



KASHMIR II. PERSIAN LANGUAGE IN KASHMIR

KASHMIR

ii. Persian Language in Kashmir

Persian was the basis of administrations all over western Asia and the highly prestigious language at the courts. Hence, Persian learning radiated into Kashmir and found a fertile soil after the initial impulse. Continuous efforts in all fields of science brought forth treatises on medicine (e.g., Ḥakim Maṣṣur's *Kefāyat al-manṣuri*; see Sufi, I, p. 165; Khan, 1983, p. 166), language (e.g., *Farhang-e jahāngiri*, a Persian lexicon compiled in the early 17th century by Mir Jamāl-al-Din Ḥosayn Enju), biographical accounts (e.g., Shaikh Ya'qub Ṣarfi's *Maḡāzi al-nabi*), advice literature (e.g., Pir Ḥasanšāh's *Golestān-e aḡlāq*; Kirpā Rām's *Goldasta-ye aḡlāq*), and a large corpus of poetry and works on history (for general reference see Sufi; Riāz and Ṣeddiq Ṣebli, pp. 189 ff.).

Poetry. Persian poetry in Kashmir begins with Sayyed 'Ali Hamadāni and Sultan Zayn-al-Ābedin Šāh-Miri (see [i](#)). Hamadāni was a renowned man of letters (q.v.; Sufi, I, pp. 84 ff.), and Sultan Zayn-al-Ābedin compiled a collection of poems titled *Šekāyat*. According to Girdhari Tikku, four phases of Kashmiri Persian poetry can be discerned: early phase under the Šāh-Miri sultans (1349-1561), court and Sufi poetry under the Shi'ite Chak rulers (1561- 89), Mughal Indo-Persian style (1586-1752), and finally a Kashmiri style, developed



under the Afghans and the Sikhs (for a thorough analysis, see Tikku, 1963 and 1971).

Some of the most prominent poets are Shaikh Ya'qub Šarfi (d. 1594), Mollā Moḥammad- Moḥsen Fāni (d. 1081/ 1670-71, q.v), Mollā Moḥammad- Ṭāher Ġani (d. 1669, q.v.), and Pandit Tāba Rām Torki (d. 1847; see Sufi, II, pp. 343 ff.; Riāz and Šeddiq Šebli, pp. 189 ff.; Šafa, V, pp. 1255-60, 1285-88; for general reference, see Tikku, 1963 and 1971). Persian poetical formal genres and meters were adopted, even for the composition of Hindu epics (Grierson and Barnett, in Laldyada, p. 144; Cook, p. 28). However, the frame of reference for poets has always been classical Persian poetry. Consequently, outstanding Kashmiri poets have been given surnames such as “Ferdowsi of Kashmir” (i.e., Wahhāb Parē, d. 1914).

Historiography. Of almost equal importance has been the composition of books on history. The earliest such work written in Kashmir is probably Mollā Aḥmad's *Baḥr al-asmār* (Sufi, II, p. 348; see i). Important chronicles are Badehra's *Rājdaršani*, K̄vāja 'Azim Deda Meri's *Ketāb-e tāriḳ-e Kašmir*, Ġolām Nabi Kānyāri's *Wajiz al-tawāriḳ*, Ḥāji Moḥyi-al-Din Meskin's *Tāriḳ-e kabir-e Kašmir*, and the anonymous *Bahārestān-e šāhi* (see elaborate lists in Sufi, I, pp. xlili ff.; Riāz and Šeddiq Šebli, pp. 220 ff.; Šafā, V, pp. 1570-76; in general see Dogra and Mattoo). There are also biographies of famous rulers, of which the best known is Kirpā Rām's *Golāb-nāma*, on the life of Maharajah Golāb Singh (1792-1857).

Highland. In the Highland states of Chitral, Dir, Hunza, Nager, Yasin, Kishtwar, Gilgit, Darel, Punyal, and others. Persian served for administrative and diplomatic purposes. The ruling classes of these kingdoms were all well versed in Persian, and some members of the local elite have shown proficiency in literature. Nāšer-al-Molk, the former ruler of Chitral (r. 1936-43), published a collection of his Persian poems, entitled *Šaḥifat al-takwin*.

A number of local histories have been written in Persian— some quite recently, for instance, Ḥāji Qodrat- Allāh Beg's *Tāriḳ-e 'ahd-e 'atiq-e riāsat-e Honza* and Pandit Šivji Dar's *Tāriḳ-e Keštwar*. Other noteworthy works are Mirzā Moḥammad Siar's *Šāh-nāma dar ta'rif-e Moḥtaram-šāh*, *Šāh-nāma-ye Čitrāl* by Šir Aḥmad Khan Kāboli, and the anonymous, versified epic *Šigar-nāma*. The genuine Persian tradition of historiography led to the writing of chronicles in other local languages based on this model; for example, the *Tāriḳ-e Čitrāl* by 'Aziz-al-Din and Šāh Ra'is Kān's *Tāriḳ-e Gilgit*, both in Urdu.



Mention should also be made of the village of Madaglašt, where, for more than 200 years, Persian speakers from Badakhshan have found a refuge.

Grammar. Persian works composed in Kashmir are written in the standard literary style. On the other hand, administrative writings and texts from the Highland states, such as Ḥāji Qodrat-Allāh Beg's *Tāriḳ-e 'ahd-e 'atiq*, show strong influences from variations in (mainly spoken) Afghan Dari (see [kāboli](#)) and Tājiki (see [tājik ii](#), online). Specific grammatical features include: the simple dubitative future (Farhādi, p. 185) with present stem (e.g., *kāhad bebinam*, "I shall see then [sometime]") and with past stem (*kāhad didam*, "I may well see"), completed present- future (*dida hastam*, "I surely see"; *ibid.*, p. 181), and converbs (or conjunct verbs). These include: (1) *dādan* "to give" with action performed for another, as in *nevešta mi-deham* "I'll write [it for him]"; (2) *raftan* "to go," with the verb of motion indicating action directed away, as in *farār namuda raftam* "I fled [from here]"; (3) *māndan* "to remain, be left," indicating conclusion of an action, as in *dāda mānda-am* "I've given [it out completely]"; (4) *āmadan* "to come" with the verb of motion indicating action directed toward or emphasizing the result of an action, as in *goriḳta āmada-am* "I've escaped [to here]" (see "gerund-compound verbs" in Rastorgueva, pp. 84-87; Rzehak, pp. 100 ff.; Perry, sec. 5.20).

Use of the infinitive with a modal verb, and preceding it, is common: (*kāh ba 'ahd-e mā kāh ba 'ahd-e farzandān ḥamla kardan betavānim* "we may be able to attack, whether in our time or our sons' time" (Moḥammad- Režā Beg, fol. 69b). Use of the perfect stem of the verb following the modal verb also is common: (*fawj-e ma'murah-e bar Tak pištār dar Gilgit mi-tavānad rasid* "the troop stationed at Tak can reach Gilgit before [they do]" Jammu Repository and Archives, Pers. Doc. 689/46). Furthermore, there are certain typical present tense verb stems, such as *feris-* from *ferestādan* "to send," or infinitive forms not used in standard Persian, like *šeštan* "to sit" (pres. stem *šin*). The construction of a past participle with suffix *-gi* (Rastorgueva, pp. 80 ff.; Rzehak, pp. 76 ff.; Perry, sec. 3.44) is not unusual: *az qadīm budagi*, "from ancient times on" (Ḥāji Qodrat-Allāh Beg, p. 151).

There are also influences from Urdu, lexical (e.g., the very common suffix *wāla* or *kisi* plus negation, "no one, no other; without"), as well as analogous constructions, when, for example, *tā ham* stands for *tō bhi* ("nevertheless"; see Weber, I, pp. 230 ff.). Since Persian verb structure facilitates the coinage of new verbs, we find complex verbs such as *rajāki kardan* (in the Burushaski language *rajāki* means "forced labor"; Ḥāji Qodrat-Allāh Beg, p. 112).



Side effects. Because of the continuous impact of Persian, all the local languages have incorporated a great amount of Persian loanwords. People still today know a lot of Persian proverbs; much cited are the sayings of Bibi Bahat, who lived during the time of the Šāh-Miri dynasty (for proverbs, see Haughton, pp. 295, 302-3, 305; Vigne, II, pp. 317, 327). It is also worth noting that the art of calligraphy flourished in Kashmir, a celebrated master of which was Moḥammad Ḥosayn Zarrin-Qalam (Sufi, II, pp. 557 ff.). Last but not least, filmmakers still get their inspiration from Persian literary themes, for example the epic romances of *Ḳosrow o Širin* or *Leyli o Majnun*.

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