

Jan Heegård Petersen: Kalasha texts – With introductory grammar. Linguistic consultants: Nabaig, Sikandar Ghulam Khan and Taj Khan. Travaux du Cercle Linguistique de Copenhague Vol. XXXV. In: *Acta Linguistica Hafniensia – International Journal of Linguistics*, volume 47, supplement 1, pp. 1–275.

The book under review is an outcome of several years of field work conducted by the author in an outlying part of the Hindu Kush. The texts in Kalasha language were recorded and transcribed by him and his language consultants between 1995 and 1997, and between 2004 and 2006. Kalasha has around 3,000 to 5,000 speakers and is a threatened Indo-Aryan language spoken in the Hindu Kush Mountains of Pakistan. Like several other languages in the area, also Kalasha adopted fairly recently an adapted version of the Persian script. However, this is of limited practical relevance. Out of the more than 30 languages that are spoken in the high mountains of North Pakistan none is employed as a medium of instruction in the local schools. Pakistan's language and education policy differs significantly from that in India with its Three Language Formula which frequently means studying in a regional language and learning Hindi and English as second languages. It is also a regrettable fact that the present 'cultural climate' in the area does not really encourage caregiving to oral traditions in regional languages. And, of course, there has always been only a small number of enthusiasts ready to deal with all the difficulties and problems that are part of linguistic field work in such remote areas. It is necessary to point all this out because such circumstances make publications like the present one all the more important and valuable.

The author's book comprises eight chapters. They deal with the cultural and linguistic setting, a summary of the Kalasha grammar, characteristics of the regional oral traditions and other related issues, and the texts. The oral texts have been put into writing in three different ways: first as running texts (with translation) by using the usual transcription/transliteration standards in South Asian linguistics, second in an interlinear presentation where the original text is presented both in broad transcription (easy to read for non-specialists) and according to IPA. This procedure is quite elaborate but it has the advantage that the book can also be used by non-linguists. Kalasha language and culture has always had a great attraction for anthropologists and linguists. Here follow some remarks on background and history of research.

The Kalasha people still follow a polytheistic religion akin to Hinduism in India. But their religion has preserved a number of archaic features otherwise only known from the ancient Vedic religion. This is paralleled by the fact that the Kalasha language is also remarkably archaic when compared with other Indo-Aryan languages further south. The author's grammatical description is, however, purely synchronic. This is not meant as a criticism because this method serves the purpose of making the original texts understandable. Still, I will add some historical and typological facts in order to make the background of the Kalasha language clearer, and why the language is so interesting. The Indo-Aryan languages (including Nuristani) spoken in the north-west of South Asia have a preeminent role in our understanding of the history of the Indo-Aryan branch of Indo-European. This is so despite the fact that these languages are only known since the second part of the 19th Century and none of them owns old written texts that could be used for historical reconstruction.¹ Here I have to mention the name of the eminent Norwegian linguist Georg Morgenstierne who conducted field work already in the 1920s and then for many decades in the mountains that now belong to East Afghanistan and North Pakistan. It was Morgenstierne's merit to clarify the complicated situation of this linguistic area. Thus he showed that the Nuristani languages spoken in the neighborhood of Kalasha – though they have many features in common with Kalasha – have preserved linguistic traits older than the Vedic language and even going back to the common Indo-Iranian stage. Consequently, Morgenstierne postulated a third branch of Indo-Iranian – namely Nuristani – besides Indo-Aryan and Iranian. Neighboring Kalasha and other Indo-Aryan languages in the area, which are traditionally termed Dardic languages, have been given by Morgenstierne the status of being purely Indo-Aryan – i.e. direct descendants of Old Indo-Aryan (OIA) – even though he sees them also characterized by many “aberrant” traits.

The author summarizes the discussion around the linguistic classification of Nuristani and Dardic (pp. 21 –23) and accepts the traditional view that Nuristani (which comprises four or five major languages) constitutes a separate branch within Indo-Iranian and that the linguistic status of Dardic (which comprises circa twenty-seven languages, according to *Ethnologue*) is controversial. Since I have been working on this question for a longer time, I feel bound to name here a minimum of three arguments regarding the historical linguistic

1. That is to say that the history of the rest of the Indo-Aryan languages, which constitute the bulk, can be traced back to the Vedic language spoken around 3.500 years ago practically without interruption.

status of Dardic and Nuristani in the shortest possible way. The very small selection of the following arguments will be substantiated with plenty of data in my forthcoming publications.

(1) It is generally agreed that Dardic preserved OIA archaisms not found elsewhere in New Indo-Aryan. This holds also good for Nuristani. In his article on Nuristani in the *Encyclopedia Iranica*² Richard Strand lists a series of grammatical features characteristic for Nuristani. However, all features have parallels either in Iranian (a few) or in Indo-Aryan (many). This fact stumbles against the generally accepted principle that language branches are characterized not by preservation of archaisms but by linguistic innovations not found elsewhere.

(2) On p. 31 the author presents the Kalasha consonant inventory. This contains a very symmetrical subsystem of four orders of voiced and unvoiced dental, retroflex (postalveolar) and alveopalatal (alveolar) affricates and fricatives. However, such presentation conceals historical facts: not only do the unvoiced fricatives [s, ʃ, ç] have historical origins that are different from their voiced counterparts [z, ʒ, ʒ], the voiced fricatives are pronounced as such only in words of Perso-Arabic origin. Otherwise, there is frequently variation between the pronunciation of [z, ʒ, ʒ] and [dʒ, dʒ, dʒ], and the palatal sound is mostly, at least word-initially, pronounced as an affricate. Consequently, these two orders do not have any minimal pairs and it is both historically and functionally more reasonable to postulate an underlying subsystem of three orders and not of four: two affricate orders (voiced and unvoiced) and one fricative order (only unvoiced). From an historical point of view, the development of palatal affricates versus dental affricates (the emergence of the retroflex affricates is a separate story) is by nature 'Iranian' in so far as it reflects the differences of the Proto-Indo-European orders of labiovelar versus palatovelar stops. This distinction has not been preserved (in this way) in Indo-Aryan which has only one order of palatal affricates. Yet, this 'Iranian' subsystem (frequently also including subsystems with retroflex affricates) is presently found in Nuristani, Dardic, Kashmiri and many varieties of West Pahlāvī (spoken in the Central and Western Himalayas). Although the difference between palatal and dental affricates has disappeared in many cases due to continuing depalatalization in later periods,³ still a number of examples can be found as in Nuristani Prasun *žon-* 'kill' < Proto-Indo-European (PIE) **g^{uh}en-* versus **z(ə)n-* 'know' < PIE **ǵneh₃-* (but OIA *han-* versus *jan-*). But this 'Iranian' type of palatalization is

2. See <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/nurestani-languages>.

3. It started in Indo-Iranian times but it seems that this process is ongoing even today in various Indo-Aryan languages especially in north-western South Asia.

also found in Dardic, e.g. in Kalasha *vi-čái-k* ‘to rest from working’ (not found in Nuristani) with second element < PIE **k^ueih₁-* ‘rest, quiet’ versus *zant* ‘pregnancy’ < PIE **géh₁-* ‘beget, engender’.

(3) As mentioned above, there are many examples for innovations not only found in Nuristani but also in other NIA languages. An example for one such type (not mentioned by Strand) is found on p. 62: Kalasha *juó* ‘second’ parallels Dardic Khovar *jū* ‘two’ and Kashmiri *zab* ‘two’. The same numeral is also found in the Nuristani Prasun word *imj’ü* ‘dyadic; twin’ with first syllable < OIA *yamá-* ‘twin’, thus basically meaning ‘twin-two’. The forms cannot derive directly < OIA *dva-* ‘two’. Ralf Turner (1966) suggested hesitantly in the *Comparative Dictionary of the Indo Aryan Languages* (p. 380) for Khovar “*jū* < **dyu* < **dui*?” But reconstruction of **dui* is not necessary because Kalasha *váraš* ‘hawk’ versus Khovar *yúruž* ‘hawk’ suggests opposing trends for palatalization and velarization as a regional feature.⁴ Thus there must have existed in the area between Nuristani, Dardic and Kashmiri not only reflexes of OIA *dva* ‘two’ but also of **dyu* ‘two’. The historical (2) and the areal (3) example must suffice to clarify that the discussion about the history and internal structure of the Indo-Iranian family has not yet ended. In my forthcoming publications I will suggest that the fissure of Indo-Iranian into Iranian and Indo-Aryan did not only lead to – using the terminology of Malcolm Ross (1996) – lectal⁵ differentiation in the wake of the two new branches, but there also continued to exist an older linkage of lects between the two poles of Iranian and Indo-Aryan, with Old Nuristani and Old Dardic constituting two such lects.

Coming back to the summary of the grammar: On p. 33 the author deals shortly with stress. He mentions that there are a few minimal pairs with different stress positions in homonym words, and then he states that Kalasha does not feature – as distinguished from neighboring languages like Palula, Kalam Kohistani or Indus Kohistani – phonemic tonal contrast. But Indus Kohistani does not have phonemic tonal contrast (Kalam Kohistani does have this), instead it has a two-element pitch accent system. The pitch accent systems found in several Dardic languages are inherited from the quite similar Vedic pitch accent system. For Kalasha, this has been shown in an excellent article by the author of the book under review (2012). The fact that Kalasha has only few

4. Note also that the author mentions (p. 31) that the two lateral approximants in Kalasha show varying degrees of palatalization and velarization in their phonetic realization. This velarization seems to be phonetically comparable with the retroflexion of vowels which is so typical for Kalasha. Palatalized consonants and morphological palatalization of consonants are otherwise especially common in Kashmiri and Prasun.
5. Lect is the collective term for dialect and language.

examples for phonemic stress oppositions may be due to an east-west cline: whereas in further eastern Dardic languages like Indus Kohistani and Shina phonemic stress distinguishes not only lexemes but fulfills also grammatical functions like verbal causativization, further east in Kalasha and in Nuristani these functions seem to be much less relevant. Most of the other topics presented in the summary of the grammar have already been described and analyzed by the author and by others in older publications and thus do not need here further discussion.

The chapter on grammar is followed by a chapter dealing with the linguistic and stylistic characteristics of oral performance (pp. 75-82). Here (as well as in the selection of oral texts) the author concentrates on the specific performance form of storytelling. Among the features distinguishing the language of storytelling from everyday language he mentions a.o. the artistic use of creaky and breathy voice (p. 75). In fact, these are phonetic features found in normal speech in different Dardic languages, for instance in Kalam Kohistani (Baart 1997). Other characteristics are a.o. word repetition and “ritualized openings and closings” (p. 77). In the following chapter, the author presents seven oral texts that can be allocated to different genres: animal fable, travel account, ‘wit and wisdom’-type story, myth, and fairy tale. The stories were rendered both by male and female speakers; several of them are known to be especially good storytellers. But it seems that none of them is a religious specialist, called in Kalasha *dehár*, *dehál* ‘shaman’. It would have been interesting to have a specimen of the oral performance of a Kalasha shaman and compare his language with the stories of the lay persons because performances of the former can be – as is known from other areas in South Asia – much more artistic and stylistically complex than performances of the latter.⁶ And there is here yet another point: There exists a common designation for ‘shaman’, ‘medium’ or ‘musician of a deity’ in many places between Nuristan and the Central Himalayas, for instance Nuristani Waigali *dāl* ‘Kafir soothsayer, shaman’, Indus Kohistani *diāl* ‘female oracle, shaman’, Baṅgāñī (a variety of West Pahāñī) *devāl* ‘professional musician of a deity’, etc. All these words, also including Kalasha *dehár*, *dehál*, go back to OIA *devapāla*- ‘god defender’. But the designation of a specific group of religious specialists with this term is only found between Nuristan and Central Himalayas. A local person once defined the term for me more precisely, he said: “The *devapāla* is the guru and the deity is the disciple.”

6. Some such oral texts have actually been published by Morgenstierne, Halfdan Siiger and Pierpaolo di Carlo (see the author p. 11) but, as a rule, they have not been analyzed under a stylistic perspective.

There is no doubt that in the mountainous stretch from Nuristan to the Central Himalayas these *devapālas* once were (and in some places still are) the main carriers of traditional knowledge and lore, and that they once held a much higher social position than they do today (for more details see Joshi 2011 and Zoller 2016).

Finally some comments on some of the stories: Text 8.2 ‘The story of the unfortunate daughter’ is actually a somewhat camouflaged fairy tale even though the Kalasha words for ‘fairy’ *parī* or *sūci* do not appear in the text. Early in the story the heroine enters into a mountain where she encounters super-human beings. This is followed by the motif of the hero and two ‘wives’. Both motifs are also found e.g. in the lore of Indus Kohistan and of the Central Himalayas. Also the last story ‘A king without sons’, called by the author a “heroic story,” contains a considerable number of motifs also known from other places in South Asia, but again especially from the high mountains, and, of course, from the Aarne-Thompson classification system of folktale motifs. Some examples: The king, who has no son, has also a horse without filly (in Central Himalayan stories is a comparable motif: when a hero is born also a filly is born in the family [see Oakley and Gairola 1935]); the childless king and queen are visited by a holy man who gives them a fruit to eat which makes the queen pregnant (for parallels in the Central Himalayas and in Rajasthan see Zoller 2014: 44f.); the motif of animal helpers – important in this story – is found in many places in South Asia, etc.

Before summing up, I want to mention that the book contains only a very small number of typing mistakes. However, the pagination in the *Contents* (pp. 3-5) differs from the actual formation of the book by two pages. That is, the first story has in the *Contents* the pagination number 81, but actually begins on page 83.

Constituting a community of a few thousand people with a venerable religion and surrounded by other communities which are much superior in number and which nowadays practice a strict form of Islam, it is clear that the archaic Kalasha language with its ancient traditions has little chance for survival. Even though there still continues to exist traditional lore in the mountains of North Pakistan, one can see that quite a lot has been lost. For instance, traditions of long oral epics can now hardly be found even though most likely they were performed there in the past. Morgenstierne found only some tiny survivals of the epic tradition of the *Mahābhārata* in Nuristan (Zoller 2014: 180), even though he visited the area only a few decades after the forced con-

version of the former ‘Kafirs’ to Islam. On the other hand, oral epic traditions of the *Mahābhārata* are still much alive in the Central Himalayas. But such dramatic changes do not only take place through force, and languages do not only disappear when their speakers die out. One tribe of the Munda-speaking Sora (living in southern Orissa and northern Andhra Pradesh) gave up within the short period of around ten years (ca. 1995-2005) its old religion and most of its members stopped speaking Munda and shifted to Indo-Aryan Oriya (Mallebrein 2011). In addition to the danger of irredeemable loss of small languages and local cultures, field linguists have more recently realized that in many places of the world also traditional ethnobotanical knowledge (phytomedicine) is rapidly disappearing and is thus in equal urgent need of documentation. An institution very active in this field which I want to mention here is the *Living Tongues Institute for Endangered Languages* founded by the linguist Gregory D.S. Anderson (<http://livingtongues.org/>).

I formulated my concluding remarks also in order to make clear that Jan Heegård Petersen’s newest publication is much more than the documentation of the lore of a small, exotic and far-away community. It is a very well-made book, it does a good service to a small community whose language and culture is threatened, and it contains a collection of stories whose reading is a pleasure.

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