

Split intransitivity in Shughni and Bartangi: A study on lexical variation

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Outline of the talk

1. Introduction
2. Morphosyntactic manifestations of SI
3. Data and methodology
4. Lexical inventories of two languages
5. Diachronic changes
6. Conclusion

1. Introduction: Languages under study

Indo-European < Iranian
< Eastern Iranian < Pamir group

Shughni-Yazghulami group:

Shughni

Bartangi

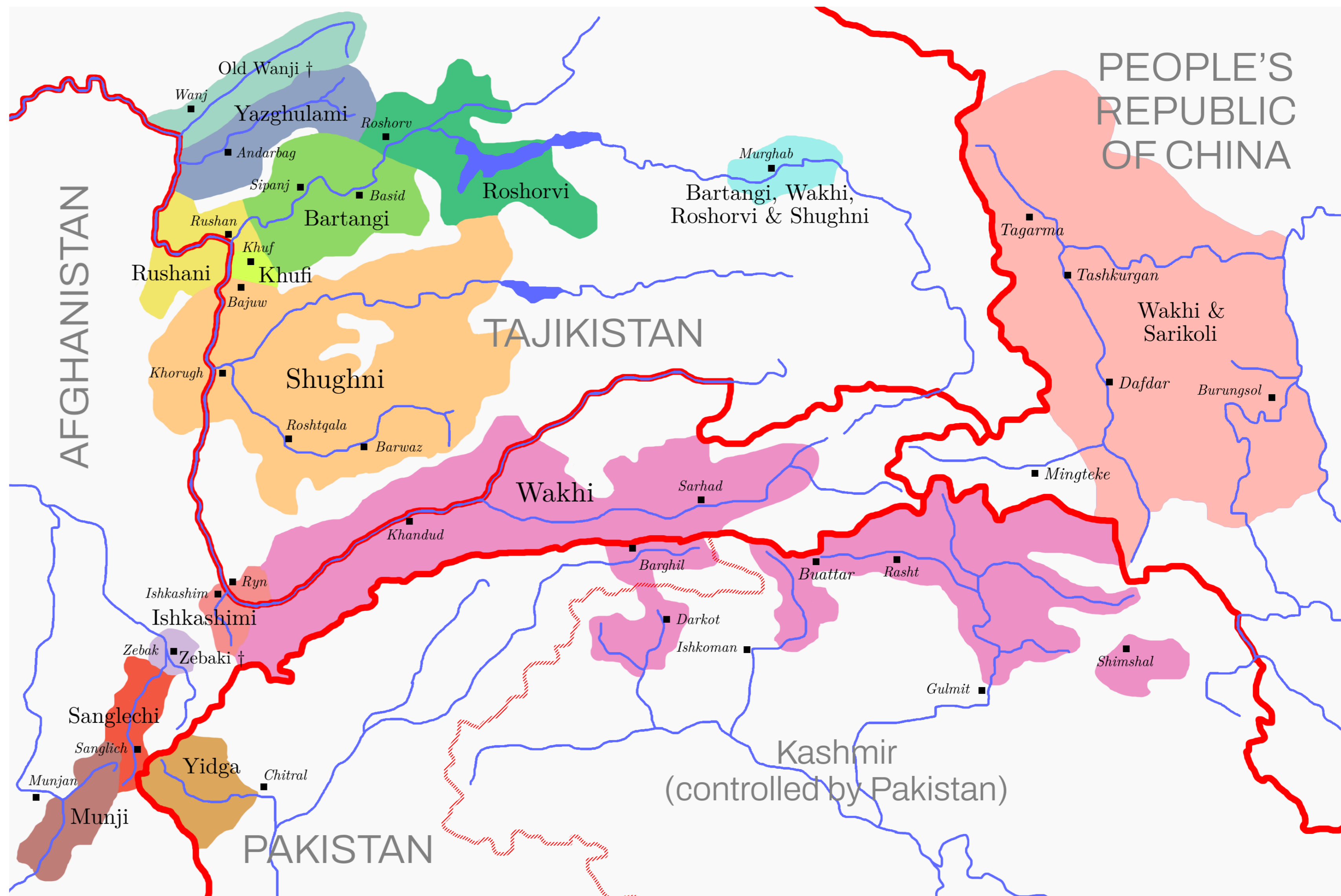
Rushani

Khufi

Roshorvi (Oroshori)

Sarikoli

Yazghulami



1. Introduction: Split Intransitivity (SI)

Split intransitivity (SI) involves a morphosyntactic split among intransitive verbs, dividing them into two distinct classes, labelled S_A-verbs and S_P-verbs (Dixon 1979; Van Valin 1990, Mithun 1991; Creissels 2007; Arkadiev 2008; cf. *active alignment, split S, unaccusativity, semantic alignment*)

Specific subtype of SI analysed in this study:

- SI manifesting at the level of alignment (**case-marking** and/or **verbal agreement**)
- S_A and S_P show distinct morphosyntax, where **S_A aligns with A**, but **S_P may not align with either A or P**

1. Introduction: Split Intransitivity (SI)

(1) Shughni (Indo-European) (Chistiakova 2023:17)

a) Transitive:

yu=yi *mu* *wīn-č*

D3.M.SG=3SG 1SG.O see-PF

‘He (A) saw me (P)’.

b) Intransitive, S_A-verb:

yu=yi *lap* *paloy-s-t*

D3.M.SG=3SG much work-PST

‘He (S_A) worked a lot’.

c) Intransitive, S_P-verb:

yā(=yi)* *pi* *dišīd* *sifā-d*

D3.F.SG up roof climb.F-PST

‘She (S_P) climbed the roof’.

1. Introduction: Split Intransitivity (SI)

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Specific subtype of SI analysed in this study:

- SI manifesting at the level of alignment (**case-marking** and/or **verbal agreement**)
- S_A and S_P receive distinct marking, where S_A **aligns with A**, but S_P **may not align with either A or P**

Research questions:

- (1) How is SI morphosyntactically manifested in Shughni and Bartangi?
- (2) What are the lexical inventories of S_A - and S_P -verbs of these two closely related languages, especially of cognate verbs?
- (3) How can we explain our findings?

2.1 Alignment and SI

Bartangi: accusative verbal agreement; tense-based alignment split in case-marking (double oblique strategy in past tenses)

Shughni: accusative alignment in both present and past tenses

SI can be observed only **in past tenses**.

		Bartangi (Basid dialect)	Shughni
Present tense	Verbal agreement	Accusative	Accusative
	Case-marking		
Past tenses	Verbal agreement	Accusative	Accusative
	Case-marking	Double oblique	

Table 1. Tense-based alignment split in Shughni and Bartangi.

2.2 SI in Shughni and Bartangi

SI can be observed only **in past tenses** and in a **limited number of contexts**: it can be found in verbal agreement with 3sg and/or 3pl subjects (Table 2) and in case-marking with pronominal subjects (Table 3).

		Bartangi (Basid dialect)	Shughni
3SG	A & S _A	–	= <i>i</i>
	S _P		–
3PL	A & S _A	= <i>af</i> / = <i>an</i>	= <i>en</i>
	S _P	= <i>an</i>	

Table 2. SI in verbal agreement with 3sg and 3pl subjects.

		Bartangi (Basid dialect)	Shughni
P		Oblique case	Oblique case
A & S _A		Oblique case	Direct case
S _P		Direct case	

Table 3. SI in case-marking of pronominal subjects.

2.2 SI in Shughni and Bartangi

(2) Bartangi (Basid dialect) (Indo-European).

a) Transitive:

<i>uf=af</i>	<i>dim</i>	<i>vār</i>	<i>na-δōd</i>
D3.PL.OBL=3PL.TR	D2.F.SG.OBL	strength	NEG-give.PST

‘They (A) didn’t handle it (P)’ (Sokolova 1960:34).

b) Intransitive, S_A-verb:

<i>uf=af</i>	<i>kata</i>	<i>ruz</i>	<i>fis-t</i>
D3.PL.OBL=3PL.TR	whole	day	blow_nose-PST

‘(The children got sick). They (S_A) were blowing their noses all day’ (elic. 2024).

c) Intransitive, S_P-verb:

<i>wāδ=an</i>	<i>ar</i>	<i>yi</i>	<i>zul</i>	<i>čūd</i>	<i>wīz-d</i>
D3.PL.DIR=3PL	DOWN	INDEF	small	house	fit-PST

‘They (S_P) fit into the small house’ (elic. 2024).

3.1 Data and methodology: Complex verbs

Simple verbs are frequently replaced by complex ones:

zinoystow → *kirx̣sitow* [slippery become] ‘to slide’;

lāxctow → *šut (šat) sitow* [lame become] ‘to limp’.

Focus only on simple verbs: their distribution likely reflects the ‘original’ SI system, while in complex verbs, S-marking depends on the light verb.

(3) S_P- light verb:

<i>mu</i>	<i>amsoya(*=yi)</i>	<i>xub</i>	<i>su-t</i>
1SG.O	neighbour	well	become.M-PST

‘My neighbour recovered’ (elic. 2022).

(4) Transitive light verb:

<i>x̣ac=i</i>	<i>yāx</i>	<i>čū-d</i>
water=3SG	ice	do-PST

‘The water froze’ (elic. 2022).

We don't have any (reliable) examples of an S_A-verbs used as light verbs.

3.2 Data and methodology: Elicitation

Data Collection

Field trips: Shughni, 11 speakers (Naryn, Kyrgyzstan, November 2022 & Khorog, Tajikistan, June 2024); Bartangi: 3 speakers (Basid, Tajikistan, June 2024).

Elicitation Process

1. Extracted all simple verbs from dictionaries; Makarov et al. (2022); Karamshoev (1989, 1991, 1999); Zarubin (1937); Sokolova (1959).

2. Removed:

- Verbs with transitive meanings (with examples involving a direct object);
- Some bivalent verbs.

List for questionnaire: 329 simple intransitive verb in Shughni, 89 in Bartangi.

3. Designed questionnaire with clear S_A / S_P contexts:

- Shughni: Past tenses, 3rd person singular subject;
- Bartangi: Past tenses, 3rd person plural pronominal subject.

4. Speakers translated sentences using target verb, and verbs were classified as S_A or S_P .

Final lists: **98 verbs in Shughni and 55 verbs in Bartangi.**

4. Lexical inventories of two languages

	Shughni	Bartangi
Total amount of intransitive simple verbs	98 verbs (100%)	55 verbs (100%)
S _A -verbs	53 (54.1%)	20 (36.4%)
S _P -verbs	45 (45.9%)	35 (63.6%)

Table 4. Distribution of S_A- and S_P-verbs in Shughni and Bartangi.

4. Lexical inventories of two languages: S_A-verbs

	Shughni (53 verbs)	Bartangi (20 verbs)
Physiological phenomena and emotions	17 e.g. <i>xirtow</i> (<i>xirdow</i>) ‘itch’ <i>qurtow</i> ‘rumble (in the stomach)’	9 e.g. <i>pirštōw</i> ‘sneeze’ <i>paxctōw</i> ‘suffer’
Sound production	16 e.g. <i>qartow</i> ‘croak’ <i>cirtow</i> ‘creak’	6 e.g. <i>jiyđōw</i> ‘shout’ <i>bũyđōw</i> ‘moo’
Manner of motion	8 e.g. <i>pačwarθtow</i> ‘turn in one’s sleep’ <i>kurxřtow</i> ‘shuffle’	2 e.g. <i>wixřtow</i> ‘swim’ <i>žexřtow</i> ‘run’
States	6 e.g. <i>laqtow</i> ‘hang’	1 e.g. <i>laqtōw</i> ‘hang’
Active (controllable) physical action	6 e.g. <i>faltow</i> ‘watch expectantly’ <i>paloystow</i> ‘work’	2 e.g. <i>fildōw</i> ‘watch expectantly’ <i>toqtōw</i> ‘knock’

Table 5. Verb classes (based on Levin & Rappaport (1995); Vydrin (2022)).

4. Lexical inventories of two languages: S_p-verbs

		Shughni (45 verbs)	Bartangi (35 verbs)
Directed motion	controllable	15 e.g. <i>dedow</i> ‘enter’	12 e.g. <i>firiptōw</i> ‘reach’
	uncontrollable	4 e.g. <i>rixix̣tōw</i> ‘crumble’	2 e.g. <i>wēxtōw</i> ‘fall’
Change of state	loss of functionality	10 e.g. <i>nax̣fīdow</i> ‘dislocate’	7 e.g. <i>ziyix̣tōw</i> ‘wither’
	others	8 e.g. <i>niḍīvdow</i> ‘stick’	6 e.g. <i>pēxtōw</i> ‘bake’
Existence and spatial configuration		5 e.g. <i>wirīvdow</i> ‘stand (up)’	5 e.g. <i>nēstōw</i> ‘sit’
States		3 e.g. <i>bīftow</i> ‘fit’, ‘suit’	2 e.g. <i>puldōw</i> ‘shine’

Table 6. Verb classes (based on Levin & Rappaport (1995); Vydrin (2022)).

4. Lexical inventories of two languages

Final lists: 98 verbs in Shughni and 55 verbs in Bartangi.

Cognates:

49 cognates were identified, of which **44** are distributed in the same way, while **5** are classified into different groups in the two languages.

Obsolete cognates (or no cognates) (n=55):

– 4 Bartangi verbs, Shughni cognates of which are obsolete and cannot be classified:

‘to swim’ *wīxǎōw* (Bartangi, S_A-verb) VS *wīxǎow* (Shughni), obsolete.

– 46 Shughni verbs for which Bartangi either has no cognate or only an obsolete cognate:

‘to stick’ *niδāvdōw* (Bartangi), obsolete VS *niδīvdow* (Shughni, S_P-verb).

– 6 concepts where Shughni and Bartangi use non-cognates, but their classification as S_A or S_P verbs is consistent:

‘to snore’ *maryǎdōw* (Bartangi, S_A-verb) VS *qūrǎstow* (Shughni, S_A-verb);

‘to chat’ *wiloxǎōw* (Bartangi, S_A-verb) VS *warventow* (Shughni, S_A-verb).

4. Lexical inventories of two languages

	S _A -verbs		S _P -verbs	
	Shughni (53 verbs)	Bartangi (20 verbs)	Shughni (45 verbs)	Bartangi (35 verbs)
Cognates, same distribution (n=44)	15		29	
Cognates, different distribution (n=5)	5	– (5 Bartangi cognates belong to S _P -verbs)	– (5 Shughni cognates belong to S _A -verbs)	5
Obsolete cognates or no cognates (n=55)	33	5	16	1

Table 7. Cognates distribution in Shughni and Bartangi

4.1 Lexical variation: Semantic shifts

In Shughni, two transitive verbs developed new intransitive meaning, and were classified as as S_A-verbs. Bartangi cognates remained transitive.

Shughni	Bartangi
<p><i>paloystow</i></p> <p>1) ‘to take care (of someone)’, transitive</p> <p>2) ‘to work’, S_A-verb</p>	<p><i>paloystōw</i></p> <p>‘to take care (of someone)’, transitive</p>
<p><i>warventow</i></p> <p>1) ‘to boil (smth), to cook (smth)’, transitive</p> <p>2) ‘to chat’, S_A-verb</p>	<p><i>warventōw</i></p> <p>‘to boil (smth), to cook (smth)’, transitive</p>

Table 8. Variations in verbs distribution in Shughni and Bartangi.

4.1 Lexical variation: Semantic shifts

Cognate verbs developed slightly different meanings in the two languages but (for the most part) retained their classification as S_A- and S_P-verbs.

Shughni	Bartangi
<p><i>riwix̣tōw</i> ‘fly away’; S_P-verb</p>	<p><i>rawēx̣tōw</i> ‘fly’; S_P-verb</p>
<p><i>zibidow</i> 1) ‘fall off’, S_P-verb 2) ‘jump’, S_P-verb</p>	<p><i>zibidōw</i> ‘run’, ‘run away’ S_P-verb</p>
<p><i>pultow</i> ‘glow, twinkle (about stars, candle)’; S_A-verb</p>	<p><i>puldōw</i> ‘shine (about the sun, the light bulb)’; S_P-verb</p>

Table 9. Different semantic shifts in Shughni and Bartangi.

4.1 Lexical variation: Verb class membership

Five cognate verbs were classified into different groups in the two languages: as S_A-verbs in Shughni, and as S_P-verbs in Bartangi, e.g. *pultow* ‘to glow’ (Shughni) and *puldōw* ‘to shine’ (Bartangi).

(5) Shughni, S_A-verb:

šam=i *pul-t*
candle=3SG glow-PST

‘The candle (S_A) was glowing’ (elic. 2022).

(6) Bartangi, S_P-verb:

wāδ=an (**uf=af*) *bašānd* *pul-d*
D3.PL.DIR=3PL (*D3.PL.OBL=3PL.TR) well shine-PST

‘(I screwed in new lightbulbs.) They (S_P) were shining well’ (elic. 2022).

4.1 Lexical variation: Verb class membership

Five cognate verbs were classified into different groups (Table 10).

Shughni, S _A -verbs	Bartangi, S _P -verbs
<i>pultow</i> ‘to glow’	<i>puldōw</i> ‘to shine’
<i>wizdow</i> ‘to fit’	<i>wīzdōw</i> ‘to fit’
<i>gāxtow</i> ‘to turn around’	<i>gāxtōw</i> ‘to turn around’
<i>čiktow</i> ‘to leak’	<i>čēktōw</i> ‘to leak’
<i>xīkiftow</i> ‘to blossom’, ‘to get prettier’	<i>xīkaftōw</i> ‘to blossom’, ‘to get prettier’

Table 10. Variation in the distribution of verbs in Shughni and Bartangi

But: These verbs in Shughni demonstrated variability (e.g., with the verb *gāxřtow* ‘to turn around’ seven people used the 3sg clitic =*i*, but four did not).

Hypothesis: The Bartangi data reflects the original distribution of verbs more closely, while Shughni shows an ‘expansion’ in the usage of the clitic =*i*.

5. Diachronic changes in alignment

Proto-Pamir languages: tense-based alignment split in case-marking.

	Proto-Pamir languages
Present tense	Accusative
Past tenses	Ergative

Table 11. Alignment of case reconstructed in Proto-Pamir (adapted from Harris & Campbell 1995: 263, following Payne 1980).

Modern Pamir languages: levelling of alignment, drift to accusative case-marking (Payne 1980).

	Modern Shughni and Bartangi
Present tense	Accusative
Past tenses	Accusative

Table 12. Change of alignment in modern Pamir languages.

5.1 Diachronic changes: modern Bartangi

Bartangi: Drift to accusative system (Payne 1980; Sergienko 2023)

		Bartangi (Basid dialect)	Shughni
Present tense	Verbal agreement	Accusative	Accusative
	Case-marking		
Past tenses	Verbal agreement	Accusative	Accusative
	Case-marking	Double oblique	

Table 13. Tense-based alignment split in Shughni and ‘old’ Bartangi.

		Bartangi (Basid dialect)	Shughni
Present tense	Verbal agreement	Accusative	Accusative
	Case-marking		
Past tenses	Verbal agreement	Accusative	Accusative
	Case-marking	Accusative	

Table 14. Alignment in Shughni and modern Bartangi.

Old Bartangi



Modern Bartangi

5.1 Diachronic changes: modern Bartangi

Bartangi: Drift to accusative system (Payne 1980; Sergienko 2023)

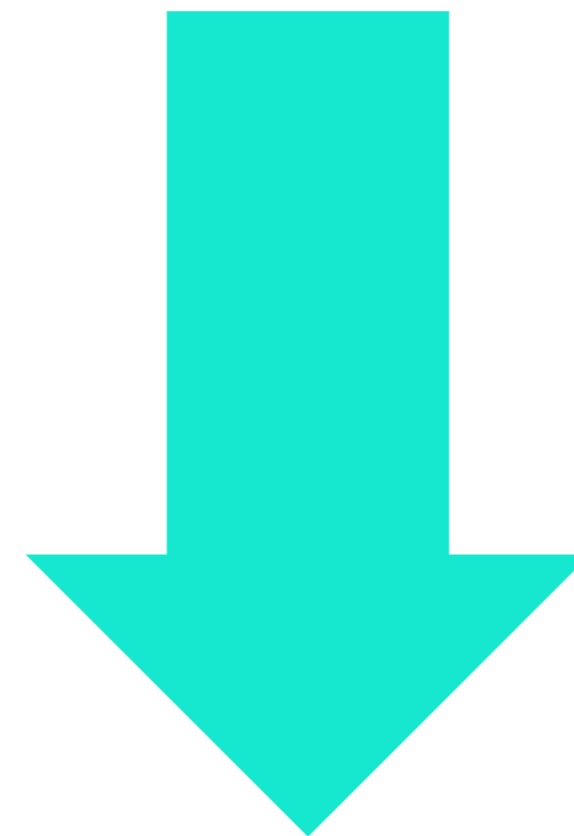
	Bartangi (Basid dialect)	Shughni
P	Oblique case	Oblique case
A & S _A	Oblique case	Direct case
S _P	Direct case	

Table 15. SI in case-marking of pronominal subjects in 'old' Bartangi.

	Bartangi (Basid dialect)	Shughni
P	Oblique case	Oblique case
A & S _A	Direct case	Direct case
S _P		

Table 16. SI in case-marking of pronominal subjects in modern Bartangi.

'Old' Bartangi



Modern Bartangi

		Bartangi (Basid dialect)	Shughni
3SG	A & S _A	—	=i
	S _P		—
3PL	A & S _A	=af / =an	=en
	S _P	=an	

Table 17. SI in verbal agreement in 'old' Shughni and Bartangi.

		Bartangi (Basid dialect)	Shughni
3SG	A & S _A	—	=i
	S _P		—
3PL	A & S _A	=an	=en
	S _P		

Table 18. SI in verbal agreement in modern Shughni and Bartangi.

5.2 Diachronic changes: Distribution of 3sg clitic =*i*

Change in syntactic position of the 3sg clitic =*i* in a clause over past 50 years:

- 20th-century texts: 3sg clitic doesn't occupy the position immediately after subject (if subject is clause-initial, clitic occupies the third position);
- 21st-century texts: all clitics (including 3sg =*i*) are (usually) placed after the first constituent (even if it is subject) (Chistiakova 2022).

(7) Shughni (Chistiakova 2022:78)

- a) [tu x̃itur] [mu š̃ig]=*i* x̃u-d
your camel my calf=3SG eat-PST

‘Your camel ate my calf’ (Pakhalina 1969: 50). ← recorded in 1948.

- b) [tu x̃itur]=*i* [mu š̃ig-buc] x̃u-d
your camel=3SG my calf-cub eat-PST

‘Your camel ate my calf’ (elic. 2020). ← recorded in 2020.

Hypothesis: Following the loss of oblique subject, not only the distribution, but also the ‘transitive’ function of the 3sg clitic =*i* underwent reanalysis.

5.3 Yazghulami: reanalysis of oblique S

Yazghulami:

- Oblique S typically occurs with similar group of S_A-verbs: “verbs are all denoting functions of the human body or emotional reactions typical for human beings” (Wendtland 2009: 429)
 - Rarely, it also appears with S_P-verbs such as ‘to be’ (26) or ‘to go’ (28). These examples are “extremely rare” and Wendtland supposes that oblique S here “marks change of the subject” (Wendtland 2009: 429).
- Pragmatic function! pc with Shughni speaker: “we add =*i* to put an emphasis”

(26) **dim** aʃab ganda vəda
she-OBL.3SG.F.DIST incredibly ugly is.PAST
“She was incredibly ugly/bad—indeed” (Edel’man 1966:38) Y.

Normally with *vəda* the absolute case would be used like in the following example:

(27) **tow=at** lap ganda vəda
you-ABS.2SG=2SG very ugly/bad is.PAST
“You were very bad!” (Edel’man 1971:279)

(28) waxte vad ki du xatən mæg **way**
time was that the woman die.PAST he-OBL.3SG.MASK
šod=ata ma du góri zām=ay xi=ra
went.PAST.ITR=and to the grave edge=he.3SG.ENCL self=for
aʃra biréd.
hut built.PAST
“The time came that the woman died. He went to the edge of the grave and he built a hut for himself.” (Edel’man 1966 :212) Y.

6. Conclusion

Possible explanation of lexical variation: Shughni and Bartangi shifted in different ways from ergative (or double-oblique) case-marking to accusative strategy, which affected SI system in both languages.

Bartangi (Basid dialect):

- Decay of double-oblique case-marking leads to the gradual loss of S_A / S_P distinction in both case-marking and verbal agreement.
- SI system in Bartangi is more stable and closer to the ‘original’ SI system, since it was preserved simultaneously in both case-marking and verbal agreement.


Shughni:

- Ergative case-marking disappeared earlier, but S_A / S_P distinction is preserved via the distribution of the 3sg clitic =*i*.
- Over the past 50 years, the syntactic position of 3sg clitic =*i* in a clause has changed.
- 3sg clitic may then have developed new pragmatic functions (which aligns with speaker intuitions).
- As a result, ‘transitive’ function of clitic =*i* weakened, and its use expanded to include some verbs that belong to the S_P group in the closely related Bartangi.

→ In Shughni, we observe an expansion of the S_A -verb group due to the gradual loss of the ‘transitive’ function of the 3sg clitic =*i*.

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A wide-angle landscape photograph showing a river with white-water rapids flowing through a valley. The river is flanked by lush green trees and shrubs. In the background, there are rugged, brown mountains under a bright blue sky with scattered white clouds. The overall scene is bright and clear.

Thank you for your attention!