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Peer reviewed

A Grammar of the Shina Language of Indus Kohistan

By Ruth Laila Schmidt and Razwal Kohistani

(Beiträge zur Kenntnis südasiatischer Sprachen und Literaturen, 17. Herausgegeben von Dieter B. Knapp)

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Reviewed by Henrik Liljegren

Shina is a cluster of Indo-Aryan varieties spoken in a vast and remote mountain region of northern Pakistan, spilling over into Indian-held territories in the east and into Afghanistan in the west (the latter represented by the speech of a small Shina enclave in a single village, Buddruss 1967). The object of Schmidt's and Kohistani's work is the Shina variety of Indus Kohistan, possibly one of the, from an outsider's perspective, least accessible areas of the entire region, culturally as well as geographically. This piece of original scholarly work is important and exemplary in more than one way. First, it contributes greatly to our understanding of languages in this region, of which most until recently have been only summarily or unsatisfactorily described, and in particular it helps us form a more complete picture of the Indo-Aryan languages often referred to as "Dardic" (a designation we will return to shortly). Second, it is a collaborative undertaking of a western scholar (Schmidt) and a trained native linguist (Kohistani) that serves as a positive example to be followed by other field linguists, in its attempt to build a bridge of mutual benefit and respect between the academic world and the local communities and their own scholars.

Although large sections of the grammar have been published before in various articles (Schmidt 2000, 2001, 2003, 2004; Schmidt and Kohistani 2001) and other varieties are described, at least to some extent, by other scholars (Bailey 1924; Bashir 2003; Buddruss 1967, 1987, 1993, 1996; Hook 1990, 1996; Hook and Koul 2004; Hook and Zia 1987; Liljegren 2008; Morgenstierne 1941; Radloff 1992, 1999, 2003; Radloff and Shakil 1998; Strand 1997/2008), this is the first full grammar of Kohistani Shina, based on high quality data that has been collected and subjected to meticulous analysis over a period spanning several decades, paired with the authors' deep knowledge of Urdu and the diachronic developments of Indo-Aryan, from Old Indo-Aryan into the modern languages of the Subcontinent.

It is obvious that the grammar is written in a more traditional indological format (and thereby requires some knowledge of that tradition) but because of the contribution it makes to the Shina language of Indus Kohistani, it is indeed of value for typologists, the latter an increasingly important target group as far as grammars and other language-specific reference works are concerned. Some of the comments made in this review reflect my own (the reviewer's) interest in typology.

Chapter 1 is a general introduction, with a clear focus on the historical setting. In Section 1.1, the authors identify present-day Shina as the linguistic descendant of the Middle Indo-Aryan variety referred to as Gandhara Prakrit and its speakers as the "heirs" of the ancient Dards with their centre of power around the Neelam (Kishanganga) Valley. With this hypothesis as a backdrop, a division of Shina into four major dialects (Gilgiti, Kohistani, Guresi and Drasi) is presented and compared with some other attempts at sub-classifying Shina (Bailey 1924; Strand 1997/2008). The conclusion drawn is that these varieties and their geographical distribution are the result of subsequent migrations of Shina speakers, or rather proto-Shina speakers, from an original homeland situated somewhere north of the Kashmir Valley. In Section 1.2, the perspective is narrowed down to the Shina-speaking area in

Kohistan and its impressive oral history, in Section 1.3 leading over to a discussion of the comparatively recent and very gradual introduction of Islam and some possible features of the pre-Islamic religion in the area. Section 1.4 provides a brief characterisation of the present-day status of Shina in Kohistan.

What the introduction, with its interesting historical emphasis, leaves us wondering is what today's Kohistani society is like, to what extent Shina speakers interact with speakers of other languages, how the speakers themselves refer to their language, what some of the most important geographical characteristics of the Shina-speaking area of Kohistan are. The map (after the Preface and before the list of Abbreviations) unfortunately gives us few other clues. Most of the place names included are in fact situated in non-Shina speaking areas, mostly on the mainly Indus Kohistani-speaking west bank of the Indus.

Schmidt and Kohistani's use of the term "Dardic" (and "pan-Dardic", p. 97), when referring to Shina as well as to other Indo-Aryan languages in the region, is not wholly unproblematic. Although not discussing the use of the term *per se*, and probably not even making a statement by using it, the absence of an explanation of the sense in which it is used, is somewhat disturbing. This should be seen against a background of an ongoing controversy, where some scholars (e.g. Bashir 2003: 822) use it only as a convenient cover term for the Indo-Aryan languages of this particular region (sometimes referred to as the Hindu Kush region), albeit explicitly without any claims of subclassification within Indo-Aryan, whereas others seem to use it in a routine-like way but nevertheless in a classificatory sense (e.g. Baart 1999: 8; Radloff 1999: 4). On the other hand, there are those linguists who indeed make a statement by either using it (Zoller 2005: 10) or by *not* using it (Strand 2001: 251, including footnote 441), the former indeed positing "Dardic" as a unitary subgroup within Indo-Aryan, the latter discarding and discouraging a term which he sees as embodying the false claim of a widely accepted classification.

Chapter 2 outlines the Kohistani Shina phonology (or less technically: "sound system", which is used by the authors) and is a revised version of the phonological description found in Schmidt and Zarin 1981. It begins with a fairly traditional, concise and well-structured presentation of the consonant and vowel segments in the language, exemplified in different word positions, with further details on their allophonic variation and phonetic realisations. On the segmental presentation follow some sections mainly dealing with the intriguing features of stress or accent in Shina. The status of a few marginal or more recently introduced phonemes are subsequently discussed, and, finally, some sample acoustic graphs are shown.

The otherwise clear presentation, with plenty of examples, in Section 2.2, is obscured by the use of non-standard transcription in the phonemic as well as the phonetic representations. It assumes a familiarity with indological transcription (such as that used by e.g. Turner 1966 and Masica 1991) and is therefore quite difficult for the general linguist or typologist to use. In the discussion on accent, the distinction between an underlying tone or moraic accent and its phonetic manifestations seems somewhat blurred, and one cannot help wondering whether a simpler statement or definition such as the one found at the end of Section 2.3 would not be better suited at the beginning of this entire discussion (also in line with the description found in Radloff 1999, which seems to capture this phenomenon as it appears in various Shina varieties).

The characterisation of voiced aspiration (Section 2.5) as a contrastive feature reintroduced through borrowing from neighbouring Indus Kohistani is insightful and points to the complexities involved in diachronic research and reconstruction in an area where extensive borrowing has taken place between relatively closely-related languages throughout much of their history.

Chapter 3 (mainly) deals with noun morphology. The formal expressions of gender, number and case for different noun classes is at the centre of a very detailed description, but

case functions and the category of definiteness are to some extent also explained and covered in the chapter. The allomorphic complexity of Shina noun morphology is apparent and is not easily captured in a grammatical description. To this is added, as the authors also remark, the internal variation, typical of a non-standardized language such as Kohistani Shina. The order of presentation, however, seems somewhat counterintuitive. The paradigms and the noun classes are presented before the dimensions involved and the functions associated with them have been properly introduced. Exactly what the so-called “layers” (after Masica 1991: 230-48), mentioned already in beginning of Section 3.1, really refer to does not become clear(er) until well into the chapter, and even then it is doubtful to what extent the terminology and definitions used by Masica contribute to a higher degree of clarity and explanation.

The close functional relationship between case marking and postpositions justifies the treatment of postpositions (Section 3.2) in this chapter, but considering that many postpositions are also used as spatial adverbs (or, perhaps, the other way around), they may equally well have been treated in Chapter 7. The characterization of postpositions as free, independent and inherently accented (p. 70) stands in contradiction to what we immediately learn of some of the postpositions; *-da* and *-gi* indeed seem to be bound, dependent and constitute phonological words with the nouns they are postposed to. I assume what we have is a distinction between case markers fused with the preceding noun and case markers with an independent word accent on the one hand, and a distinction between variant and invariant case forms on the other, and that these two criteria for differentiating between postpositions and case suffixes are only partly overlapping.

The indefinite particle is an interesting phenomenon, and it exemplifies one of those areas where the otherwise morphological focus of the work shades over into the realm of syntax. Also, the far too short Section 3.4 on doubled nouns opens up for an area deserving of more in-depth treatment, comparison with similar word-formation phenomena in other languages of the region and textual examples. The same could be said of the somewhat related phenomena of repetition and vowel lengthening mentioned in 7.3.3.

Chapter 4 discusses pronouns and deixis. The whole area of deixis and the multitude of dimensions expressed through the pronominal system, could, as the authors remark, “in itself be the topic of a dissertation”. This is possibly one of the areas where Shina, perhaps along with a number of other languages in the region, turns out to be typologically most interesting. The description here gives us some ideas as to how languages in this particular region make pronominal and deictic differentiations related to e.g. spatial position, source of knowledge and visibility. This is naturally an area where corpora studies do not suffice and scholars actively involved in research in this region need to pursue alternative approaches (such as shown by e.g. Heegård Petersen (2006: 45-46) in his use of experimental stimuli – drawings, maps and films – as a means of investigating Kalasha local case marking).

The comparatively short Chapter 5 introduces Shina adjectives and their morphological properties and is for the most part entirely novel material. Apart from adjectives proper, some sets of deictic adjectives, an adjectival particle, adjectives used as noun, a reflexive adjective (why not a reflexive pronoun?) and the means available for expressing the functional equivalents of comparative and superlative degrees are presented. A final but summary section is dedicated to numerals.

The use of the terms “marked” and “unmarked” to characterize the adjectives (and in Chapter 3 the nouns) of certain declensional classes is a bit unfortunate. Although it should become obvious to most readers that “marked” nouns and adjectives, as the term is used here, are those (regular ones) that have overt formatives expressing masculine or feminine gender, the terms, as they are used in linguistic typology, would render almost the opposite meaning, i.e. regularity would be considered unmarked and irregularity marked (Croft 1990: 64-94; Waugh and Lafford 2006: 493).

Chapter 6 commences with a presentation and exemplification of what the authors refer to as nonfinite and finite simple verb forms (these, however, are far from all the forms used in the language and do not even include the most frequent ones). The presentation goes on with outlining the historical derivation of the so-called compound tenses. Subsequent to that, the compound tenses (including Present, Imperfect, Future, Past, Perfect and Pluperfect) are presented, followed by a lengthy description of the verb classes into which all Shina verbs can be divided. Voice, imperatives, modality, conditional sentences, conjunct and nominal verbs are each dedicated a comparatively short section.

This chapter finds itself in many ways at the heart of the entire grammatical description, covering the most elaborate part of Shina morphology, and constitutes with its almost 100 pages a comprehensive presentation. Apart from introducing a wealth of detailed information on the present-day verbal paradigm of Kohistani Shina, the dimensions expressed in it, the properties of a number of inflectional classes and verb stems, it provides an important attempt at reconstructing the ancient Shina verbal paradigm and the grammaticalisation processes resulting in the present inflectional system. The verbal paradigms of various dialects are compared and taken into account in the analysis and the authors convincingly trace the development of the so-called compound tenses (comprising most finite verb forms) to various fusion processes, some of them involving an older person-agreement suffix fusing with a ‘be’-auxiliary, others involving a participial fusing with a form of the verb ‘go’ (with some perfective tenses in their turn resulting from a subsequent fusion with a ‘be’-auxiliary).

With this grand attempt and the level of detail provided, there is no wonder that one easily loses track at a first read. The order of presentation is, again, not fully intuitive, and a presentation of a full paradigm at the beginning of the entire chapter would certainly help in the orientation, followed by a short characterization of all the forms displayed in the paradigm. When the reader has had a chance to see the big picture as far as the entire verbal system is concerned, she is certainly better prepared to grasp the details provided in connection with the reconstruction. The nonfinite forms introduced in Section 6.1 are further exemplified and their functions are explained in chapter 7, and therefore cross-references from Chapter 6 to the relevant sections in Chapter 7 would greatly improve the user-friendliness of the work.

I for my part am left slightly confused over the use of “roots” and “stems” in Section 6.4, how these are defined, respectively, and what might be gained analytically by further breaking down stems into roots and vocalic (derivational?) elements. As the authors themselves say, “causatives, like passives, are lexemes in their own right”. Another unanswered question is whether it is indeed the authors’ intention to make a differentiation between *conjunct* verbs (6.9.1) and *nominal* verbs (6.9.2), by placing them in two subsections, and what in that case is the differentiating factor.

Chapter 7 covers the somewhat incongruous categories adverbs, participles and verbal nouns. The “conjunctive participle” and its various functions were also discussed at length in Schmidt 2003, i.e. the nonfinite verb form which in that article was discussed in terms of a “converb” in following Haspelmath (1995). Although form rather than function is in focus here as in most of the other chapters, we nevertheless find a great deal of “hidden” syntax. Particularly central for understanding syntax in Shina (and Indo-Aryan at large) is the role played by different participles and nonfinite verb forms.

Another interesting feature, which crops up in more than one chapter and in connection with several parts of speech (cf. 4.1.2-4.1.3, 5.3, 7.1.2.1, 7.1.3.1 and 7.2.2.2), is essentially a part of the deictic system: the so-called “symmetrical sets” that are characterised by the recurring elements a-as-ka, proximate-remote-indefinite, respectively. This phenomenon is also pointed out by Schmidt 1999 as occurring in Urdu, but it may very well be a feature

associated with a larger area (cf. the strikingly similar behaviour and scope of deictic elements in Lezgian (Haspelmath 1993: 187-8), a language spoken in the Caucasus).

Chapter 8 discusses so-called “compound verbs”, a term used by e.g. Masica 1991: 326. This is an interesting and intriguing Indo-Aryan innovation, found in many of the major languages of South Asia, such as in Urdu-Hindi (Ebert 2006: 559; Masica 2001: 250-52; Schmidt 1999: 143). In Shina, however, it is still a rather marginal and lexically limited feature (which seems to be the case also in other Indo-Aryan languages of this mountain region (Baart 1999: 108-110; Bashir 1993: 1-4)), a reason why it is a bit surprising that it has been dedicated an entire chapter of its own.

The very short Chapter 9 introduces the most important conjunctions (or, maybe, discourse particles) found in Kohistani Shina, including a couple or more illustrative sentences for each one of them. These, again, are mainly there to whet our appetite as far as Shina syntactic and discourse structures are concerned, and scholars with an interest in Indo-Aryan languages in this region certainly hope to soon learn more about Shina from Schmidt and Kohistani.

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