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A postcolonial sociolinguistics of Punjabi in Pakistan

Abbas Zaidi

1. Introduction

In October 2002, the newly elected Punjabi assembly was convened for a swearing-in ceremony. It was a matter of routine and all went as planned till Fazal Hussain, a legislator-elect, said that he would take his oath in Punjabi, his mother tongue. The speaker, a fellow Punjabi, did not think much of it and proceeded with the ceremony using Urdu, the usual language of assembly proceedings. But when Fazal Hussain insisted on taking the oath in Punjabi, the speaker had him removed from the assembly through security guards. The speaker's reaction was in sharp contrast to his counterparts in other provinces¹ where the legislators-elect took the oath in their mother tongues. Thus it was only in the Punjab assembly with hundred percent Punjabi legislators where an extraordinary linguistic situation prevailed.

It was not the first time that a supporter of Punjabi took heat for supporting Punjabi. Two decades before the Fazal Hussain incident, Muhammad Masud (1916-85), a well-known campaigner for the rights of the Punjabi language, tried to offer prayers in Punjabi instead of Arabic. He was thrown out of the mosque by his fellow Punjabi worshippers (Malik and Salim, 2004).

These two incidents were not instances of synchronic historicity. Since the very creation of Pakistan, Punjabi, the mother tongue of over 50 percent of Pakistanis, has been treated as of an inferior position *vis-a-vis* Urdu. Significantly, it is the Punjabis themselves who have been instrumental in the undermining of their own language. There is not a single Punjabi newspaper in Pakistan, and there is not a single school where Punjabi is taught (Jaffrelet, 2002; Rahman, 2005; Asher, 2008).

This paper tries to understand various factors underlying the state of affairs of Punjabi from a diachronic perspective.

2. Pakistan's sociolinguistic scene: a brief historical background

At the time of its creation, Pakistan was divided into two wings: East Pakistan and West Pakistan. East Pakistanis were almost entirely Bengalis (Noman, 1990; Hananana, 2001), and West Pakistan was comprised of indigenous people like the Balochis, Pathans, Punjabis, Sindhis, and diverse ethnolinguistic groups of Northern Areas (Kazi, 1987). There were no Urdu-speaking Mohajirs² living in Pakistan at the time of its creation. The Bengalis with 55.6 percent

¹ In India and the United States, the term "state" is used to denote a federal unit.

² The native speakers of Urdu are called Mohajirs. They all emigrated from India to Pakistan. *Mohajir* means an emigrant/migrant.

of the population of Pakistan were in majority (Rahman, 2002). At the time of Partition, there were 34 million people (overwhelmingly Muslim) living in the areas which became Pakistan (Curtis and Blondel, 1993). Over 10 million emigrated from India to newly created Pakistan. Here is the break-up of those who migrated from India to Pakistan in 1947:

Table. 1. Patterns of migration to Pakistan after Partition

Ethnicity	Number	Percentage
Urdu speaking (from Bihar, West Bengal and Orissa)	701,300	6.72
Urdu speaking (Uttar Pradesh and Delhi)	464,200	4.44
Urdu speaking (from Gujarat and Bombay)	160,400	1.53
Urdu speaking (from Bhopal and Hyderabad)	95,200	0.9
Urdu speaking (from Madras and Mysore)	18,000	0.17
Punjabis (from East Punjabi)	8,994,375	89.9
Total	10,433,475	100 ³

Source: adapted from Chitkara, 1996.⁴

Out of these migrants, 100,000 Urdu speaking migrants from Bihar in India went to East Pakistan. All the Punjabis based in East Punjabi (which became a part of India) went to West Pakistan and settled in the province of Punjab⁵. The rest of the migrants, all Urdu speaking (Mohajirs), went to West Pakistan and settled in the urban centers of the province of Sindh such as Karachi, Hyderabad, and Sukkhar.

After the British government announced the partition of India in August 1947, it was the Mohajir politicians who flew in from India to take control of Pakistan. Unlike in the case of

³ The figures have been rounded up for convenience.

⁴ It is reasonable to believe that the people from Gujarat and Madras must be bilingual at least (i.e., Urdu-Gujarati and Urdu-Tamil).

⁵ The Pakistani part of Punjab was known as West Punjab before Partition.

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India, Pakistan's rulers were not indigenous⁶. The figures above make it clear that it was the Bengalis who should have ruled Pakistan based upon one-man-one-vote formula. Since the Bengalis were in majority, it was their democratic right to rule newly created Pakistan. Bengali rule would have meant the ascendancy of the Bengali language, *inter alia*. Thus, to thwart the Bengalis, the Punjabi leaders joined hands with the Mohajirs (Cohen, 2004; Khan, 2005), and despite the declarations that Pakistan would be a democracy, the government, which was comprised of the Mohajirs and their Punjabi supporters, did not hold the promised elections. The constitution was not drafted, and the ruling elite continued to run Pakistan's affairs provisionally on the 1935 constitutional package which the British had given to India as colonial rulers (Masud, 1978; Khan, 2005).

2.1. Beginnings: intimation of linguistic mortality

Within weeks of the country's establishment, the government of Pakistan made an extremely important political-linguistic decision. In November 1947, without any debate in parliament or feedback from people or academics, it declared that Urdu would be Pakistan's national language ignoring all the indigenous languages (Meyer, 1976; Rahamnna, 1990; Calvet, 1998;). The government claimed that Urdu was an Islamic language which would weld country's different ethnolinguistic groups into one nation (Ahmad, 2002). The Bengalis launched a campaign against Urdu, but the government suppressed it brutally killing scores of students (Rahman, 1996; Ahmed, 2004). But the Bengalis refused to back down and continued to campaign against the supremacy of Urdu. Their alienation, mainly based upon what they saw as the suppression of their language, ultimately led to East Pakistan's separation from West Pakistan, and the making of Bangladesh in 1971 (Islam, 2003; Ahmed, 2004; Umar, 2004).

In March 1949, the government made another significant decision with far-reaching repercussions through the infamous Objectives Resolution which declared Pakistan to be an Islamic state (Nasr, 1994; Brasted, 2005). Leaders from different communities protested against it, but the Resolution was carried in the parliament despite protests from Bengali legislators (Korejo, 2000). Making Pakistan an Islamic state had no justification. According to Chief Justice Muhammad Justice Munir who witnessed the Pakistan scene from its beginning till the 1980s, the legislation based upon the Objectives Resolutions, which the government pushed through the

⁶ Why would non-indigenous politicians from the Utter Pradesh province in India (UP) would have flown 'home' and preside over the destiny of indigenous ethnolinguistic groups despite the fact that these groups were neither 'backward' nor 'uneducated' is *per se* an independent and polemical topic and requires a separate study. This paper deals with only linguistically relevant points. It may be noted that there were a few non-Mohajirs in the formation of ministerial cabinet at the time of Pakistan's establishment. Pakistan's first foreign Minister Sir Zafarullah Khan, a Punjabi, is one example. But he had no political standing of his own, and owed his job because he was liked by Jinnah, the Father of the Nation and the first Governor General of Pakistan. The other non-Mohajirs were Punjabi bureaucrats who opted to leave India. The point to note is that non-Mohajirs were politically insignificant.

parliament in collaboration with “the Ahrar, the Jamaat-i-Islami, the Deobandis, the Brelvis, and the Ahli-Hadis [the Islamic fundamentalist parties], was quite contrary to [Jinnah’s] conception of the State” (Munir, 1979: xv-xvi). Binder’s commentary on the Resolution is,

The Objectives Resolution, acknowledged the sovereignty of God, recognized the authority of the people derived from their creator, and vested the authority delegated by the people in the Constituent Assembly for the purpose of making a constitution for the sovereign state of Pakistan. (Binder, 1961: 149).

Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan, in his famous speech to the Constituent Assembly only days before the creation of Pakistan had declared:

You are free; you are free to go to your temples, you are free to go to your mosques or to any other place or worship in this State of Pakistan. You may belong to any religion or caste or creed that has nothing to do with the business of the State. (cited by Wolpert, 2002: 339).⁷

The Bengalis did not accept the domination of Urdu and relegation of Bengali. They, in the words of Bartkus, “were united by a common language and culture” (Bartkus, 1999: 125). It was their feeling of economic and political deprivation, starting with the treatment of their language within months of Pakistan’s creation which was later to lead to the separation of the Bengalis, i.e., East Pakistan, from West Pakistan and the formation of the state of Bangladesh.⁸

The ruling elite’s ploy, i.e., the Resolution and the earlier declaration about the status of Urdu,⁹ meant this: (i) make Pakistan an ideological state and neutralize people with secular or nationalist views; (ii) make Urdu the Islamic-ideological language and relegate other languages to a low status; (iii) entitle, by implication, only those people to rule who could be the custodians of the country’s ideology; and (iv) command loyalty to the ruling elite’s ideology from those who aspired to have a share in the governance of Pakistan.

Once the ideology of Pakistan and its custodians were in place, all opposition to the ruling elite was suppressed in the name of Islam and national security (Mehdi, 1994). Instead of holding national elections, the ruling elite continued to rule through manipulations (Yusuf, 1980) and never allowed the Bengalis to rule till martial law was imposed in 1958. Meanwhile, the

⁷ 11 August 1947.

⁸ It was not just the national/ethnic pride which was hurt. The relegation of Bengali meant loss of hundreds of thousands of mid to lower level jobs not just in West Pakistan, but also in East Pakistan.

⁹ I want to clarify that the Punjabi masses had no voice in the decision-making. The province of Punjab had (and has) traditionally been ruled by the landed aristocracy known in Pakistan as “feudal lords”. The Punjabi masses, just like other ethnolinguistic groups did not even vote for the creation of Pakistan because in 1946 when the British held elections which later led to the creation of Pakistan, they were not allowed to vote. In the 1946 elections only those people were eligible to vote who owned property. Thus only 15 percent of the Muslims of India voted. The rest of the 85 percent were disenfranchised. For details, see Haqqani, 2005.

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movements for the language rights launched by the Bengalis, Sindhis, and Punjabis¹⁰ were dubbed communist and/or anti-Islamic and suppressed (Rahman, 1996 and 2000).

The above account is very brief, but it, I hope, sets the stage for a discussion of Punjabi in the sociolinguistic setting of Pakistan.

3. Punjabi in Pakistan's sociolinguistic setting

From the very beginning, the Punjabi language found itself in trouble. Rahman (2002) says that after the creation of Pakistan, Punjabi became suspect for its association with the Sikhs who had allegedly been involved in Muslim genocide at the time of Partition. One immediate result of this attitude towards Punjabi was that it, in the words of Shackle, "vanished as a university subject" (cited by Rahman, 1996: 199). Faqir Muhammad, the leader of the pro-Punjabi movement in the province of Punjab, tried to give Punjabi its rightful place. In 1951, he gathered prominent Punjabi intellectuals and established Pak Punjabi League. The League demanded that Punjabi be taught from primary to MA levels (Akram, 1992). In order to avoid being dubbed anti-state, the Punjabi activists came up with *Pak Punjabi* (Ambalvi, 1955)¹¹. As a result, Punjabi was allowed to be taught at the postgraduate level in the Punjab University, but only as an optional subject. Pro-Punjabi organizations like Punjabi Majlis and the Punjabi Group of the Writers' Guild, also established during this period, campaigned for the use of Punjabi in schools and government. In 1958, General Ayub imposed martial law in the country. His government was very suspicious of movements for regional rights, and Punjabi came under the martial law regime's suspicion. In the words of Mirza, a leader of the pro-Punjabi movement,

To support Punjabi language and literature was labeled an anti-state act and in 1959, under Ayub's martial law, the Punjabi Majlis, a Lahore based literary organization was declared a political party and banned. So much so that from 1959 to 1962, no one dared to form literary organization in Lahore lest it be declared a political organization. (Mirza, 1985: 43).

The Writers' Guild was also banned in 1963 (Rahman, 1996 and 2000).

However, the Punjabi activists continued to campaign for their linguistic rights. In 1962, the government allowed Punjabi as an optional subject in schools. Rahman (2002) calls it a great triumph of the Punjabi activists given the high intolerance of multilingualism and multiculturalism of the centrist government of General Ayub. One of the problems that the Punjabi movement faced in the 1950 and the 1960s was that the government and the state-

¹⁰ Despite the fact that the Punjabi feudal lords (i.e., the landed aristocrats) were part of the ruling elite, there was a vibrant group of Punjabi middle class intellectuals who wanted linguistic and democratic rights for themselves and the other ethnolinguistic communities of Pakistan. For details, see Rahman, 1996.

¹¹ *Pak* stood for Pakistan/Pakistani.

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controlled media presented its leaders as anti-state (Afzal, 1986).¹² It was only during the democratic government of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (1972-77) that the so-called anti-state Punjabi intellectuals were allowed to teach Punjabi in the Punjab University. Punjabi functions and cultural programs were encouraged (Lewis, 1985). But the status of Punjabi did not change as it was not allowed to be taught in schools in Punjab unlike Sindhi in Sindh and Pashto in the Northwestern province. One reason behind this was that only recently, i.e., in December 1971, East Pakistan had ceded from West Pakistan. The Bengali language movement had been central in the cessation movement (Rahman, 1996). However, the Punjabi movement or the Punjabi language did not face a hostile government as long as the government of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto lasted.

In July 1977, General Zia imposed martial law in Pakistan and began Islamization of the country. Anything which was perceived to be anti-Islamic and anti-Urdu was decimated through extremely harsh punishments and censorship (Ayres, 2003; Shackle, 2007). The teaching of Punjabi was Islamized to the extent that the Punjabi literature course at the Punjab University became Islamic studies in the Punjabi language (Randhawa, 1990). I have recorded some of the education and language policies of General Zia (1977-88) below. Even to this day, the Punjabi language has not found its place on account of the anti-indigenous mindset of the ruling elite of Pakistan. This will be discussed in the following two sections.

4. The language ecology of Pakistan¹³

It is in language ecology that language maintenance or language shift takes place (Mackey, 2006; Zaidi, 2010)¹⁴. One main consideration in language ecology is about languages having their own niches, which means different languages have their places, though their functions may vary. The notion of language niches implies the acknowledgement of the existence, in whatever degree¹⁵, of all the languages which exist in a given language ecology. According to Haarmann, “Language ecology should cover the whole network of social relations which control the variability of languages and their modal speakers’ behavior” (Haarmann, 1986: 3).

¹² One of the most prominent leaders of the movement was C.R. Aslam who was a leader of the Communist Party of India before Partition. He had been involved in organizing peasants’ rights movement, and continued his work after the creation of Pakistan. He established the Communist Party of Pakistan, which was banned in 1954 (Zaheer, 1998).

¹³ I will not discuss English as my focus is the Pakistani languages only, especially Punjabi and Urdu.

¹⁴ “A language may expand, as more and more people use it, or it may die for lack of speakers. Just as competition for limited bio-resources creates conflict in nature, so also with languages. If a small fish gets in contact with a big fish, it is smaller which is more likely to disappear” (Mackey, 2006: 67).

¹⁵ Muhlhausler says language ecology is all about “language diversity” (Muhlhausler, 1996: 2).

Below will be discussed Pakistan's language ecology in order to find out what niches and roles different languages have in it, especially Punjabi, and why. To most of language maintenance or language shift studies (e.g., Saxena, 1995; Nambiar, 2006; Zaidi, 2010), a census is a basic document. I, therefore, will take a brief look at the languages of Pakistan through the national censuses. According to the census of 1998, the latest census to date, the languages of Pakistan have the following distribution:

Table. 2. The Census of Pakistan 1998: language distribution

Language	Speakers (%)
Punjabi	44.15
Pashto	15.42
Sindhi	14.10
Seraiki	10.53
Urdu	7.57
Balochi	3.57
Others	4.66

Source: *Census of Pakistan-1991*. (1998) Islamabad: Government of Pakistan.¹⁶

Before I challenge some of the figures on the table above, a couple of facts should be taken into account. The 1998 census was supposed to have been carried out in 1991. But there was so much controversy about it that it had to be postponed.¹⁷ By that time, it was obvious that the urban population in Pakistan had increased manifold since 1981, the last time the census was taken, which meant that there were far fewer people living in the rural areas than around 1981. The 1981 census provoked a violent backlash from religious, linguistic and regional groups. They accused the government of under-enumeration. The government implicitly accepted the accusation when it promised freezing of assembly seats and federal aid allocation for these groups. The government also promised that the accusation of under-numeration would be rectified in the 1991 census (Blood, 1999; Husain, 2000). Had the proposed 1991 census given the new facts, its political ramifications would have been immense. Since the political power base of the "feudal lords" in Punjab lies in the rural areas, the new census would have meant

¹⁶ The Government of Pakistan: [Statistics Division/Ministry of Economic Affairs and Statistics, Government of Pakistan: http://www.statpak.gov.pk/depts/pco/statistics/other_tables/pop_by_mother_tongue.pdf](http://www.statpak.gov.pk/depts/pco/statistics/other_tables/pop_by_mother_tongue.pdf).

¹⁷ Incidentally, in 1991-93 I worked as a journalist in Lahore and was able to see for myself why the census-taking was being resisted.

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huge electoral losses to them by redrawing their traditional constituencies.¹⁸ Thus it took seven more years to hold the census with the results desired by the feudal lords. The 1998 census was rejected by the urban-based parties and a number of NGOs. In 2008 another census was supposed to have taken place, but so far it has not happened, and no information about it is available on the web site of Pakistan's Bureau of Census.¹⁹

But since the 1998 census is the only document which is there, I will have to make do with it. As I have said before, I would like to challenge the very census figures. First, I will deal with Urdu. I contend that Urdu is not the language of 7.57 percent of the country's population. Urdu is not an indigenous language of Pakistan. Before Partition, the Mohajirs did not live in the areas which in 1947 became Pakistan. After the establishment of Pakistan, the number of the Mohajir migrants was very low, as we have seen above. Very few Mohajirs settled in Punjab. Their destination was urban Sindh, which was at that time Pakistan's capital, the seat of the government dominated by their fellow Mohajirs (Shah, 1997).²⁰

Sometimes people associate with language not because it is their mother tongue, but for other reasons like prestige and economy (Saxena, 1995; Zaidi, 2010). This is what has happened in the case of Punjabi and to the benefit of Urdu. Mansoor in her research on Lahore's Punjabi graduate students found that they identified themselves as Urdu speakers because they were embarrassed to call themselves Punjabi speakers (Mansoor, 1993). Rahman also confirms Mansoor's findings about educated Punjabis' attitudes towards their mother tongue (Rahman, 2002). Thus, in either case, the figures on the percentage of the speakers Urdu are suspect.

Even if there are 7.57 percent speakers of Urdu, it is natively the least spoken of the languages on the table above.

Another point I want to make is that Punjabi's percentage is not as low as 44.15 as shown on the table. Seraiki is a dialect of Punjabi, but it has been separated from Punjabi on the political basis. Rahman (1996 and 2002) rightly points out that Seraiki as a separate language was the result of the movement in the 1960s which sought to redress economic deprivations suffered by the people of South Punjab, the so-called Seraiki belt. Scholars of Seraiki contend that Seraiki and Punjabi are not different languages but two varieties (Nadiem, 2005; Shackle, 2007).²¹

¹⁸ Sayeed (1967) has written about the "feudal lords" in detail.

¹⁹ See: <http://www.pap.org.pk/Statistics.htm>.

²⁰ At present, they form majorities in Sindh's urban areas, and win comfortable majority in urban Sindh in every election. After the 2008 election, they formed a coalition government with Pakistan's People's Party, the latter won the majority of the seats in rural Sindh.

²¹ From 1986 to 1990, I lived and taught in Multan, the centre of the Seraiki movement. My own view based upon my interaction with the Seraiki speakers is that it is not very different from Punjabi. Punjabi and Seraiki are mutually understandable. Punjabi and Sindhi, Pashto, or Balochi are not mutually understandable at all. As an example, the Punjabis do not listen to Pashto, Sindhi, or Balochi poetry and songs because they do not understand "A postcolonial sociolinguistics of Punjabi in Pakistan," Abbas Zaidi
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Hence, the percentage of the speakers of Punjabi should be 54.68. But even if Punjabi is 44.15 percent of the Pakistani languages, it has the largest number of speakers in Pakistan, and Pashto with 15.42 percent of speakers is a distant second.

Let us take a look at the Census of 1981:

Table. 3. The Census of Pakistan 1981: language distribution

Language	Speakers (%)
Punjabi	48.17
Pashto	13.14
Sindhi	11.77
Seraiki	9.83
Urdu	7.60
Balochi	3.02
Others	6.47

Source: *Handbook of Population Census Data*. Islamabad: Population Census Organization, Statistics Division, Govt. of Pakistan, 1984.

Of all the languages listed in the two censuses, only Punjabi has declined as shown in the 1998 Census. The Census gives no reason why. Certainly there was no drop in the Punjabi population, and no Punjabi migration to other places or countries was recorded. My argument is that for the 1998 Census, a number of Punjabis did not identify themselves as speakers of Punjabi. I would like to produce details from the 1961 Census to support my argument:

Table. 4. The Census of Pakistan 1961: language distribution ²²

% of speakers			
Language	East Pakistan	West Pakistan	All Pakistan
Urdu	1.3	14.6	7.2
Bengali	99.0	0.1	55.8
Punjabi	0.0	67.6	29.5

these languages. But Seraiki poetry and songs are very popular with the Punjabis, especially the poetry of Khawaja Ghulam Farid. Had Seraiki been a separate language, it would have been a different case. It is true that Seraiki has lexical variation from Punjabi. But this is not a unique case. Language varieties have lexical differences.

²² English was identified as: in East Pakistan: 0.8; in West Pakistan: 2.1; all Pakistan: 1.4
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Sindhi	0.0	14.2	6.2
Pashto	0.0	8.9	3.9
Balochi	0.0	2.9	1.3

Source: *Census of Pakistan: Population 1961* (Karachi: Government of Pakistan, 1961), VI, 32-33.

Significantly, Seraiki is non-existent in the Census because it was a part of Punjabi then.²³The number of the speakers of Punjabi is also very high.

I would like to make another observation: in Pakistan's language ecology, languages other than Urdu are tolerated, and not accepted or encouraged. Baart and Sindhi say that Urdu is given "official patronage at the cost of other Pakistan languages" (Baart and Sindhi, 2003: 26). There are over 50 languages spoken in Pakistan with their speakers ranging from 2,000 to 300,000 (Rahman, 2002), but Pakistan's censuses have historically asked the respondents only about the main languages. People either have to identify one of the main languages as their own, or they have to write "Other". Important official documents like forms for the national identity card or passport which I have examined have the same trend.

Another fact which I would like to give in support of my argument that in Pakistan non-Urdu languages are only tolerated comes from the facts that apart from Pashto and Sindhi which are taught at the lower levels in the Northwestern and Sindh provinces, no indigenous language is allowed to be taught in schools (Rahman, 2000 and 2003). Ironically, one can do an MA or a Ph.D. in a language like Punjabi (Zaidi, 2001), but one cannot read a word of it in schools, all in the name of Islam, unity of the country, and national security (Rahman, 2002; also see the following sections). The reason Pashto and Sindhi are taught in their respective provinces is because of the strong and successful language movements there (for the movement for Punjabi, see below).

Urdu is at the top of all the languages spoken in Pakistan. In Mansoor's words,

. . . regional languages are accorded a low status and limited to hearth and home. They play no role in the official life of the provinces and their educational role is restricted to primary or secondary level in most provinces as materials for higher studies are practically non-existent in the vernacular. (Mansoor, 1993: 6).

Mansoor is largely right in her claim. The only modification which can be made to her claim is that Pashto and Sindhi are taught in schools in the Northwestern province and Sindhi (excluding Karachi). But Punjabi, on the other hand, has no place either in schools or media. These issues will be discussed below.

²³ According to Rahman, it was only after the creation of Bangladesh in 1971 that "the Seraiki identity emerged" (Rahman, 1996: 2).

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5. Language planning in Pakistan

Pakistan's language planning can be likened to the fascist language planning in Italy in the first half of the 20th century. Throughout its history, Pakistan's governments have been interfering in the language issues and suppressing campaigns for linguistic rights of Balochi, Pashto, Punjabi, and Sindhi in the name of national security, Islam, and the Pakistan ideology (Rahman, 1996). This type of intervention in the Fascist Italy was called *fasci interventisti* (Schjerve, 1989: 61). Writing about language planning in the Fascist Italy, Klein says, "in public education fascism attempted to create a policy of linguistic unification, which bordered on dialectophobia. . . the idea 'one nation=one language' was created" (Klein, 1989: 39). He further says that because in Italy language education interventions "permitted formal, monocentric and endonormative standardization" (Klein, 1989: 42), the result was that the Fascist language planning was characterized by "autarchism" (Klein, 1989: 50).

This is what exactly happened when the government of newly created Pakistan claimed that Pakistan would be "one nation, one religion, and one language" (Zaidi, 2001), and "Islam is the *raison d'être* of Pakistan" (Husain, 2001: 9). Curiously, Pakistan's language planning was done by no other person than the ruling Mohajir-Punjabi elite in order to sideline the Bengalis and gain power through language. Rahman puts it comprehensively thus:

. . . since the Bengalis constituted more than half (55.6 per cent) of the population of Pakistan, the ruling elite—Muslim League [the ruling party] politicians, the bureaucracy, and the military—which was dominated by a Punjabi-Mohajir coalition felt threatened by the mere fact of Bengali majority. To neutralize the threat of possible domination by East Bengal [i.e., East Pakistan], it might have made sense to the ruling elite to fall back on Urdu as a unifying symbol of the state. (Rahman, 2002: 263).

In November 1947, within three months of Pakistan's creation, the government of Pakistan formally did the code selection: Urdu was declared to be the national language of Pakistan's both wings: East and West Pakistan. The Bengalis reaction to it has already been discussed above. In order to placate the Bengalis, the government was able to draft the country's first constitution in 1956 called the Constitution of 1956. From the linguistic point of view, it had great significance: it declared Urdu and Bengali to be joint national languages. Although under pressure from the Bengalis, the Bengali language was declared Pakistan's second national language with Urdu, its presence was only restricted to Bengal; in West Pakistan it was non-existent (Salamat, 1992). The 1956 Constitution had no room for an indigenous language like Punjabi.

After General Ayub took over in 1958, all efforts were made to strengthen the federal government at the cost of provincial autonomy. He formed a commission on education in Pakistan. The commission, known as the Sharif Commission on National Education, presented its report in 1959. The Commission discussed the medium of education in Pakistan at some "A postcolonial sociolinguistics of Punjabi in Pakistan," Abbas Zaidi
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length. The report acknowledged the existence and importance of regional languages like Balochi, Pashto, Punjabi, and Sindhi and observed,

Urdu is the medium of instruction in the former Punjab [i.e., the Pakistani part of Punjab] and Balochistan areas, whereas in the Peshawar region, Pashto is the medium of instruction till class 5 and Urdu from class 6 onwards. In the Sindh region, Sindhi is the medium of instruction in most schools while Urdu is a compulsory subject of study. Since 1947, a number of schools have opened in Sindh with Urdu as the medium of instruction in which Sindhi is a compulsory subject of study. (p. 283).

The Report had nothing to say about Punjabi. About the role of Urdu, it said, “the assimilative power of Urdu must be fully utilized to make it function as a basic and representative language for the whole of West Pakistan by introducing into it useful words of all the languages of the area” (p. 283). The Report’s recommendation for East Pakistan was that Bengali be taught there, but for West Pakistan, it said,

We are firmly convinced that for the sake of our national unity we must do everything to promote the linguistic cohesion of West Pakistan [today’s Pakistan] by developing the national language, Urdu, to the fullest extent. . . Urdu . . . will eventually become the common popular language of all the people in this area. (p. 292).

The report concluded by saying that in 15 years’ time English should be replaced by Urdu in West Pakistan and by Bengali in East Pakistan.

In 1965, a report was prepared to deal with the problems faced by students at different levels of education. The Report, known as the Hamood-ur-Rahman Report, briefly dealt with the medium of instruction, but there was nothing new in it as it reaffirmed the recommendations made by the Sharif report.

In 1969, General Ayub had to step down and General Yahya took over as the country’s president and chief martial law administrator. He appointed Air Marshal Nur Khan to head an education commission to come up with new ideas about education in Pakistan. The Nur Khan Report on education condemned the existence of English in the country’s education system because it had privileged the rulers over the ruled, and recommended that Urdu be the national language of Pakistan and medium of instruction at all levels.

In December 1971, East Pakistan ceded from West Pakistan and became Bangladesh. About the same time democracy was restored in Pakistan. The government of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (1972-77) Bhutto gave a new constitution to the country in 1973. It is called the Constitution of 1973. In this constitution, which is still Pakistan’s constitution, language planning was done for the country once for all. Article 251 of the 1973 Constitution says: “The

national language of Pakistan is Urdu, and arrangements shall be made for its being used for official and other purposes within fifteen years from the commencing day.”

So far we have seen that Urdu was given privilege for the sake of obtaining national unity. But it was in 1978 that the great linguistic cataclysm struck Pakistan when Zia ul Haq, who had taken control of Pakistan through a coup in July 1977, declared that Pakistan’s education would be Islamized. He gave top priority to the teaching of Urdu and Islamic Studies. In the words of Cohen (2004),

The state controlled textbooks and electronic media, ran several newspapers, and had a coercive influence over the privately owned press. Even when the latter was not subjected to formal censorship, threats were made to withdraw official advertisements, and important revenue stream for most print media. . . . The Pakistani state was deployed in the service of the two-nation theory. . . ideological propagation grew over the years, the process reaching a peak under Zia when virtually everything was censored, even books that were favorably regarded by Zia himself. A whole discipline, “Pakistan Studies”, was established in the Ministry of Education and became the vehicle for the promulgation of often-distorted version of Pakistan, its origins, and other states, especially India. (Cohen, 2004: 68).

It is important to remember that General Zia had the unqualified backing of the army and the Islamic fundamentalists, which makes him the most powerful ruler in Pakistan’s history. In his language policy, Urdu was given top priority,

To foster in the hearts and minds of the people of Pakistan in general and the students in particular a deep and abiding loyalty to Islam and Pakistan and a living consciousness of their spiritual and ideological identity thereby strengthening unity of the outlook of the people of Pakistan on the basis of justice and fair play. (Cited by Raman, 2002: 276).

The latest national education policy was formulated in 1998. This policy is the same as that of the education policy of General Zia in its emphasis on Islam and the ideology of Pakistan. The only reference to the language issue in Pakistan this policy makes is,

It is expected that the students should leave secondary education stage and be able to speak and write Urdu or English fluently along with good communication skills. So, the contents of the curriculum should consist of the components of language, basic science, and social sciences. (p. 48)

The next education policy will be announced some time in 2010.

The above discussion should make it clear that in Pakistan there is no such a thing as linguistic rights. Planning education or language is done in order to gain or retain power whether in the name of national unity or Islam. Rahman (2002) contends that the reason the Punjabis “A postcolonial sociolinguistics of Punjabi in Pakistan,” Abbas Zaidi
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have championed the cause of Urdu at the cost of their own language is that by supporting Punjabi they do not want other provinces to demand their linguistic rights. He may be partially right. But the facts are that in Sindh and the Northwestern province Sindhi and Pashto are taught in schools. In what way the teaching of Punjabi will hurt the interests of the Punjabis and upset the other provinces is hard to comprehend. Rahman (1996 and 2002) himself acknowledges that the Punjabis are ashamed of their own language because they consider it a vulgar language. Mansoor (1993) in her sociolinguistic study of Punjabi in Lahore reached the same conclusion. My own research finding is that the Punjabis feel embarrassed speaking their language; the only topics, as they reported, suitable for Punjabi are gossip, swearing, and jokes (Zaidi, 2001 and 2010).

6. Ideology: language and curriculum

General Zia's (1977-88) rule was a watershed in the linguistic history of Pakistan. His enforcement of the *Shariah* turned Pakistan into a "retrograde" society (Sayeed, 1990: 186) in which everything 'unIslamic' was crushed. Urdu was the main tenet of the Islamic grand narrative which he imposed on society.

As I have said before, pre-Zia rulers used Islam and Urdu in order to retain power. But Zia's case was different. He did not have to seek power through the use of ideology²⁴. He was a general and had seized the power at a gun point. He single-handedly destroyed all democratic and social institutions in Pakistan (Kaushik, 1993; Stern, 2001). He was different from his predecessors as he actually believed in Islamizing the society and wanted to bulldoze everything which he considered un-Islamic (Haqqani, 2005; Hussain, 2007). In his very first speech after staging a *coup d'état* he addressed the nations thus: "Pakistan, which was created in the name of Islam, will continue to survive only if it sticks to Islam. That is why I consider the introduction of [the] Islamic system as an essential prerequisite for the country" (Abbas, 2005: 92). His religious fanaticism was extremely pathological. In his own words, "We were created on the basis of Islam. . . without Islam Pakistan will fail" (Weaver, 2002: 57). He oversaw the proliferation of *madrassas*, the Islamic schools, which taught extremely virulent and paranoid version of Islam, and "enabled them to operate on a greater level of autonomy from state interference" (Dittmer, 2005: 8). General Zia's closest ally and a member of his cabinet, General Chishti echoed his boss: "[The] enemies of Islam must be hunted down and killed like snakes even when they are offering prayers" (Noman, 1990: 122). With the full force of the Islamic ideology, General Zia set out to reform Pakistan's education. He went to the extent of restructuring the national school system by separating "the primary Muslim-Pakistani nation from the non-Muslims" (Ahmed, 1998: 180). *Dawn*, Pakistan's national English language daily (*Dawn*, 20 May 2009), in its editorial, and Saleem (Saleem, 8 June 2008), an independent

²⁴ It is true that he used ideology to make himself even more powerful. But the point is that he actually believed that Islam was the solution to everything.

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economist, in his article, have named the curricula devised and taught under General Zia as “Curriculum of Hatred”. The General was against all the indigenous languages of Pakistan because he thought them to be “symbols of ethno-nationalism” (Rahman, 1996: 204), which were dangerous for his version of Islam. I will discuss only those aspects of his “reforms” which affected the Punjabi language and culture.

Since Punjabi had been “sacrificed to Urdu” (Jaffrelot 2002: 252; see also: Baart and Sindhi, 2003 for details) and had not been a part of the school system and was taught only at the higher education level, the Department of Punjabi in the Punjab University, Lahore, was a big casualty of Zia’s linguistics of Islamization. The left-leaning members of staff were sacked, and the literature written by the Sikhs (i.e., non-Muslims) was expunged from the syllabus (Humayun, 1986). Even those Muslim poets who seemed to have secular views were removed from the syllabus. Punjabi syllabus was decimated through Islamization. In the end, only Islamized curriculum was what the students were given to study.

Aziz (2004) has chronicled how all non-Muslim contributions to India were taken out from the syllabi. After analyzing all the textbooks at various levels taught during General Zia’s time, Aziz makes a few observations. He says that the General had all the textbooks rewritten to make them more Islamic. They were replete with historical errors and lies which Aziz calls “prescribed myths” (Aziz, 2004: 1). All the social sciences textbooks, Aziz found, taught that everything non-Arabic was non-Islamic and that everything should be judged from the Islamic point of view (Aziz, 2004).

The implication of General Zia’s Islamization of the curriculum was that everything indigenous was suspect and everything which was exogenous (Islam, Urdu) was noble.²⁵ I will have more to say about it in the following section.

6.1. The exosmotic catharsis: False memories, founding fathers, and heroes

Ideology can be another name for myth-making. Some researchers of experimental psychology and neuroscience have explored the phenomenon of how false memories are created in people (see for example, Roediger III and McDermott, 1995; Loftus, 1997; Stadler, Roediger III and McDermott, 1999). In Pakistan, mythical-ideological national-theological grand narratives and the inculcation of false memories have in the past and in the present led to the undermining of Pakistan’s indigenous languages including Punjabi.

I have tried to show above that General Zia was not the only person who undermined the indigenous languages through ideology. From the very establishment of the state of Pakistan, an attempt was made to rewrite history by overwriting the true history. This was done through

²⁵ Ahmed (1998) has given a critique of the ideological use of Urdu during Zia. “A postcolonial sociolinguistics of Punjabi in Pakistan,” Abbas Zaidi *JPCS*, Vol. 1, No 3&4, 2010. <http://www.jpccs.in>

teaching falsehoods and pure lies as authentic history confirming Michel de Certeau's claim that the "past is a fiction of the present" (de Certeau, 1988: 10).

The curricula taught from the very beginning of Pakistan's creation to the present day, and enforced by the media, claim that Pakistan was not created on 14 August 1947. The textbooks and 'patriotic' history books argue that Pakistan came into existence when the very first Muslim set his foot in the subcontinent (Aziz, 2004; Alam, 2006). But some zealots have gone even farther. I would like to quote an interesting example from no less a person than Eric Hobsbawm,

I recall seeing somewhere a study of the ancient civilization of the cities of the Indus valley with the title *Five Thousand Years of Pakistan*. Pakistan was not even thought of before 1932-3, when the name was invented by some student militants. It did not become a serious political demand until 1940. There is no evidence of any more connection between the civilization of Mohenjo Daro and the current rulers of Islamabad than there is a connection between the Trojan War and the government of Ankara. (Hobsbawm, 1997: 5).

A recent research on an expatriate Punjabi community (Zaidi, 2010) found that the respondents could not name Punjabi icons. For example, the greatest literary figures that Pakistan has produced are Punjabi. Saadat Hassan Manto is regarded as the greatest Urdu short story writer in the Indian sub-continent; the Lenin prize winner and Nobel-nominated Faiz Ahmed Faiz is regarded as Pakistan's greatest poet of love and revolution; and Majid Amjad and Nasir Kazmi are regarded as the two greatest romantic poets of the twentieth century. All of them wrote in Urdu. Faiz in his long creative life wrote only one poem in Punjabi, and it was written in celebration of African peasants; hence, the problem of naming a Punjabi icon who wrote in Punjabi. Also, those great Punjabis, old or modern, who had nothing to do with Urdu, find no place in the curriculum. For example, Punjabis are largely ignorant of the likes of Nizam Lohar and Ahmed Khan Kharal who fought against the British colonizers, or Dullah Bhatti who fought against Akbar, the Mughal emperor. The great Sufi poets like Shah Hussain and Bulleh Shah are known only because their poems are sung by artists. Officially sanctioned or produced books have little to say about them. All these Punjabi icons were Muslim. In Pakistan's 'curriculum of hatred' a place for non-Muslim Punjabis like Bhagat Singh and Lala Lajpat Rai, also anti-imperialist fighters, is impossible. The books taught in schools or given awards for 'scholarship' are filled with 'the founding fathers' and 'independent movement heroes', none of them Punjabi. They are either Urdu speaking (Qureshi, 1965; Haq, 1970; Hamid, 1971), or the Arabs, Mughals, and Pathans who invaded and/or ruled India (Irfani, 2004; Hoodhboy and Nayyar, 2005; Ejaz, 2008).

Irfani offers a powerful argument. He writes that since 1947, the time when Pakistan was established, there has been a steady ascent of an "Arabist shift". He defines this shift as the

tendency to view the present in terms of an imagined Arab past with the Arabs as the only “real/pure” Muslims, and then using this “trope of purity for exorcizing an ‘unIslamic’ present. Consequently, the Arabist shift lost the eclecticism and intellectuality that were the basis of a creative South Asian Muslim identity, and this has led to a hardening in the understanding of Islam as a result of imagining Pakistanis in Arabist terms” (Irfani, 2004: 148).

Dawn has editorialized on the Pakistani historiography thus,

. . . no objective account exists of the history of Pakistan, a country that has been ruled either by military dictators or authoritarian civilians who conflated personal with collective interest. Where the national interest really lies is in truth but that has been a casualty from day one. (*Dawn*, 10 July 2008).

The same editorial concludes,

For many the history of what is now Pakistan seems to begin not with the Indus Valley civilization but the subjugation of Sindh by an Arab invader, Mohammad bin Qasim. An attempt has also been made to place our cultural roots in Central Asia or the Middle East instead of South Asia and this link, sadly and erroneously, is now widely accepted as fact.

Ejaz’s assessment of the Islamist-Pakistani historiography is also worth-quoting,

Intellectual Talibanization was initiated from very early on after the creation of Pakistan. A mythical history of Muslims was introduced in textbooks where every ruler, invader and plunderer, was shown in the role of protector and religious crusader. Starting from Mahmud Ghaznavi, the conqueror of the Somnath Temple, to Nadir and Ahmad Shah Abdali, every invader was presented as the great savior of Indian Muslims. Three generations of Pakistanis have been indoctrinated with this concocted history to create Islamic chauvinism and to belittle people of other religions. (Ejaz, 9 July 2008).

Eric Cyprian, a very well-known Punjabi and one of the main leaders of the pro-Punjabi movement from the 1960s to the 1990s, also argued that the reason the Punjabi language was pushed to the margins by the ruling elite of the country was because of the past of the Punjabis and the Punjabi language. According to him, from the earliest times, foreign invaders had to pass through Punjab to attack Delhi, the capital of India. The Punjabis resisted all of them whether they were Muslim or non-Muslim. Thus resistance to the foreign invaders became a part of the Punjabi culture, and the Punjabi poetry chronicles at length the bravery of the Punjabis against the foreigners. Hence, the foreigners, Muslim or non-Muslim, understood very well the political power of the Punjabi language and did everything to denigrate it, especially the British who brought Urdu-speaking administrative and police officers from Utter Pradesh in order to consolidate their hold on the province of Punjab and its residents (Cyprian, 1991).

The Arab heroes, I would like to add, stand tall, in books and the media, and are portrayed as filled with compassion and courage while the fact that they robbed and killed the locals, including local Muslims, is glossed making the Punjabis “absent from history” (Manzoor, 1993: 21). Also, the books outlining Pakistan’s ‘history of freedom movement’ are filled with countless ‘sacrifices’ made to achieve Pakistan.²⁶ But the historical fact is that no sacrifices were made to wrest Pakistan from either the Hindus or the British. The killing of hundreds of thousands of Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs took place after India had been divided and the people fought as they were migrating to India or Pakistan (Talbot, 2007). Interestingly, not a single textbook in Pakistan mentions that it was the Punjabis who were killed, but ‘Muslims’ so that the credit of ‘sacrifices’ made does not go to one community only (Aziz, 2004). Some of the examples of absolute historical lies which Aziz (2004) quotes are: “Pakistan has been a fortress of Islam”; “the advent of Islam reformed the Hindu society”; during the Muslim rule, “the nobles and *ulema* [the religious scholars] took part in selecting Muslim kings”; “Muslims came to this country, bringing with them a clean and elegant culture and civilization”; “the Hindus are indeed indebted to Muslim culture and civilization today”; and “The Hindus wanted to control the government of India after independence. The British sided with the Hindus but the Muslims did not accept the decision” (Aziz, 2004: Chapter 3).

Haider (2009) too has carried out comprehensive research on how the journalists, intellectuals, historians, planners, and curricula over the years have led the Pakistani nation into believing that the entire non-Muslim world is bent upon destroying Pakistan. As a result of this *civilizational narcissism*²⁷, Pakistanis in general have developed very negative attitudes towards the non-Islamic world, which, as a result, has turned Pakistan into a breeding ground of international terrorism.

The result of false histories and memories is that the Punjabis have no heroes of their own to identify with. History for them is the history of those ‘great heroes’ who were not Punjabi and did not speak their language. Shah (1997) in his book on Pakistan’s ethnic groups and the country’s foreign policy says that Sindhis and Balochis are religiously tolerant and have their own heroes, but “Punjab has both an official and an unofficial culture. Sindhis and Balochis insist on adhering to their own ethnic identities and abhor the idea of an official culture of Pakistan, which usually implies speaking Urdu and wearing *sherwani* and *kurta* as national dress. It is only in the Punjab that elements of both Pakistani and Punjabi flourish side by side, though the former invariably takes precedence over the latter” (Shah, 1997: 127). He goes on to

²⁶ Aziz (2004) enumerates and analyzes hundred of textbooks, books recommended at different academic levels, and general historical and political books in which bogus facts are presented as genuine history.

²⁷ This is the title of Haider’s book and the argument which he develops: Pakistani Muslims are suffering from civilizational narcissism.

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say that a careful study of Punjabi heroes reveal that that “all resisted non-Punjabi rule” (Shah, 1997: 127), which means they resisted Muslim invaders also.²⁸

The Punjabi language has great literary traditions. Punjabi literature is found in every *genre*, especially Sufi poetry in Punjabi is of great quality (Quddus, 1992). The famous Punjabi epics like *Hir-Rjha*, *Sohni-Mahinwal*, *Saiful-Maluk*, and *Mirza-Sahiban* are not only poetical masterpieces, they all deal with human problems like life, death, love, faith, loyalty, and how to live in a society fraught with contradictions. Moreover, one of the greatest theme running in Punjabi literature is that it protests foreign rulers, most of whom happened to be Muslim (Mirza, 1992), which partly explains why Punjabi literature was Islamized during General Zia’s time.

Even today people write in Punjabi, but since Punjabi enjoys only minimal official patronage, it is usually difficult for one to get published easily. The media gives little coverage to Punjabi literature and litterateurs. The problem lies in a society which is marked by linguistic apartheid. Hence the Punjabis’ emotional fulfillment and catharsis are exogenous.

7. The problem of culture

Rahman contends that it is the very state of Pakistan which has enforced a uniform culture in all Pakistanis. This culture, according to Rahman, is the culture of the Urdu-speaking elite which has resulted in more use of Urdu and has become “the ideal criterion for the distribution of power” (Rahman, 1996: 2).

There has been very little debate on Punjabi culture in Pakistan. In Pakistan, by culture is meant Islamic culture (Azam, 1980; Mallik, 2006). A plea for local Punjabi culture has never found a place in society (Ahmed, 1998). Only during the time of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (1972-77), a great deal of debate was allowed on local cultures (Raza, 1997). Bhutto was a democrat, but once General Zia overthrew and hanged him, the very notion of indigenous cultures disappeared under the watchful eyes of the military and mullahs.²⁹

Ahmed Ali, Pakistan’s acclaimed and highly influential writer and journalist of the Mohajir stock, challenges the very argument that indigenous cultures exist in Pakistan. In his contribution to Symonds (1987), Ali goes to the ridiculous length in proving that “there is no such a thing as Indian/Hindu, or local in the culture of Pakistan” (Ali, 1987: 199). He also claims that “Pakistan has never been a part of India, politically speaking” (Ali, 1987: 200). Before 1947, the areas which make up Pakistan were under the Muslim rule (Ali, 1987). Rauf (1975) too is dismissive of local cultures and claims that in Pakistan only Islamic culture exists.

As a journalist, researcher, and student of the Pakistan society, I have rarely come across the word *cultures*; it has always been the singular word *culture*. Quddus (1992) and Rauf (1975)

²⁸ Thus they have no role in an Arabized/Islamized curriculum.

²⁹ The military-mullah combine is known in Pakistan as *the military-mullah alliance* (Haqqani, 2005). “A postcolonial sociolinguistics of Punjabi in Pakistan,” Abbas Zaidi *JPCS*, Vol. 1, No 3&4, 2010. <http://www.jpcs.in>

in their books, which claim to discuss Pakistan's culture, have nothing to say about indigenous, i.e., non-Islamic, cultures³⁰. The first Muslim invasion of India was carried out in 712 C.E. by an Arab. India, including the parts which make up today's Pakistan, had existed from times immemorial. But the books on Pakistani culture make no reference to pre-Islamic cultures which flourished in the areas now called Pakistan unless they are found to be inferior (Aziz, 2003; Haider, 2009). I would like to refer to a book titled *Facts About Pakistan*. It is published by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of Pakistan, Islamabad, and is distributed free to visitors and tourists. It has no publishing date. The name of the author is also not given. Its Chapter 13 is about Punjab. The "Cultural Heritage" section of the chapter begins thus,

Arts and artifacts bequeathed to Pakistan are essentially Islamic in nature. The magnificent edifice dotting this land of ancient civilization, in the form of forts, palaces, mosques and mausoleums, are eloquent reminders of the great tradition in Muslim architecture. The structure of a mosque is simple and expresses a sense of openness. Calligraphic inscriptions from the Holy Quran decorate mosques and mausoleums to create a divine atmosphere. (page: 198).

The section goes on to identifying "Muslim musicians" for their great contributions, and also other Muslim architectural landmarks.

I have a comment to make on the above quote in line with the argument I have been presenting in this paper: Although the section is about the Punjabi culture, *Punjab* is substituted by *Pakistan*. No reference is made to the ancient Harappan civilization. Harappa lies on a 90-minute drive south of Lahore. No reference is made to the ancient Gandhara civilization, or the first university in the world established in Taxila. The fascinating fasting Buddha and the ancient temples of Katas have been effaced from memory. No reference has been made to the Punjabi language.

Why is there no room for local cultures in an Islamic state? The answer is provided by one of the most revered Pakistani scholars of Islam. I quote from his book which, printed by the government of Pakistan, has for years been a part of the compulsory "Islamic Studies" subject in schools and colleges. The author likens Islam to Fascism:

³⁰ I am based in Brunei Darussalam. The web site of the Pakistan High Commission in Brunei (<http://www.brunet.bn/gov/emb/pakistan/history.htm>) gives the following introduction to Pakistan's history: "The Islamic Republic of Pakistan emerged as an independent state on 14 August 1947. It has its roots into the remote past. Its establishment was the culmination of the long struggle by Muslims of the South-Asian subcontinent for a separate homeland of their own. Its foundation was laid when Mohammad bin Qasim subdued Sindh in 711 AD as a reprisal against sea pirates that had taken refuge in Raja Dahir's kingdom. The advent of Islam further strengthened the historical individuality in the areas now constituting and further beyond its boundaries."

The Islamic State would endorse some part of the program of the Fascist State. Fascism proposes to weld the nation into an organic whole in which conflicts of interest shall not be allowed a free-play to the detriment of national solidarity. The right of private property is recognized as it is recognized in Islam, but all rights of the employers and the employed are subject to the over-all supervision and control of the State. . . . However one might appreciate the Fascist methods of harmonizing conflicts within the body politic and of achieving national solidarity, the moral cost is too great to be imitated by a truly Islamic State, whose aim is the establishment of universal peace transcending all racial and national boundaries. (Hakim, 1988: 269-270).

8. Punjabi's objective ethnolinguistic vitality

What makes a language viable in a society? In 1972, Fishman wrote that “visible vitality” affected a language group’s language attitudes or beliefs. By “visible vitality” he meant “interaction networks that actually employ them natively for one or more vital functions” (Fishman, 1972: 21). In 1977 Giles, Bourhis and Taylor presented a theoretical model which they believed could point to the sustainability of a language. Theirs is known as the Ethnolinguistic Vitality Model³¹. Vitality of an ethnolinguistic group, argue Giles *et al*, “is that which makes a group likely to behave as a distinctive and active collective entity in inter-group situations. From this, it is argued that ethnolinguistic minorities that have little or no group vitality would eventually cease to exist as distinctive groups. Conversely, the more vitality a linguistic group has, the more likely it will survive and thrive as a collective entity in an inter-group context” (Giles, *et al*, 1977: 308). The parameters described in the Ethnolinguistic Vitality Model are summarized thus:

Status: economic, social, sociohistorical (within and without)

Demography: distribution (national territory, proportion, concentration), numbers (absolute, birthrate, mixed marriages, immigration, emigration)

Institutional Support: formal (mass media, education, government services), informal (industry, religion, culture)

The economic status, according to Giles *et al*, is “the degree of control a language group has gained over the economic life of its nation, region or community” (Giles *et al*, 1977: 310). Baker (1993), commenting on the economic status, says that where a minority language community experiences considerable unemployment or widespread low income, the pressure may be to shift to majority language. Rindler-Schjerve (quoted by Saxena, 1995: 38) supports the significance of the economic status by giving the example of Sardinia where Italian, because of

³¹ The Ethnolinguistic Model has micro and macro levels called subjective and objective aspects of the Model. In this paper, it is the objective aspect which is relevant.

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its association with modernization, industrialization and urbanization, was given preference over other languages.

In the maintenance of a language, *social status* and *socio-historical status* are two important factors and are closely related. People whose language has a low social status or who themselves have a low view of it are likely to shift to another language. On the other hand, a socially high status language is more likely to be maintained. If a language is supposed to have played a significant part in the past, it can still have symbolic value for its speakers in the present.

Language status is about “history, prestige, and the degree of standardization [and] may be a source of pride or shame” (Giles, *et al*, 1977:312).

The demographic parameter refers to the geographical distribution of a linguistic group. Institutional support is about how media approaches issues related to a minority group. If a minority’s language and culture are excluded in the mainstream media, its prestige and prospects are likely to suffer. Official support and patronage of a language is crucial. If a language is used for administrative purposes (police, immigration, official correspondence), for general public (health, postal services), and education (language planning), it will have wide-ranging ramifications for it.

From our discussion in the preceding sections, it would not be difficult to claim that Punjabi’s ethnolinguistic vitality is seriously undermined in the sociolinguistic setting of Pakistan. We can understand Punjabi’s vitality thus,

Status: Punjabi has little economic, social, or sociohistorical status. Punjabi is used in low jobs like labor and sweeping. This is the language of the illiterate employed in low jobs. Mansoor (1993) also reports that Punjabi is regarded as a “low status language” (Mansoor, 1993: 129).

The Punjabis are the most powerful economic group in Pakistan (Ahmed, 1997; Khan, 2005). In the words of Rahman, “Punjab is the most populous and prosperous province of the country, notorious for its dominance in the army and the bureaucracy.” Rahman, 1996: 191). Hence, we need to modify the Ethnolinguistic Vitality model by saying that an ethnolinguistic group may be very powerful, even dominant in a number of ways such as economy and politics. But the group’s language may be irrelevant, or useless, because the group does not use its language for many important functions.

Demography: In Pakistan, Punjabis are numerically more than the rest of the Pakistani ethnolinguistic groups put together. Their distribution (national territory, proportion, concentration) and numbers (absolute, birthrate, mixed marriages, immigration, and emigration)

do not put them at a disadvantage in any measure. Hence, in the light of the Ethnolinguistic Vitality model, Punjabi can be considered a minority language.

Institutional Support: Punjabi has little institutional support. On the formal side (mass media, education, government services), it is almost absent. Rammah (2002) did not find a single Punjabi medium school in Punjab compared to 36,750 Sindhi medium schools in Sindh and 10,731 Pashto medium schools in the Northwestern Province. On the informal side, (industry, religion, culture) the situation is more or less the same. Giles *et al* (1977) say that a language in question will have low ethnolinguistic vitality because it is not given institutional support. Giles *et al*'s idea is that a language faces vitality problem because institutional support is denied to it. In the case of Punjabi, no institution in Pakistan is powerful enough to undermine the Punjabi language. The Punjabis are too powerful to have to ask for their language rights. But they do not want their language to be given any support anywhere. Thus on the point of institutional support, Punjabi's vitality is minimal.

From the point of view of the Ethnolinguistic Vitality model, we can say that Punjabi's vitality and viability is faced with serious problems.

9. Conclusion

Fishman (1976) has argued that it is the broader sociocultural factors which affect the maintenance or shift of a language³². It is obvious that the sociocultural factors affecting the Punjabi language in Pakistan have been detrimental to its spread in society, teaching in schools, or its use in government and media. Rahman says that at no stage in the history of Pakistan did Punjabi find state patronage (Rahman, 2002). From our discussion of education policies in Pakistan we can see that Punjabi never found even a supportive reference in the passing even when the teaching of much smaller languages like Sindhi and Pashto was acknowledged. As a result, Punjabi's vitality in the broader sociocultural scenario of Pakistan has been very low. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the state, or the ruling elite, has abandoned the Punjabi language to an extent which has been detrimental to its spread at official, academic, and societal levels. This is borne out from the role played by Pakistan's ideology and the state language planning. The way culture has been interpreted and projected has also privileged Islam and Urdu over indigenous cultures and languages.

The history of Punjabi in Pakistan is not very different from the situation of Africa where indigenous languages are known as inferior, or vulgar and colonial languages as superior. For instance, a language like Wolof spoken by 83 percent of the Senegalese has no status before French (Bamgbose, 1991).

³² "antecedent, concurrent or consequent psychological, social and cultural processes and their relationship with stability or change in habitual language use" (Fishman, 1976: 301).
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This paper does not imply that before the establishment of Pakistan, Punjabi was taught in schools and was being patronized by the government. Punjabi during the Raj calls for independent research and cannot be discussed here. But the point is that the very establishment of Pakistan was in principle the beginning of a new socio-political contract based upon the principles of equality and universal justice as claimed by the leaders of the new country. But this was not the case. I have quoted Irfani above who refers to the Arabist shift in Pakistan. I would like to reinterpret it.

I would like to argue that behind the whole phenomenon of language and ideology in Pakistan lies the failure of Pakistan as society (Jahan, 1972). Ali (1970 and 1983) is also of the same view. Pakistan was created with high-sounding professions that it would be a utopia for the people (Jalal, 1994). It was argued, as we have seen before, that based upon the principles of Islam, Pakistan would be a far superior society than India. But within months of its creation, Pakistan was shaken to its foundations when the Bengalis refused to accept the ideological argument and demanded their rights. In 24 years' time, East Pakistan separated after a bloody civil war. That was the failure of the Islamic ideology (Ahmed, 2004). Sherbaz Khan Mazari, a seasoned octogenarian politician, in his memoir has called living in *Pakistan: A journey to disillusionment* (Mazari, 1999). Noman describes the first decade of Pakistan, 1947 to 1958, as "the disenchantment with freedom" (Noman, 1990: 3-26). With spectacularly low literacy rate and immense poverty, the inferior position of women, lack of resources and the health and education system in the state of permanence collapse from its very beginning, and its permanent position in world's top corrupt countries have been very clear. Within months of its creation, it was obvious that the promised utopia was meant only for the ruling elite; the lives of the hundreds of thousands who died or were killed while migrating to Pakistan had gone waste (Ziaullah and Baid, 1985; Ahmed, 2001).

Pakistan was a failure as a polity too (Khan, 1983; Baxter and Wasti, 1991). The post-independence ruling elite did not hold elections and did not make the country's constitution because they wanted to hold on to power. The ruling class's inner bickering led to martial law in 1958. Pakistan saw democracy from 1972 to 1977, but then General Zia destroyed whatever democratic-political capital the country had.

In 1952, looking back at the establishment of Pakistan and the promises made of the new dawn of freedom, the great Faiz said wrote:

Dawn of Freedom (August 1947)³³

This leprous daybreak, dawn night's fangs have mangled—

³³ Originally written in Urdu, the poem is a part of the collection which Faiz published in 1952. After the publication of the collection, Faiz remained a *persona non grata* till his death in 1984. He spent years either in jail or in exile. The only reprieve he got was during the government of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (1972-77). This poem was translated by Victor Kiernan. See Kiernan, 1971.

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*This is not that long-looked-for break of day,
Not that clear dawn in quest of which those comrades
Set out, believing that in heaven's wide void
Somewhere must be the star's last halting place,
Somewhere the verge of night's slow-washing tide,
Somewhere an anchorage for the ship of the heartache.*

He concludes his poem with:

Let us go on, our goal is not reached yet.

The official Islamist explanation of the failure has been this: Pakistan and the Pakistanis have suffered and are suffering because the people have not been good Muslims. Hence, Pakistan must reject everything Western and return to Islam. Esposito and Voll (1996), and Jacobson (1998) have also recounted this explanation. Pakistan, however, is not the only country. It is a part of scores of Muslim countries which have failed as polities, thus enabling the Islamists to assert themselves and claim that a return to Islam and a dismissal of everything Western will solve all the problems faced by the Muslims. Harrison and Berger have researched this issue. They write,

“The formula of a return to Islam is a magic one, rhetorically articulating an alternative and promising a better future but with no prospect of real success Islamists reject their social environment perceived as a source of their anomie, alienation, and socioeconomic problems, as an expression of *jahiliyya* (pre-Islamic ignorance, unbelief), seeing nothing creative, innovative, or promising in it. This wholesale rejection merely cements the impasse in the country” (Harrison and Berger, 2006: 171).

As a result, an escape has been sought in what Irfani above calls “the Arabist shift”. Thus, everything local is bad. Irfani rightly points out that this shift took place immediately after the creation of Pakistan because it was evident that the ruling elite on their own could not run the country successfully, and a perfect paradigm was needed in order to take people’s attention off economic and political issues. Thus it was argued that good could come only from Arabia where Islam began and the Prophet Muhammad lived. Such a state of affairs, it can be argued, has no place for things local, be it a local culture or language. This also explains why a person, a Punjabi, like General Zia would be so ruthless a religious fanatic. Thus in the quest for Saladin—the warrior-victor-cum-good Muslim—a culture developed, or was developed, in which a bitter present was sought to be replaced by a golden, but mythical, past. In this search for a utopia, every quest for autonomy, basic rights, and cultural-political plurality was quashed. Michel de Certeau rightly said, “In the past from which it is distinguished, it promotes a selection between what can be *understood* and what must be *forgotten* in order to obtain the representation of a present intelligibility” (de Certeau, 1998: 4).

Biography

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