Khowar and Kalasha:
Similarities and differences in their micro-areal contexts

by Elena Bashir

Abstract: This paper identifies similarities and differences between Kalasha and Khowar, and roughly periodizes the appearance/development of specific characteristics into an early stage (a time when a common proto-Kalasha-Khowar is posited); a middle stage (when pre-Khowar and pre-Kalasha diverged and their speakers eventually established themselves in northern and southern Chitral, respectively; and a recent stage, which can be characterized as a period of rapid (re-)convergence between Kalasha and Khowar. It lists those characteristics found in both languages, those found only in Kalasha, and those found only in Khowar.

1 Introduction

This paper focuses on and revisits Kalasha and Khowar, further exploring both the similarities and the differences between them – those which I have previously described over the years and those which have been recently identified. I try here to arrange them in a tentative diachronic scenario, and to point up questions and areas needing research.[1]

Interestingly, Grierson considered that Kalasha belonged to a Kalasha-Pashai subgroup of Nuristani ("Kafir") languages and that Khowar belonged to a separate (sub-)group (1919: 2), perhaps on the basis of observing

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similarities between Kalasha and the Nuristani languages like those which have recently been focused on from an areal linguistics point of view (di Carlo 2011, 2016; Liljegren & Svärd 2017). Morgenstierne, however, opined that: "Kalasha has its closest affinity with Khowar …" (1965: 188). It appears that Grierson focused on the differences between Khowar and Kalasha, while Morgenstierne emphasized the similarities. Following Morgenstierne, Strand (1973) groups Kalasha and Khowar together in a Chitral Group under "Dardic Languages", a position which he maintains in Strand (2001). Bashir (2003) also follows Morgenstierne (1965) and Strand (2001), with only minor modifications.

The present discussion of Kalasha and Khowar is based on synchronic descriptions and comparative study of these and neighboring languages and considers possible diachronic stages in the development of their similarities and differences.

2 Historical questions

Given both the close similarities, mostly in morphology and syntax, and the striking differences, mostly in phonology and lexicon, the most intriguing question for me about the historical development of Kalasha and Khowar is this. Did the pre-Kalasha and pre-Khowar speakers enter Chitral separately, having diverged prior to reaching Chitral, or did they reach Chitral together, still as a pre-Kalasha-Khowar group, separating afterwards? If they entered separately, which group arrived first, and where did they (first) settle? If they arrived together, at what point did they diverge, and where did each group (first) go?

According to local tradition among both the Kalasha and Khowar-speaking communities, Kalasha was formerly spoken as far north as Reshun as well as in a considerably wider swath of Southern Chitral than it is today[2]. Kalasha oral tradition also says that Kalasha speakers reached their present and recent past location from a legendary place called Tsiyam, whence they came to Waigal and then to Chitral (Morgenstierne 1965: 189). In these traditional Kalasha accounts, interestingly, Khowar is not mentioned at all. Its

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[2]   Di Carlo (2016: 118, fn 1), Cacopardo, A. M. (1991), Cacopardo, A. S. (1991), and Cacopardo, A.M. & Cacopardo, A.S. (1992, 2001: 74–76) discuss this question in detail.

Kalasha name is Patua Mon, which some have interpreted as 'speech of the Parthians/Persians'. However, Skalmowski (2004: 258) argues convincingly that the term Parthian etymologically "meant essentially 'outward-oriented', i.e. 'exterior/remote' in space, time or degree." Given this, perhaps "Patua Mon" meant/means something like 'speech of the outsiders, distant ones' rather than speech of a specific ethnic group or polity. If this is so, it would point to early divergence of the Kalasha and Khowar communities.

The origin of the name "Khowar" is unclear; Baig (1994: 6–7) discusses this question, saying: "The word Kho is never applied to any particular ethnic group to be found in the list of tribes spreading over Chitral", though it is now used to refer to either the people of Upper (northern) Chitral or in a more restricted sense to the people of Torkhow and Mulkhow. Contemporary Khowar speakers consider the original homeland of the language to be in the Torkhow and Mulkhow valleys. I have not encountered, either in the literature or in my fieldwork, any mention of an earlier "homeland" for the language.[3] Khowar is frequently anecdotally described as a "mixed language", which reflects people's recognition of the various origins of the Khowar lexicon. Today's Khowar speakers are indeed a disparate group, including descendants of the original proto-Khowar speakers, former Kalasha speakers, descendants of former Burushaski speakers, descendants of Turkic- and Persian-speaking ruling families, and descendants of early-Shina-speaking immigrants from Chilas now living in Laspur (Cacopardo & Cacopardo 2001: 82–83). Cacopardo & Cacopardo (2001: 85 ff.) cite an unpublished paper by Faizi (1989) on the descendants of Choke and Machoke (immigrants from Chilas) now living in Laspur. As Baig (1994: 7) says, "None of the present tribes are aborigines of the areas where they are now found." Perhaps researches in the genealogies and oral histories of other immigrant-origin clans can help fill in the picture of the disparate origins of today's Khowar speakers.

Two groups of hypotheses have been advanced about the origin and historical movement of Kalasha: (a) those which postulate a single pre-Kalasha-Khowar which entered Chitral while still a single linguistic community and then differentiated, and (b) those seeing Khowar moving northward into

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[3]   Morgenstierne (1932: 46, fn1) mentions a Kalasha tradition saying that the Kho came from Yasin. This may refer to more recent movements, in historical time.

Chitral before Kalasha and beginning/continuing to evolve separately from Kalasha.

According to Strand's account of the movements of the Khowar- and Kalasha-speaking peoples prior to their present locations in Chitral, Khowar, Kalasha, and other NWIA ("Dardic") languages of the region all share a "common linguistic heritage that harkens back 3500 years to the Sanskritic speech of the early Hindu Aryas who settled the alluvial flatlands along the Kabul River and its tributaries (Strand 2001: 251)." Here, still in the lowlands, "the language differentiated into clusters of regional dialects along the major tributaries of the Kabul River. From here, various groups spread up the Kunar Valley, proto-Kalasha speakers finally settling in lower [southern] Chitral and proto-Khowar speakers moving farther north into the valleys of upper [northern] Chitral." Strand describes the geographical distribution of pre-Kalasha and pre-Khowar as follows (2001: 253). "Still further up the Kunar in the present-day region of Sindân [Gabarong] and Southern Chitral were dialects ancestral to [Kalasha]. […] Beyond these in the high valleys of the uppermost sources of the Kunar the ancient language followed a somewhat special development into Khowar…" This account places the initial differentiation prior to entrance into Chitral and describes the resulting spatial distribution of Kalasha and Khowar, but does not suggest a sequence of movements.

Cacopardo, A.S. & A.M Cacopardo (1992: 371), based on their ethnographic and genealogical studies in the Kalasha-speaking valleys and citing Morgenstierne's hypothesis (1932: 47) that the mythical name Tsiyam may be connected with toponyms like Sanglechi *Šām* (northern Chitral) or Prasun *Šim Gul* for Chitral proper, conclude that: "The most likely hypothesis, therefore, is that Khowar and Kalashamun developed from a common language in Chitral itself, in agreement with Schomberg's suggestion that the whole of Chitral was once inhabited by one people (1938: 209)."

Morgenstierne's view (1932: 51) is different. He said that "probably the two languages belong to the first wave of Indo-Aryan immigrants from the south." He does not suggest a sequence of movements, but cites facts (pp. 46–47) pointing to a long-standing presence of the Kho in Mastuj (northern Chitral). Wazir Ali Shah (1974: 70) suggests a similar picture: "According to Grierson and Ghulam Murtaza, and also supported by Morgenstierne, the Kalash tribes arrived in south Chitral valleys via Bashgal and Arandu and pushed the *then resident* [emphasis mine] Kho tribes (also pagan) further

north. The area controlled by them extended up to Reshun …" This scenario suggests that the Kho tribes had migrated into Chitral separately, before the Kalasha tribes, and thus that a common proto-Kalasha-Khowar would have existed (only) before either group reached Chitral. It sees Kalasha speakers (at a fairly early stage) pushing Khowar speakers farther north, rather than Khowar speakers moving north on their own prior to the arrival of the Kalasha in southern Chitral. Given the well-known pattern of populations being pushed into higher elevation refuge areas by later arrivals, notably the fairly recent expansion of Pashto speakers into formerly "Dardic" areas, this seems to me the most likely scenario. Narratives of the Kalasha being driven southward by the Kho refer to a more recent, well attested historical and ongoing, development, in which the Kalasha (formerly ruling as far north as Reshun) have been pushed southward into the territories they now inhabit.

Strand (2001: 251) thinks that the speakers of the Nuristani languages arrived in this area, "probably much later [than the Indo-Aryan pre-Dardic languages, including pre-Kalasha-Khowar]", and "settled the district northeast of the confluence of the Kâbul and Kunar Rivers around present-day Kâmâ. These later arrivals [i.e. speakers of Nuristani languages] spoke languages with prehistoric Iranian traits, distantly related to the Indo-Aryan languages of their new-found homeland (p. 253)." This later arrival of Nuristani languages and their considerable interaction with Kalasha and its neighbors at that time would be consistent with a scenario in which Khowar had already moved farther north. Interestingly, following Skalmowski's convincing 2004 argument about the etymological origin of the term "Parthian"[4], the Kalasha name for Khowar, Patua Mon suggests a meaning of 'speech of the peripheral ones/outsiders', again pointing to an early separation of the two communities. In addition, the numerous contact effects with Burushaski, and even more so with Wakhi (Bashir 2001), which are not shared with Kalasha, point to a long period of Khowar (but not Kalasha) contact with these languages.

Recent research identifies linguistic micro-areas in present-day northeastern Afghanistan bordering Pakistan, in which Kalasha shares two features with Nuristani languages and some neighboring languages, but not Khowar. Di Carlo (2011, 2016) focuses on two features – the typologically rare retroflex vowels, found in Kamkataviri, Waigali, and Ashkun

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[4] See also p. 1 in this paper.

(Nuristani), and Kalasha and Dameli (IA); and on pronominal suffixes appearing with kinship terms to indicate the "possessor", which are found in Kamkataviri, Waigali, and Ashkun (Nuristani), and Kalasha, Dameli, Gawar Bati, and Pashai (IA). Significantly, neither of these features is found in Khowar. These results suggest that Khowar left the area of southern Chitral and present-day northeastern Afghanistan earlier than did Kalasha.[5]

3 Similarities and differences: a relative chronology

What is the relative chronology of the similarities and differences observed? Which similarities are shared retentions from OIA, and which are innovations in either Kalasha or Khowar – either internal developments or the result of areal influence? I will try to associate the various differences and similarities observed with rough, relative chronological stages.

3.1 Early stage

For purposes of this paper, the early stage refers to a time when a common proto-Kalasha-Khowar is posited. Questions about this stage include the following. Where was this proto- Kalasha-Khowar spoken? To what extent were the Kalasha and the Kho two distinct tribes or communities at this stage? To what extent were they (still) in contact with Iranian languages? Commonalities which appear to date from an early stage at which proto-Kalasha-Khowar was still minimally differentiated include phonological traits, lexical items, morphosyntactic characteristics, and some cultural elements.

3.1.1 Phonology

An apparently unique similarity between Kalasha and Khowar is pointed out in Morgenstierne (1973: 236). Discussing the metathesis of liquids in Dardic

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[5]   Liljegren & Svärd (2017) also discuss a construction expressing bisyndetic antithesis, which they found in Palula, Dameli, Kalasha, and Gawri (IA); and Waigali Kati (Nuristani), but not Khowar. The earlier version of the present paper mentioned three such linguistic micro-areas, including the feature of bisyndetic antithesis. However, I have recently discovered examples of bisyndetic antithesis in Khowar (see Section 3.2.3.3), necessitating revision of this statement.

languages, he says: "The assimilation of r with a following dental into a cerebral which is common to all Dardic languages with the exception of Kh. and Kal., antedates, and consequently prevents the metathesis." He gives examples like Kalasha *bat*, Khowar *bort* 'stone' as opposed to, e.g. Gawar Bati *wāṭ* and Dameli *baḍ* 'stone'. This innovative assimilation of r in the other Dardic languages would presumably have taken place at a time when Kalasha and Khowar were still together, having already separated from the rest of the (pre-)Dardic languages, but before Khowar moved farther north. Morgenstierne (1965: 188) also cites the possibility of reconstructing common *Kalasha-Khowar forms like that for 'daughter'. He says that common *Kal-Kho probably had *δ from intervocalic -t-, seen, for example in the developments in Northern Kalasha *čhu:(l-)*, Southern Kalasha *ǰhu:r,* and Khowar *žuúr* 'daughter' < *ǰhu:δ.

3.1.2 Lexicon

Numerous Kalasha and Khowar words are reflexes of common OIA forms, e.g. Kalasha *áma* 'raw' (T&C: 9) and Khowar *ámu* 'raw', both < T1236 'raw'; or Kalasha *aŋgár* 'fire' and Khowar *aŋgár* 'fire' < T125 'glowing charcoal'. However, some Khowar words show similarity to Nuristani words, for example the word for 'bow' (used with arrows), in contrast to the Kalasha word, which is apparently the reflex of a different IA form. Compare Nuristani: Kati *drõ:*, Waigali *drũ:*, Ashkun *drõ:* 'bow' (T6636, *druṇa* 'bow') (Nelson 1986: 56), Prasun *durũ* (Buddruss & Degener 2015: 652), and Khowar *dron* (T6636) (Naji 2008: 230)[6]; with Kalasha *thom* or *thām* (T&C: 304) (T6726, 6728, *dhanús* 'bow'). Apparently the vocabularies of Kalasha and Khowar began to differentiate quite early.

3.1.3 Morphology/syntax

3.1.3.1 OIA augment

The retention of the OIA augment in past tenses and the consequent retention of the nominative-accusative alignment pattern was pointed out already by

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6   Dameli *drun* 'bow' may either reflect participation in the micro-area discussed in the previous paragraph, or be a recent borrowing from Khowar.

Morgenstierne (1965: 188). In Kalasha (with a significant number of verbs) and Khowar (with fewer verbs and recent loss of the augment in even more) an augmented past tense has been retained. For example, in Kalasha from *nášik* 'to die', we have *a-náš-au* 'he/she/it died', and in Khowar from *brik* 'to die' we have *o-brít-ai* 'he/she/it died'. I have not found evidence of the retention of augmented forms in any other language, nor has Georg Buddruss, who says: "I am absolutely sure that all Nuristani languages known to me have no augment." (email May 31, 2010)

3.1.3.2 Nominative-accusative alignment pattern

The retention of the OIA augment in preterital tenses is linked to the retention of a NOM-ACC alignment pattern in Kalasha and Khowar. The finite preterital tense (> PST.ACTUAL) developed from the finite aorist and imperfect tenses of OIA, rather than incorporating participial forms. Along with Nuristani Prasun (= Vasi Vari) (Buddruss & Degener 2017: I, 26), Kalasha and Khowar are the only IA languages which have retained an original NOM-ACC alignment, while in the rest of NIA a split-ergative pattern evolved.[7] Edelman (1983: 56) postulates former geographic contiguity as the reason for this common retention, saying that Prasun, Kalasha, and Khowar used to constitute a compact block prior to "the relatively recent immigration of Kati speakers into the area." Where could this putative early micro-area have been? Presumably it was not close to where the Prasun speakers are now located, and not in Chitral, but somewhere in the lowlands north of Kabul as described in Strand's historical scenario.[8]

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[7] Modern Bengali has a NOM-ACC case marking pattern which has developed after the loss of the Old Bengali split ergative pattern (Chatterji 1970: 947–948, and has lost grammatical gender. In Old Bengali, morphological ergativity existed in the past and future tenses. Finite verbs tended to agree with unmarked transitive objects in gender. However, morphological ergativity had vanished by the Middle Bengali period (Klaiman 1980: 77–78).

[8] An anonymous reviewer disagrees with Edelman's analysis, arguing that early development and subsequent loss of split ergativity (as happened in Bengali) is an equally possible explanation. Strand (2010: unpaginated) cites Morgenstierne (1952: 123) in mentioning in Nuristani Tregami "an active, prospective past similar to that of V., but one that requires a special pronoun for the past actor-subject; e.g., *že-pe tō źyãt-em* 'I saw you'. Morgenstierne calls this a "mixed construction".

The questions of whether or not Prasun had/has a split ergative alignment pattern, and whether Prasun retains inherited grammatical gender are relevant for the question of the loss of gender and development of grammaticized animacy in Khowar and Kalasha. Prasun, along with Kalasha and Khowar, (now) has a NOM-ACC alignment system. Liljegren (2019: 311) has suggested that one factor in the loss of proto-Khowar-Kalasha gender is the absence of verbal agreement with direct objects in languages with a NOM-ACC system, resulting in a lower overall frequency of gender agreement with noun phrases. Such lack of gender agreement with nouns with inanimate referents would weaken the masculine-feminine distinction in nouns referring to inanimates, and seems likely to be a major cause of the weakening and loss of the inherited gender distinctions in pre-Khowar-Kalasha.

Following this line of thought, one might expect that since Prasun has NOM-ACC alignment it would also have lost grammatical gender. [9] However, this is not the case. Richard Strand (email 6/24/2020) states unequivocally that there is grammatical gender, contrasting default and feminine genders in Vâsi-vari (Prasun). He says: "In Pâṣki it shows up in verb forms made with the morphemes that depict:

- Progressive ("Present") -*m'â* [default]/-*m'i* [feminine],
- Prototypical ("Present II") -*g'â* [default]/- *'ig* [feminine], and
- Immediate ("Aorist") -*'ę* [default]/- *'i* [feminine]

and in nouns and adjectives with the feminine suffixes -*ig* and -*i*." He further notes that "most of Buddruss's examples of adjectival gender pairs are loanword pairs from Kâta-vari." His ethnographic texts include the example *mŭn(d)*/*mŭndi* 'clan leader'/'clan leader's wife' at http://nuristan.info/Nuristani/Vasi/VasiCulture/Zaman14.html and he notes that "many of the feminine forms of human social-role nouns depict 'X's wife'." Buddruss & Degener (2017: 69–72) also discuss nominal gender, as well as noting that gender is marked in the present and aorist affixes in the verbal paradigm (p. 31).

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[9] Morgenstierne (1949: 195) had stated that loss of gender is one of the most salient features of Prasun: "In P. the existence of nominal gender is very doubtful, but I found it difficult to get unambiguous information on this point (p. 217)."

The key difference beween the Kalasha-Khowar and the Prasun cases is that Kalasha and Khowar retain original finite preterital forms, whereas several finite verb forms in Prasun include originally participial elements marked for gender verb-internally while having verb-final person-number suffixes which agree with the subject of a sentence. Morgenstierne (1949) noted that several finite verb forms include word-medial participial elements. The transitive preterite "is based on a 'participle' in *g*", followed by personal endings (p 235). "The present is based upon an ancient participle in **ma*, f. *mi…*" (p. 237). "The perfect is formed by adding the present of 'to have' to the participle in *g. . .*" (p. 240).

All of Buddruss and Degener's examples of marked feminines are of animals or humans, as are all of Strand's examples of masculine-feminine pairs. Strand provisionally concludes, and it also seems to me, that gender is marked only on nouns denoting animate entities. This appears to be an intermediate stage in the process of gender loss, gender marking being first lost on inanimates, then on animates.

3.1.3.3 Morphologized inferentiality/evidentiality marking

Morphological marking of what I call inferentiality, the encoding of information not directly experienced (e.g. hearsay, distant unwitnessed past events) or newly learned (mirativity), on the verb seems to be a shared OIA heritage in Kalasha and Khowar, which has been modified and amplified by subsequent language contact. In 1988, I felt that the historical development seemed to be as follows. The seen/unseen (*parokṣa* 'unseen') distinction was morphologically indicated in the in OIA verb system in the language of Pāṇini.[10] Deshpande (1981), based on analysis of Pāṇini's rules P.3.2.110, P.3.2.111, and P.3.2.115, concludes that in his Sanskrit the three preterital tenses were specified as presented in Table 1.

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[10]   But these distinctions apparently did not hold in Vedic. Pāṇini, who gives very precise roles concerning the use of the aorist, imperfect, and perfect in his own Sanskrit, says that these varieties occur at random in early Vedic (*chandas*) (Deshpande 1981: 63).