

**Dodykhudoeva Leila**

**Revitalization of minority languages: Comparative dictionary of key cultural terms in the languages and dialects of the Shughni-Rushani group of the Pamir languages**

The Shughni-Rushani language group consists of closely related Pamir languages. These belong to the East-Iranian subgroup of Iranian languages. They are prevalent in the Mountainous-Badakhshan Autonomous region of the Republic of Tajikistan. These vernaculars have no written tradition and are used only as spoken languages in the region. All of them are under the pressure from titular Tajik and are in the situation of language endangerment. These language communities have ceased to speak their mother tongues in public, in favour of the surrounding dominant Tajik language. The languages have now deteriorated: They are spoken only in private, within the community members until the time when their native speakers adopt the externally conveyed negative attitude towards them, and cease completely to pass the languages on to their children. This process is taking place in Badakhshan, affecting different languages, depending on the number of their speakers and their local status.

The underlying concept of the paper is that through documenting the Pamir languages vocabulary data we can “provide a comprehensive record of the linguistic practices characteristic of a given speech community” (Himmelmann 1998). And through this reliably reconstruct historical and socio-linguistic data of the Pamir communities. Specifically, the documenting of the Pamir lexis (words and expressions) enables us to obtain knowledge about the oral tradition, treating of the oral and written word, as well as to preserve and revitalize the mother tongues of Pamir minorities.

This paper is focused on the techniques used in the process of the fieldwork for the establishing of a multilingual dictionary of a group of closely related languages. This comparative dictionary reflects different processes that take place in the language group, and also reflects the process of usage of these languages. Therefore, along with linguistic data in the dictionary, extra-linguistic data, such as ethnic, cultural and historical are collected. In this way, an outline of the social and historic situation of the language and its language community can emerge.

For this purpose special fieldwork skills and specific ethno-linguistic and socio-linguistic methods are used. These include apart from collecting language materials living in the family, observation, different types of questionnaires, as well as a broad set of extra-linguistic data collection techniques. The most specific in our work is a newly employed method, elaborated by Vladimir Ivanov, that allows to stimulate a language consultant by a visual image. The method gives language consultant opportunity to start a spontaneous description of the situation depicted in the picture and to provide a text (short or long) as a result. This technique was employed during several field sessions working with students in Khorogh State University for recording data on phonetics, and in Rushan and Bartang regions in 2006-2007.

Leila R. Dodykhudoeva, PhD

Senior Researcher, Department of Iranian Languages, Institute of Linguistics,  
Russian Academy of Sciences

Bolshoy Kislovskiy Pereulok 1/12

103009 Moscow, Russian Federation

Tel : ++7495 733 3905 E-mail: leiladod@yahoo.com