

Chapter 10:

Balochi: Towards a Biography of the Language

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Introduction

Balochi¹ is known in the literature of area studies and linguistics as a series of dialects, for the most part mutually intelligible, differing mainly in vocabulary and the degree of influence from neighboring languages, mainly Persian (cf. Elfenbein 1989a, 1989b). It is spoken by three to five million² people in Pakistan, Iran, Afghanistan, Oman and the Persian Gulf states, Turkmenistan, East Africa, and diaspora communities in other parts of the world. But some communities on the peripheries of this distribution, isolated from other Balochi-speaking communities in Punjab, Sindh, India and elsewhere, have ceased to be Balochi-speaking. The most important contributors to modern studies of the Baloch have been Joseph Elfenbein and Carina Jahani. Jahani (1989:86-90) summarises the official status of Balochi in each country, and is a valuable source for the situation with regard to standardization and literacy up to 1989.

Although a Baloch state was established at Kalat (located now in Pakistan) in 1638 (cf. Spooner 1984, 1989), under a dynastic Khan, this political centralization did not survive through the colonial period and did not lead to standardization of the language. The medium of administration in this state, which became known as the Khanate of Kalat, was Persian, as was customary down to the 19th century throughout south and central Asia and beyond (see Spooner, this volume). Kalat was taken over by Ahmad Shah Durrani, and incorporated into the new Afghan Empire in the late 1740s, but broke away and became independent again in the mid-1750s, remaining so until the arrival of the British in 1839. Efforts to establish a standard written Balochi began with the ethnic awareness that emerged during the period of British suzerainty (1839-1947). After Kalat and its dependencies acceded to Pakistan in 1948 Balochi was recognised as one of the national languages of Pakistan, and publication in Balochi (supported by government funding) favored some dialects over others, but still did not lead to general acceptance of a standard. Sokolova (1953) provides a useful review of publication in Balochi down to that time.

Similar state recognition was granted to Balochi in Afghanistan after the communist Putsch in 1978, with similar lack of significant effect. There has been no comparable state

¹ This account is based on my own research with the Baloch in Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan between 1958 and 1985, enriched by data from the works cited below.

² Some claim many more, and national censuses are indeterminate, except for Turkmenistan in the USSR 1989 census which lists 29,000 (Axenov 2006:19).

recognition of Balochi in Iran or in any of the other countries with Balochi-speaking minorities, except to some extent in Turkmenistan (see below).

Meanwhile, although literacy rates in the region have risen significantly over the past generation, the rise in Balochi literacy has been slow, and generally negligible. Literacy for most Balochi-speakers is not in Balochi, but in Urdu in Pakistan and in Persian in Afghanistan and Iran. Even now very few Baloch read Balochi, in any of the countries, even though the alphabet in which it is printed is essentially identical with Persian and Urdu. Despite efforts to make Balochi a medium of written and print communication, Baloch who read Urdu or Persian comfortably and could easily make out Balochi on a printed page, claim to find it illegible, though there is no difficulty for a non-native speaker. This is a situation which needs to be explained both in terms of the way people read and of the historical status of the three languages. In general people read by unconscious recognition of the shapes of common combinations of letters, rather than by phonetic construction of words from individual letters. This is especially true of languages written in the Arabic script, because writing works in terms of established pen-strokes including particular serial combinations of letters, rather than by the simple connection of whatever letters are required to form any particular word. Most of the established pen-strokes in Urdu are different from those in Persian. Those needed for writing in Balochi are different again, and therefore unfamiliar to readers already accustomed to either Persian or Urdu and difficult to read. In general also there is still an historical expectation that writing should be in Persian or Urdu, rather than Balochi. But without a growth in literacy rates or increase in use in electronic (non-oral) media Balochi is unlikely to achieve standardization, or to increase in national significance. Currently, however, its use is central to local political as well as cultural identity within Baloch-majority areas. This is due to its historical use as the medium of public life among the Baluch, and as the medium of interaction between subcommunities who have come to consider themselves Baloch even if they retain the use of another language. We may therefore expect that if socio-political identity continues to rise among the Baloch, as it has over the past generation or so, its use in electronic media will increase and a standard form of the language will emerge. In Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan, the Baloch live in areas that are poor in resources, and have historically received little attention from the national government. Under current processes of globalization this situation may change, with consequences for the Baloch and their language that are not yet predictable.

The history of the Baloch and their language over the past four centuries makes Balochi an interesting case for modern language policy studies--one in which linguists, anthropologists, historians and political scientists all have a stake. Besides providing a detailed description of a variety of processes of language change, the value of such a study lies in the light it would shed on a transnational identity in a globalizing world. My aim in this chapter is to justify this statement. I will start by reviewing the history of the Baloch: how they arrived in their current locations and the significance of the configuration of their modern communities. Along the way I will point to consequences for the evolving status of Balochi. I will conclude with a summary of what can be said of current policy regarding Balochi in the countries we will have visited.³

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Balochi in the light of Baloch history

True to ibn Khaldun's model of historical relationships between tribal nomadic and settled agricultural populations, besides the Kalat Khanate the Baloch made other efforts to take over settled communities. None of them is well known historically. But the best known is the case of the Baloch Talpur Mirs, who ruled Sindh before it was annexed by the British in 1843. Another is Las Bela which was established under a Baloch with the local title Jam in 1742. In both these cases the local population was Sindhi, but even though Sindhi had become a written language at least as early as the 16th century, the literacy ratio was very low and Balochi was the language of the ruling family.

The earliest extant text (i.e. direct evidence) of Balochi is a ms in the British Museum, published by Elfenbein (1983), who dates it to around 1820. It is important to note that this is a period when several languages in the region are beginning to compete with Persian as written languages. In the part of Balochistan that came under British suzerainty the amount of textual material gradually increases in the course of the colonial period, during which time first Kalat (on the plateau) and later Las Bela (on the coast) and Kalat's western dependencies (Kharan, and eastern Makran, centered on Turbat) were recognised by the British as Princely States. A century later, seven months after the Partition of British India in August 1947, lacking the support that would have been necessary for independence, Baluchistan acceded to Pakistan. Balochi was now the language of one of four provinces of West Pakistan. Next, all four Baloch Princely States (Kalat, Kharan, Las Bela, Makran) were joined together in the Baluchistan States Union of West Pakistan in 1952 (with the Khan of Kalat as the Khan-e A`zam, or Great Khan). This arrangement lasted until 1955, when the Union was formally absorbed into the unitary province of West Pakistan, together with the area known as British Balochistan along the Afghan border (which had been directly ruled from Calcutta, and later New Delhi). The current Pakistani Province of Balochistan, including all these earlier divisions, was established after East Pakistan broke away to become Bangladesh in 1971. Since that time various movements have arisen among the Baloch (whose leaders never fully acquiesced in the accession to Pakistan) to seek independence from Pakistan, or minimally to renegotiate the relationship with the central government in Karachi, and later in Islamabad.⁴ Tariq Rahman (1996) classifies Balochi as one of 65 languages in Pakistan. It is one of the six official languages, but not one that can be used for any form of nationally recognised or useful qualification. He records that 3.57% of the population speak it, and that it is a strong identity symbol but of no value for either economic or political advancement. The Province of Balochistan, however, covers over 43% of Pakistan's territory, and Balochi is the primary language associated with it.

Hostility to the Federal Government in Islamabad has grown, most particularly among the Marri and Bugti tribes in the northeast of the Province. The discovery of a cache of arms in the Iraqi embassy in Islamabad in 1973, supposedly destined for delivery to the Marri, led to an escalation of the Government's efforts to suppress Baloch opposition, which in turn increased their sense of political identity. In 1974 the Marri went into full rebellion, and some migrated into southern Afghanistan, where they remained for over a decade. The problem has not been

⁴ Islamabad was constructed as the new national capital in the 1960s and began functioning as such in the early 1970s. Its location was chosen to provide better access to the seat of government from all parts of the country. In fact, however, it reduced accessibility from Baluchistan.

resolved. Nominally the Baloch in modern Pakistan have a significant degree of political autonomy in that the province elects and forms its own provincial government. However, the Baloch have been unable to benefit from this situation, partly because of the divisions among the communities that formed the Princely States of the British period, and partly because of the number of Pashtuns who are included in the most densely inhabited part of the province, that was British Balochistan, along the border of Afghanistan.

The relationship between the Baloch and the Pashtuns is complex, since neither community is politically centralized. They are closely related culturally as well as historically. Balochi and Pashto are both Iranian languages, but only distantly related and with no degree of mutual intelligibility. However, since the incorporation of the Baloch into the Afghan Empire in the mid-18th century, if not before, there has been a transitional zone in northern Baluchistan and along either side of the border with Afghanistan, which is inhabited by communities of both identities. There is evidence that some Pashtun communities have assimilated to Baloch identity over the past two hundred years. An interesting explanation of this process has been offered by Barth (1966). The whole of Balochistan was included in the territory claimed by the Pashtunistan movement, promoted by Kabul in the middle of the last century.

The political history of the Baloch in Iran has been different, but interrelated. The difference is partly the result of distance from Kalat and beyond the reach of the Khan, but more importantly because of differences between the larger government interests extending into the area from Kabul, New Delhi and Tehran. Political movements against the authority of the central government in Tehran have been similar to those of the Pakistani Baloch against the Government of Pakistan. But early in the 19th century a new element appeared. A branch of the Barakzai line of the Durrani ruling clan of Pashtuns in Afghanistan appeared among the Baloch in Saravan, in what is now the Iranian province of Sistan and Baluchistan. Since this was soon after the internecine fighting between the two main branches of the Durrani clan in Herat in 1817-1819, it is likely that the migration resulted from that clash, but no textual evidence or living memory has survived to substantiate the connection. Gradually these Pashtun Barakzai managed to replace the local leaders in Saravan, Bampur and western Makran. They also assimilated to a Baloch identity. These leadership positions were comparable to those of Kharan and Makran that became Princely States under the British, but the Iranian conception of the state did not recognise any degree of local autonomy. In Iranian Baluchistan there are several other agricultural settlements with non-Balochi names that appear to have continuous histories from before the arrival into the area both of Islam and of the Baloch, many of which had local rulers who claimed non-Baloch origins, comparable to the Barakzai.

Barakzai power and regional authority grew in the early decades of the 20th century when, following the efforts of Muhammad Shah to extend his authority into Baluchistan in the 1830s, his successors in the Qajar dynasty in Tehran had little interest in such distant parts of the country. However, when Reza Shah Pahlavi deposed the Qajars and launched his new nationalistic modernizing regime in 1925, he spent the first years restoring the authority of the government throughout Iranian territory as it had been defined in border negotiations with the British and the Russians starting in 1871. As with previous rulers the Baloch were last on his list. Finally, in 1928 he sent an army against them under General Amir Amanullah Jahanbani, which had little difficulty in defeating the alliance of tribes that the incumbent, Dust Muhammad Khan

Barakzai, namesake of the Afghan 19th century ruler (1826-1863), had assembled (see Jahanbani 1957, 1959).

The two efforts to build a Baloch state to include all or most of the Baloch—the Ahmadzais in Kalat and the Barakzais in Bampur—both failed to survive through the 20th century. But these indigenous efforts distinguished the Baloch situation from that of the Kurds or Azari-speakers, who have not established their own central authority, except ephemerally with Soviet assistance after WWII. However, although the Baloch were not reliable fighters for their own leaders, they were always ready to fight for others. In particular they formed the army of the Muscadine Empire in the Persian Gulf and the western Indian Ocean in the 19th century, remained in Zanzibar till the revolution in 1963 (initially filling the position of Viceroy), and traded in East Africa moving as far west as the Congo (where some were observed by an ethnographer as late as the 1950s). Several Baloch tribes settled in Oman earlier and become Arabic-speaking. Others developed trading relationships with the other Gulf states, which continue down to the present. There were abundant opportunities for Baloch to trade and find employment under the British, and some joined the merchant marine and gained experience of other parts of the world. Meanwhile, in eastern Iran the Alam family, descended (like the Durrani Shahs of Afghanistan) from one of Nader Shah's⁵ generals, and established since that time in the Qa'nat in what became eastern Iran, had extended its influence south into Sistan and Baluchistan, and used the Baloch as retainers. It is possible that Baloch from the Sarhadd (lit. "borderland," the northern part of Iranian Baluchistan) had raided north before this time, but in the 19th century their relationship with the Alams encouraged them further. In the 1950s there was still a community of Baloch north of the central deserts west of Esfara'in in northwestern Khorasan (Iran). Some moved further north and settled in what is now Turkmenistan.

The extent of this dispersal raises the question: how could the Baloch maintain a single cultural, linguistic and political identity over such a vast geographical extent with nothing to hold them together—no central place or authority, and no written language or means of communication among far-flung communities speaking different dialects. The answer to this question appears to lie in the cultural significance they attributed to pastoral nomadism and a mobile rather than a settled agricultural life. The degree to which language played a role in this process was introduced by Barth (1964). Here I will summarise Barth's argument and elaborate on it from my own experience.

Balochi as a criterion of Baloch identity

The Baloch have been held together, and perhaps even able to expand, because their sense of common identity lay in acceptance of institutional forms of behavior among strangers, forms in which language was a central component, but the necessary standard forms were shared across dialects. To be accepted as a Baloch one had to do little more than do as the Baloch did. It was a hierarchical society with an oral culture. Anyone could be accepted so long as they assimilated to the behavioral norms that signified acceptance of a position in the political hierarchy of communities. The most important general institutions which are a part of everyday Baloch life concern meetings and exchange of information (cf. Barth 1964:13-14).

⁵ Nader Shah (1736-1747) was assassinated in Mashhad in 1747.

Although Baloch etiquette and formality is minimal compared to (for instance) Persian, except when he is with intimates the Baloch is properly always dignified, formal and laconic (*sangin*). When a man enters another's house he says the traditional Islamic greeting--*salaam aleikum* (peace be on you) and equals and inferiors rise. The newcomer "gives" hands with his host and any other men present with whom he has or would like to have some personal relationship. the host is not necessarily the owner of the house. The honorary role of host is played by the most senior man present who is least traveller (*musafir*) i.e. a more senior man after the first day or so of his stay is treated as though he were the owner and host. The newcomer then sits in the place indicated by the host, and the host turns to him, and does the *wash-atk* (Bal. *wash-atk akant*), thus:

HOST		NEWCOMER	
<i>wash ātke</i>	you are welcome	<i>wash ātke</i>	you are welcome
<i>juṛ e</i>	are you well	<i>juṛ e</i>	are you well
<i>mehrabāni kan</i>	do kindness	<i>hodāi mehrabān int</i>	God is kind
<i>tau mehrabāni kan</i>	you do kindness		
<i>habar kan</i>	talk, tell the news		

In a formal situation the newcomer will then give a short resumé of the news he has, e.g. where he has come from (also, of course, in the unusual circumstance where this is not already known, who he is), what he has seen on his way and any recent developments in the region he has come from, in a nomadic region who is camped where, assuming of course that he has no reason for wanting to keep his hosts ignorant of these things. He will then, the formalities over, ask the health individually of the others present, including the families of any whom he may know, with the phrases *juṛ e? dadd e? sharr dadde?* He will not be pressed to give the reason for his coming until the third day.

Where two or more meet away from a settlement or camp the procedure differs only in that whoever is senior does the *wash-atk*. (I never observed any disagreement over who was senior.) If any are mounted, they dismount some ten yards or more before meeting. Then they walk towards each other, give hands, say *salaam aleikum*, and sit in a circle. If the men concerned have met before the same day, or if each knows that the other is local the procedure is abbreviated, but not omitted. The general Balochi word for news is *hal* (from the Arabic *hal* condition, situation, actuality). It is constantly being sought and exchanged. The two main occasions for the exchange of *hal* are the *wash atk*, and the *diwan* ("court," from Sasanian usage), an institutionalized gathering intimately connected with the position of any senior personage.

Although life among the Baloch has changed over the past half century as their interaction with a larger national society has increased, these practices are still recognised and have not lost their cultural value. One may assume that this function of the language belongs to a particular historical phase of the developing relationship between the Baloch and their neighbors. Although there is no historical evidence, it is easy to understand how such a function would have evolved under regimes of Baloch rulers who could not use literacy for local administration. Although this use of the language continues, Balochi is now a written language and has been

evolving slowly in this new dimension of remote interaction over the past fifty years. But very few Baloch read Balochi, and fewer write it, and those who do are mostly in Pakistan. The foundations of Balochi literacy were laid by foreigners in the 19th century, mostly by missionaries. The interests of the Baloch were also served significantly by the production of the multivolume Baluchistan District Gazetteer Series, published in 1906-1907, which included a great deal of information on the language as well as the sense of identity and the cultural life associated with it, making them one of the best documented non-literate peoples anywhere. The earliest periodical publication appears to have been *Bolan*, a literary weekly published in Quetta before Independence, perhaps as early as the 1930s (see Elfenbein 1989, and Jahani 1989:135). We lack data on print runs and readership. Publication in Balochi was subsidized by the Federal Government when the Balochistan States Union acceded to Pakistan in 1948. But it peaked in the 1950s and 1960s.

Other initiatives designed to raise the status of Balochi to a national level (all in Pakistan) include regular radio broadcasts, the establishment of a Balochi Academy in Quetta (the provincial capital) and a Balochi Studies section at Balochistan University in Quetta. Broadcasts in Balochi were introduced by Radio Pakistan in 1949. The program was daily, forty five minutes, and was broadcast from Karachi. Starting in 1956 the programs were broadcast from Quetta, the provincial capital. The Balochi Academy was founded in Quetta in 1961, with financial support from the Federal Government. Its most important literary activities have been publication of books, mainly in Balochi, and the organization of literary meetings. A Balochi Studies section was formed at the Balochistan University in Quetta in 1997, which teaches and sponsors research on the Balochi language and literature. There have also been some attempts at starting primary education in Balochi. As the result of an initiative of the government of Benazir Bhutto, Balochi, Brahui and Pashto were introduced as the medium of instruction in government schools in 1990. However, only two years later, in 1992, education in "mother tongue languages" was made optional and parents switched back to Urdu (Rahman 1996:169). Private initiatives have also been taken to teach Balochi, especially in the main Baloch residential area of Karachi, Lyari. A number of periodicals have also been published in Balochi for various periods. Some of the Baloch in the Diaspora are also concerned with the preservation and promotion of Balochi, publishing magazines and arranging literacy classes, cultural evenings etc. Nowadays there are numerous weekly and monthly magazines published in Balochi. Although these initiatives raised the value of particular dialect forms, mainly Makrani, they did not raise the value of Balochi as a language or lead in any significant way towards standardization.

Some more detail from the current literature on the early history of the language and people may be useful here. Balochi is classified as Northwest Iranian and is closely related to (but by no means mutually comprehensible with) Kurdish as well as Persian. For this reason it was often referred to in the past as a dialect of Persian. But this was more a political statement about the relationship of the non-literate Baluch to the Persianate urban elite than a linguistic statement about the relationship between the two languages. The name "Baluch" appears in sources that originate before the Islamic period. It is associated with people who appear to have moved as pastoral nomads from areas south of the Caspian Sea south and southeastwards towards their current territories in southeastern Iran, southwestern Afghanistan and western Pakistan. Linguists consider the original home of the Baluch to have been somewhere just east or southeast of the central Caspian region, the meeting point of Middle Persian and Parthian

(Elfenbein 1989a). Minorsky suggested that the place names on the edge of the central deserts of the Iranian Plateau may be the equivalent of visiting cards left by them on their way—which suggests that they were also involved in agriculture. (Balochi epic poetry, collected by Dames themselves claim to have come from Syria.) They were passing through the Kerman area in the time of Mas`ud (ruling from Ghazni in what is now southeastern Afghanistan) in the 11th century, and arrived in the Indus valley finally in the 15th or perhaps even 16th century. They brought the Baluch identity and language with them and must have "Baluchized" the existing population, i.e. assimilated them to a Balochi identity. Many of the current place names of the region, names of agricultural settlements, predate their arrival. The fact that although they had no unifying social structure or political identity before the middle of the 17th century, and appear to have arrived in waves raises questions about the current dialect variation, apart from the two significant language subcommunities in their midst--the Jadgal in Dashtiari (southeast corner of Iran) and the Brahui who are concentrated mainly south of Kalat. In the recent past the Baloch have routinely distinguished between nomads whom they referred to as *baloch* (with the implication of *par excellence*, the real Baloch) and agriculturalists, for whom they used the term *shahri* (Spooner 1987). Many of the *shahri* enjoyed a helot type of status under the control of leading tribal families, most of whom may have originated outside the region and outside the Balochi-speaking community, though they are now fully identified as Baloch. This category includes the Jadgal (whose speech appears to be a dialect of Sindhi). There were also serfs, imported from East Africa. Many of the Brahui speakers, however, have been close to the government in Kalat, which had a continuous existence from 1638 to 1954. Perhaps more interesting still, there is evidence to suggest that some tribal communities have shifted from Brahui to Baluchi or vice versa more than once in the recent past (Morgenstierne 1932:8-9, quoted in Barth 1964:13, wrote that "the tribal system of the Baloches and Brahuies, which in contrast to that of the Pathans favours the assimilation of racially foreign elements into the tribe, has no doubt led to frequent changes of language within many Baloch and Brahui clans.)

Since in the modern world ethnic identity is usually understood in ethnolinguistic terms, the emergence of nationalist sensibilities raise the question whether or not Brahui-speakers should be distinguished in some way from Balochi speakers. The question has not arisen for Jadgali speakers in Dashtiari (Iran) because they have historically held low-class helot-type states and the Sardarzai Khans in Bahu Kalat. But the Brahui-speakers in Sarawan, south of Kalat, in Pakistan had no such historical disadvantage. Two academies were established for the promotion of Baluchi and Brahui languages and cultures. It was in the government, A's interest to see Brahui develop as a distinct identity, which would weaken Baluchistan solidarity. Quetta radio became the major producer of programs in Baluchi, heard in Iran and Afghanistan. (Radio Zahedan and Radio Kabul had less than ten hours a week each.) Baluch writers published magazines and books in Baluchi, English, and Urdu. Beginning in the 1960s an increasing number of Baluch writers have published on the history and culture of the Baluch.

After the establishment of the Khalqi government in Afghanistan in 1978 Baluchi was declared one of seven national languages of Afghanistan, along with not only Dari and Pashto but also Uzbeki, Turkmani, Nuristani, Pashai (DPA Revolutionary Council's Decree Number 4 on May 15, 1978; see Nawid, this volume). Balochi continued with this status through the various changes of government during the Soviet occupation and the civil war that followed, although Dari and Pashto were given preference in practice under Najibullah, from 1986

onwards, and the Baloch were not equipped to take much advantage of the opportunity to promote their ethno-linguistic identity. Beginning in 1996, under the regime of the Taliban, although no official language policy was announced, Pashto became *de facto* the official language of the government. **The next constitution, promulgated by the coalition forces in 2004, like previous constitutions, did not designate any language as official.** However, Article 16 states, "From amongst Pashto, Dari, Uzbeki, Turkmani, Baluchi, Pachaie, Nuristani, Pamiri and other current languages in the country, Pashto and Dari shall be the **official languages** of the state. In areas where the majority of the people speak in any one of Uzbeki, Turkmani, Pachaie, Nuristani, Baluchi or Pamiri languages, any of the aforementioned languages, in addition to Pashto and Dari, shall be the third official language, the usage of which shall be regulated by law. The state shall design and apply effective programs to foster and develop all languages of Afghanistan. Usage of all current languages in the country shall be permissible in press publications and mass media. Past academic and national administrative terminology and usage in the country shall be preserved."

While Iran's 1906 Constitution did not specifically acknowledge Baluchi, Chapter 1 Article 15 did articulate that local languages were allowed to be used, including use in the media. This article also allowed the instruction of ethnic literature alongside Persian courses. However, despite the previously detailed spurts of production following the Revolution, solely Radio Zahidan's daily radio broadcasts were sustained (Jahani 1989: 86). This article also allowed the instruction of ethnic literature alongside Persian courses. The central government in Iran did during the 1960s broadcast Baluchi news and music for several hours a day from a transmitter in Zahedan (Elfenbein 1966: 1). It is perhaps notable that Baluchi was taught to a small group of Iranian refugees living in Sweden in the late 1980s (Jahani 1989: 90).

In Pakistan Baluch nationalism continues to be a political factor at the national level. It has been suggested that the idea of Baluch nationalism began with Dost Muhammad Khan's resistance to Reza Shah in Iran in 1928 (Harrison 1981:3). But it is doubtful whether the combination of general ethnic awareness, interest in political unity, and potential for strong leadership, which are necessary for a successful nationalist movement, existed in a significant proportion of the Baluch anywhere before the 1960s at the earliest. Since then it has motivated an increasing number of young Baluch in Pakistan, Iran, and the Persian Gulf. In February, 1981, a coalition of Baloch emigre groups was formed in London under the name of World Baluch Organization, the purpose of which is to raise money for the Baluch cause.

The future of Balochi is now uncertain because of the increasing rate of social change, especially in Iran and Pakistan. As tribal identities continue to lose significance, the language is likely to give way to Persian and Urdu, unless the movement for a stronger ethnic identity finds a leader. In 1984 I was in a situation in rural Baluchistan in which six languages were being spoken in a single discussion: Balochi, Brahui, English, Pashto, Persian, and Urdu. So far as I could tell I was the only participant who thought this significant. Bi- or multi-lingualism is common in Balochistan and surrounding regions. Probably no one in the group spoke all six languages comfortably. But they were accepted as local languages, and every participant was comfortable in at least several. All participants had different social statuses, not easy to define in every case, but recognizably different. A generation earlier, perhaps less, the differences in social status would have determined the choice of language: everyone in the group would have

understood implicitly who was senior and that person would have managed the discussion in the language of his choice. In general that is the way Baloch society worked. By the mid 1980s, however, statuses had already lost some of their edge. People were becoming more socially mobile, and this was being reflected in the way people from different backgrounds did business with each other. The Baloch in Sindh, South Punjab can speak four languages: Balochi, Sindhi, Panjabi and Saraiki. There are a large number of Baloch living in Karachi who are fluent in Urdu and Sindhi. The number of situations where it is important to speak Balochi is diminishing.

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