

# State Control and its Impact on Language in Balochistan

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The purpose of the present article will be to present certain aspects of the sociolinguistic situation among one of the least studied ethnic groups in the Middle East, the Baloch, who inhabit the south-eastern corner of the Iranian linguistic area. It is an area where the dominance of the state is relatively recent, and where modern society with a monetary economy, a settled lifestyle, mass education, state administration etc. is just being established.

It is particularly interesting to study language-related decisions of the state, and the implementation of these decisions in a region like Balochistan, where until recently there were no such phenomena as e.g. language planning, education, mass media, newspapers or administrative language. However, in Iran the Persian language and in Pakistan Urdu and English have started to play a constantly growing role in Balochistan, something which is by many Baloch felt as a threat to both their language and their distinct ethnic identity. It must be stressed that modernity is not regarded as negative, but the Baloch intellectuals face the dilemma of how to retain their ethnic and linguistic diversity at the same time as they seek active participation in an increasingly globalised world.

## **The Historical Background**

The border between Iran and Pakistan, which cuts through the traditional land of the Baloch, has since the time of its demarcation in the late nineteenth century been constantly questioned and frequently ignored by the Baloch living on both sides of it. It is called the Goldsmid line, and was drawn by a border commission headed by the British general Goldsmid, which also held representatives from Tehran and the Balochi Khanate of Kalat (see below)

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(Breseeg 2001: 133-134, Hosseinbor 2000: 73-80).<sup>1</sup> However, it has had a considerable impact on linguistic issues, and it is therefore interesting to study the position of Balochi on both sides of this border.

There is very little known about the early history of the Baloch, but two main theories prevail as to when they arrived in their present habitat, which includes south-eastern Iran, south-western Pakistan and southern Afghanistan. The 'native theory' argues that the core of the Baloch settled in Balochistan and mixed with other local peoples as early as 2000 years ago, as a continued movement of the Aryan tribes that had already invaded the Iranian plateau from the north. The 'migration theory', supported by the indigenous epic tradition as related in the epic poetry on genealogies and the wanderings of the Baloch tribes, suggests that the Baloch arrived in Balochistan from the north-west considerably more recently, some time around the tenth century A.D.

In fact, the ballads suggest a Semitic origin for the Baloch and a close relation to the prophet Muhammed. This could, however, be seen as a pseudo-historic way of legitimising the Baloch as good and orthodox Muslims. Other origins, such as Turkic or Indian, have also been suggested for the Baloch (Dames 1904: 7). It may well be that the Baloch earlier in their history were 'a series of tribal communities not sharing any feelings of common ethnicity' (Spooner 1989: 607), and that even though linguistic evidence suggests the likelihood that at least a core group were of Indo-European origin<sup>2</sup> who had migrated from the north-west, 'Arab groups could have found their way into the heterogeneous tribal population that eventually assimilated Baluch identity east of Kerman' (Spooner 1989: 609). Arab historians from the ninth and tenth centuries A.D. associate them with the area between Kerman, Khorasan, Sistan and Makran (Spooner 1989: 606). It is also possible that they assimilated a major part of the local inhabitants in Balochistan when they settled there.

It is not possible to talk about 'a Baloch race' (cf. Dames 1904) in order to distinguish them from neighbouring peoples, but there are other factors which bind them together and separate them from others in the region. Anthony D. Smith (1986: 21) finds that the term *ethnos* 'would appear to be more suited to cultural rather than biological or kinship differences'. Among such cultural differences, he enumerates 'a collective name', 'a common myth of descent', 'a shared history', 'a distinctive shared culture', 'an association with a specific territory' and 'a sense of solidarity' as crucial components of ethnic affiliation (Smith 1986: 22-31). All these factors are applicable in the case of the Baloch. Among the components of a shared culture, those of language and religion are particularly important, and the Balochi language as well as the Sunni creed are distinguishing factors in relation to neighbouring ethnic groups.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Baloch delegates opposed the demarcation already at the meeting of the border commission, arguing that both the western and the eastern parts of Balochistan ought to belong to the Balochi Khanate of Kalat.

<sup>2</sup> Balochi is an Indo-European language of the Iranian branch, most closely related to Kurdish, Gilaki, Mazandarani, Talyshi and other north-western Iranian languages.

<sup>3</sup> However, a small number of Baloch in Iran profess Shi'a Islam. There are also Shi'a Muslims among the Baloch in Pakistan (Breseeg 2001: 58). There are, furthermore, communities who profess the so-called *zikri* religion which developed out of Sunni Islam around 1500 A.D. As for language, many people who ethnically regard themselves as Baloch, especially in Punjab and Sindh, do not any longer speak Balochi, which means that there is a process of language shift

It is important to be able to distinguish the 'self-group' from other surrounding ethnic groups. In fact, it is only in an interactive relation to other groups that are perceived as different that a delimitation of the 'own-group' versus the others becomes meaningful (see e.g. Eriksen 1993). In Iran the Sunni creed is crucial in that respect, since the Balochi language is closely related to Persian and is normally in the official discourse described as a 'dialect' (*guyeš*) of the Persian language (*zabān*), whereas the majority in Iran, contrary to most Baloch, profess Shi'a Islam. In Pakistan, on the other hand, the language, which is not closely related to Sindhi, Lahnda, Punjabi, Urdu or other Indian languages and very distinct from the eastern Iranian language Pashto, is more crucial, since the majority of the Muslims in Pakistan, including a vast majority of the Baloch, profess Sunni Islam.

The traditional socio-economic systems in Balochistan divide the land into a northern part and a southern part.<sup>4</sup> In the north, pastoral nomadism has been the predominant lifestyle, whereas in the south agriculture, with few landowners and landless workers or slaves, has been more common. The tribal structure has, however, historically been a uniting factor among free-born Baloch in all Balochistan, and it has been easy for originally non-Baloch tribes and clans to associate with and incorporate themselves into the Balochi tribal system.<sup>5</sup> Nowadays the de-tribalisation process is strong, especially in those parts of Balochistan where the traditional economy is based on settled agriculture rather than on pastoral nomadism.<sup>6</sup> Tribal loyalties are also often felt to hamper a strong nationalist movement, and many intellectual Baloch nowadays try to propagate the replacement of tribal (sub-national) loyalties with loyalty to the entire Balochi *ethnie* (see Smith 1986: 21).

In the seventeenth century the Baloch allied themselves with another tribal people, the Brahuis,<sup>7</sup> against other forces in the region, and this Balochi-Brahui Khanate, with its centre in Kalat (in present-day Pakistan) continued to exist until 1947. It was especially powerful during the second half of the eighteenth century, under Nasir Khan I, who 'was the only khan who successfully transcended tribal loyalties' (Spooner 1989: 611), but it was later weakened and incorporated into the British administration in 1839. The language of administration in Kalat was from the beginning Persian (Baloch 1987: 120),<sup>8</sup> but English later replaced Persian for official purposes.

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under way among the Baloch. There are strong reasons to believe that this process will continue and probably even be speeded up as modern society with education etc. more and more strongly penetrates Balochistan.

<sup>4</sup> For a thorough discussion of socio-economic structures in Balochistan, see e.g. Fabietti (1996).

<sup>5</sup> See Titus (1998: 668), who discusses the differences in social structure between the Pashtuns and the Baloch, and finds that among the Baloch a hierarchical structure predominates and facilitates the incorporation of new elements into the tribe.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Orywal (1996), who describes the de-tribalisation process among the Baloch in Afghanistan.

<sup>7</sup> The Brahuis speak a Dravidian language, and therefore are generally considered to have migrated to their present habitat from the south-east.

<sup>8</sup> Persian had a long tradition as a language of writing, literature and administration. The Samanids, ruling from Bokhara over large areas of Central Asia and Khorasan in the ninth and tenth centuries, began using New Persian in addition to Arabic, the language of the Muslim conquerors, as an administrative language.

In the nineteenth century the Qajar shahs, ruling from Tehran, made several attempts to subdue the western parts of Balochistan. Likewise, British India had intentions of expanding westwards in Balochistan. This is the background of the Goldsmid border commission, and the demarcation that resulted from it divided most of the Balochi mainland between British India and Iran.<sup>9</sup> Even so, the Qajars never succeeded in establishing their power in Balochistan, and it was only in 1928 that the newly established Pahlavi monarchy was successful in imposing direct control over the province.

### **Official Language Policy and the Impact of Education and Mass Media**

Education in Balochistan prior to the modern era was comprised of the traditional Islamic *madrassa*-education. There was no possibility of studying the Balochi language and literature within this system, since there was no written literary tradition in Balochi to refer to. The languages employed were Arabic, which was the language of religion and science, and Persian, the language of a long and elevated literary tradition.

Along with modernisation came a secular education system and a nationalist discourse as well, first in British India, and later in Iran. Hosseinbor finds several reasons as to why a nationalist movement demanding political, linguistic and cultural rights for the Baloch was much slower to emerge in western (Iranian) Balochistan than in eastern (Pakistani) Balochistan, e.g. the ‘extremely slow pace of urbanization, the absence of social and economic modernization, and the very limited modern education introduced in western Baluchistan prior to the 1960s’ as well as the ‘repressive Pahlavi rule’ (Hosseinbor 2000: 150).

When the demands for freedom from the colonial yoke grew stronger and stronger in British India, several of the educated young Baloch started to demand a free Balochistan as well. Some of these nationalists were also poets and writers and played a major part in the Balochi literary movement. The British had already paid considerable attention to the Balochi language. A number of grammatical descriptions and dictionaries of various Balochi dialects were produced in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.<sup>10</sup> Balochi oral epic poetry, folktales, stories etc. were collected and published by M. Longworth Dames, who as a result made a great contribution to the preservation and study of Balochi oral literature.<sup>11</sup> Examinations were also held in Balochi, and the colonial officials were encouraged to learn the language (Bruce 1900: 69).

<sup>9</sup> A smaller part is found within the borders of present-day Afghanistan.

<sup>10</sup> E.g. Gilbertson, George W., *The Balochi Language, A Grammar and Manual*, Hertford 1923; Gilbertson, George W., *English-Balochi Colloquial Dictionary*, I-II, Hertford 1925; Marston, E. W., *Grammar and Vocabulary of the Mekranee Beloochee Dialect*, Bombay 1877; Mockler, E., *A Grammar of the Baloochee Language*, Henry S. King & Co., London 1877; Pierce, E., ‘A Description of the Mekranee-Beloochee Dialect’, *Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 11(1875): 31, Bombay 1876, pp 1-98.

<sup>11</sup> In Dames, M. Longworth, *Popular Poetry of the Baloches*, I-II, published for the Folk-Lore Society by David Nutt, London 1907, and Dames, M. Longworth, *A Text Book of the Balochi Language*, Punjab Government Press, Lahore 1891.

When the young nationalists from the 1930s onwards started to write poetry, stories and other literary pieces in Balochi, they thus had a certain tradition to fall back on. The importance of books and periodicals in Balochi published from the mid-1950s onwards must not be underestimated. These publications, however, are also very limited in many ways. Firstly, their distribution is geographically limited, largely to Pakistan, and secondly, their readership is very limited. All educated Baloch have received their education in English/Urdu (in Pakistan), Persian (in Iran and Afghanistan) or another language, e.g. Arabic in the Gulf States. In addition, the Balochi literary movement is founded solely on personal initiatives, with next to no official support. Therefore, only a small literary elite takes an interest in reading books and magazines in Balochi, which also places financial constraints on publishing in Balochi (see e.g. Dashtyari 2003).

There is no official use of Balochi as a language of administration or education in Pakistan, even if voices have been raised in particular for introducing it as a language of education. The official support the language receives in Pakistan is that it is taught at the University of Balochistan in Quetta, that it has an official academy, the Balochi Academy, founded in 1961 and that it is used as a language for radio and TV transmissions. There is also a periodical, *Ulus*, published in Quetta by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.<sup>12</sup>

In the early 1990s measures were taken to introduce Balochi as a language of primary education in those areas of Pakistani Balochistan where it is spoken by a majority of the population. This experiment was not very successful, however, due to several reasons, including disagreement among the Baloch on orthographic issues and the lack of qualified teachers. What was perhaps more important was the speakers' attitude towards Balochi, which many Baloch see as a 'backward and rural' language, knowledge of which offers no improvement in terms of social or economic status in today's Pakistan. Likewise, people felt threatened by the fact that the Brahuis and the Baloch would be taught in different languages, even though as a result of their political alliance in the Khanate of Kalat, they strongly identify as one people. There is also widespread bilingualism (Balochi - Brahui) among the Brahuis (Farrell 2000: 24-25).

Although the cultural climate in British India, and later in Pakistan, was not totally negative to a Balochi cultural and literary movement, things were quite different on the other side of the Goldsmid line. The linguistic and cultural policy of the Pahlavi monarchs was that of strict conformity to the majority. All attempts at strengthening local customs, traditions and cultures were viewed as opposition against the nation and as threats to the territorial integrity of Iran. Especially those languages spoken within the borders of Iran that are related to Persian (the Iranian languages)<sup>13</sup> were regarded as local dialects of Persian. Under such circumstances there was, of course, no provision made by the government for mother tongue education or even cultural activities or

<sup>12</sup> *Ulus* was published regularly between 1961 and 1991. It was re-started in 1996, but the issues appear very irregularly.

<sup>13</sup> These languages include e.g. Kurdish, Lori, Gilaki, Mazandarani and Balochi. Languages totally unrelated to Persian that are spoken in Iran are e.g. Arabic (a Semitic language) and Azerbaijani Turkish (a Turkic language).

publication in the minority languages. Mojab and Hassanpour describe this cultural and linguistic hegemony as the propagation of 'racist and national chauvinistic myths in the state-controlled media, in educational institutions (all state owned), and in government organs', denying the national, linguistic and cultural diversity of Iran (Mojab and Hassanpour 1995: 231-232).

According to the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, chapter 1, article 15, in addition to the official language Persian, '[t]he use of regional and national...languages in the press and mass media...as well as for teaching in schools the literatures written in them, is permitted' (Algar 1980: 34). This means that it is in principle permitted to publish books and newspapers in Balochi, but at present there is hardly any such publication taking place in Iran. When it comes to teaching Balochi literature in the schools, there is, of course, no provision being made for such a subject, due to the almost total lack of Balochi literature in written form.

The first time publication in Balochi was possible in Iran was directly after the Islamic Revolution (1979-1980). A number of magazines appeared for some months, but this publication was soon forced to cease. In the late 1990s publishing in Balochi was resumed, and two bilingual magazines (Persian-Balochi) are at present being published, one from Iranshahr and one from Zahedan.

As for radio programmes, the situation is different, and Radio Zahedan has daily broadcasts in Balochi. In fact, these broadcasts date back at least to the 1960s, thus to the time of the Pahlavi monarchy.<sup>14</sup> The contents of these broadcasts are usually viewed with suspicion by the Baloch, being regarded as 'official propaganda' rather than as genuine concern for the Balochi language. There is no provision being made for TV transmissions in Balochi in Iran.

State control in Iran expresses itself as control over education, administration, media, publication etc., and thus there is an exclusive or nearly exclusive use of Persian in these language domains. There is no interest on the part of the state to stimulate the development of a vigorous Balochi language to be used in media, education and administration. The reason for this is obvious. There is a strong fear that a movement in support of cultural autonomy would soon develop into a political movement with demands for independence.

It should, however, be said in favour of the present regime that it has allowed much more cultural plurality than the Pahlavi monarchy. TV programmes showing regional variations in e.g. lifestyle, dress, dance etc. are frequently broadcast. Permission has been given to arrange 'poetry evenings' with recital of Balochi traditional and modern poetry e.g. in Chabahar where many culturally active Baloch live. The bilingual magazines in Persian-Balochi (see above) are also a positive feature. There is, in fact, a considerable publication (books, newspapers etc.) taking place in the two largest minority languages Azerbaijani and Kurdish, and in the academic year 2004-05 B.A. programmes in the Azerbaijani language and literature (in Tabriz) and in the Kurdish language and literature (in Sanandaj) are offered in Iran for the very

<sup>14</sup> Elfenbein (1966: 1) refers to broadcasts in Balochi from Zahedan.

first time.<sup>15</sup> There is also a Department of Gilan Studies at the University of Rasht.<sup>16</sup>

In Pakistan the use of Balochi in education, administration and media is also very limited, although not as restricted as it still is in Iran. Balochi is mainly spoken at home, within one's immediate community (with relatives, neighbours, friends etc.), and sometimes at work as well. When it comes to religion, Arabic is the language of recitation and worship, whereas sermons are normally delivered in Balochi for the sake of comprehension in Balochi-speaking communities both in Iran<sup>17</sup> and in Pakistan. On the whole, however, Balochi may be regarded as the language of the traditional domains, which carry no particular status in today's society.

Prestigious domains such as administration and education, which hold the opportunities for advancing in society, are non-Balochi domains. Here the state language(s) is/are totally predominant. Therefore, many parents who are eager for their children to advance in society prefer them to learn these languages instead of Balochi.<sup>18</sup> The survival of Balochi would under such circumstances only be possible at the cost of education and progress in society. Farrell (2000: 20) finds that '[a]t present it is partly *lack* of education that is ensuring the strength of Balochi', a situation that is, of course, both impossible and undesirable to perpetuate. The state, i.e. the ruling elite, may desire to keep the Baloch uneducated and unable to participate in modern political discourse, but that is definitely no longer the desire of a majority of the Baloch themselves.

Even though the literacy rate is still low in Balochistan, it is gradually rising. I have made my own observations and also interviewed several people who live in Iranian Balochistan or who have visited the region recently, and it is quite clear that most children there, both boys and girls, nowadays receive at least primary education. The traditional lifestyle is more and more giving way to modern life, which makes school attendance easier<sup>19</sup> and more attractive. Thus, nearly the entire younger generation becomes acquainted with Persian at

<sup>15</sup> For Azerbaijani, see [www.tribun.com/2000/2009.htm](http://www.tribun.com/2000/2009.htm). Information about Kurdish was given by Hashem Ahmadzadeh, Uppsala.

<sup>16</sup> Oral communication with Padideh Pakpour, Uppsala, who spent the spring semester 2004 as a guest student at the University of Rasht.

<sup>17</sup> This occurs within the Sunni mosques throughout Balochistan, which are not frequented by the Shi'ites. However, in the *Masjed-e Makki* 'The Meccan Mosque' in Zahedan the sermon is in Persian due to the fact that this mosque is also frequented by other Sunnis than the Baloch (recent information obtained from Iran).

<sup>18</sup> It was, in fact, observed in Zahedan, the provincial capital in the Iranian province of Sistan and Balochistan, that some families chose to speak Persian to their children rather than Balochi. They argued that this would prepare their children better for starting school, since the child would otherwise in school meet a new language that he/she was not familiar with, something that could hamper the learning process and put the child at a disadvantage compared to classmates who already knew Persian. See also Farrell (2000: 25), who notes that in Balochi tuition centres in Karachi, the aim of which is to provide supplementary education to the children of their community, Urdu is used as the teaching language, since the goal is 'academic advancement of their pupils rather than any concern for language issues'. For a comprehensive study on language attitudes among university students in Pakistan, see Mahboob (2002). Only 10 per cent of the respondents to the question 'Should your first language (other than Urdu) be the medium of instruction for primary education' give a positive answer, whereas the same figure for Urdu is 63.1 per cent and for English as high as 76 per cent (Mahboob 2002: 30).

<sup>19</sup> E.g. when the nomadic lifestyle is replaced by a settled way of life.

least from the age of six, when they begin school. The socio-cultural hindrances against girls' education were also to a certain degree weakened after the establishment of the Islamic Republic, with separate boys' and girls' schools and the compulsory veil. On the other hand, reports also indicate that in small villages with only a few children, boys and girls are taught together in one class, something which causes most girls to drop out after elementary school.

In the census carried out in 1996 (*Ābān* 1375 in the Iranian Anno Hijra solar calendar) the literacy rate for the province of Sistan and Balochistan was 57 per cent for persons six years of age and older. Looking at the literacy rate by gender, the breakdown was 49 per cent for females and 65 per cent for males (*Iran Statistical Yearbook 1377 2000*: 603). The definition of literacy was very generally stated as 'all individuals who can read and write a simple text in Farsi or any other language' and even those who had studied only the first year in primary school or the equivalent were counted as literate (*Iran Statistical Yearbook 1377 2000*: 595).

The figures for Sistan and Balochistan may be compared to the average literacy rate for the entire country, which was 80 per cent for the same year,<sup>20</sup> and to the province with the lowest literacy rate after Sistan and Balochistan, namely Kurdistan, where 68 per cent of the population was literate (*Iran Statistical Yearbook 1377 2000*: 603).<sup>21</sup> Ten years earlier, in 1986 (*Mehr* 1365 in the Iranian Anno Hijra solar calendar), the literacy rate in Sistan and Balochistan was 36 per cent<sup>22</sup> compared to 61 per cent in the whole country (*Iran Statistical Yearbook 1370 1993*: 123).

Another factor that has greatly strengthened the impact of Persian in Iranian Balochistan is the electrification of the province, which, although it had already started, was speeded up and almost totally completed shortly after the Islamic Revolution. Along with electricity came television. Many Baloch men, especially in the southern parts of Balochistan, spend at least some time as guest workers in the Gulf States, where they often purchase electronic goods, such as radio- and TV-sets, for their family in Balochistan. Television was first introduced in the provincial capital, Zahedan, in the 1960s, but nowadays television has reached even the most remote areas of Iranian Balochistan.

Television has been a major breakthrough in the introduction of Persian in Balochistan. By watching Persian programmes at an early age, often even before going to school, the children get acquainted with this language and learn to pronounce it with a Tehrani accent, something which is not true of most educated Baloch in the older generation, who generally speak Persian with a 'Balochi accent'. One reason for that is that they were introduced to Persian at school, generally by local teachers, who themselves spoke Persian with a Sistani or Balochi accent. Several Baloch friends of mine from Iran remember that they felt ashamed to speak Persian at school, especially in front of Persian-speaking classmates who made fun of their accent.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>20</sup> 74 per cent for females and 85 per cent for males.

<sup>21</sup> 57 per cent for females and 79 per cent for males.

<sup>22</sup> 25 per cent for females and 46 per cent for males. Compare this to Kurdistan, with a 39 per cent literacy rate (23 per cent for females and 54 per cent for males).

<sup>23</sup> The power of television exceeds by far the power of radio. Since it is both audial and visual, it makes a much greater impact than only audial media. The power of television in making a whole generation acquainted with a language can also clearly be seen in Sweden, where many

## Structural Influence from Persian on Iranian Balochi<sup>24</sup>

In Iranian Balochistan two major dialects are spoken, the Western (or Rakhshani) dialect and the Southern (or Makrani) dialect. Both these dialects are spoken on the other side of the Goldsmid line as well. There is also an area in Iranian Balochistan, Sarawan, where a very particular dialect, more profoundly influenced by Persian than other Balochi dialects, is spoken (see also Baranzehi 2003).

Nowadays it is quite obvious that the national language, Persian, is the socially and culturally dominant language, and that Balochi is the low-status vernacular. However, this has not always been the case, and the example of Sarawan proves that clearly. Within this area one or two centuries ago, Baloch tribesmen of high status in the local society lived side by side with immigrant peasants of Afghan or other Persian-speaking origins, who had come to Sarawan more recently than the Baloch (Spooner 1967: 56).

Languages in contact can affect each other in different ways. Much depends on the relative status of the languages. Two or more languages of more or less equal status may be spoken side by side and mutually affect each other in terms of structure and lexicon without eradicating either one or the other language. This is called *adstrate* influence.

Another setting is when a dominant language, e.g. the language of a conquering group or the political elite, exercises influence on a dominated language, e.g. the language of a minority group. This type of influence is often called *superstrate*. Sometimes this term also implies that the final outcome of language contact is that the prestigious language is abandoned by the conquerors in favour of the local language, which, however, has been considerably influenced by that language. Such an outcome is more likely when a small number of conquerors seize political power in an area where a language other than their own is spoken, e.g. at the Norman conquest of Britain.

However, the term superstrate is also used in a broader sense to describe the influence on a low-prestige language when 'another and more prestigious language which is imposed upon the speakers of the first, usually by conquest or political absorption...exercises an identifiable effect upon that first language' (Trask 2000: 330). By this definition, Persian structural and lexical influence on minority languages in Iran could be termed superstrate influence. It is, however, very unlikely that local languages would replace Persian in present-day Iran.

The term *substrate* is normally used for a language already spoken in an area or by a group of people 'which has had a detectable effect upon the newly

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children in the younger generation who grow up with American serials subtitled in Swedish start speaking English before they are even able to read and write Swedish. Procházka also stresses the impact of television as one of the key factors behind the ongoing language shift from Arabic to Turkish among speakers of Arabic dialects in Turkey (Procházka 1999: 124).

<sup>24</sup> The purpose of a research project carried out by the present author, funded by the Swedish Research Council between 1998 and 2002, was to describe the linguistic interaction between Persian and Balochi in Iranian Balochistan. For further information on phonological, morphosyntactic and lexical influences from Persian on Balochi both in historical and modern times, see Jahani and Korn (2003), particularly the articles written by Baranzehi, Farrell, Jahani, Korn, Mahmoodi Bakhtiari and Mahmoodzahi.

arrived one' (Trask 2000: 329). As with superstrate, this term generally refers to a difference in status between the substrate language and the newly arrived language, where the substrate language is the low-status language. Likewise, it is often used to describe settings where this language has been replaced by the new language, in which it has left structural and lexical traits. As an example, Celtic traits in English could be mentioned.

The dialect of the central valley of Sarawan mentioned above is especially interesting to study from a contact linguistic perspective. In Sarawan, the non-pastoral economy, mainly based on settled agriculture, has a longer tradition than in other parts of Iranian Balochistan. The same applies to education. Since education is in Persian, it considerably strengthens the Persian influence. This, together with the immigration of Persian speakers to Sarawan in the past centuries, has made this dialect a very interesting object for studying linguistic contact.

It seems that in former times, Balochi was the high-status language in Sarawan, since the immigrants gave up Persian for Balochi.<sup>25</sup> However, a significant number of substrate phenomena<sup>26</sup> from Persian can be found in Sarawani Balochi. These features are not encountered in any other dialect of Balochi, either in Iran or in Pakistan. Examples of such phenomena are the replacement of the genitive with the *izāfa*-construction for genitive attributes, and, on the whole, a case system very similar to that of Persian. Another structural reshaping is that all postpositions have changed into prepositions.

Today Persian is the unquestioned high-status language, and nowadays superstrate effects from Persian on Sarawani as well as on other Balochi dialects in Iran is heavy. Among superstrate phenomena can be mentioned syntactic constructions instead of morphological case marking (e.g. for the indirect object), adjectives placed after their nouns with the *izāfa* as the linker and Tense-Aspect-Mood (TAM) forms of the verb modelled on Persian constructions (e.g. the progressive present and past). Extensive use of Persian lexical items can also be observed in most dialects.

### **Is there a Future for the Balochi Language within the State of Iran?**

As long as a language is used in all the domains represented in everyone's daily life, or at least in the life of a majority of its speakers, it cannot be seen as threatened. But as soon as socio-economic changes take place, the traditional lifestyle and culture of an *ethnie*, and with that possibly its whole

<sup>25</sup> This was my assumption at the time when I wrote the article. However, new information on Sarawan (obtained during a field journey to Iran in February-March 2005) gives a different picture. The Baranzahi/Barakzahi khans of Sarawan were of Afghan origin, thus not speakers of Balochi. However, in order to be able to communicate with their subjects, they acquired Balochi, retaining the Persian grammatical structures referred to in the article as substrate phenomena.

<sup>26</sup> I am broadening the use of this term here. Normally it is used to describe the influence from an indigenous low-prestige language on a newly arrived language. Here, I use it to denote the influence of any language of low status (in this case Persian spoken by an immigrant group who had settled in the central valley of Sarawan) on a more prestigious language (here Balochi, the language of the ruling elite, which was also gradually adopted by the immigrants).

basis of identification, is threatened.<sup>27</sup> When this happens among a minority group, like the Baloch, there are several courses the group, or members of the group, can take. They may seek full acceptance in the majority society and be ready to give up what is distinct and exclusive to their group, including the language, or they may see a need to defend their identity by demanding self-determination in some form or another. They may also strive to retain their identity as a separate *ethnie* within the present political framework. This approach is a realistic alternative only if adequate opportunities for the development of distinct languages, forms of worship and other components of the 'ethnic' cultures are given by the state authorities.

In Iranian Balochistan there is a deeply rooted suspicion against the Persians,<sup>28</sup> who are often derogatorily called *gajar*.<sup>29</sup> The Balochi way of living, including its social organisation and its honour codes, differs considerably from that of the Persians. There have been several insurgencies against the direct rule from Tehran over Balochistan after 1928 (see e.g. Hosseinbor 2000: 141-164). After 1979, the different religious creeds have also been accentuated, and there is a strong feeling among the Baloch that due to their Sunni creed, they are not given adequate opportunities to advance in the Islamic Republic, which is based on the Shi'a creed.

The Iranian Baloch also have strong links with the Baloch in Pakistan, Afghanistan and the Gulf States, e.g. by massive immigration to Karachi from Iran after the 1928 events, by tribal links to the Baloch in Afghanistan and by Iranian Baloch seeking employment as guest workers in the Gulf States. The choice to be incorporated into the majority society would mean giving up these links. It is therefore unlikely that the Baloch will seek full acceptance in the majority society, and if adequate measures are not taken for cultural (including linguistic) development within the present political framework, there will most likely be increased demands for political self-determination.

Indeed, many Baloch intellectuals are genuinely concerned about the future of the Balochi language in Iran. With the introduction of education and modern socio-economic structures in Balochistan, the basis of the traditional society is being eradicated slowly but surely. However, there is also an awakening to the fact that if Balochi is to continue to be a vigorous language in Iranian Balochistan, the Baloch themselves must adopt a positive attitude towards the language and work for its development in the new domains as well, i.e. as a language of writing, and ultimately of education. Some steps have already been taken, such as the publication of bilingual (Persian-Balochi) journals and the more and more frequent arrangements of Balochi literary and cultural gatherings (see above). I have also been told that there is some lobbying for the introduction of Balochi as a subject at university level in

<sup>27</sup> Religious beliefs may be re-evaluated (secularisation), and the language may be threatened, especially in a minority setting, based on the fact that new language domains (e.g. education and official administration in a language other than the minority language) enter into the life of the members of the *ethnie*.

<sup>28</sup> This is also the case with other Shi'ites, e.g. the Azerbaijani Turks.

<sup>29</sup> This term comes from the Qajar dynasty, who ruled Iran between 1796 and 1925. It was during this dynasty that Tehran became the capital. Military campaigns from this new capital were launched towards Balochistan to subdue the region, something which created strong hatred towards the '*gajars*' among the Baloch.

Iranian Balochistan.<sup>30</sup> These are all steps that have been taken several years ago in Pakistani Balochistan.

It is the state that forms policies towards language and culture and controls the administrative and educational systems. The demands of the people within the state have, of course, a strong bearing on the decisions of the ruling elite. The present paper has tried to show that the more favourable conditions for the Balochi language in British India than those seen in Iran from the beginning of the twentieth century prepared the path for a new generation of educated Baloch to also use their language in reading and writing.<sup>31</sup> It must, however, be stressed that even in Pakistan the Balochi cultural movement is facing enormous problems, including low readership, financial constraints and official suspicion. The unsuccessful launching of Balochi as a language of primary education in Pakistani Balochistan can also be seen as a serious backlash.

On the other hand, it was noted above that political strength is a changeable factor, and that at one time the Baloch tribes in Iranian Sarawan were a mighty force, who assimilated other ethnic groups such as Afghans and Sistanis, whereas now the Shi'a Muslims<sup>32</sup> constitute the ruling elite in Iran. What will happen on the political scene in Iran and Pakistan in the future is hard to foresee, and one can do nothing but speculate about whether there will be new shifts in the political strengths between the Baloch and the present ruling elites.

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<sup>30</sup> The two state universities in Iranian Balochistan are located in Zahedan and Iranshahr. There are also 'free' (i.e. private) universities in Balochistan. In view of the fact that such permissions have been granted for Azerbaijani and Kurdish (see above), it is likely that this will happen also for Balochi in a not too distant future.

<sup>31</sup> This is not necessarily due to a genuine concern on the part of the British administration for the Balochi language. They just applied a different policy towards local languages in order to maintain and strengthen their rule than that employed by the Pahlavi monarchs.

<sup>32</sup> These are mainly the ethnic Persians and Azerbaijanis. Among the Azerbaijanis, there is an ambivalent attitude towards the Persian cultural dominance. Many seek full acceptance in the Persian culture even to the degree that they feel ashamed of their background which they associate with a rural and 'backward' way of living. Others are proud of being Azerbaijanis, i.e. speakers of a Turkic language, and want to retain this language and transfer it to their children. For them, there is the choice of trying to acquire cultural rights within the present system or to struggle for independence. The fact that there is a fear of Azerbaijani attempts at self-determination can be seen in, e.g., Iran's official support for the Christian Republic of Armenia in its conflict with Azerbaijan.

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