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Is Brahui Really Dravidian?
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There has never been any serious doubt in the field that Brahui is in some way related to the Dravidian family of languages.¹ Even the founder of Comparative Dravidian in the nineteenth century, Robert Caldwell, held Brahui to be related if not properly Dravidian. He was working in a larger framework of genetic connections which allowed such a view and thought that the morphological relationships were not direct enough for inclusion in the family. By 1880, Ernest Trumpp had shown that some connection was irrefutable. However, the exact nature of the connection has been open to considerable doubt and reinterpretation, particularly after all external connections had come to be rejected. The early solution (cf. Grierson and Konow in the Linguistic Survey of India, Vol. 4) generally had Brahui as the first branch off on the Stammbaum. Following the publication of Denys Bray's (1909, 1934) grammar of Brahui, the greater detail and reliability allowed a new formulation. This is implicit in Thomas Burrow's 1943 article on initial k in Dravidian and explicit in Murray Emeneau's book, Brahui and Dravidian Comparative Grammar. They connect Brahui with the closely related Kurux and Malto to form a group called North Dravidian on the basis of several perceived shared innovations.

As presented by Emeneau in this work (1962), the evidence for North Dravidian can be summarized as follows: In phonology, the shifts of (1) *k- > x except before i, (2) *v- > h initially, and (3) *c- > k before ū and ē. Of these, only the first is well established. The second is found elsewhere, and the third is poorly attested and overlaps phonologically with the first. Shifts (2) and (3) would not be sufficient evidence for shared innovation without (1) establishing the primary case. In morphology, while specific traits are shared with Kurux and Malto, Brahui shows no particular pattern of morphological similarity with them or any other specific group of Dravidian languages, but rather a scattering of traits usually with the more conservative languages. Similarly there is no particular pattern of shared lexical retentions. Out of just over 250 Dravidian etyma with reflexes in Brahui, only 11 are uniquely shared with Kurux-Malto, while in comparison 9 are uniquely shared with Tamil-Kodagu in South India. By contrast, Kurux and Malto uniquely share over 150 terms.

Thus, in reality, the North Dravidian hypothesis rests on a single shared phenomenon, the *k- > x shift, which has long been attested as such in Brahui and Kurux. For many years, the exact nature of Malto's evidence was

ambiguous at best. In 1973, A. Sisir Kumar Das's work on Malto made it certain that Droese (1884) had been literally correct. Malto had a true uvular stop [q] as its reflex of PDr *k-. Since the shift of [q] to [x] is common and phonetically reasonable, while its reverse is not so, and since Kurux and Malto are clearly closely related, it follows that the *k- > x shifts of Brahui and Kurux must be independent. This argument is supported by the observation in Pfeiffer (1972:149-50) where he makes it clear that PDr *k- remains k in Kurux before both i and u, while in Brahui this is the case only before i. Thus, the environments for the changes are different in Kurux and Brahui. Furthermore, there are no shared etyma with k- in these languages. As a result, the one last good piece of evidence for the North Dravidian hypothesis has been called into question. The case for it is no longer a prima facie one. In other words, while Brahui shares features with Kurux-Malto, it does not do so in such a way or with a frequency that would clearly indicate a shared stage. Nor is the evidence any different to a significant degree for any other grouping of Dravidian languages. Brahui seems to show random retentions, but no shared innovations with any Dravidian group.

Over the past eight years, I have been able to demonstrate a cognate relationship between the Dravidian languages including Brahui and Elamite, a major language of ancient West Asia. This has included systematic phonological correspondences (McAlpin 1974) and partial, but detailed, morphological correspondences (McAlpin 1975). In my forthcoming work, I have been able to show that almost the entire morphological system of Proto-Dravidian is either cognate or clearly an innovation and that over half of the attested Elamite lexicon is cognate. I do not intend to argue the details or validity of the hypothesis here, but it does set the background for a reexamination of the position of Brahui and the meaning of the term Dravidian.

There are only a few morphological systems which can be reliably reconstructed for Proto-Dravidian. Foremost among these is that of the personal pronouns. While there are minor disagreements on a few details, all Dravidianist would agree with the system given in Table 1. All branches of Dravidian concur in the specific details of singulars in -n, plurals in -m, nominatives with long vowels, and obliques with short ones. Most of this morphology is unique to the personal pronouns. Significantly, Brahui deviates from this system particularly in the first person singular and in having a third person nonresumptive form.

Table 1 -- Personal Pronouns

	Proto- Dravidian	Brahui	PED		Elamite
			a.	b.	
1s 'I'					
N	yāṅ	ī	i	i(k)	u (<*i)
O	yaṅ	kan	ḷen	ikan	un*
1p(ex)'they and I'					
N	yām				
O	yam				
1p(in) 'we'					
N	nām	nan	naN(kə)	nikə(m)	nika, nuku
O	nam	nan	naN(kə)	nikəm	nukun
2s 'thou'					
N	nī(ṅ)	nī	ni		nu (<ni)
O	niṅ	nē, n-	nin		nun*
2p 'you'					
N	nīm	num	nim		num
O	nim	num	nim		numən
3 'he, she, it'					
N	---**	---**	i		i, ir
O	---**	ī...ta	i		i, ir, in
3rs 'self'					
N	tāṅ	tēn	ta		tu
O	taṅ	tēn	tan		tun (?)

*From oblique n plus accusative n, i.e. n + n → n.

**Replaced by deictic appellative pronouns.

All other Dravidian languages use the deictics for third person pronouns as does Brahui in the nominative.

All of the basic personal pronouns are attested in Elamite which has a nominative/objective contrast partly cognate and partly paralleling the nominative/oblique one in Dravidian.² It is very noteworthy that Middle Elamite agrees with Brahui as much as Brahui agrees with Proto-Dravidian. Note the first person nominative where *i > u shifts are common for Elamite and the third person forms in i. If only the Proto-Dravidian and Elamite forms are used, it is still possible to reconstruct the personal pronouns for Proto-Elamo-Dravidian (PED). These are given in the column marked PED-a in Table 1. Comparing the forms, it is soon obvious, that with the partial exception of the second person form nī, Proto-Dravidian singular nominatives are not cognate with the Elamite nominatives but rather with the Elamite objectives, the -ṅ

of which is fundamentally cognate with the final n seen in the Dravidian obliques. Thus, the Proto-Dravidian singular nominatives are best seen as the result of an innovation in which the previous nominatives were replaced by the oblique forms which were then lengthened by regular morphophonological processes.³ The details of this innovation are as follows: PED reconstructs simple monosyllabic nominatives which form their oblique in -n after full vowels and -ən elsewhere and their plural in -m with the plural oblique somewhat ambiguous but probably not having any additional morphology. The first person plural is uncertain in its form in that a morpheme -kə, which is also a first person marker, seems to be optional.

Proto-Dravidian loses the inherited nominatives and replaces them with the obliques. Only the second person singular *nī is a partial exception since both variants are attested widely. An automatic rule of vowel lengthening (Zvelebil's rule) comes into play and the free standing nominatives are lengthened while the obliques with following morphology are not. Thus, Proto-Dravidian ends up with alveolar n's in the nominative (a unique example) and with vowel length alternation between the nominative and oblique stems. It also innovated a first person exclusive plural pronoun by pluralizing the singular form. Thus, the completeness and formal balance of the Proto-Dravidian personal pronouns comes from their being a new system. In all Dravidian languages the third person pronominals are handled by another system on the deictic bases except for the resumptive/reflexive *tān. Elamite added the accusative -n explicitly to the plural objectives and has tended to shift i to u. The first person plural forms are a minor problem.

The forms in Brahui are consistent with this PED pattern. If, however, we take Brahui as a third essentially independent branch of PED, different forms must be reconstructed for the first person. These are given in the column labeled PED-b in Table 1. Basically, a velar k must be added to the reconstruction. This explains the Brahui oblique kan (including in part its aberrant initial k), possessive and verbal forms in Brahui and Elamite in -ka, and helps explain the k of the Elamite first person plural pronouns. In any case the first person plural forms are awkward to reconstruct. In this case, Pre-Dravidian took its oblique *ikan to *yan following a well attested tendency for intervocalic lax k to weaken. While still tentative, this second set of forms seems the more likely.

In a parallel vein, Proto-Dravidian reliably reconstructs a small number of case endings. Among these is the dative in *-kkə. It is widely attested throughout Dravidian and usually remains distinct although occasionally it falls together with the accusative to form an objective case. When this happens in Dravidian, as in Konda and Pengo, remnants of the velar morphology of the dative are always present. Brahui has a different pattern. Here there is an objective case which is formed in -e and a separate adessive in -ki. This is parallel to Elamite where there is no marking of direct or indirect objects (except for the pronominal accusative) but there is an adessive postposition in -ikki/-ikku. Note the forms in Table 2. In the general context of their cognation and since Elamite and Brahui agree as compared to Proto-Dravidian, it is clear that Proto-Dravidian has had an innovation in which the older adessive added the function of marking the indirect object to its function of indicating motion toward. The result is the Proto-Dravidian dative case.

Table 2 -- Dative and Related Cases

	PDr.	Brahui	PED	Elamite
Adessive	-kkə	-ki	-əkkə	-ikkə
Indirect Ob.	-kkə	-e	?	∅
Direct Ob.	-əŋ	-e	-n	-n

There are other phonological correspondences such as the loss of PED *ǰ and morphological features such as the system of plurals which would tend to link Brahui and Proto-Dravidian more closely than Brahui and Proto-Elamite. While its exact relationship remains the object of future detailed study, Brahui is functionally equivalent to a third independent branch of PED for these purposes.

Thus, in the framework of the most current research, it is quite clear that Proto-Dravidian, as a unit, has had two distinct independent innovations that are not shared by Brahui. Since there are two of them and since they are major and almost universally attested, it seems that this was a major formative stage of development and that it and its later stages would have the label Dravidian. Even if it should prove true that Brahui and Proto-Dravidian in this sense share some other specific innovation, i.e. that there is a Braho-Dravidian grouping, it seems better to limit the term Dravidian closely and to put Brahui outside of it.

These morphological innovations completely swamp any arguments for a North Dravidian grouping which would include Brahui. This grouping has been found to be a very weak hypothesis at best although at one time it was clearly the choice on the basis of the best available evidence. Thus, Brahui returns to the not Dravidian, but closely related, status that Robert Caldwell gave it over 125 years ago.

Notes

¹In many ways, this paper is a reply to M.B. Emeneau's chapter on the position of Brahui in Brahui and Dravidian Comparative Grammar (1962:62-70). This should be consulted for further information on background and sources.

²The evidence is somewhat indirect in Elamite since an overt accusative ending exists only in the personal pronouns, much like Modern English. In the singulars the attested forms in -n come from the merger of an oblique in -n with an accusative in n. There are citations of forms with both n's attested; note unan 'me' beside the more normal un. Also the oblique n is found in other cases; note Achaemenid Elamite unina 'my' (← un + na). Both the oblique n and the accusative n are cognate with Dravidian forms. In the plural pronouns the attested n in Elamite comes only from the accusative.

³See Zvelebil (1970:185-87) for a discussion of the process involved. While not universally accepted and overstated by some, it is clear that a basic ancient morphophonological principle is involved in the personal pronouns.

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