

## BRIEF COMMUNICATIONS

*Four Varieties of Pashto*

Four varieties of Pashto are identified by the pronunciation of the spirant in the name of the language. The regional distribution of the varieties is discussed, followed by evidence and speculation concerning the chronology of phonetic and phonological changes that led to the present situation.

1. Pashto, an Iranian language spoken in Afghanistan and Pakistan, can be divided into four varieties on the basis of the pronunciation of the second consonant in the name of the language.<sup>1</sup> The four varieties are Pəšto, spoken around Kandahar; Pəšto, spoken around Quetta; Pəçto, spoken in the northeast part of the Pashto area; and Paxto, spoken around Peshawar (see Figure 1).<sup>2</sup>

Only in the  $\zeta$  area is there an eight-member contrastive set /š ž z ç k g x γ/, corresponding to the orthography.<sup>3</sup> In the other areas,  $g$  corresponds to Kandahar  $z$ , and various other sound types correspond to Kandahar  $\zeta$ , as shown below.

Kandahar	Pəšto	š ž z ç k g x γ
Quetta	Pəšto	š ž z ç k g x γ
NE	Pəçto	ç g š ž k g x γ
Peshawar	Paxto	x g š ž k g x γ

In one part of the  $\zeta$  area, Wardak Province, a palatal  $\zeta$  corresponds to Pəšto  $z$ , but most speakers of Pəçto use  $g$ . In the Pəšto and Paxto areas there are only six members in this class of oppositions.

<sup>1</sup> Many other features—lexical, syntactic, morphological, and phonological—vary widely in Pashto, and few of their isoglosses coincide. For the purposes of this paper, however, I shall focus only on the four named varieties. I am extremely grateful to Justice Mohamad Anwar Wardak and Engineer Hanafi for helping me with the Pashto language in 1966 and 1967.

<sup>2</sup> In Paxto, there is no contrast between [a] and [ə]. This contrast survives, though with low functional load, in the other varieties.

<sup>3</sup> Herbert Penzl, *A Grammar of Pashto* (Washington: American Council of Learned Societies, 1955), pp. 9–10.

2. Geiger gives  $\zeta$  as the reflex of Avestan *sr*, *rs*, *rš*, and the  $\zeta$  corresponding to PIE \**kš*.<sup>4</sup> The intervocalic allophone of  $\zeta$ ,  $z$ , achieved phonemic status through final vowel loss, as in *γwaz* 'ear' <AV. *gaoša*. Geiger notes (p. 209) only two varieties of the language, "Pəšto" and "Pəçto".

Darmesteter also describes only two varieties, "Pushtū" and "Pukhtū".<sup>5</sup> Despite his investigation of Pashto in areas where the opposition  $\zeta$ : $g$  is phonemic, he appears not to have heard the difference between the initial consonants of *špa* 'night' and *šə* 'good', and he incorrectly states that 'night' is \**xpa* in the north. He may have been misled by the orthography, since a grapheme to represent  $\zeta$  separately from  $\zeta$  was not finally standardized until the middle of this century.<sup>6</sup> In a discussion of the relative antiquity of the two varieties he described, Darmesteter decides that "Pukhtū" must be a later development, *kh* being a "fausse prononciation" of *sh*.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Wilhelm Geiger, *Die Sprache der Afghānen, das Pəšto. Grundriss der iranischen Philologie*, I.2.v (Strassburg: Trübner, 1895), p. 206.

<sup>5</sup> James Darmesteter, *Chants populaires des Afghans* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1888), pp. xxxv ff.

<sup>6</sup> Penzl, p. 6. It is also possible that Darmesteter's informants led him astray, if they were from outside the Pəšto area. Speakers of Pəçto or Paxto trying to imitate speakers of Pəšto (the prestige dialect in Afghanistan) usually replace  $\zeta$  with  $\zeta$ .

<sup>7</sup> See also George Grierson, *Linguistic Survey of India*, X (New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1921 [reprinted 1968]). Grierson distinguished only two varieties, northeastern and southwestern. D. A. Shafeev, "A Short Grammatical Outline of Pashto," *International Journal of Applied Linguistics* 30.3 (1964), continued the tradition.

3. The development of retroflex stops and spirants in Pashto is a fascinating topic. All varieties include, in addition to the sounds discussed above, /ʃ/, /ʄ/, /ʈ/, and /ɳ/. All of these occur initially, medially, and finally, in contrast to the more limited privileges of occurrence of retroflex stops, liquids, and nasals in Indic languages. The liquid, /ʈ/, appears to have developed from Av. *rt* and *rd*, and the nasal from *rn*. It is very difficult to find etyma for words containing /ʃ/ or /ʄ/; most may be borrowed from Indic (specifically Lahnda).<sup>8</sup> What is of interest now is the development of the four varieties of Pashto described above.

The Pašto and Paxto areas are small and peripheral. If it could be demonstrated that they share some archaic features, then the other areas could be said to have innovated the  $\mathfrak{s}$  :  $\mathfrak{c}$  contrast. No such evidence appears to exist. The Pašto area has been strongly influenced by the politically dominant Baluchi language,<sup>9</sup> and Paxto by Urdu (Penzl, p. 8). In fact, Pašto, spoken in the largest area, was probably the most isolated, since the trade routes largely bypassed it.<sup>10</sup> The smaller areas lay across important routes into and out of Afghanistan.

It therefore seems likely that Pašto is the most conservative variety. Given the extreme phonetic and phonological changes in Pashto, and the nomadic habits of its speakers, it is

impossible to tell whether the change  $\mathfrak{s}$  >  $\mathfrak{c}$  is more likely than the reverse, since it amounts only to a phonetic change.<sup>11</sup> However, the merger of  $\mathfrak{z}$  and  $\mathfrak{g}$  is much more likely than the split of  $\mathfrak{g}$ , there being no evident conditioning factors for such a split.

The most likely sequence of events, then, is this: Old (i.e., Avestan or a similar Old Iranian language)  $(C)\mathfrak{s}$ ,  $sC$  > "Proto-Pashto"  $*/\mathfrak{s}/$ , which was  $[\mathfrak{S}]$  after  $/x/$  and  $[\mathfrak{s}]$  elsewhere. Loss of preconsonantal  $x$  led to the split of  $\mathfrak{s}$  and  $\mathfrak{S}$ . In the northeast,  $\mathfrak{s}$  became a palatal spirant  $\mathfrak{c}$ , which subsequently merged with  $x$  in Paxto only. The voiced member of the pair,  $\mathfrak{z}$ , underwent a similar shift in point of articulation to  $\mathfrak{j}$ , which survives in Wardaki Pashto. Why this sound then merged with  $\mathfrak{g}$  in Paxto and other dialects of Pašto, instead of following the voiceless pattern and merging with  $\mathfrak{g}$ , must remain for the moment an open question.<sup>12</sup> In the south (Baluchistan), there are two possibilities: (a)  $\mathfrak{s}$  and  $\mathfrak{S}$  never split but were always pronounced  $\mathfrak{S}$ , or (b) they split, as in the other varieties, after the loss of  $x$ -, and subsequently merged. It seems slightly more likely that they never split, since if they had  $\mathfrak{z}$  might well have gone the way it did in the northern varieties rather than merging with  $\mathfrak{z}$ .

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<sup>8</sup> Michael M. T. Henderson, "Some 'Indic' Features in Pashto," *Wisconsin Papers in Linguistics* 1 (1970), pp. 88-101; Georg Morgenstierne, *Report on a Linguistic Mission to Afghanistan* (Institutet for Sammenlignende Kulturforskning, 1926, Serie CI - 2).

<sup>9</sup> Georg Morgenstierne, "Archaisms and Innovations in Pashto Morphology," *Norsk Tidsskrift for Sprogvidenskap* 12 (1940), pp. 88-114.

<sup>10</sup> Richard S. Newell, *The Politics of Afghanistan* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972), pp. 10-11.

<sup>11</sup> In some German dialects,  $[c]$  has changed to  $[\mathfrak{S}]$ , but in Spanish  $[\mathfrak{S}]$  changed to a velar or uvular spirant.

<sup>12</sup> Possibly,  $/g/$  was felt to be a more "native" phoneme than  $/\mathfrak{g}/$ . The latter, though already present in Pashto, was made considerably more frequent (and perhaps raised to full phonemic status, as English  $[v]$  was under the influence of French) with the introduction of Arabic loans. But this is pure speculation.

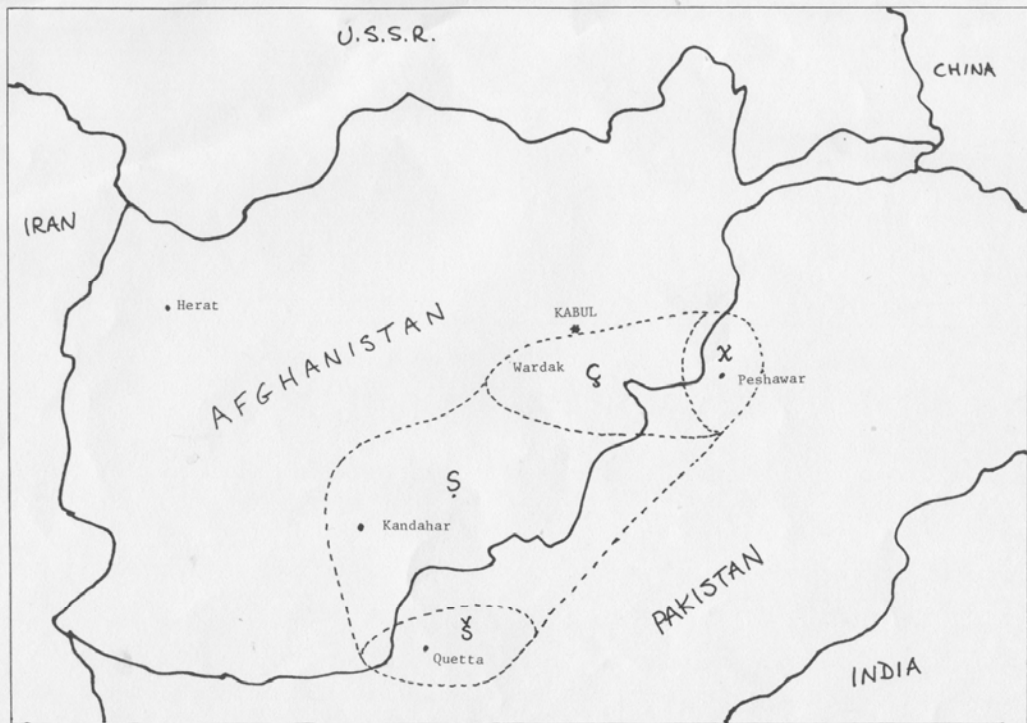


Figure 1