



Nazir, Yawar. "India Revokes Special Status of Kashmir" Getty Images, 30 August, 2019

An Assessment of Kashmir and Linguistic Plurality in South Asia

Tess Yazvac

Coastal Carolina University



Pavia, Isabel. "Close-up of Arabic Calligraphy" Getty Images

Abstract

Kashmir is the northernmost region of India that has been under territorial dispute for centuries. In recent years, China, India, and Pakistan have all claimed to have control of a certain domain of this region. Before and after India gained its independence from British rule, fighting has ensued over which nation claims dominance over Kashmir. Out of this conflict, Kashmir became an epicenter where multiple ancient languages have joined and produced variations around the region. This research explores the linguistic importance of Kashmir by studying its religious personality and its different writing systems and vocabulary. According to a 2011 religious' poll, Kashmir has more than a 60% Muslim population, with Hinduism making up only 28% of the population (<5% make up Christians, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, and other or not stated religions combined). Kashmiri is the most spoken language in the region and is considered "one of the most of the most conservative Indo-Aryan languages". By researching the relationship between these languages, it becomes evident how traditions can morph from the conceived norms.

Objectives

- Explore religious and geopolitical influences in East Asia
- Analyze Kashmiri language structure and syntax
- Examine linguistic and cultural significance of Kashmir

Methods

The history of Kashmir's independence is fundamental to the territory's cultural significance. The conflict began when India won their independence from British rule in 1947. Under the Indian Independence Act, Kashmir was free to join Pakistani or Indian state lines. At first, the ruler at the time wanted Kashmir to be independent, but instead chose India in return for protection from attacking Pakistani fighters. China is not as active a member in the fight as Pakistan or India, but they do have ground control of the Shaksgam valley and Aksai Chin outside of the Bandipora district (though India claims to have control). This is the epicenter where the ancient languages of Chinese, pictographic in nature, and Arabic, derived from the creation of the Quran, meet. The importance of Kashmir lies in its religious personality. According to a 2011 religious' poll, Kashmir has more than a 60% Muslim population, with Hinduism making up only 28% of the population (<5% make up Christians, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, and other or not stated religions combined). After reviewing the statistics and the map below, it is apparent that religion contributes to the cultural significance of Kashmir. Wade (1888) refers to the census taken fifteen years prior that recorded "Muhammadans", known today as Muslims, had a majority among the population with 427,488 citizens out of a total 491,846, with 61,132 Hindus and 3226 sundry castes.

Tracing back the introduction of Islam in Kashmir is difficult. Early forms of Hinduism had been the predominant religion in Kashmir for centuries until Buddhism had been introduced in 300 BCE. Buddhism provided a moderate structure compared to Hinduism that was not separated by a caste system that was in place during the time. Hindu Kashmir rulers had tolerated Buddhism for centuries, and the two religions learned to cohabitate. Once the number of followers became a threat to those in power, the Hindu rulers began to oppress the Buddhists that began revivalism in the country. By the early 8th century, Islam had been brought to Kashmir, which brought hope to the oppressed Buddhists and deemed low-ranking Hindus. Munir describes Kashmiris "converted to Islam in a flood." It is unclear exactly who delivered the message of Islam to Kashmir. One argument claims Hamim Ibn Sama, son of the Sindh's Hindu ruler Raja Dahir, a Syrian Muslim military general who was defeated by Umayyad forces and fled to Kashmir. Due to his title, the ruler of Kashmir granted him land where he built Kashmir's first mosques. Another argument claims to have been influenced by Central Asian Muslims. A century later, the new ruler of Kashmir ordered translations of the Quran to be made in Kashmiri.

According to the World Population Review, "There are more than two billion Muslims worldwide, making Islam the second-largest religion in the world, exceeded only by Christianity." As of 2023, the source estimates that number of Muslims followers will outnumber Christian followers by the year 2050. The largest population of Muslims reside in Indonesia with 231,000,000 followers. Pakistan has the next largest population with 212,300,000 followers. Next, India holding third with an estimated 200,000,000 followers.

Results

Zeisler discusses Tibetic language influence in Jammu and Kashmir in a chapter their book *Ambiguous Verb Sequences in Transeurasian Languages and Beyond* where they mainly focused on the Turkic language patterns. Transeurasian Languages include Turkic, Mongolic, Tungusic (Eastern Siberia and Manchuria), Japonic, and Koreanic languages. Tibetic languages derive from the northern side of the Himalayan Mountains in western China. Zeisler discusses the similarities and differences of Tibetic language sentence sequencing, presenting tables and examples for visualization. The study acknowledges that not all of the sentence structures have been developed from their beginning form while some have changed to fit modern communication across cultures. For example, Zeisler describes how, depending on the ambiguity of a situation, it would be difficult to fully understand the time taken for the given situation, how long it happened, if it continued to happen and for how long, etc. Below is an example of this phenomena. From this study, readers can begin to comprehend and understand the exchange of cultural influences on the languages spoken in Kashmir.

Wade's book recounts the historical and linguistic significance between Islam and the written Arabic language after living with the Church Missionary Society in Kashmir. This study clearly breaks down the structure of Arabic grammar and its similarities along with its differences. In regard to reflexive pronouns in Kashmiri, Wade describes "The word Pana in Kashmiri means "self" and is in declinable; it is used with all persons, numbers, and genders (bo pana is I myself, as pana is we ourselves...). Pan means "the human body" and hence "self". Panawon means "amongst ourselves, yourselves, themselves," etc. like apas men in Urdu. Pana is not used in an honorific sense, as ap is in Urdu (Wade, 31). The study discusses how the dialects utilized in different regions of the territory are a result of interconnection between cultures in surrounding areas. Wade provides charts and translations of words to illustrate these connections. Wade includes conjunctions he concluded were only used by Muslims in Kashmiri. An example of this is utilizing "Ada" as "then". Another example is "Kyazi", or "Tikyazi", being used to mean "because" (Wade, 99). Wade separates his study into sections starting with making comparisons of the English and Arabic alphabet, how vowels are pronounced differently, how nouns are utilized, and later analyzing the use of masculine and feminine nouns in Arabic grammar. Finally, Wade explores the same properties found in Kashmiri grammar such as reviewing different verb tenses, explaining the passive voice, and providing English and Kashmiri sentence translations.

Syed, Shafi, and Alanazi present data that features Arabic loan words being used in Saraiki, one of the many languages of Kashmir. The study shows that speakers using Arabic loan words in Saraiki often manipulate the tradition language structure of the spoken language and the borrowed language. The study examines the geographical similarities that contribute to what the authors call "Loanword Adaptation" and later explain what the process entails, which include three models of adaptation. In addition, the study analyzes how some words or vowels are included, removed, or substituted in use of the given language. Finally, the study present many examples of these loan words divided by the sections mentioned previously. Their first chart compares Arabic and Saraiki words that share the same pronunciation with an extra vowel given to Saraiki words. For example, President in English is pronounced "sadṛ" in Arabic and "saḍḍṛ" in Saraiki. From this study, it is evident how traditional structure of languages can change based on geographical location and surrounding influences.

Conclusions

Bilingualism in knowing both ways to tell time. The Hindus follow a solar year while Muhammadans follow a lunar year. Wade notes that most of the inhabitants of Kashmir are Muhammadans and that "they must know the Muhammadan days of the week and months of the year in order to keep their feasts and fasts, the Arabic names for the months, and the Hindustani and Persian names of the days of the week, which are often used in Kashmir..." (Wade, 107). Through this research, it becomes apparent how culturally diverse Kashmir is. Arabic is a Semetic language, honed from the spoken word of the Quran in the Middle East. Chinese is a Sino-Tibetan language with beginnings from strokes on an oracle bone. Hindi, the official language of India, is an Indo-Aryan language with roots that trace back to ancient Sanskrit. The territory has not only been separated by language, but also by geopolitical operations. Even today, the three countries continue to wage battles for dominant control of the territory, with battles as recent as August 2019 (Center for Preventative Action, 2022). Kashmir is also distinguished by the three major religions: Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism, with Islam being the majority among the population. What makes Kashmir significant is the inhabitant's ability to endure strife from outside influences and their ability to maintain their individuality through the language.

References

"MAP 2: Tibeto-Burman languages of Kashmir." *Pacific Linguistics*. Series A. Occasional Papers, vol. 86, 1997, pp. 65. ProQuest, <http://login.library.coastal.edu:2048/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/map-2-tibeto-burman-languages-kashmir/docview/1297868965/se-2>.

Nazir, Yawar. "India Revokes Special Status of Kashmir" Getty Images, 30 August, 2019, <https://www.gettyimages.com/detail/news-photo/kashmir-muslim-women-protesters-shout-anti-indian-slogans-news-photo/116477773?adppopup=true>

Pavia, Isabel. "Close-up of Arabic Calligraphy" Getty Images, <https://www.gettyimages.com/detail/photo/close-up-of-arabic-calligraphy-royalty-free-image/1081412268?adppopup=true>

Syed, Nasir Abbas, et al. "The Emergence of Parallel Grammars: An Analysis of Arabic Loanwords in Saraiki." *Kashmir Journal of Language Research*, vol. 25, no. 1, Jan. 2022, pp. 203–20. EBSCOhost, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=sso&db=cms&AN=161047341&site=ehost-live.

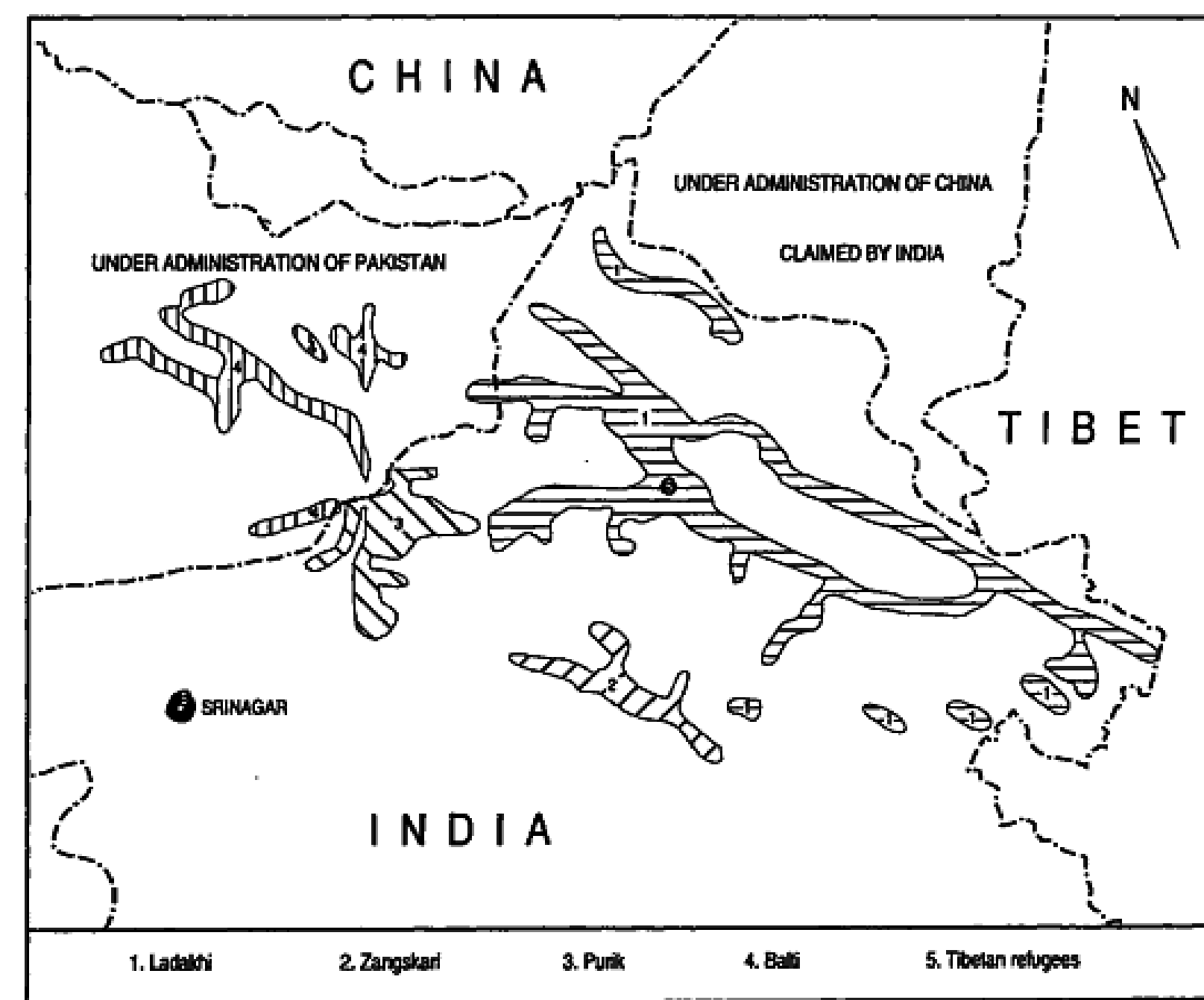
Wade, T. R. *A Grammar of the Kashmiri Language: as Spoken in the Valley of Kashmir, North India*. Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1888, 1888.

Zeisler, Bettina. "Ambiguous Verb Sequences in Ladakhi (a Tibetic Language Spoken in Ladakh, India, Formerly Part of the State Jammu and Kashmir)." *Ambiguous Verb Sequences in Transeurasian Languages and Beyond*, edited by Éva Á. Csató et al., 1st ed., Harrassowitz Verlag, 2019, pp. 313–40. JSTOR, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvx1hw37.20>. Accessed 20 Feb. 2023.

Acknowledgements

Supervised By: Dr. Edurne Beltran de Heredia Carmona
Contact Information: ebeltran@coastal.edu

Presenter: Tess Yazvac
Major: Languages and Intercultural Studies
Minor: Asian Studies, Middle Eastern Studies
Contact information: tkyazvac@coastal.edu



MAP 2: TIBETO-BURMAN LANGUAGES OF KASHMIR

"MAP 2: Tibeto-Burman Languages of Kashmir." *Pacific Linguistics*. Series A, vol. 86, 1997, p. 65–.

“Kathih suet wasih weh tah Tcathih suet wasih sreh”

Translation: A word stirs up anger or love.

Knowles, James Hinton. *A Dictionary of Kashmiri Proverbs & Sayings: Explained and Illustrated from the Rich and Interesting Folklore of the Valley*. Asian Educational Services, 1985.