

THE
Dravidian
LANGUAGES

EDITED BY **SANFORD B. STEEVER**

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THE DRAVIDIAN LANGUAGES

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Sanford B. Steever

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Preface

The Dravidian Languages owes its existence to another book: it grew out of a chapter on the Dravidian language family written for *The World's Major Languages* a decade ago. At that time, when theoretical work commanded the attention and resources of most linguists, *The World's Major Languages* answered a call to provide both general readers and professional linguists with accessible, concrete descriptions of various languages around the world. That volume and the mandate underlying it came to serve as the basis for Routledge's language reference series, of which *The Dravidian Languages* is the most recent instalment.

Handbooks of the Dravidian language family have appeared over the past 150 years, but virtually all of them are comparative studies geared towards the needs of specialists in historical and typological linguistics. These studies tend to juxtapose individual forms from one language to the next; in doing so, they have often lost sight of the grammatical systems in which those forms originally appeared. None of them provides self-contained descriptions of the individual Dravidian languages, their speakers, their structure and their historical development. This state of affairs reflects, in part, the fact that grammars and even raw data for the Dravidian languages are generally hard to come by, taxing the ingenuity of the most dedicated specialist. So it comes as no surprise that nothing to date has appeared in print to which the layman or linguist might turn to satisfy his curiosity about these individual languages. *The Dravidian Languages* attempts to fill in that gap in our knowledge of this language family.

The present volume contains readable descriptions of 12 of the individual languages written by internationally recognised experts. Each chapter introduces the reader to the language and its speakers, then proceeds to discuss its internal structure in sections devoted to phonology, morphology and the parts of speech, syntax and lexicon. *The Dravidian Languages* also serves the needs of historical linguistics: its design invites comparison among the various chapters. The contributors have been encouraged to depart from the general format where it would distort or diminish the prominence of a salient aspect of the language un-

der description. A general introduction to the family and to the Dravidian writing systems round out the book.

The biggest editorial challenge in designing and preparing this volume lay in the selection of languages. There are simply too many Dravidian languages to fit into a single volume: at least 23 modern languages plus three ancient ones. Furthermore, what we know about the Dravidian languages varies greatly in depth and quality from one language to the next. Just four of the languages have a substantial writing tradition, and can provide linguistic examples from before the modern era. At the other end of the spectrum, some languages are barely attested; Naiki, for example, is known primarily from word-lists. While Gadaba has been described in two grammars, only two texts totalling 450 sentences have ever appeared in print. No major publication has appeared on Kūi since the Reverend Winfield brought out his grammar in 1928. Examples may be all too easily multiplied. Some of the grammars of these languages are long out of print, some lie collecting dust in rarely visited libraries and others still exist only in manuscript form. Particularly where several of the non-literary languages are concerned and where the need for research is greatest, we lack scholars with an intimate knowledge of the language actively pursuing its study. Since this volume, as others in the language reference series, relies on the informed contributions of individual experts, some languages had to be passed over which I would otherwise have wished to include.

Given these conditions, I chose to offer as broad a selection as I could. At least two languages were chosen from each of the four major subgroups: this breadth is useful both for comparative purposes and to display the range of variation among the different languages of the family. The languages of the southern and south-central branches of the family, which include all of the literary languages of the Dravidian family, have been accorded a broader representation, with four languages each. Although each language omitted from this volume is an occasion for regret, languages from two areas are sorely missed. I would have liked to have included a chapter on the languages spoken on the Nilgiris Massif, Toda, Kota, Baḍaga and Irula, as well as one on the languages spoken in the Khondmal Hills of Orissa, Kūi, Kūvi, Pengo and Maṇḍa. Besides the intrinsic linguistic and anthropological interest of these languages, several are faced with extinction in the near term as their speech communities are dispersed and their speakers assimilated into the surrounding dominant regional languages. To appreciate the true *embarass de richesses* that these and other Dravidian languages offer, the reader can do no better than consult M.B. Emeneau's 1984 *Toda Grammar and Texts* or M. Israel's 1979 *A Grammar of the Kūvi Language*, both excellent grammars of the 'small' languages. It is my hope that *The Dravidian Languages* will serve not just as a reference volume of our current knowledge of this family of languages, but also as an inspiration for others to take up their study.

To say that this book owes its existence to another book, as I did above, is, of course, to speak figuratively. It is people, and many of them, who are responsi-

ble for the conception, writing and production of *The Dravidian Languages*. It is only fitting to thank here those who participated in and supported the preparation of this volume. The first is Bernard Comrie, who first invited me to write an article on the Dravidian languages for *The World's Major Languages*. Next is Jonathan Price at Routledge who originally commissioned me to design and edit the current volume for Routledge. During the initial stages, Murray B. Emeneau, William Bright, E. Annamalai and Peter T. Daniels gave me much valuable advice, suggestions and leads. To the individual authors whose chapters appear in this volume, I offer my deepest thanks for their patience and commitment to this project. In particular, my *guru* Bhadriraju Krishnamurti has been involved at every stage of this book's growth, advising me on its design and writing two chapters for it.

At an advanced stage of preparation, three contributors had to withdraw from the project. Since it was not possible to find suitable replacements in time to meet deadlines, I assumed the task of preparing three chapters. To minimise the decrease in the diversity of scholarship on which this volume rests, these chapters draw on the work of linguists whose work I admire and consider authoritative. While I have firsthand knowledge of Kannada, I have drawn on the scholarship of S.N. Sridhar and D.N. Shankara Bhat (the author of the chapter on Tulu) whose work is largely responsible for bringing insight and rigor to modern Kannada linguistics. Much has been written on the dialects of Gondi, but nothing to my mind approaches in insight and elegance Susie Andres' study of Muria Gondi. Finally, B.P. Mahapatra's grammar of Malto, through its alternation of linguistic and anthropological insight, has become the most valuable sourcebook for this language. The three chapters prepared for this volume rely on these sources for crucial linguistic examples that could not be obtained anywhere else. I hope these three chapters do justice to these scholars, and persuade others to give them their due recognition by consulting their work first-hand.

Routledge, the publisher, has my sincere gratitude for the commitment they have made to such a specialist volume. Many in the Routledge family have promoted the cause of this book, but three deserve special mention. I wish to thank Jonathan Price who first brought me on board several years ago. Just as important, in my mind, is Denise Rea, whose patience and determination have brought this volume to completion. She and her able colleagues, notably Sarah Hall, have provided me with invaluable help in editing and producing this book. And finally, I wish to thank Peter T. Daniels, who expertly typeset the volume. *nanri marapatu nanru anru*.

New Canaan, Connecticut
Easter 1997

Linguistic Conventions

The conventional transcriptions of the original languages have been preserved to the extent possible. However, certain changes have been made to enhance comparability among the various languages. For example, while vowel length in the various languages may be indicated by a macron (\bar{a}), colon ($a:$), raised dot ($a\cdot$) or doubled symbol (aa), it has been uniformly transcribed here with a macron. In transliterating Tamil I have followed the scheme of the *Tamil Lexicon* with one exception: to represent the retroflex approximant, I use z instead of j .

To clarify morphemic identities, I follow Lehmann's 1989 convention of placing a dot before certain morphophonemically automatic segments to separate them from invariant morphological material. In the transcription of the Tamil sentence *anta.p peṭṭi.y-ai.t tūḱku* 'lift₃ that₁ box₂', the $.p$ at the end of the demonstrative *anta.p* 'that' is triggered by the initial stop of the following word; the $.y$ in *peṭṭi.y-ai* is a glide that is automatically inserted between the final vowel of *peṭṭi* 'box' and the initial vowel of the accusative case marker *-ai*; and the $.t$ in *peṭṭi.y-ai.t* is triggered by the following voiceless stop. I have extended the use of this symbol to other Dravidian languages, as well. This use of the dot should not be confused with the marker for a syllable boundary; the immediate context should help the reader determine which usage is intended.

Dravidian etyma are identified by their numbering in *A Dravidian Etymological Dictionary* (second edition), abbreviated as DEDR; for example, **en* 'say' (DEDR 868). In the context of diachronic linguistics an asterisk denotes a reconstructed form; in synchronic linguistics it denotes an ungrammatical or unacceptable form.

List of Abbreviations

The following list of abbreviations relate to the grammatical analyses of example sentences. The abbreviations used in the main text (sing., plur., etc.) need no further elaboration and in certain instances (SDr, etc.) are explained at their point of origin.

1p ^{ex}	first person plural exclusive	cond	conditional
1p ⁱⁿ	first person plural inclusive	cnj	conjunctive form (Brahui)
2	second person	cnt	contingent tense
3sncl	third person singular neuter clitic (Brahui)	cont	continuative
a/a	ablative-associative case (Gonḍi)	cplt	completive
abl	ablative	dat	dative
acc	accusative	dat/acc	dative-accusative case (Brahui)
adn	adnominal verb form	def	definite
adv	adverbial	dur	durative
aff	affective voice (Tamil)	echo	echo syllable
anp	adnominal form	eff	effective voice (Tamil)
ant	anterior	emp	emphatic
antc	anticipative	encl	enclitic
aor	aorist (Old Telugu)	ep	epicene
ass	associative	euph	euphonic particle
caus	causative	evt	eventative (Gonḍi)
cf	conjunctive form	expl	expletive particle
cls	classifier	f	feminine
clt	clitic	fut	future
cmp	comparative form (Gonḍi)	gen	genitive
		hbt	habitual
		hon	honorific
		hrt	hortative

hum	human	plhum	plural human
imp	imperative	plm	plural masculine
impf	imperfect (Gonḍi)	pln	plural neuter
impfc	imperfective (Brahui)	plnhum	plural non-human
imprf	imperfect	plnm	plural non-masculine
inc	increment	pn	<i>participium</i>
incl	inclusive		<i>necessitatis</i> (Brahui)
indef	indefinite	prdc	predictive (Gonḍi)
inf	infinitive	prf	perfect
ins/loc	instrumental-locative (Gonḍi)	prm	permissive
inst	instrumental	prs	present tense
int	interrogative	pst	past tense
intr	intransitive	rlt	resultative
loc	locative	rsn	reason
locI	locative I (Brahui)	s	singular
locII	locative II (Brahui)	sb	subject
m	masculine	sf	singular feminine
neg	negative	sm	singular masculine
nfv	non-finite verb	sml	simultaneous
nhum	non-human	sn	singular neuter
nm	non-masculine	snhum	singular non-human
nom	nominative case	snm	singular non-masculine
npst	non-past tense	soc	sociative case
obj	object	src	source case
obl	oblique	subj	subjunctive
opt	optative	sup	supine
pcl	particle	tag	tag-question marker
pd	predictive	tpe	truncated personal ending
pe	personal ending		
pf	perfective aspect	tr	transitive
pl	plural	vn	verbal noun

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1 Introduction to the Dravidian Languages

Sanford B. Steever

1.1 Background

The Dravidian language family is, in terms of speakers, the fourth or fifth largest in the world. The family comprises at least twenty-three languages spoken primarily in South Asia by as many as 220 million people. The majority of the Dravidian languages are concentrated in southern and central India, spreading south from the Vindhya Mountains across the Deccan Plateau all the way to Cape Cormorin. Elsewhere, they are spoken in Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Outside South Asia, the Dravidian languages, particularly Tamil, are also spoken in Fiji, Indonesia, Malaysia, Martinique, Mauritius, Myanmar, Singapore, South Africa and Trinidad.

The Dravidian language family has four subgroups: South Dravidian with Baḍaga, Iruḷa, Kannada, Kodagu, Kota, Malayalam, Tamil, Toda and Tulu; South-Central Dravidian with Gonḍi, Koṇḍa, Kūi, Kūvi, Maṇḍa, Pengo and Telugu; Central Dravidian with Gadaba, Kolami, Naiki and Parji; and North Dravidian with Brahui, Kurux and Malto. Since the 1950s reports of other languages have appeared, but the lack of adequate descriptions prevents us from saying whether these are new, independent languages or merely dialects of ones already known. For South Dravidian, Bellari, Burgunḍi, Kaikuḍi, Koraga, Korava, Kuruba, Sholega, Yerava and Yerukula have been reported; for South-Central Dravidian, Āwē, Indu and Savara. Conversely, certain dialects of Gonḍi, Kolami, and Kurux could prove, under closer inspection, to be independent languages.

Apart from their intrinsic linguistic interest, the Dravidian languages constitute the single most important gateway to many aspects of Dravidian and Indic culture. They inform many facets of Dravidian culture, including literature and religion, the fine arts and philosophy. The ancient poems of love and war, the twin epics, the medieval devotional poems and magisterial Ramayana of Kampan, all landmarks of Tamil literature, are slowly coming to be known and enjoyed by a wider audience. The vacana literature of the Vīraśaiva saints, composed in Middle Kannada and Middle Telugu, are also beginning to cast light on vast literatures hardly known outside of South India. In more recent times, some