

## **Hitherto Unsolved Problems Relating to the Balochi Language**

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*The Balochi language is considered to be one of the ancient languages of the world, and it is also believed to be one of the primitive Iranian languages. The Balochi language has not been a written language throughout the history and still awaiting for a standardized orthographic system. Efforts have been formulated by a small number of linguists to practice a satisfactory and standardized orthographic system but this dream is still awaiting to be accomplished.*

*This paper illustrates all aspects of hitherto un-solved problems of the Balochi language and its orthographic system in detail.*

### **Introduction:**

The survival of a language depends upon the strength of the nation and directly propositional to the strength of people sharing common interests. The greater attention paid by the people towards their language nourished the language and it would survive for thousands of year such as the Greek language which was flourished at time of Alexander the Great and till now it is well-preserved. While, there are number of languages in the World which did not survive and disappear from the pages of history.

Moreover, Balochi language is facing the same trouble from the very outset. The Balochi language has received no more than abundant of harsh waves of trials and tribulations. The language, to its extreme unfortunate, has never felt the pleasure of being an official language that causes it backwardness.

The current article discusses some hitherto unsolved, by most of people, problems attached to Balochi from early beginning to date, its historical background, Balochi as a written language, script issues, Arabic and Roman Script, and in the last section current improvements in Balochi language

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#### **Historical Background:**

The Balochi language has been facing countless difficulties since the inception as language, at every step of history; it has been regarded as Dialect of Persian.

It's an Indo-Iranian Language (Christian 1876). Balochi is the language of more than one cror people .<sup>1</sup> Balochi is spoken in Pakistan, Iran, Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Gulf countries and etc. with different dialects. Standardization and Orthography are two major problems throughout the history of the Balochi language.

#### **Balochi as a Written Language:**

The Balochi Language didn't have any written heritage prior to advent of British, after their arrival, for their own sake, they produced some written text in Balochi in Roman script.<sup>2</sup>

"The oldest indigenous sources for written Balochi we knew of are three Balochi manuscripts in the possession of the British Library, London. Two of these are Oriental 2439, date 1873, and Oriental 2921, date 1294 A.H. ( 1877 A.D), and they are thus roughly contemporary with the British occupation of Quetta in 1877.<sup>3</sup> The author of these manuscripts is KamalanGichki."<sup>4</sup>

To make their rule of law stronger, each British posted in Balochistan, had to learn Balochi to have soft contact and communication with Baloch; therefore, they design a course to teach them Balochi, "Balochi was one of the languages in which examinations were held, and British military and civil officials were encouraged to get a good grasp of local languages where they were posted.

The British and Foreign Bible Society in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century published the complete New Testament and to boot some parts of the Old Testament in Balochi which includes both Roman and Arabic Scripts (According to the record of the Bible Society's Library, Cambridge University Library).

In addition to Christian religious literature, Islamic literature was also produced. "The most important of the Islamic literary schools was the Durkhani School in Dadar, whose leading figure was Molwi Hazur Baksh Jatu'i". He translated the Holy Quran into Balochi published in 1329 A.H (1911 A.D) and had many religious treatises in his credit around 1900.<sup>5</sup>

Dr. Tariq Rehman writes in his book 'Language, Ideology and Power' that "The Balochi texts from Turkmenistan seen by me were written in the Roman Script and were published in."<sup>6</sup>

Most of the texts available in colonial period are mentioned, perhaps, many remain to be searched or documented, but I could come across these limited data and sources available at hand. Despite this, vigorous efforts were made to get Balochi language launched as medium of instruction by Baloch: "In 1932, the Baloch nationalists met at Jacobabad, where Balochi was demanded as a medium of instruction".<sup>7</sup> Moreover, "In April 1946, Mir Gul Khan, the General Secretary of the Kalat State National Party published an article advocating Balochi as the national and official language of Balochistan. Mohammed Hussain Anka, General Secretary of the Baloch Language and chief editor of the weekly 'Bolan', wrote an editorial, 'Balochi Language', and demanded from the Khan that Balochi be introduced as medium of instruction in schools".<sup>8</sup>

After independence of Pakistan, the first highly spirited efforts put on producing modern written literature on individual basis can be seen in 1951 by the publication of magazine named Oman in Balochi language in Karachi by Khair Mohammed Nadwi by help of the Baloch Educational Society. Following that, magazines have been published and stopped, at present, monthly magazines active in Balochistan (Pakistan) are Sichkan, Murwarid, Balochi, Balochi Labzank and etc. Arabic Script is medium of writing, though orthography varies from magazines to magazines, which conveys a harmful message to language learner.

### **Issues of Script:**

To have standard language, it's tantamount to having an acknowledged script. Baloch people so far have unsuccessful to decide in which script Balochi be written, namely in Roman or Arabic, albeit most of materials of Balochi has been written in Arabic and it's being used the most in Baloch community in Pakistan. However, the Roman school of thought, to very some extent, still does exist. Let's have a brief look at debates done on both scripts.

### **Arabic Script:**

Arabic Script has remained the core of discussion to the selection issue of Balochi orthography, the reason, as people believe close ties of Baloch to Islam and its tradition, and has even declared that refusing Arabic Script may cause good-bye from religion. Much dialogue and argument has taken place on it and even most of orthographic work carried out in the same script, as such, Sayad's orthographic system, Azat Jamaldeni orthographic system and etc. However,

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Sayad firmly had the belief that Roman Script has the potential to solve linguistic problems of Balochi to greater level.

Commenting on Arabic Script Gul Khan Naseer stated ‘the Arabic Script was not a script chosen by the Baloch themselves; they had been influenced by the writing systems of the Persian and Arabic languages.’<sup>9</sup>

Follower of Arabic Script school of thought were ‘Ishaq Shameem, Molwi Khair Mohammad Nadwi, Malik Mohammed Ramazan, Ahmed Jigar, Tahir Mirza, Abdul Hakim, Mohammed Hussain Anqa, Muraad Sahir, Murad Awarani and Mumin Buzdar’.<sup>10</sup>

If Arabic to be taken as language of Islam and close ties of Baloch cultural to Islamic rules would be the specific support of it or people think learning Arabic script will enable Baloch to be effective and fluent reader of Balochi, then it would be an obvious and transparent injustice to Balochi language. Since there exists countless Baloch who can read and recite Arabic fluently, but can hardly read out one written word of Balochi, as such, Eunice Tan mentions in her article: “The oldest member of the class was about fifty years old. She was able to read the Quran, but did not know how to read and write Urdu or Balochi and therefore decided to join the class.”

No denying the fact, Holy Quran is compulsory to be learnt by every Muslim, but not necessarily one should convert the script into Arabic just because of it and to the detriment to the language, since linguistic rules don’t follow religion.

### **Roman Script:**

Jahani writes that ‘the lack of full vowel representation in the traditionally Arabic Script is, especially in languages with many vowel phonemes, felt as a hindrance to correct reading’.<sup>11</sup>

It can be one of the contributing factors led to hot debates done on Balochi script to be Romanized in 1970s to fulfill its linguistic demands. As Sayad Hashmi in his book ‘Balochi Siyahag e rasth nabeesag’ “advocates the Roman script school of thought reasoning out that it solves the problem of vowel representation.” But further he writes ‘it is only possible when accepted by all Baloch and Strong Authority. Consequently, Baloch should keep going with Arabic Script.’<sup>12</sup>

Supporter of Roman school of thought ‘Ata Shad, Meer Aqil Khan Mengal, Basheer Ahmed Baloch, Kareem Dashti, Jan Mohammad Dashti, Yar

Mohammad Yar, Gulzar Khan Mari, Aziz Bugti, Ibraheem Nigwari, Nasir Baloch (BSO), Beezhan Baloch, Rasheed Baloch, Nek Mohammad Buzdaar, Rasheed Ahmed Baloch, Abdul Qadir Shahwani and Manzoor Ahmed Baloch' can be mentioned.<sup>13</sup> Central reason to Romanize script shared was that it solves the problems of vowel representation, it's easier to be learnt, it's script of science and technology and etc.<sup>14</sup>

Josef Elfenbein writes that in his visit to Quetta in 1961, he met Abdullah Jan Jamaldeni and through him to many other Baloch, as well Gul Khan Naseer. Later he states that 'he mentioned to me his great interest in the development and establishment of a generally-agreed fixed norm of written Balochi, in Roman Script if possible.'<sup>15</sup>

The writer mentions that he didn't have any deep interest in such a task, but zealous Gul Khan Naseer influenced him to be part of the task. Commenting on same the writer mentions '...its central figure is in many ways Gul Khan Naseer.'<sup>16</sup>

Moreover, they began the arduous journey and could succeed in the beginning. "Our talks attracted the interest of quite a few other Baloch who happened to be in Quetta, namely Bashir Ahmed, Director of Radio Pakistan, Quetta. Abdul Hakim, Chief Balochi Newsreader, the writer Abdul Qadir Shahwani, and some other"<sup>17</sup>

The process began in a small scale and interference hamper many times. In the process, again intervention of some forces can be seen to halt the activities of Baloch to work on development of Balochi as mentioned 'Suddenly holding meetings became difficult. It was desired to adjourn further meetings to Nuskhi, but the government would not allow us to meet there either, and we had to cease meeting altogether in July 1961'.<sup>18</sup>

The second meeting towards Romanizing Balochi was held in March 1962, in which new members showed interest 'Niyamatullah Gichki, Surat Khan Mari, Mitha Khan Mari, Lal Baksh Rind, and Basheer Ahmed. Sayad Hashmi was also invited, but he did not come.'<sup>19</sup>

### **Official Efforts to Romanize Balochi Orthography:**

By the time 'Gul Khan Naseer became provincial Minister of Education, and one of his first acts was to summon a convention in Quetta to formulate language policy. It was ordained to institute school instruction in both Pashto and Balochi, and the problem of getting textbooks written was urgently tackled'.<sup>20</sup>

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No religious arguments were given space; some people advocate the thought of Roman and some both Roman and Arabic-Urdu Script. This couldn't carry its weight for long time, because the NAP office was soon dismissed by Bhutto. In present time, in no magazine of Balochi published in Balochistan (Pakistan) the Roman Script is used.

### **New Improvements in Balochi Language:**

Less work and more rhetoric encompass Balochi language history, a lot has been discussed but very little done. Roman script movement to a larger extent has stopped breathing and Arabic dominated. After As the fate, new groups emerged as opposing each others' orthographies, such as Sayad Hashmi orthographic system, Azat Jamaldeni orthographic system, Haji Qayyum orthographic and many individual on their own.

Each person started finding mistakes in orthographies other than working on its improvement, very harsh to be accepted. In the recent years, one can see activities by Sayad Reference Library on Balochi literature and promotion of Balochi throughout Balochistan.

The greatest activity Reference Library has initiated which really deserves appreciation and encouragement plus help is the teaching Balochi to students across Balochistan. They have designed an especial course for it which is called Certificate Course in Balochi Language; it was started by the Reference Library under suggestions of Saba Dashtyari in 2007 and running effectively to date. It has been introduced to Malir (Karachi), Quetta, Turbat, Gwadar, Pasni, Pishukan, Nushki and etc. According to a volunteer teacher who is teaching the course told me that previous year 300 students were taught the course.

Another most needed task the Library has done the introduction of Balochi language in primary level in Private school, which has been ever-demanded thing of every person. More interestingly, it has been fruitful to attract the interest of Baloch children towards their mother tongue and they are overwhelmingly participating in the class activities of Balochi class.

Publication of the Third edition of "Nokaz", a collection of neologism, compiled by Dr. Naguman by Sayad Reference Library, is another so promising toil done by the Reference Library.

Balochi Academy is the sole academy funded by government to carry out work on Balochi literature and language. It has published many classical works of Balochi literature, written book in and on Balochi and Baloch and its recent work

on Balochi-Balochi Dictionary is in the process as according to the report of Balochi Academy '50 years of the Balochi Academy, Quetta':<sup>21</sup>

"In 2001 the Balochi academy started compiling a Balochi-Balochi Dictionary. For the compilation of this dictionary a team of literary men and experts was made in the supervision of Jan Mahamd Dashti. The editorial board was consisted of the following editors: Jan Muhammad Dashti (Editor in Chief) and editors are: Ulfat Naseem (Panjgoor), Gulzar Khan Murree (Kohlu), Ghaus Bahar (Ormara), Ghani Pahwal (Karachi), Dr. Abdul Saboor Baloch(Turbat), Prof. Muhammad Yousuf Baloch ((Noshki), Dr. Aini Baloch (Kharan), Wahid Baksh Buzdar (Koh e Sulaiman), Sajid Buzdar (Dera Ghazi Khan), Molvi Abdul Haq Baloch(Turbat), Yousuf Gichki( Turbat) and Ashraf Sarbazi(Iran). The dictionary is in its last stage of completion."

Some very important plans were spoken out in 2nd International Conference on the Balochi Language, Literature, Culture and History are following:

"To make an acceptable and standardized Orthography for the Balochi language.  
► To hold national and international conferences concerning to the Balochi language, Literature, Culture and History.

► To establish a spacious library on the basis of modern science and technology and to preserve manuscript and hand written books, publications, and inaccessible research books, films, audios, videos and cassettes.

► To establish a more effective and functional research cell, which fulfill the needs of modern research.

► To extend the needs of Balochi dictionary and translate the Balochi-Balochi dictionary into Balochi-Urdu, Balochi-Persian, Balochi-Arabic, Balochi- Brahui, Balochi- Sindhi and Balochi- Pashto.

► To write down the three thousand years ancient history of the Baloch nation on the basis of research and compile a book on it."

If the plans are seriously taken, a very fruitful result can emerge, but the history of Balochi speaks that plans have been made not implemented ever.

### **Conclusion:**

Recent works on Balochi show a hopeful picture of its future, but one must not be satisfied enough to it, because there seems a sad lack of consensus among different Baloch men of letter on agreed-upon orthography, Sayad

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Reference Library uses modified orthographic system of Sayad Hashmi, Sayad Hashmi Academy, Gwadar uses the same used by Sayad Hashmi and Balochi Academy uses a different one. Unfortunately, it does not seem to guarantee suitable future for the language. Eyes of common people are at academies, whose limits are limited, to get a hopeful picture of their language.



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