NOTES ON KUVI WITH A SHORT VOCABULARY

by

T. BURROW AND S. BHATTACHARYA

Oxford

The Kuvi language was not dealt with in the Linguistic Survey of India, but a few years later accounts of it were given by two authors, A. G. Fitzgerald\(^1\) and F. V. P. Schulze.\(^2\) These works provided a considerable mass of information about the language, but in both cases the transcriptions are so inaccurate as to make it difficult, and in some cases impossible to use the material for comparative purposes. Since these works appeared no further work had been done on the language, and consequently, while touring the tribal Dravidian area in early 1958, we decided to spend some time interrogating Kuvi speakers. This we did in the first place at Araku in Andhra Pradesh, our informants coming from the village of Sunkarametta some miles to the East. Later, at Gudari, while studying the Kuttiya dialect of Kui, we also examined for a short time a Kuvi speaker. This informant was not native to this place, but, according to his statement, from the region of Bisamkatak, and he had resided away from his home for some considerable time. For this reason he was not altogether satisfactory as an informant, and the possibility that his speech had been influenced by the local Kui had to be taken into account, but nevertheless some useful information was gathered. He described himself as a Parja Kandh, and so the forms of his dialect are indicated by the abbreviation \(\text{P}\). The dialect which we studied at Araku is indicated by the abbreviation \(\text{Su}\). [Kar. = dialect of Karaveli, a village on the Koraput-Rayaghoda road.]

The following letters are necessary for the transcription of the language, the alphabetical order being the customary one for Indian alphabets:

- Vowels: \(\text{a } \text{ā } \text{i } \text{ī } \text{u } \text{ū } \text{e } \text{ē } \text{o } \text{ō}\)
- Consonants: \(\text{kgncjtdngnbpmyrľvsh}\)

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\(^1\) A. G. Fitzgerald, *Kuvinga Bassa. The Khond language as spoken by the Parjas (and kindred Tribes) of the Madras Presidency* (Calcutta, 1913).

In addition there is the glottal stop which is the most striking feature of the language phonetically. We have followed Fitzgerald and Schulze in transcribing this with the sign ‘.

So far as the available evidence goes, there appear to be no serious dialectical cleavages within the Kuvi language. The account of it by Fitzgerald appears to have been compiled mainly in the tea gardens of Assam, where Kuvi tribesmen were recruited in considerable numbers, and consequently it has no single dialectal base. On the other hand Schulze’s account is based on the Kuvi spoken in the vicinity of Salur. Between these two versions of Kuvi there seem at first sight to be some considerable differences, but these turn out on examination to be merely variations of transcription. The language as recorded by us at Araku, apart from certain comparatively minor details, does not differ essentially from the language as described by these two authors. On the other hand the language of the parja Kandh, whom we examined at Gudari, showed certain more original features, and this dialect would be worth further investigation.

In spite of their inaccuracy the works of Fitzgerald and Schulze are, taken together fairly comprehensive, and consequently our investigations were useful more from the point of view of checking and correcting existing information rather than in providing new material. These notes are based on a combination of the material we collected and that supplied in the books which could be utilised with much greater certainty than was possible before. We have been able to give a fairly comprehensive survey of the phonetic history of the language and of its structure, which will be found particularly useful since the above mentioned books have been long unobtainable. While the first part of the article is considerably indebted to our predecessors, the second part containing the vocabulary is confined to our own collections. Etymological notes are provided in this vocabulary in the case of material which is supplementary to the Dravidian Etymological Dictionary.

The contents of our vocabulary mostly represent items that are already known, but there is a certain amount of new material, which suggests that further investigation would reveal a good deal more. The following is a sample list of words previously unrecorded: ārgu (pl. ārka) “sp. grain”, katti “mat wall”, karna “irrigation channel”, kunumpa “sp. fruit”, kudu “broken rice”, kupli “hill, hillock”, kumbra “clump of trees”, gu’u “hump of cow”, gumomi “heap”, genji “water in which rice has been boiled”, goskori “shrimp”, grik- (grikh-) “to be bitter”, jonjoli “sieve”, tık- “to get stuck”, doji “calf of leg”, triv- “to spin, revolve”,