatalization is not distinctive in Shina as it is in Kashmiri but nevertheless present in certain adverbial suffixes and discretely in some words like the following:

Shina	Gloss
/č <sup>h</sup> in <sup>j</sup> a:s/	cut
/th <sup>j</sup> o:nu/	to do
/sa:bin <sup>j</sup> /	soap
/čak <sup>j</sup> o:nu/	to walk

The number of consonants in Kashmiri is twenty seven (Munshi, 2006: 583) while as in Shina it is thirty seven (Masica 1991). Thus both have a high number of consonant phonemes. The inventory of twenty seven consonants for Kashmiri does not, however, include the palatalized consonants. In Kashmiri, virtually all the consonants can be palatalized barring the palatals. There is a lot of ‘pattern congruity’ shared by these two languages in the phonology although in certain cases there is a triple contrast [Coronal versus Retroflex versus Palatal] in Shina found lacking in Kashmiri. This is seen as a new development in Shina and Dardic languages in general. Shina shares this feature with Burushaski and Brokskat etc.

The *gurezi* dialect, because of contact, has borrowed many items from Kashmiri. For example, the word for ‘grapes’ in Kashmiri /dač<sup>h</sup>/ seems to have been borrowed by *gurezi* Shina, for the reason that it is not seen in the other dialects of Shina which have /zač/ for ‘grapes’. The cognate in *gurezi* is /daš/ which means that *gurezi* Shina has borrowed only the initial (onset) consonant and the vowel while retaining the retraction in the final consonant. The consonant at the coda position in *gurezi* Shina is [ʂ] which is a voiceless retroflex fricative. Palula- an archaic dialect of Shina which along with Sawi (another archaic variety), believed to have separated from the Shina in the mid 17<sup>th</sup> century- has the retracted fricative at the coda position of the word much similar to the coda consonant of Kashmiri differing only in not being aspirated like the one in Kashmiri i.e. it has /dač/. Thus the only difference in the two seems to be the lack of aspiration in Palula word. It might as well be presupposed that Palula may have borrowed it from Kashmiri since deletion (of aspiration here) is the more common phenomenon historically than addition. It would be unlikely, therefore, to say that source is the Palula /dač/ from which Kashmiri has developed /dač<sup>h</sup>/. The schemata for the rule would be as below.

Kashmiri	Palula	Gurezi	Gloss
/dač <sup>h</sup> /	/dač/	/daʃ/	Grapes

However, it is also believed that *gurezi* Shina among all other varieties, has the least retracted retroflex sounds (Schmidt and Kaul 2008: 233). Retraction is a specific feature of all the dialects of Shina. The lessening of retraction in [ʃ] in *gurezi* Shina may be because the geographical and political barriers separating the latter from the rest of the varieties, or due to their frequent interaction with the Kashmiri speakers of the valley or a combination of both. Schmidt (2004) too believes that “political developments since 1947 have nearly eliminated communication between the eastern and western dialects of Shina, where as previously there may have been more contact between Gurezi and Kohistani” [and other Shina dialects]. This may have had its influence on the retracted sounds of *gurezi* Shina. “The development of retroflex affricates from various Old Indo-Aryan clusters is an innovation in Dardic languages” (Munshi, 2006: 283). However, Kashmiri, considered as one of the members of Dardic group, is devoid of these retracted affricates. The above example is just one instance where there is a retracted affricate in Shina but not in Kashmiri.

Being part of the Kashmir division of Jammu and Kashmir, there has been a prolonged speaker contact between Kashmiris and Shins of Gurez, with speakers from several villages of the latter being equally proficient in the two languages. It may therefore be plausible to say that the *gurezi* dialect of Shina is much more influenced by Kashmiri than the other dialects of Shina like Gilgiti or Astori etc. The influence of contact can be mostly felt in lexis and phonology. The phonological comparison between the Shina of Gurez and Kashmiri reveals a certain similarity. For example, the lack of voiced aspirates in most of the Dardic languages gives rise to a three way contrast in consonant phonemes i.e. there is a voiceless phoneme, its aspirated form and a voiced phoneme which does not have the aspirated form. It would be like having in a language like Kashmiri [p], [p<sup>h</sup>] and [b] but not [b<sup>h</sup>]. This feature is common to both Kashmiri and Shina and is present in all the Dardic languages e.g.

Indo-aryan	Dardic	Gloss
/b <sup>h</sup> u:mi/	/buúm/	earth
/d <sup>h</sup> ūvā:/	/dú: <sup>u</sup> m/	smoke
/du:d <sup>h</sup> /	/dɔd/	milk
/g <sup>h</sup> i:/	/gi:/	ghee

(Dardic examples are from Kashmiri, Shina, Khowar and Pashai)

There is also a triple contrast of coronal-retroflex-palatals like [s], [ʂ] and [ʃ] in Shina affricates while as in fricatives there is a triple contrast of [z], [ʒ] and [ʒ]. This is lacking in Kashmiri but found in Burushaski, although it is supposed to be a recent development. Masica (1991:102) reports that “absence of voiced aspirates can be found in “Kashmiri and most other Dardic languages (Shina, Bashkarik, Gawarbat, Khowar etc.), a few West Pahari dialects etc.”. This is one such feature which links Kashmiri as well as Shina with the so-called Dardic group. He further notes that “voiced aspirates are retained, however, in most Pahari dialects, most ‘Lahnda’ dialects, in Dogri, and in the Kashtwari [Kishtwari] and Rambani dialects of the Kashmiri group, and in Dardic Maiyá and Kalasha” (ibid). However, a survey of Kishtwari<sup>2</sup> has not been able to report a single instance of voiced aspirates in Kishtwari. Like [h] dropping, the findings of the above project reveal that devoicing is a prominent feature of Kishtwari. Masica (1991:102) also assumes that “absence of voiced aspirates is often correlated with the presence of TONE”, but also notes that, “this is not always the case, however, (e.g. in Kashmiri etc.)”. However, there are traces of *tone* found in Kishtwari- considered as a true dialect of Kashmiri- although very rarely. “Out of Kashmiri, Kishtwari, Poguli and Siraji, only Kishtwari shows unambiguous evidence of pitch contours, with a schleifton occurring in words of which a historical voiced aspirated initial consonant has become devoiced and de-aspirated [Kishtwari /po:y/ vs. Kashmiri /bo:y/ ‘brother’]” (Schmidt and Kaul 2008: 231).

<sup>2</sup> The survey of Kishtwari is part of the project *Survey of Kashmiri Dialects* being carried out in the Department of Linguistics, University of Kashmir, Srinagar in collaboration with Urdu Teaching and Research Centre, Lucknow and Central Institute of Indian Languages, Mysore.

## Conclusion

The relationship between Kashmiri and Shina is a question that has long been asked but not settled fully as of yet. Despite many similarities between Kashmiri and Shina at the phonological level as revealed by the above findings, there is scope for further research to unravel the status of these two languages with regard to their genealogical affiliation.

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