



RESEARCH PAPER

The Vernacular Literary Resistance in Colonial Punjab and Colonial Balochistan 1880-1925: A Comparative and Historical Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the Balochi-Brahui vernacular literary resistance in comparison with the Punjabi language from a historical perspective, which has never been highlighted before. Vernacular literary resistance during British colonial rule triggered numerous physical resistance movements in different parts of the Raj, from British Balochistan in the west to the colonized Punjab in the east. The movement in Punjab was designed to protect the Punjabi language against the forceful imposition of Urdu along with English, while in Balochistan the literary movement had its agenda to protect local Baloch people from the Christian missionaries who were busy propagating Christianity by using both Balochi and Brahui languages. The present study is based on a mixed method of analytical and explanatory methods, and it has endeavored that all the sources are critically analyzed. The Vernacular Literary resistance of both regions powerfully affected British colonial state formation with its full zeal and enthusiasm.

KEYWORDS Balochistan, British, Colonial, Literacy Resistance, Punjab

Introduction

The British colonial rule from 1857 to 1947 brought several changes in colonial India, which are still present in some way or another even after spending 75 years of independence. The concepts of "Divide and Rule", "Canal Colonies" and "Martial Race Theory" were all designed to protect their imperial and colonial interests. Meanwhile, the local people not only started following these imposed constructions but remained firmly attached to these newly developed conceptions (Mir, 2010) & (Muzaffar, et. al. 2018). The imposition of Urdu in Colonial Balochistan and Punjab was another fascinating development by the British in two different parts of their rulings. Interestingly, both regions came up on the surface against the forceful imposition of this newly put-up language through different mechanisms, which came to be known as "Vernacular Literary Resistance". Both Punjab and Balochistan literary sections had to first face the Christian missionaries and their writings and then they both had to face the imposition of Urdu in the administrative setup of colonial governance (Kamran et al., 2008) & (Muzaffar, et. al. 2021).

Urdu as an imposed language proved more problematic in Balochistan as compared to Punjab as it was new to the people of Balochistan, especially to the Balochi and Brahui-speaking people. But the people of Punjab were somehow already familiar with Urdu as it had lingual similarities with the Punjabi language (Ayres, 2008). Moreover, the dynamics of the imposition of Urdu in two different regions were opposite from each other.

In Punjab, its imposition was related to the threat and confinement of Sikh nationalism, and in Balochistan, it was mainly attached to the British loyal servants' problem of posting who were waiting to get powerful governmental positions and to undermine Baloch tribal resistance against the colonial governance (Mir, 2010).

Even though Urdu had the privilege from the state side of its security and development, indigenous vernacular languages like Punjabi, Balochi and Brahui not only survived but transformed into more significant and influential regional languages. Interestingly, Balochi and Brahui further went ahead by getting their newly developed scripts (Amara, 2004). People started learning in Punjabi, Balochi and Brahui through their own regional and religious teachers. But the vernacular literary resistances on both sides in Colonial Punjab and Balochistan failed to confront Urdu as a whole on the ground. Urdu attained its ascendancy and progression with its full zeal and enthusiasm both in Baloch tribal society and Punjab's settled and urban lifestyle (Khan, 2014).

Literature Review

The Punjabi literary movement started far before the British advent. It is believed that it was the 7th century when literary sections and Punjabi-speaking intellectuals started writing in the Punjabi language. However, those unique writings and their texts were either lost or destroyed by their own owing to perpetual negligence (Amara, 2004). Not any particular attention was primarily focused on their perseverance. But almost all historians of the Punjabi language and its history are agreed that the famous Punjabi Poet Sheikh Fareed's Sufi poetry and Janam Sakhis of Guru Nanak Singh were the first available Punjabi literary sources. On the other hand, in Balochistan, it is believed that a book called "Tafat ul Ajaib" written in the Brahui language by Mulla Malik Dad Kalati was written in the 11th using Arabic script. It was all about the religious teachings of Islam and understandings the basic five fundamentals. This book is lost the same as that of the initial Punjabi writings (Kamran et al., 2008). However, no written shaped Balochi book has been ever produced or discussed by any Baloch writer. But Syed Zahoor Shah Hashmi in his Book "Balochi Zuban o Adab ki Tareekh" develops an argument that during the rule of Chakar Balochi literature in the fields of poetry and prose reached an impressive stage. It was the period when oral collections of the old Balochi folk were collected through oral means. Sabir Badal Khan, on the other hand, sketches another picture of the history of the collection of Balochi poetry by saying that rather than Chakar, it was the Khanate period during which the process of oral poetry reached its zenith (Amara, 2004). The Punjabi literature other than Fareed Sheikh's poetry and Janam Sakhis saw further development in the field of poetry, prose and novel, but in the Balochi and Brahui languages, no further literary advancement or development was observed until the arrival of Christian missionaries. Now the question that develops here is why Balochi and Brahui writers could not switch to written script from oral practices like Punjabis before the 18th century. Sabir says that "*The isolation of their country and nature did not provide the Baloch with the possibilities of developing a written literary tradition, which needs both a peaceful life and a settled mind*" (Khan, 2014).

A huge similarity is present in Punjabi and Balochi mystical poetry starting from the 11th century to the 17th century. The mystical poetries written in the Punjabi language were mainly preserved and published as the printing culture had already arrived in the Sikh-ruled Punjab. But in the case of Balochistan, most of the mystical poetry was mainly preserved through oral songs and conversations. The tribal people of Balochistan never tried to preserve them in their writings which ultimately resulted in the loss of old mystical Balochi poetry. The poetries of Bully Shah and Sheikh Fareed used to be read by the local Punjabis Sufi youngsters. On the other hand, the heroic stories of Mir Chakar and Mir

Guhram, Hammal o Jeehand and Taj Muhammad Tajal remained existed in the hearts of only those Baloch people who loved their poetry and tried to be preserved it through oral means (Kamran et al., 2008).

The literary developments both in colonial Punjab and colonial Balochistan were moving on equal grounds. But Punjabi writings were huge in numbers as the Punjabi writers were not missing any chance to utilize the incentives of printing culture. Things changed on both sides when half of Balochistan became part of the British Empire in the name of British Balochistan in 1878 and Punjab was conquered in the Second Anglo-Sikh War of 1849. British missionary societies started propagating Christianity in the native languages at almost the same period. In colonial Punjab, Serampore Missionary Society by Willam Cery and Baptist Missionary Society were the initial missionary societies who, with the support of their printing Press culture deliberately used Gurmuki Script for writing by totally ignoring Indo-Persian lettering to portray Punjabi as the language of Sikhs (Ayres, 2008). The main reason behind doing all this was to glorify Sikhism because the entire Punjab had recently been taken away from Sikhs and it was a colonial necessity to make them happy at all (Mir, 2010).

For Balochistan, other missionary societies quite different from Punjab's were selected for the propagation of Christian teachings. St Mary's Church Society of Balochistan along with St. Joseph Catholic Church started working on the vernacular Brahui and Balochi languages and T.J L Mayor, a Christian Bishop, for the first time, published the Bible in the Brahui language. The church missionaries both in Colonial Punjab and Colonial Balochistan were publishing books on vernacular languages. The Catholic Church in Balochistan funded the formation of Books like "*The Handbook of Brahui languages*" by Diksen Diskey and Longworth's Dames book "*The Handbook of Balochi language*". Dames went further ahead by collecting Balochi poetry in his book "*The Famous Balochi Poetries*". Same was witnessed in Punjab when Church for the first time started publishing books on the Punjabi language and Janiver's book "*Punjabi languages*" is worth mentioning here (Kamran et al., 2008).

The Urdu language 1860 was imposed as an official language in Punjab when circumstances forced the British government to opt-in and give preference to Urdu over the Punjabi language in Colonial Punjab. Urdu was declared as a full official language for all the official works in Punjab's administrative setup. In British Balochistan, Urdu was imposed as the official language in late 1877. Previously, Persian was the court language of Kalat Khanate. The nature and the reasons for imposing Urdu in two different colonial areas were different from one another. The growing Sikh nationalism threatened English officials that declaring Punjabi as the official language of Punjab might increase Sikh political claims for the entire province. The British officials were anxious that like an aggrieved Sikh nationalist feeling was still there in its extreme form and could blow up at any time (Amara, 2004). So the officials started criticizing Punjabi in their official letters and conversations by calling it a language null and void for official purposes. The main targets were the different dialects of Punjabi that worked for them. Nationalist feelings were also at their peak in Balochistan. The creation of British Balochistan along with the Kalat state with the construction of the Jirga system and day-to-day interference of the British in Kalat Khanate intensified the marginal local people against the Raj policies. The imposition of a colonial language was not welcomed by the common educated man of Balochistan, as the comprehension of Urdu for a local Balochi and Brahui-speaking person was even more difficult than understanding the Persian language (Mir, 2010).

The actual reason behind the imposition of Urdu in Balochistan was to control the Baloch-Brahui vernacular literary resistance that was at its extreme peak against the Raj.

Urdu became obligatory in schools and kids were discouraged from even thinking about getting an education in their vernacular local languages (Ayres, 2008). The newly recruited Urdu-speaking Indian officials of Raj who were waiting for posting and positions also saw British Balochistan as a powerful vacuum for their appointments. British Balochistan was providing them with a huge incentive in that case. The Urdu language imposition in Balochistan was beneficial for them in many ways and it fulfilled their colonial agenda. Urdu's imposition in Balochistan was economically advantageous for British policymakers. Only a few Indians had dominant command of Urdu and this eventually eradicated the hard competition of the recruitment process. Only a few became eligible for government posts and the rest had to accept their ineligibility to run state affairs.

Urdu had its full backing from the state side and was rapidly developing in Colonial Punjab and Balochistan. People had to learn Urdu to communicate in offices and those who became fluent got state leverage without any difficulty. For governmental job recruitment, Urdu papers became compulsory and candidates had to learn both Urdu and English to get good positions.

Books, newspapers and journals started being published in Punjab in a maximum quantity and some of the Punjabi sections even owned Urdu as their native language over Punjabi. Punjabi writers started writing in Urdu. *Fasana Azad*, *Diwan-e- Ghalib*, *Urdu Naat ki Shayri Riwayat*, *Patras k Mazameen* and *Noor ul Lughat* were some extraordinary 19th century Urdu productions in Punjab-Colonial backed Urdu publications started their work in Balochistan too. At first, the English Gazettes started writing in English and Urdu languages. The Monthly Balochistan Advertiser had articles on the British army in both English and Urdu languages and it was published in 1888. The Balochistan Gazette was also following English and Urdu languages for opinion writing and its editor was Mr Enscomb. 1887 in the same way the Border Weekly News Quetta weekly used to publish Urdu articles. The first Urdu Newspaper in Balochistan was "*Rasthgoon*" in 1886. "*Al-Islam*" "*Al-Haq*" and "*Daulat*" were all Urdu newspapers (Khan, 2014).

Sikhs were the first ones who stood for the cause of their vernacular language against the imposition of Urdu. Punjabi newspapers by Sikh publishers started with the names of *Singha Sahba* (1866), *Khalsa Samachar*, and *Panj Darya*. Muslims were not given a major concern about the Punjabi language problem owing to the ongoing Urdu-Hindi controversy, so the entire vernacular resistance was mainly confined to Sikhs. Sir Guru Singh Sabha, The political association known as Sikh National Association's main agenda was to promote the Punjabi language and literature. Punjabi literary societies started in Lahore and Amritsar. These literary societies were used to organize debates and poetry competitions in the Punjabi language.

Material and Methods

The present study is based on a mixed method of analytical and explanatory methods, and it has endeavored that all the sources are critically analyzed. Since the sources of the present study mainly revolve around secondary data that is why the qualitative method is applied in the explanation of facts and themes.

Discussion

On Balochistan's side, Maktaba-e-Durkhani (The Durkhani Religious Institution) made by Mullah Fazil Durkhani Raisani started a vernacular resistance movement against Brahui and Balochi translations of Bible books (Khan, 2014).

Three scholars of Makhtab -e- Durkhani published some 280 books in Brahui and Balochi languages as a rival force against the growing Urdu and English set up from 1880 to 1947. Three Scholars, Maulana Muhammad Umer Dinpuri, in Balochi, Mulla Nabo Jan in Brahui and Mulla Hazur Bakhsh Jataoi again in Balochi, were at the forefront against Urdu and English writings through their limited sources (Mir, 2010).

Balochi, as the same as like the Brahui, was also suffering from the inability to have a unique and different written script other than depending on Persian and Arabic letters. Even though Balochi had a close syntax resemblance with Persian, the religious leaders of Makthaba ay Durkhani preferred Arabic script for the Balochi language. But in the late 19th and 20th centuries, secular and nationalist Baloch literary circles adopted the Arabic-Perso script.

Meanwhile, the first newspaper was published in Brahui and Balochi with the name "Al Haq" in 1920 by Maulana Muhammad Umer Deenpuri and then Nawa - e- Watan Newspaper in 1935 by Lala Ghulam Muhammad (Kamran et al., 2008).

However, like Punjab, Urdu was adopted as a means of communication and literary writing in Balochistan among the Baloch writers when Urdu became the main source of communication of ideas after the English language in the British colonial state. Baloch intellectuals like Yousaf Aziz Magsi started writing in Urdu for his cause of greater Balochistan to get the sympathies of Indian nationalists against Khan of Kalat and British imperialism (Amara, 2004).

The two different literary resistance movements from 2 different sides had the same agenda to confront the growing power of the colonial-imposed Urdu language over their languages. Both sides did their best literary and political objectives. Both sides successfully retained their positions of vernacular resistance and saved their local languages, especially in the case of Balochi and Brahui. It is even more interesting as they got their scripts because of that vernacular resistance.

Conclusion

The vernacular literary resistance in colonial Punjab and colonial Punjab from 1857 to 1925 for the cause and sake of Punjabi, Balochi and Brahui languages had unique similarities. Urdu, along with English, was imposed in both regions with different colonial agendas by the British. The vernacular resistance gave a fresh and bright impetus to the regional languages of Punjab and Balochistan against both Urdu and English. The Punjabi language was further advanced in its literary areas of poetry, prose and journalistic literature. Most importantly, Balochi and Brahui languages got their newly developed scripts. Newspapers, books and translations of the Holy Quran begin in vernacular languages without any substantial dependency on Persian and Arabic scripts. Oral practices were replaced by written techniques.

Even though every possible force was moved against Urdu in Colonial Punjab and Colonial Balochistan by the regional literary figures, Urdu not only survived but was adopted as a source of communication both by the literary and political personalities in colonial Balochistan and colonial Punjab. People like Iqbal, Muhammad Hussain Azad, and Krishan Chander in Punjab adopted Urdu for their poetry and other literary activities. Muslims from the platform of the All India Muslim League had always supported Urdu rather than Punjabi and this ultimately resulted in the advancement of Urdu in the land of Punjab. In Balochistan, nationalist literary and political figures' dependency on Urdu from 1910 to 1925 allows the imposed language to attain its grounds in a tribal Baloch society.

Baloch famous politicians like Yousaf Aziz Magsi, and Ghulam Ahmed Shahwani started writing in Urdu newspapers rather than choosing Balochi and Brahui magazines for the cause of their Baloch nationalism which in return give a tremendous boost to Urdu in colonial Balochistan.

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