From a Literary Language to an Oral Tongue: A Linguistic Overview of the Dakhni Language

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Abstract: Dakhni Urdu is an Indo-Aryan language spoken in the Deccan region of India, especially in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. This variety of Urdu, which developed in the Deccan from the 13th century, is the result of the contact between Urdu and the Dravidian tongues spoken in South India. It flourished as a literary vehicle during the 14th and 15th centuries and, after the conquest of Deccan by the Mughals in 1687, it saw a rapid decline that restricted it to the oral form. The proposed paper seeks to trace the history and development of Dakhni from its birth to its decline, paying closer attention to the social, political and linguistic choices that influenced the use of Dakhni in South India. In particular, the research looks at its origin, its literary production and, finally, at the social and political factors which led to its decline in the late 17th century. Moreover, the paper also gives a brief outline of Dakhni and its main linguistic features, stressing the Indo-Aryan and Dravidian influence on the language.

Keywords: Dakhni, Deccan, Dravidian Languages, Identity, South India, Urdu.

1. INTRODUCTION

Dakhni is an Indo-Aryan language spoken in the Deccan region of India in the modern states of Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu. Also known as Dakhni Urdu, this language has many names — Dakkhani, Dakhani, Deccani or Dakhini — all derivatives of the Sanskrit term dakṣiṇā, which means 'south' and refers to the Deccan region situated in South India. The origin of this language is still uncertain, nevertheless, many scholars would agree that Dakhni is the result of the interaction between Indo-Aryan and Dravidian languages and it has been spoken by sizable communities throughout Southern India since the 15th century. During the Bahmani period, and the following dynasties who ruled in the Deccan between the 14th and 16th centuries, Dakhni developed as a literary vehicle. After the arrival of Mughals in the 17th century, the Dakhni language was substituted by the variety of Urdu from North India in public and official domains. Despite losing its status, Dakhni has continued to be spoken in many states of southern India until today. The central idea of this

paper is to discuss the origin and development of Dakhni and its earliest literary production. Moreover, it also presents a brief overview of the language, including its phonology, morphology and some salient linguistic features at the syntax level.

The Birth and Development of Dakhni

Many theories have been formulated over time in order to trace the origins of the Dakhni language, which still remain very difficult to ascertain (Shirani 1928; Zore 1930; Chatterjee 1963). However, starting with Sayed (1968), scholars share the opinion that Dakhni developed from Urdu, which arose in and around Delhi after the arrival of Muslims in northern India in the 11th and the 12th centuries. It is widely assumed that the origin of Dakhni was due to the military expeditions of the sultans of Delhi to the Deccan, which occurred in multiple stages between the 12th and the 13th centuries. In 1327, Muhammad Ibn Tughlaq (1290–1351), the eighteenth sovereign of the Delhi Sultanate (1206–1526), conquered a great part of the Deccan and decided to transfer the capital from Delhi to Daulatabad, in Maharashtra. This choice resulted in a massive migration from Delhi — especially soldiers, government officials, businessmen and Sufis — to the Deccan. In Dakhni scholarship, this event has gained much importance as it permitted the entry of the northern language of the capital into the Deccan, allowing for the language contact between Indo-Aryan and Dravidian languages and, hence, giving birth to the southern language named Dakhni.

The subsequent invasion of Delhi by Timur in 1398 led to the decline of the Tughlaq Sultanate, and many provinces of the empire began to proclaim their independence. During this period, the Deccan witnessed the growth of many independent kingdoms, such as the Bahmani kingdom (1347–1527), which had a prominent role in the development of the Dakhni language. The Deccani kings, who wished to be independent and separate from the capital, supported the detachment of southern Urdu from the variant spoken in the North, cultivating their Urdu variety as opposed to Persian. There is much evidence to presume that Bahmani rulers cultivated Dakhni as a literary language (Hashmi 1963; Khan 1965), although Schmidt (1981, 2) suggested that the official language of the kingdom was Persian. In 1481, after the death of Muhammad Shah III, the Bahmani kingdom collapsed, giving the opportunity to provincial governors to declare independence of their territories. The Bahmani reign was then divided into five administrative districts: Ahmednagar, Golconda, Bijapur, Bidar and Berar. With the decline of Bahmani rulers, the Adil Shahi and Qutb Shahi kingdoms in Bijapur and Golconda were formed, in 1490 and in 1512, respectively. The kings of these dynasties are not only said to have been patrons of Dakhni, but are also said to have ruled in both local languages: Dakhni and Telugu (Schmidt 1981, 6). During this time, Dakhni was first cultivated as a literary language together with Persian, which had the status of the official language. In the post-Bahmani era, except for the Qutb Shahi and Adil Shahi kingdoms, the other dynasties which settled in the Deccan did not play a significant role in the development of the Dakhni language.

The Literary Production

The literary development of Dakhni has been divided in three periods: the religious period (1350–1490), the literary period during the Qutb Shahi and Adil Shahi kingdoms (1490–1687) and the literary period of Aurangzeb and his successors (1687–1730). In the Bahmani

era, Dakhni literature was mainly religious and composed by Sufi preachers, who started to use Dakhni as a literary vehicle for religious purposes. These writings, most of which have been lost (except for prose and poetry), have great linguistic importance as they are records of the language in its earliest form.

Among the Bahmani rulers, Taj ud Din Firoz Shah (1397–1422) is remembered as a great patron of literature. According to Sherwani (1953), Firoz cultivated the society of Sufis and other learned men coming from the North. He also married several wives of different nationalities, from whom he learned many languages. Most scholars emphasized that the king favored the integration of the Hindu and Muslim communities, giving birth to a mixed culture which continued to grow and develop in the following years. Furthermore, in order to combat the influence of migrants coming to the Deccan from Iran, Iraq and other Arab countries, it is said that he gave high office to Hindus and, thus, under his reign, the Dakhni language received some official recognition. During his rule, one of the most prominent Sufi figures was Gesu Daraz (1323/4–1426), who composed the short prose risālas: Shikār Nāma and Mirāj-ul-ʿĀshiqīn. In addition to these prose works, a number of short poems have been ascribed to the poet, such as Chakki Nāma (a religious song, meant to be sung by people working the mill). Although Gesu Daraz's writings are considered the first examples of Dakhni literature, in a recent work, Qaatil (1968) proved that the risālas were composed at the end of the 17th century. Attentive studies remarkably suggest that even though they were originally composed by Gesu Daraz, these works were subsequently altered and modernized in later times. One of the earliest compositions in Dakhni was likely Kanam Rāo Padam Rāo, written by the poet Nizami of Bidar at the court of Sultan Ahmad Shah Vali (1422–1435). The masnavī, which remained incomplete, bears no title; but from the existing portions of texts, it has been possible to state that the story has two principal characters: Kadam Rao (the king) and Padam Rao (the minister). In terms of meter, it perfectly adheres to Persian models, applying the mutaqārib; as opposed to Sufi poems, which often utilize simple, non-Persian meters. However, due to the missing parts of the text and lack of other substantial Dakhni works produced in this early period, the work cannot be accurately dated. An extremely popular writer and saint of this time was Firoz Bidari, who, in the middle of the 16th century, wrote a masnavī entitled Piratnāma (The Story of Love). In this era, although the Bahmani rulers began to take interest in the language, evidence of any court patronage is very limited. However, the language brought to the Deccan by the Sufis and the soldiers of Delhi had established itself as the language of communication between the Muslims and the local populations living in the area. As a result of the linguistic interaction of northern Urdu with southern languages, there was an acquisition of new words and certain grammatical features, which were borrowed from Marathi and, to a smaller extent, local Dravidian languages, e.g., Kannada and Telugu.

After the dissolution of the Bahmani kingdom, the kingdoms in Bijapur and Golconda were formed. In 1490, the Adil Shahi dynasty began its rule in Bijapur, where Dakhni literature had the chance to develop and prosper. The fourth king of the Adil Shahi lineage, Ibrahim Adil Shah II (1580–1627), was a great patron of Dakhni. He also composed the Kitāb-i Nauras, a Dakhni music poem using Hindi meters. This may be considered the earliest surviving non-religious Dakhni work, except for the masnavī of Nizami. The language is a mixture of Dakhni

and elements borrowed from other Hindi dialects or imported by languages like Marathi. This work consists of dohās and songs (gīt) on a variety of themes, even though most of them are in praise of Hindu deities.

As previously stated, the earliest literature in Dakhni was produced by Sufis, who continued to be very productive even during the Adil Shahi rule. The Sufi Shah Abul Hasan Qadiri (d. 1635) wrote Sukh Anjan, a collection of popular poems and songs with the aim of reminding people about their religious duties. Throughout the reign of Ibrahim's son, Muhammad Adil Shah (1627–1657), the cities of Bijapur and Golkonda strengthened their relations, especially after Muhammad's marriage with Khadija Sultana, the daughter of Muhammad Qutb Shah (1565–1612). This proximity favored cultural exchanges between the two cities, in which well-known Dakhni poets were sent as envoys. During Muhammad's reign and that of his son, Ali Adil Shah II (1656–1672), Bijapur experienced a period of peace and great prosperity, during which Dakhni became the language of the court, emerging as a more or less standardized form, gradually replacing Persian as the medium of literary expression.

On the contrary, in Golconda, the Qutb Shahi kings did not provide such favorable conditions for the development of Dakhni. The language was almost entirely neglected and, prior to the reign of Muhammad Quli (1580), there is no surviving evidence of works having been composed in Dakhni. One of the two earliest Dakhni compositions of this time is Kulliyāt e Sultān Muhammad Qulī Qutb Shāh, written sometime before 1611 by Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah, the founder of the city of Hyderabad, and considered to be the first literary writer in Urdu. In this text, we find mainly ghazals which — as opposed to the traditional compositions focused on love — concern a variety of topics, including religious and secular festivals, the monsoon season, the building of Hyderabad and the king's life. From a linguistic perspective, Muhammad Quli's language is not different from other Dakhni writers of the 17th century. The choice of vocabulary and images are conventional, and one finds an almost total absence of Dravidian loanwords. This element surprised many scholars since Muhammad Quli was perhaps the son of a Telugu woman and, according to historians, his father had learned to speak Telugu and had several notable Telugu poets in his court (Chenchiah 1954). Despite being considered a period of ideal synthesis of Hindu and Muslim culture, Muhammad Quli offers no evidence that he or his father extended their patronage to Telugu writers or that he was adopting stylistic or linguistic forms originating from outside the Persian literary tradition. The other widely known piece of this period is Qutub Mushtari (1609), composed by Ahmad Vajhi. This masnavī recounts the romantic story of a prince who would later become the king of Golconda. Only during the reigns of Abdullah Qutb Shah (who came to power in 1626) and later, his son-in-law, the city of Golconda prospered, becoming an important center of Dakhni literature. Ahmad Vajhi, author of Qutub Mushtari and Sab Ras (his final work), remains one of the most prominent Dakhni writers under the Qutb Shah patronage.

Dakhni continued to flourish until 1687, when Aurangzeb entered and conquered the cities of Bijapur and Golconda. The Urdu of Delhi was then established by the Mughals as the official language of the empire and Dakhni ceased to be the literary vehicle. At the end of the 17th century, Aurangzeb founded a new capital, Aurangabad, which attracted poets and Sufis from

Delhi and the Deccan. During this transition period, marked by the sudden decline of the Dakhni patronized kingdom, Vali (1668–1741) and his pupil, Giraj Aurangabadi (1714–1763), are remembered as the last representatives of Dakhni culture. From the 18th century onwards, in spite of Urdu having been proclaimed the official language of the kingdom, Dakhni survived as a spoken tongue in many territories of the Deccan.

After the breakdown of the Mughal empire in South India, the Nizams declared their independence and founded the Hyderabad State, which they ruled from 1724 to 1948. During this time, Persian was reestablished as the official language, while Dakhni was the spoken language, used in everyday life situations. In the 19th century, the dynamic changed once more when the son of Salar Jung, Nawab Mir Mahmood 'Ali Khan (1868–1911), adopted Urdu as the official language in lieu of Persian in some domains of power such law courts, administration and education. However, this decision did not help Dakhni in restoring its literary status since the Urdu chosen as the language of the state was the northern variant spoken in Delhi. In this regard, Rahman (2008) emphasized that the Nizams used indigenous languages at certain levels of administration such as Marathi, Telugu and Kannada; thus, when Urdu replaced Persian, this multi-linguistic structure involving Persian and local languages was substituted by a unique, predominant idiom. This variety of Delhi-Urdu — brought by the non-mulki civil servants coming from the North and settling in the Deccan to work in the administration of the Nizam — differed considerably from Dakhni, which developed through its contact with Dravidian languages. Finally, in 1919, the foundation of Osmania University, with Urdu (Northern-Urdu) as the medium of education, led to the further segregation of Dakhni to the non-official sphere, limiting or even eradicating its use in the official public domain.

Dakhni Varieties and Hyderabadi Urdu

Dakhni Urdu and its variants are still spoken in many areas of the Deccan. In the Linguistic Survey of India, Grierson identified three different dialects: the Dakhni of Bombay, Madras and Berar. Unfortunately, since the time of Grierson, we do not have any data on the population who actually speak Dakhni and the different variants of the language in southern regions of India. However, in recent times, Mustafa (2008), who worked on the convergence between Dakhni and Telugu language, identified three varieties: Andhra Dakhni, Kannada Dakhni and Tamil Dakhni (based upon the area of the Dravidian language in which it is spoken). In particular, Andhra Dakhni would present an additional schism between the dialect spoken in Rayalaseema, which has features imported from Telugu, and the one spoken in Telangana, called Hyderabadi Urdu, which shows more resemblance to the Standard Urdu.

Overview of Linguistic Features

The special linguistic situation in South India favored the bidirectional convergence of Dakhni towards Dravidian languages, e.g., Telugu. This section gives a brief outline of the phonology and morphology as well as some salient syntax features of Dakhni as it is spoken in Rayalaseema, in Andhra Pradesh. The work will take into consideration only a few selected traits of Dakhni concerning the grammar and other levels of linguistic organization. The aim

of the section is to discuss the most common features of Dakhni, observing the influence of both Standard Urdu and Telugu on the language.

Phonology

Dakhni Urdu is an Indo-Aryan language, written in the Perso-Arabic alphabet. Although it generally shares with Standard Urdu (SU) the same sound system, it presents the aspirates /mh/, /lh/, /rh/, /vh/ and /yh/ and the nasal and lateral retroflex phonemes, /ṇ/ and /ḷ/. The former is present in Hindi but not in SU, while the latter is absent in both. Dakhni is characterized further by the dropping of the intervocalic /h/ and the pronunciation of /q/ as /x/, as it lacks the phoneme /q/, which SU has.

Morphology and Syntax

Rather than the three-level pronominal system present in Hindi and SU (tū, tum, āp), Dakhni instead presents a two-level hierarchy: tu, which is used for the 2nd person sg., non-honorific and non-formal; and tūme, denoting the 2nd person pl. or honorific sg. and formal. The honorific form āp is not used in Dakhni. For the third person, in the case of people, Dakhni employs the following forms: īne (sg., non-honorific, proximate), īno (pl. or sg., honorific, proximate), ūne (sg., non-honorific, remote) and ūno (pl. or sg., honorific, remote). Instead, the pronominal forms ye (sg. o pl., proximate) and vo (sg. o pl., remote) are used to denote the 'non-personal category', e.g., things and animals. In SU, we may find the same two forms (ye, vo) employed for both 'personal' and 'non-personal' categories.

An interesting feature of Dakhni is the distinction between an exclusive (1) and inclusive (2) 1st person plural pronoun. This attribute is found in other Indo-Aryan and Dravidian languages, but not in Hindi and SU.

    (1) exclusive 'we'   ham logāñ
    (2) inclusive 'we'   apan/apal logāñ

For nouns, the gender has the tendency to vary, however, masculine and feminine are usually maintained only in the singular form, while in the plural the masculine is applied to both. This feature differs from SU, in which gender is maintained in the singular as well as in the plural. According to Pray (1980), this aspect shows the influence of Telugu on Dakhni, since Dravidian languages make a distinction between masculine and feminine in the singular form, and between human and non-human in the plural.

A notable difference between SU and Dakhni concerns demonstrative adjectives. In SU, the same forms function as a demonstrative adjective and pronoun, while in Dakhni they always have separate forms. In particular, in SU, demonstrative adjectives and pronouns take the oblique forms when followed by propositions (3). Such a phenomenon does not appear in Dakhni, where the demonstrative adjective remains unchanged (4).

    (3) ye mēz   'this table'
        is mēz par   'on this table'

(4) ye mēz   'this table'
    ye mēz par/po 'on this table'

Moreover, in Dakhni the postpositions kā, kī and ke, marking the possessive, tend to be omitted (5). Thus, the subject is generally left in its nominative form without a postposition.

(5) gopāl likhā se kitāb   'the book written by Gopal'
                                        (instead of gopāl **kī** likhī huī kitāb in SU)

The construction of Dakhni indefinite pronouns also differs from the one found in SU, where they are formed by the annexation of the particle -hī or -ī to the interrogative pronouns (6). Instead, Telugu indefinite pronouns are derived from the interrogatives, to which the enclitic particle -ō is added (7).

(6) kis 'who' → kisī 'someone'
    kahāñ 'where' → kahīñ 'somewhere'
    kab 'when' → kabhī 'sometime'

(7) evaru 'who' → evarō 'someone'
    ekkaḍa 'where' → ekkannō 'somewhere'
    eppuḍu 'when' → eppuḍō 'sometime'

In this context, Dakhni applies the Telugu construction, by adding the particle -kī to the interrogatives (8).

(8) kaun, kis 'who' → kaun kī, kis kī 'someone'
    kāñ 'where' → kāñ kī 'somewhere'
    kab 'when' → kab kī 'sometime'

Regarding the Dakhni numeral system, the most remarkable feature is that numbers above twenty (except for the multiples of ten) are formed by adding the units (e.g., bīs po no ['29'], tīs po āt ['38']), as opposed to SU, in which units and multiples of ten are blended.

The verb morphology in Dakhni also presents many peculiar forms, such as the habitual present-cum-future (maiñ jātũ ['I usually go', 'I will go']), which is used for both present and future actions. The permissive-imperative tense, constructed from the stem verb plus the suffix -ñde (or -añde for stems ending in a consonant), does not vary by gender or number, and it is used informally with all persons (e.g., hame jāñde ['let us go'], ūno jāñde ['let them go']). In Hindi and SU, we do encounter a similar construction, e.g., tū/ye/vo jāne de ('you/he/she permit[s] to go'). Nevertheless, as Mustafa (1985) stressed, there is no parallelism between the two constructions for three different reasons. Firstly, the Hindi and SU model is only transitive as it always requires an object. In contrast, Dakhni construction can be either transitive (9) or intransitive, i.e., without an object (10).

    (9) maiñ khānā khāñde   'let me take food'
    (10)maiñ jāñde   'let me go'

Secondly, in the construction vo jāne de, vo is the subject of the verb de, whereas the oblique infinitive jāne corresponds to another subject (here implicit). Instead, in the Dakhni phrase ūno jāñde ('let them go'), the verb jāñde refers to ūno. Lastly, Dakhni supports the presence of another non-finite oblique infinitive verb in such constructions, e.g., maiñ khēlne jāñde ('let me play') or maiñ bolne jāñde ('let me say'). In Hindi and SU, this is not possible.

In the category of non-finite verbs, the inflectional suffixes such as -ko, -ñdeko and -so are particularly relevant. The participle in -ko, which does not vary in gender and number, usually describes the finished state of an action, and it can be translated as 'having cut, done, etc.', e.g., khāleko ('having eaten').
   The other participle formed by the annexation of -ñdeko (or añdeko) to the verb stem, refers to a post-action, e.g., 'after doing, eating, saying', etc. (11).

    (11) maiñ jāñdeko boltuñ   'I tell after going'

Among the participles, the most interesting example is the relative adjectival participle, which is formed by attaching the suffix -so to the verb stem. This precedes the noun and functions as an adjective or a complement, showing a variation of gender and number (12).

    (12) maiñ bolya so bāt, suno!   'Please listen to what I said!'

Dakhni is also characterized by the presence of non-verbal sentences, e.g., uskī mātā Sītā ('Her mother is Sītā'); however, double causative sentences, passive sentences and relative clauses jo-vo do not appear.
   One peculiar trait of the Dakhni language is the order of reporting a speech, which is the exact opposite in SU (13). In this case, Dakhni tends to follow the Telugu pattern expressed with the emphatic -ō (14), but it employs the particle -kī as in SU (15). An alternative form which follows the SU order may also appear (16).

    (13) muje nahīñ mālūm kī/ke usne kyā bolā   'I don't know what he said.'
    (14) vāḍu ēm ceppimḍō nāku erkalēdu   'I don't know what he said.'
    (15) une kyā bolā kī mere kū nahīñ mālūm   'I don't know what he said.'
    (16) mere kū nahīñ mālūm kī une kyā bolā   'I don't know what he said.'

On the syntax level, Arora and Subbarao (1993) observed that the Dakhni language went through a process of 'dativisation', losing the genitive structures that are common in both Hindi and SU. This change may be explained as the result of the influence of Dravidian languages on Dakhni, since Dravidian languages prefer the use of dative structures rather than genitive ones. For instance, in Dakhni, the possessive and kinship relationship is expressed with the dative (17) and not the genitive, which generally occurs in Hindi and SU (18).

(17) Rāma ku cār bahaneñ haiñ   'Rāma has four sisters.'
(18) Rāma kī cār bahaneñ haiñ   'Rāma has four sisters.'

The following example (19) represents an extreme case of 'dativisation' of Dakhni, in which the dative is used to express directionality. This trend is common to Telugu (20), whereas in Hindi and SU the preposition is omitted (20).

(19) kā ku jāre?   'Where are you going?'
(20) kahāñ jā rahe ho?   'Where are you going?'

In Dakhni, the dative construction is also applied when the difference between objects is measured (21). In such utterances, Hindi and SU do not permit the use of the dative and rather prefer to employ the postposition maiñ (22).

(21) tum kū us kū kittā farak hai?   'what is the difference between you and him?'
(22) tum maiñ aur us maiñ kitā farak hai? 'what is the difference between you and him?'

2. CONCLUSION

Dakhni, being one of the first examples of linguistic contact between Indo-Aryan and Dravidian languages, represents an extremely interesting field of research for scholars in many disciplines. Nevertheless, due to its extreme complexity, Dakhni has been largely neglected by Indian and foreign scholarship over time, aside from a few rare exceptions. Many efforts have to be made in the study of Old and modern Dakhni and its variants across the Deccan, e.g., Andhra Dakhni, as well as Kannada Dakhni and Kerala Dakhni. These varieties, being the result of the interaction between two different South Asian linguistic families, deserve to be explored in more detail, at the phonological, morphological and syntax level. On the one hand, further research into Old Dakhni would enrich the scholarship on the history of Muslim kingdoms in the Deccan, providing precious information about the relationship between religion, power and language from the 13th to the 20th centuries in South India. On the other hand, after evaluating today's presence of Dakhni in different areas of the Deccan, the study on modern dialects would give new insights into the religious and linguistic panorama of India, especially with reference to oral and minority languages.

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