Chapter III
LANGUAGES IN TAJIKISTAN

Language

Language is a medium through which human beings convey their thoughts among themselves, exchange their feelings, desires and any other idea which comes across in one's mind. Though, recent researches have shown that other living beings also communicate with each other for example, the dolphins and elephants. Language is a system for communication. Interpersonal communication is not the only important function of the language; it is a medium through which the idea of a human being can be transferred to a vast majority of the people. There are different types of languages; sign language, oral language, literary language, gestures. It is a mode which has got some definite meaning and does not vary among users. Without language, thought could not attain anything like the complexity found in human being.

Written languages use symbols (that is, characters) to build words. The entire set of words is the language's vocabulary. The ways in which the words can be meaningfully combined is defined by the language's syntax and grammar. The actual meaning of words and combinations of words is defined by the language's semantics. Human languages are usually referred to as natural languages, and the science of studying them is called linguistics. Languages are first spoken then written, and then an understanding and explanation of their grammar (according to speech) is formulated. Languages live, die, move from place to place, and change with the passage of time. It is a fact that any language that stops changing with the passage of time, begins to die and any language which is a living language is a language in a state of incessant transformation.
There are many definitions of language. Collier’s Encyclopaedia defines it as;

‘the system of vocal and written symbols used by human beings to communicate their thoughts and feelings’ and ‘a system of units, realizable in some sensory medium, only certain combinations of which have meaning by convention and hence can be used for communication’.

Encyclopaedia Britannica defines it as;

‘a system of conventional spoken or written symbols by means of which human beings, as members of a social group and participants in its culture, communicate’.

It can be mentioned here that the study of languages began in India long time ago. Panini was the first linguist of the world, he lived in the 5th century B.C., formulated 3,959 rules of Sanskrit morphology, known as the Astadhyayi. In south India Tolkappiyar, who lived in the 3rd century B.C. was a grammarian of the Tamil language and produced his work named Tolkappiyam. Panini’s grammar is highly systematized and technical. Inherent in its analytic approach are the concepts of the phoneme, the morpheme, and the root; Western linguists only after some two millennia could recognise the phoneme. Tolkappiyar’s work is perhaps the first one to describe articulatory phonetics for any language. Its classification of the alphabet into consonants and vowels, and elements like nouns, verbs, vowels, and consonants which he put into classes, were also a breakthrough of that the time. Among the Tajik scholars, Sibawayh made a detailed and professional description of Arabic language in 760 A.D. in his monumental work, Al-kitab fi al-nahw (The Book on Grammar), bringing many linguistic aspects of language to light. In his book, he distinguished phonetics from phonology.

Linguists have divided major languages of the world into different groups and have put the Tajiki language is the group of Indo-European family of languages. Tajiki or Persian or Farsi was the language of the Parsa people who ruled Central Asia between 550-330 B.C. It became the language of the Persian Empire and was widely spoken in the ancient days.
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ranging from the borders of India in the east, Russia in the north, the southern shores of the Persian Gulf to Egypt and the Mediterranean in the west.

Indo-Aryan Family of Languages

The Indo-Aryan languages comprise a family of several hundred related languages and dialects, including most of the major languages of Europe, the northern Indian subcontinent (South Asia), the Iranian plateau (Southwest Asia), and much of Central Asia. Indo-European has the largest numbers of speakers of the recognised families of languages in the world today, with its languages spoken by approximately three billion native speakers. Suggestions of similarities between Indian and European languages began to be made by European visitors to India from the sixteenth century onwards. In 1583 Thomas Stephens, an English Jesuit missionary in Goa, noted similarities between Indian languages, specifically Konkani, and Greek and Latin. The first account to mention Sanskrit came from Filippo Sassetti (born in Florence, Italy in 1540 AD), a Florentine merchant who travelled to the Indian subcontinent and was among the first European observers to study the ancient Indian language, Sanskrit. Writing in 1585, he noted some word similarities between Sanskrit and Italian (e.g. deva/dio 'God', sarpa/serpe 'snake', sapta/sette 'seven', ashta/otto 'eight', nava/nove 'nine'). Unfortunately neither Stephens' nor Sasetti's observations led to any further scholarly inquiry. In 1647 Dutch linguist and scholar Marcus Zuerius van Boxhorn noted the similarity among Indo-European languages, and supposed the existence of a primitive common language which he called 'Scythian'. He included in his hypothesis Dutch, Greek, Latin, Tajik and German, later adding Slavic, Celtic and Baltic languages. However, the suggestions of Van Boxhorn did not become widely known and did not stimulate further research. The hypothesis re-appeared in 1786 when Sir William Jones first lectured on similarities between four of the oldest languages known in his time: Latin, Greek, Sanskrit, and Persian. Systematic comparison of these and other old languages conducted by Franz Bopp supported this theory, and Bopp's Comparative Grammar, appearing between 1833 and 1852 is considered as the starting-point of Indo-European studies as an academic discipline.
TAJIKI LANGUAGE

Tajik people call their language as Tajiki. The present day’s Tajiki language in Tajikistan is written in Cyrillic script and from right to left, which is different from the Persian of Iran or Dari of Afghanistan which are written in Persian/Arabic script and from left to right. Tajiki/Persian historically has been most prestigious language after Arabic in the Muslim world. It was a vehicle of cultural expression: in Central Asia from the establishment of Arab rule, in the Ottoman empire and Mughal India. The influence of Tajiki language and culture was over a wide area covering Balkans to Bangladesh and Persian Gulf to the north of Jaxter river. Today Tajiki is the official language of Tajikistan, Farsi (Tajik in Arabic script) is the official language of Iran and Farsi Dari (Tajik in Arabic script) is one of the two official languages of Afghanistan, besides it is also spoken in Samarqand and Bukhara areas of Uzbekistan, some parts of Turkmenistan and in some areas of Azerbaijan.

Over the centuries there have been many changes in the Tajiki/Persian language it has reached its modern form through various phases of developments. The origin and transformation can be divided into the following three phases;

a. Old Tajiki
b. Middle Tajiki
c. Modern Tajiki

Old Tajik/Avestan Language

In the ancient times in Tajikistan, two languages were important namely- Avestan and Old Tajik. Old Tajik was spoken in the province of Pars and has similarity with Avestan and Sanskrit languages and all these are believed to have originated from same roots. The oldest traces of Old Tajiki date to the 6th century B.C., but it was spoken until the 3rd century B.C. Linguists who are working on the languages of the Central Asian region call Old Tajiki as the language of Achaemenians and attribute Avestan language to the followers of Zoroastrian faith, who were mainly concentrated in the modern day Tajikistan. The language in which the religious books of the Zoroastrians, Avesta is written, came to be known as Avestan. It was
the language of the priestly class. (Shafaq: 1991) Avestan language bears much similarity with the ancient Indian language, Sanskrit. The Gatha\textsuperscript{1} in Avestan language and Rig Veda\textsuperscript{2} in Sanskrit language have much similarity in style and structure (Ghafurov 1997: 65). Old Tajik is preserved through cuneiform tablets found in the remains after the Achaemenid dynasty (550-330 BCE).

Old Tajik in Cuneiform Script

\textbf{Figure 3.1: Sample of the cuneiform script}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{1} Most ancient literature of the Zoroastrian faith, considered to be written by Zarthurst himself.
  \item \textsuperscript{2} Earliest literary scripture in India
\end{itemize}
The Avestan language should not be confused with the Avestan alphabet, which is significantly was the invention of later period. It is believed that the script of the Avestan language evolved during the Sasanid period in the 3rd century A.D, till then the contents of Avesta were transferred from one generation to another through memorization and word of mouth (Shafaq 1991: 23) (similar was the case of Rig Veda in India which was composed during 4th century A.D.). Many of the letters were derived from the old Pahlavi alphabets of Persia, which itself were derived from the Aramaic alphabets. Greek influence, in the form of the full representation of vowel sounds, is also present there. Avestan writing system was based on alphabet and it was written in right to left direction in horizontal lines.

The Avestan language, as reflected in the Avesta, is divided into two different forms:

**Old Avestan or Gathic Avestan**

This form of the language was used to compose the Gathas and other more ancient portions of the Yasna. Gathic Avestan is an archaic language with a complicated grammar which consists of eight case forms and a highly inflected noun system. It is still quite close to the Vedic Sanskrit. Like Zoroaster's lifetime, widely differing dates for Avestan have been proposed; scholarly consensus is of around 1000 BC (roughly contemporary to the Vedic/Sanskrit period in India).

**Young Avestan**

This language was used for composing the greater part of the Avesta, including many of the Yashts, the Visperad, Vendidad and some sections of the Yasna. Young Avestan itself has two forms, one called Original Young Avestan, and the other, Artificial Young Avestan. The first form was probably a natural development of Old Avestan and was most likely also a spoken language up to the 8th century B.C. The Artificial Young Avestan however is a corrupt form of the language, a form that was never spoken and was used by the priesthood in later times in order to compose new texts. The Vendidad is the most significant collection of texts that were composed in Artificial Young Avestan.
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Sample text in Avestan

Middle Tajiki or Pahlavi Language

It descends from Old Tajiki and is the nominal ancestor of Modern Tajiki spoken in Tajikistan, Iran and Afghanistan. The period from the last Achmenian ruler and up to the advent of Islam in Central Asia was dominated by middle Tajik language. This is also known as Pahalavi language and is attributed to “Parthians”, who after the death of Alexander of Macedonia drove away Greeks from Central Asia and established a big empire. This language had two dialects Eastern Pahalavi and Southern Pahalavi. The Eastern Pahalavi is also called Saka Pahalavi or Pahalavani. The southern dialect is also known as Sassanid Pahalavi or Parsik. During the Sassanid period there was much progress in the Pahalavi or middle Tajiki language. (Shafaq 1991: 29) The Sassanian court extended generous patronage to its poet-musicians, and the ruler Bahram V is said to have promoted their rank to one of the highest in the courts. In contrast to Old Persian, whose spoken and written forms must have been different from one another, written Middle Tajiki reflected oral use, and was thus much simpler than its predecessor. The complex conjugation and declension\(^3\) of Old Tajiki yielded to a simple internal structure of Middle Tajiki; the dual number disappeared, leaving only singular and plural, as did gender. Instead, Middle Tajiki used prepositions to indicate the different roles of words, for example an -i suffix to denote a possessive "from/of" rather than the multiple (subject to gender and number) genitive case forms of a word. The Middle Tajiki script developed from the Aramaic script and became the official script of the

\(^3\) Declension: a class of nouns and adjectives having the same inflectional forms.
Sassanian Empire (224-651 A.D). Middle Tajik was most frequently written in the Pahlavi writing system. It changed little during the time it was in use, but around the 5th century A.D., it spawned a number of new scripts, including the Avestan scripts. Other forms of written Middle Tajiki include Pazend, a system that - unlike Pahlavi - did not have Aramaic ideograms and also has a different script.

Middle Tajiki was written from right to left in horizontal lines. Many works were produced in the Middle Tajik language, among the varieties of Sassanian poems one may count the sorud (ode), used for celebration and panegyrics; the chakama, for narration; and the tarana, for light poetry, generally in quatrains i.e. rubai. Unfortunately only few original Sassanian works have survived. The bulk of the material, however, consists of religious books which were revised and edited in the ninth and tenth centuries, when the mobads of the diminished and enfeebled Zoroastrian community made an effort to defend their religion and instruct the faithful in the face of Islamic propagation in the region. Although much of the Middle Tajiki literature was translated into Arabic, the bulk of its writings were lost during Islamic times. Near about hundred books could be saved and continue to enrich our knowledge till date. These books are related to various topics like history, literature, governance, war etc. Most important among these books are Karnamak-e-Ardshir Papkan, Zend, Pazend, Matigan-e-Chaturang, Khutai Namak, Ardwiraf Nameh, Wendidad, Kirtak-wa-Damnak.

There are important inscriptions in this language. Perhaps the most characteristic and certainly among the most impressive relics of Sasanian art are the great rock sculptures carved on the limestone cliffs that are found in many parts of the country. The best-known groups are at Naqsh-e Rostam and Naqsh-e Rajab, both near Persepolis, and at Nishapur, an ancient city a few miles north of Kazerun in Fars, Iran. The most important being the inscription of Ardeshir on Naqsh-e-Rustam.

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4 It is the translation of Indian ancient book Pancha-Tantra.
5 It is a place called Naqsh-e Rostam (the Picture of Rostam), from the Sasanian carvings below the tombs, which were thought to represent the mythical hero Rostam. That the occupants of these seven tombs were Achaemenian kings might be inferred from the sculptures, and one of those at Naqsh-e Rostam is expressly declared in its inscriptions to be the tomb of Darius I, son of Hystaspes, whose grave, according to the Greek historian Ctesias, was in a cliff face that could be reached only by means of an apparatus of ropes.
After the conquest of the area what is present day Iran and Central Asia by the Arabs, every aspect of Tajik life was changed forever including their language. Now new language called Modern Tajiki came into use.
Figure 3.4: Ka’bai Zartosht (cube shaped construction in the foreground) against the backdrop of Naqsh-e Rustam

Figure 3.5: Two tombs; right and left, of the Achaemenid kings.
Modern Tajiki language: Historical Perspective

The coming of Arabs with a new religion of Islam in Central Asia, a new language evolved in the region called Parsi or Farsi. The people of Central Asia accepted the new religion and its language; gradually they started using Arabic alphabets and sounds (Shafaq, 1991: 37). The problems with the Pahalavi script also paved the way for the development of Arabic script with the Central Asian people. It soon gained popularity and the script started being used widely. Arabic words also infiltrated in the Tajik/Persian literature. Persian words have their roots in different languages spoken in various parts of the country but the majority of the words have their roots in Old Tajik, Pahlavi and Avesta. They are represented in classical writings and poems. The corruption by Arabic words has done damage to the Tajik/Persian language because it has not only replaced original Tajik/Persian words but also driven them out of the language, to the extent that reintroduction of these original Tajik/Persian words sound alien to many readers. The damage has been so extensive that Arabic words have even found their way into the latter editions of Khordeh Avesta the prayer book of the Zarathushties, which one expects to be in Avesta language.

It is noteworthy that every country that the Arabs conquered lost its, culture and language and adopted the Arabic language and way of life. For example Egypt whose people could build Pyramids, were good astronomers and possessed the art of mummification lost their culture and language to the Arabs and started living like them. It was only Central Asia that broke the trend and stood against the Arabs and preserved its culture and language and even adopted their own version of Islam. Later when the Mongols/Moguls invaded Central Asia the people of the region turned them into ambassadors of their language, culture and art. The Moguls made Farsi their court language in India.

Under the Umayyids, Arabs did not like to engage in discussion of the sciences. Indeed, they had neither the tools nor the know-how to undertake such tasks. Poetry continued to be their most cherished subject of interest. This, however, did not mean that Arabs like ‘Abd-al-Malik ibn Marwan’ (646-705 A.D.) for whom the language and culture of the non-Arabs were a source of hatred and detestation, remained passive. Upon coming to power, in an attempt to consolidate the empire internally, Abd-al-Malik replaced the Greek

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6 Since the Arabs could not pronounce the sound of “P” so they called it Farsi.
and Pahalavi writings on coins with Arabic. In the case of Iran, following his dictate, all tax
ledgers were translated from Pahalavi into Arabic (685-705 A.D.), displacing hosts of
Central Asian workers in the many administrative bureaus of occupied territory of Central
Asia and Iran. Unfortunately for the Umayyids, those possessions were given to Arabs who
were not adequately trained for the jobs. As a result of this Caliphs increasingly lost contact
with the Central Asians, especially those in the eastern provinces. Gradually it led to increase
in distance between the ruler and the ruled which further led to increase in the regional
aspirations. Sensing this development and taking benefit out of it, Tahirids, they were the
people of Central Asia who established their rule and tried to revive the Tajiki language.

Tahirids (821-873)

The Tahirid dynasty is considered to be the first independent dynasty from the
Abbasid caliphate established in Khurasan, they were nominally subject to the Abbasid
caliphate in Baghdad. The dynasty was founded by Tahir ibn Husain, a leading general in the
service of the Abbasid caliph al-Ma'mun. Tahir's military victories were rewarded with the
gift of lands in the east of Persia, which were subsequently extended by his successors as far
as the borders of India.

Although sympathetic to the Caliph, the Tahirids were resolved to overthrow the rule
of the Arabs. As an indication of their devotion to gaining independence, the Tahirids
reintroduced the Tajiki language into Transoxiana and Khurasan and promoted Tajik/Persian
literature and culture. Adopting an expanded version of the Arabic script, scholars, students
and officials alike were encouraged to use the Tajiki language in their translations,
discussions, transactions and in the administration of the realm. Advocating public access to
knowledge, the Tahirids promoted the lower classes, especially the peasantry. This was the
first time, since the Arab invasion and the destruction that had accompanied it, that a native
dynasty was openly promoting the language, literature and culture of Central Asia. In this
effort, the Tahirids benefited greatly from the support of another ancient Iranian/Central
Asian House, that of Saman. Installed as the governor of the village of Saman in the Balkh
province by the Caliph Al Ma’mun, Saman Khudat (Shafaq 1991: 43), a former Zoroastrian,
was an increasingly growing force in the Balkh region. His great grandson, Ismai’l,
established the mighty Samanid dynasty.
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Samanids (875-999)

Building on the accomplishments of their predecessors, the Samanids (875-999) unified the nation by undermining the power of the local rulers. The centralisation was not complete, of course, as Khwarezm, Chaqanian, Khutalan and Isfijab did not fall in line as expected. Nevertheless, a major step in this direction was taken when such ancient urban centres as Bukhara, Samarkand, Merv, Nishapur, Hirat, Balkh, Khujand, Panjekent and Holbuq were revived. Revival of these centres, even within a limited centralized government, elevated the socio-political, economic and cultural dynamics of the new and progressive state. Additionally, in order to boost revenues and further the reach of the State across the feudal boundaries, a major programe of urbanization was launched. New mints were installed to produce Samanid dinars and dirhams and new civic administrations were empowered to revitalize traditional local customs.

In this respect, the Samanids were well versed. They were fully familiar with the region, its ethnic composition, the people’s zeal for rejuvenation of ancient values, as well as with the economic and administrative disarray that Arab rule had introduced and maintained as a measure of control over the various levels of society. Like the religion, the Samanids allowed the continuation of the coinage of Sassanids. In fact they minted coins with ancient Central Asian (Zoroastrian features). Additionally, they reintroduced such ancient works as the Khudainama and reformed their society on the model of their Sassanian predecessors. Subsequent dynasties, like the Seljuqs, followed their example in creating their centralized rule, institution of rule of justice, promotion of the arts and sciences, and facilitating commercial transactions.

While the administration was in charge of the well being of the infrastructure, language, literature and the sciences served as moving force in the state. Central Asia’s most outstanding contribution in the post-Arab invasion era was the establishment of their linguistic heritage, Tajik/Persian language. Much has been said about the subject and many names are associated with the revival. Among these, the names of Tahirids, Saffarids, Ghaznavid and Samanid rulers, as well as of Abu Hafs Soghdi, Rudaki and Firdausi are regularly and repeatedly cited. To this we should add the contributions of the ordinary people
of Transoxiana and Khurasan who actually retain the language rather than specific poets or rulers. It was the ordinary individual who took delight in his language and who continued its use even after others, including many major scholars, had abandoned it.

What then was the contribution of the state? The state Tahirids and Saffarids in the early stages and Samanids thereafter repaired the damage that Arab invaders had inflicted on the finer aspects of language i.e., language as a means of promotion of literature, art and the sciences. It funded revitalization projects so that generations to come may know their past in a better way. It funded poetry contests whereby talented youth could refine their language and express their feelings towards life, love and nature. It funded collaborative projects whereby literature could be enhanced by music.

The process, however, did not stop here. The kings being mortal, passed away. Their legacy, including their assumed contribution, reverted to the state and from there, back to the people. In this way, a generation later, the people found themselves in possession of a civilization. Major contributor to the early development of the state was the ruler's recognition of the role of Tajik language, its use as a unique means for compilation of record of historical events, and for facilitating communication across governmental, religious, military lines. The Tajik/ Persian language and culture also provided the best means for the promotion of an anti-Arab, pro Central Asian ethnic identity. By underscoring the mistakes of the Arabs, by embarrassing them in public the Samanids gained the upper hand. The indigenous people were thus being empowered to become acquainted with their true identity, as seen and described by their own people rather than by Arab or Arabicised scholars. The Samanids recognized the role of the sciences and arts in their quest for unity and advancement. Samanid rulers not only respected scholars and poets, but invited them to their courts, held group discussions and participated in the session as major. Similarly, Prime Ministers like Abu Ali Bal'ami, a well known historian, Abu Abdullah Jaihani, a competent geographer were patrons of the arts and sciences. In fact, the encounter between the young poet, Farrukhi and Amir As'ad, the vassal of the Samanids at Chaghanian, forms one of the memorable chapters of the history of Tajik/Persian literature.
During the first century of Islamic rule in Transoxiana and Khurasan, in the Umayyid period, there was very little activity in the promotion of the sciences. There was, however, considerable activity in preparing translations from Syriac, Greek, Pahlavi into Arabic and adopting ideas from India. Nevertheless, even though there was no real advancement in the sciences as such, the road was paved for future generations to involve themselves in the higher levels of learning. Thus the early Abbasids, building on the knowledge gained from the study of Indian and Sassanian scientific books, especially in astronomy, contributed greatly to the creation of a sound foundation for scientific enquiry. Samanid scholars like Al Razi, Ibn Sina and Alberuni following the Ptolemaic model, as opposed to the Indian and Persian models, enhanced this knowledge and passed it on to subsequent generations to which figures like Hakim Umar Khayyam Nishapuri belong.

In the oases of Transoxiana and what is now Tajikistan, Iranian languages predominated and today a form of Persian perfectly intelligible to Iranians and Afghans is spoken in Tajikistan and to a considerable extent in the cities of Bukhara and Samarkand. After the Muslim conquest, classical Arabic became the religious and literary language, which was taught in all the schools and was universally used by men of letters. Persian was also taught in the religious schools and was written and spoken by the urban intelligentsia. A third language of cultural intercourse was Chaghtai. This was literary language, named after one of Chengiz Khans’ sons, which came into vogue at the beginning of the 14th century and had its apogee in the 15th century. It was a Turkic language but was written in Arabic character making use of a considerable amount of Arabic and Tajik/Persian vocabulary. Upto the middle of the 19th century, when the cultural impact of the Russians first began to be seriously felt, three traditional languages symbolized a kind of common Arabo-Irano-Turkic culture. As the more advanced material civilization of the Russians made itself felt, the old Muslim Ummah began to disappear and languages based on popular dialects began to appear. On the eve of the Bolshevik Revolution, however only a few languages had achieved any kind of literary form in Central Asia and Tajik was one among them.

7 Muslim brotherhood
Chapter III

Languages in Tajikistan

Recent Past

The more recent history of the Tajiks is hardly different. The division of the Tajik community into two separate zones and the placement of each zone in a different country, Imperial Russia and Afghanistan, respectively made both groups vulnerable to cultural degeneration. The adverse impact of the division of the Tajiks to the north of the Panj River was felt even more during the Soviet period. In the process of Sovietisation, which saw the emergence of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan; the Tajiks lost two of their major cultural centers, Samarkand and Bukhara to Uzbekistan and thus losing control over their social, political and ideological centres. The situation of the Tajiks to the south of Panj was even worse. They have been in constant conflict with the Pashtun tribes of Afghanistan. Their political uncertainty prompted them to ally with their fellow Tajiks. They look to the Islamic bonds between the two groups to eventually reunite them.

Some modern technical terms, understandably, have been incorporated from English, French and German and are recognizable, but Arabic has corrupted a major part of the language by replacing original Farsi words. What Firdausi worked so hard to preserve is finally being lost. The European words have usually come into use because there was no existing Persian word to describe the situation or product. Instead of coining a word the foreign word was imported with the product. For example with the imported car came the French form of its name 'Automobile'. It took some time and effort to coin a Tajik/Persian word Khodrow and replace the foreign word. Another example is the word 'Television', which has a less successful replacement Sadah va Seema, so also is the word 'Radio'. There are some non-technical words like Merci ‘Thanks’ that has settled into the Tajik/Persian language and many people do not consider it as foreign, and the Tajik/Parsi word Tashakor is alternatively used in speaking but in writing it more often replaces Merci. Another example is the word Salaam which has been borrowed from the Arabs and is used by Tajiks as a salute when two friends meet each other, instead of the Parsi salute Rouz-e-gar Neek and Dorood. Russian has also influenced the modern spoken Tajiki, especially in cities. For example, a person travelling in the bus would say the driver to stop after the next turn in Tajiki as;

"اي راننده بعد از گردش ایست"
Instead in Russian – Tajik mix language he would say as;

"ای شغیور بعد پوروت استناف کاکن"

Another example can be taken of the potato, Tajiks use the word ‘kartoshka’, but the Tajiki word for the same is "سبیب زمینی”, ‘seb e zamini’. In the first example we see that in day to day life, things which Russians brought into Tajikistan, modern transport system, their terminologies have been adopted by the native Tajiki speakers too. In the second example, despite potato being produced for a long time in Tajikistan, people in cities have adopted a foreign word for the same.

Language of a region has always been affected by the developments of that area and its surroundings. This is true in the case of Tajiki too, it very much evident that it also has been affected by the historical, political and cultural influences. The latest have been the Russians who affected them.

Language Map of Tajikistan

Figure 3.6: Language map of Tajikistan
SCROLLS ASSOCIATED WITH THE TAJIK LANGUAGE

Tajiki/Persian is the language which has been associated with different scripts in the course of its origin and development. The first script to be used to write Tajiki/Persian language was cuneiform.

Cuneiform (Wedge Shaped)

The cuneiform script is one of the earliest known forms of written expression. It was created by the Sumerians during about 3000 BC (with predecessors reaching into the late 4th millennium). From there it reached Central Asia and Tajikistan. In the beginning this script began as a system of pictographs over time, the pictorial representations became simplified and more abstract. Cuneiforms were written on clay tablets, on which symbols were drawn with a blunt reed called a stylus. The impressions left by the stylus were wedge shaped, thus giving rise to the name cuneiform.

Figure 3.7: Sample Cuneiform Inscription, a Behistun

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8 The Behistun Inscription, carved into a cliffside, gives the same text in three languages, telling the story of King Darius’ conquests. It is illustrated by life-sized carved images of King Darius with other figures in attendance.
This inscription was deciphered by Sir Henry Rawlinson in 1835, he was an officer of the British East India Company army assigned to the forces of the Shah of Iran. It mentions about the Achamenian kings of Persia.

After the Sassanid rose to power and with the expansion of the Empire and the inclusion within their realm of various cultures that used writing to communicate, the need for communication by writing arose. The scribes of Elam and Babylon were recruited and for the first time the language of the Persians as written in the Cuneiform script. So when the Central Asians entered the business of writing they used their wisdom and started improving on existing methods and forms of writing. Initially they used the clay tablets, as was the practice among the scribes, like the ones found at Sush (Susa), which contains the Old Tajik text of the foundation charter of the palace of Dariush (Darius). Although the scribes were using Cuneiform script for centuries, it never occurred to them before, and it was under the Central Asians that it was developed into an alphabet denoting sound. Thus the second generation of Old Tajik was written in forty-three signs or alphabet and writing became easy and less tedious.

Avestan Script

The Tajik and Central Asian culture was based on the teachings of Zarathushtra, who preached the use of wisdom. They made good use of their mind -Vohumana- and memorized information acquired through the ear and this was a handy method (Habib 2002: 893-896). They only had to refer to their memory and not to the voluminous scrolls. 'We revere the wisdom acquired through the ear'. For that very reason they had no need for a script. (Even to this day the Zoroastrian Mobeds in India memorize the whole Avesta, which runs into volumes as part of their training to become Mobeds⁹ and as for a living example of a language without script, the Zarathushties of Central Asia have been speaking the Parseek language for centuries without writing it). But as society developed increasingly need was felt to pass on the knowledge to the coming generations in its original form script came into use.

⁹ Zoroastrian priests
Avestan Alphabets

![Vowels and Consonants]

Aramaic

Aramaic gradually became the lingua franca throughout the Central Asia, Tajikistan and also India, with the script displacing cuneiform as the official writing system of the existing empires (we find Ashokan inscription in this script in northwestern part of his empire). Its widespread usage led to the gradual adoption of the Aramaic alphabet for writing. A few records in the Aramanic script have been found to prove its use from Egypt to India. One of the versions, on the tomb of Darius is drawn up in the Old Tajiki language and written in the Armanic script.

The use of papyrus, skin and ink made writing, storing and transportation of written material more practical, as compared to the wet clay on which the cuneiform script was to be written and then dried. The extent of the Empire, the need for messages and records of trade and commerce to be taken from one place to another, all this weighed in favour of the Armanic script on papyrus or skin. At the same time this itself was the very cause of the loss of information. Today the lack of information on the great Empire was caused by the destructibility of papyrus and skin.
All this information and all the knowledge and science *Asha Vahista* of the Zarathushties, which was recorded, was destroyed by Alexander in his barbaric ways, but that which was saved found its way into Greece where some of it was misused, personified and attributed to the pagan gods. But most of it was translated and called Greek Medicine, Greek science, Greek philosophy, Greek mathematics, and overall it caused a growth of knowledge and progress among the Greeks (Rafa 1993: 9).

The letters of Middle Tajiki in Aramaic Script

\[
\begin{array}{cccccccccccccccc}
\text{k, g} & \text{y, e, u, j} & \text{t} & \text{h, x} & \text{'t, r} & \text{'r} & \text{h} & \text{d, y} & \text{g, y} & \text{b, w} & \text{a, â} \\
\text{t} & \text{d} & \text{s} & \text{w, '} & \text{q} & \text{c, z} & \text{p, b, f} & \text{w, r} & \text{s, h} & \text{n} & \text{m} & \text{l, r} \\
\end{array}
\]

Parseek

During the Sassanian era, a very advanced form of alphabet was used, what is today known as the *Din Dabereh* or Parsek. It has 48 alphabets consisting of 14 vowels and 34 consonants. This alphabet is capable of recording all types of sound and therefore every language. After the Arab conquest, they forced their inferior script on the people of Iran, in fact it were the Iranians who for the first time organized and wrote the grammar for the Arabic language and made it useable. Although the Arabic script was not capable of recording the sounds of Parsi language even after addition of additional alphabets not found in Arabic such as PH - CHA - JAH - GH; it became the official script for writing Persian/Tajik.
Chapter III

Languages in Tajikistan

The letters of Middle Tajik in Parthian Script

\[\begin{array}{cccccccccc}
  \text{l} & \text{u} & \text{n} & \text{t} & \text{r} & \text{a} & \text{h} & \text{b} & \text{d} & \text{g} \\
  \text{k} & \text{y} & \text{e} & \text{u} & \text{t} & \text{h} & \text{x} & \text{w} & \text{d} & \text{b} & \text{r} & \text{v} & \text{a} & \text{a} \\
  \text{t} & \text{d} & \text{i} & \text{s} & \text{e} & \text{a} & \text{a} & \text{q} & \text{r} & \text{s} & \text{h} & \text{n} & \text{m} & \text{l} \\
\end{array}\]

Psalter

The Psalter script is a variant of the Persian script which was used mainly for writing on paper. It is known from fragments of a manuscript of the Psalms of David found in north-western China.

\[\begin{array}{cccccccccc}
  \text{l} & \text{d} & \text{b} & \text{n} & \text{r} & \text{s} & \text{d} & \text{g} & \text{y} & \text{p} & \text{h} & \text{y} & \text{b} & \text{w} & \text{a} & \text{a} \\
  \text{t} & \text{d} & \text{i} & \text{s} & \text{e} & \text{a} & \text{a} & \text{q} & \text{r} & \text{s} & \text{h} & \text{n} & \text{m} \\
\end{array}\]

Arabic Script

Modern Persian had developed by the 9th century. It is a continuation of an area-wide standard language that had considerable Parthian and Middle Tajik elements, with additional influences from other Iranian and central Asian languages. The adoption of Arabic script for the Tajik/Persian language with the Parseek script led to the creation of the Modern Tajik language, which also includes Farsi, Pashtu, Dari, Kurdish, and Baluchi. Written in Perso-Arabic script (an expanded version of Arabic script), it has been the official and cultural language of Central Asia since it first appeared. Its grammar is simpler than that of Middle Persian, and it has absorbed a vast Arabic vocabulary.
Chapter III Languages in Tajikistan

Perso-Arabic script for Tajik

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ا} & \quad \text{ب} & \quad \text{پ} & \quad \text{ت} & \quad \text{ث} & \quad \text{ج} & \quad \text{ح} & \quad \text{خ} & \quad \text{د} & \quad \text{ذ} \\
\text{ز} & \quad \text{س} & \quad \text{ش} & \quad \text{ص} & \quad \text{ض} & \quad \text{ط} & \quad \text{ظ} & \quad \text{ع} & \quad \text{غ} \\
\text{ف} & \quad \text{ق} & \quad \text{ک} & \quad \text{ل} & \quad \text{م} & \quad \text{م} & \quad \text{ن} & \quad \text{و} & \quad \text{ی} \\
\text{ی} & \quad \text{ه} & \quad \text{ر} & \quad \text{و} & \quad \text{ی} & \quad \text{ی} & \quad \text{ی} & \quad \text{ی} & \quad \text{ی} & \quad \text{ی}
\end{align*}
\]

Latin Script for Tajik

The Latin script for Tajiki language was introduced after the Russian Revolution in 1920s in order to facilitate an increase in literacy and distance the language from Islamic influence. A decree on the introduction of Roman script of the Tajiki language was published in 1928 and was enforced in 1930s\(^\text{10}\). It was supposed to facilitate the process of teaching illiterate adults and children to read and write. The review *Rahbar-e-Danesh*, played the central role in the Romanisation project. Introduction of this script led to the increase in literacy rate, social upliftment and experiences were exchanged and published using the new alphabets (Jahangiri 1998).

Latin Alphabets for Tajik

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Aa} & \quad \text{Bb} & \quad \text{Cc} & \quad \text{Cc} & \quad \text{Dd} & \quad \text{Ee} & \quad \text{Ff} & \quad \text{Gg} & \quad \text{Qq} & \quad \text{Hh} & \quad \text{Ii} \\
[\text{a}] & \quad [\text{b}] & \quad [\text{c}] & \quad [\text{c}] & \quad [\text{d}] & \quad [\text{e}] & \quad [\text{f}] & \quad [\text{g}] & \quad [\text{q}] & \quad [\text{h}] & \quad [\text{i}] \\
\text{Ii} & \quad \text{Jj} & \quad \text{Kk} & \quad \text{Ll} & \quad \text{Mm} & \quad \text{Nn} & \quad \text{Oo} & \quad \text{Pp} & \quad \text{Qq} & \quad \text{Rr} \\
[\text{i}] & \quad [\text{j}] & \quad [\text{k}] & \quad [\text{l}] & \quad [\text{m}] & \quad [\text{n}] & \quad [\text{o}] & \quad [\text{p}] & \quad [\text{q}] & \quad [\text{r}] \\
\text{Ss} & \quad \text{Ss} & \quad \text{Tt} & \quad \text{Uu} & \quad \text{Uu} & \quad \text{Vv} & \quad \text{Xx} & \quad \text{Zz} & \quad \text{Zz} & \quad [?]
\end{align*}
\]

\(^{10}\) It was this time between 1920 and 1930 that the Roman alphabet was introduced in Turkey. The rapid development of publications there reinforced the nationalistic feeling, which was distinct from the Islamic religious tradition. In Iran the move to Romanise the language never saw the day, even though Reza Shah tried for it.
Chapter III Languages in Tajikistan

Cyrillic Script

In the 1940s, the Tajik script was changed once again, this time to the Cyrillic script\(^{11}\) (Aini:7). The change was stated to be necessary because the Tajiks in their ascent to the heights of communism would need the help of the Soviets, who could only communicate with them in Russian. But there may be some other reasons too, as some scholars suggest since Turkey had adopted Roman script for Turkish language, it caused fears in Soviet leaders, that the new Pan-Turkic literature could develop in the Latin alphabet and this new script could attract the people of Central Asia towards Turkey and away from Soviet Union (Bacon: 1980). The changeover to Cyrillic, therefore, would simply be the final step, before the Tajiki language would get into disuse. It was introduced as part of the ‘Russification’ of Central Asia. Another reason was that Russia had progressed much in the field of science and technology. Books were written in Russian language which was in Cyrillic script, so the need was felt that if the Tajik script is changed to Cyrillic, it will help bringing the Tajik people to the development of modern day achievements in different fields.

Cyrillic alphabets for Tajiki

\[
\begin{align*}
A & a & B & b & V & v & G & g & D & d & E & e & Е & e & Ж & z & З & з & И & i & Й & й & К & k \\
л & л & м & m & н & n & о & o & р & p & c & s & т & t & у & u & ф & f & х & х & ч & ч \\
ш & ш & ъ & ь & э & e & ю & y & я & y & Ы & y & Х & x & Ч & ч & \\
\end{align*}
\]

\(^{11}\) Aini said the new alphabets should be simple that every Tajik child could be able to master it in one month.
After deleting some Cyrillic sounds current alphabets for Tajiki

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cyrillic</th>
<th>Cyr_lower</th>
<th>Cyr_xlit</th>
<th>Arabic</th>
<th>Ar_xlit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>ئُ(h)</td>
<td>a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Б</td>
<td>б</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>В</td>
<td>в</td>
<td>v</td>
<td>v(ع/ع)</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Г</td>
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<td>g</td>
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<td>گ</td>
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<td>ғ/ғ</td>
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<tr>
<td>Д</td>
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<td>ڌ</td>
<td>ڌ</td>
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<tr>
<td>Е</td>
<td>е</td>
<td>е</td>
<td>ی(ع/ع)</td>
<td>ی(y/ی)</td>
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<td>ژ</td>
<td>ژ</td>
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<tr>
<td>Й</td>
<td>й</td>
<td>ی(y/ی)</td>
<td>ی(y/ی)</td>
<td>ی(y/ی)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ъ</td>
<td>Ъ</td>
<td>Ъ</td>
<td>ئ(ع)</td>
<td>ئ(ع)</td>
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<td>ڪ</td>
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<td>ْو</td>
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<tr>
<td>й</td>
<td>й</td>
<td>ü</td>
<td>ْو(в/и)</td>
<td>ْو(в/и)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ф</td>
<td>ф</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>ْف</td>
<td>ْف</td>
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<td>Х</td>
<td>х</td>
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<td>ِخ</td>
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<td>Х</td>
<td>х</td>
<td>h</td>
<td>ِه</td>
<td>ِه</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ч</td>
<td>ч</td>
<td>ē</td>
<td>ِْج</td>
<td>ِْج</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ч</td>
<td>ч</td>
<td>ĝ</td>
<td>ِْج</td>
<td>ِْج</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ш</td>
<td>Ш</td>
<td>š</td>
<td>ِش</td>
<td>ِش</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ь</td>
<td>Ь</td>
<td>ŭ</td>
<td>ِغ</td>
<td>ِغ</td>
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<td>Э</td>
<td>э</td>
<td>è</td>
<td>(ʔ)</td>
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<td>Я</td>
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<td>ja</td>
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<td>Ю</td>
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<td>(ʔ)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ė</td>
<td>Ė</td>
<td>jo</td>
<td>(ъ)</td>
<td>(ъ)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Щ</td>
<td>Щ</td>
<td></td>
<td>(These Cyrillic letters aren't used in Tajik)</td>
<td>(These Cyrillic letters aren't used in Tajik)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ы</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ь</td>
<td>Ь</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: http://www.tavultesoft.com
Chapter III  
Languages in Tajikistan

LEGACY OF RUSSIAN LANGUAGE

Introduction of Cyrillic script led to Russification of the Tajik language, it is an adoption of the Russian language or some other Russian attribute (whether voluntarily or not) by non-Russian communities. The major areas of Russification are politics and culture. In politics, an element of Russification is assigning Russian nationals to leading administrative positions in national institutions. In culture, Russification primarily amounts to domination of the Russian language in official, business and strong influence of Russian language on the national ones. Most evident was the changes in the names of the Tajik people. Russian suffixes like -ov and a family name was given to every Tajik. In recent times there has been trend to remove the suffixes and the President himself has changed his name from Rahmanov to Rahman.

Current Status Regarding Script

In 1989, with the growth of Tajik nationalism, a law was enacted declaring Tajik the state language. In addition, the law officially equated Tajik with Persian, placing the word "Farsi" (the local name for Persian) after Tajiki. The law also called for a gradual reintroduction of the Arabic alphabet. The Persian/Arabic script was introduced into education and public life, although the banning of the Islamic Renaissance Party in 1993 slowed down the adoption. In 1999, the word "Farsi" was removed from the state language law. As of now, the de-facto standard in use is the modified form of Cyrillic.

Many optimists in the 1990s believed that the Arabic alphabet would make a comeback to Tajikistan in some ten or fifteen years. Debates were in progress focusing on the great time and resources it would take. Champions of the Arabic alphabet laid special emphasis on the fact that once Tajik scientific, historical and religious literature was wholly written in Arabic the transition to the Arabic alphabet would be vital, otherwise part of the culture would be irretrievably lost. Also, there were quite a lot of skeptics and pessimists maintaining that the Arabic alphabet was too difficult to learn. Even now there appear from time to time articles by prominent figures flatly opposing the adoption of the Arabic alphabet. For example, Bozor Sobir, a notable Tajik poet who has stayed in the USA for the
past eight years, has recently written that it would be a great mistake of the Tajiks to adopt the Arabic alphabet as it is very difficult and not everyone can master it. In the early 1990s, though, such protests were disregarded, and the Arabic alphabet was being gradually introduced into schools along with Persian that was taught as a special discipline. Books by Tajik and Iranian authors using the Tajik Arabic alphabet came to be printed. All previous billboards, announcements and street name plates were removed and replaced with those written in the Arabic alphabet. Newspapers and television began to give lessons in the Persian language and Arabic writing. But, still, there was one important aspect the reformers neglected.

In 1992 and in the years that followed, when opposition led by the Islamic Party of Revival\(^1\) was forced to emigrate from Tajikistan, the introduction of the Arabic alphabet slowed down. People didn’t risk keeping books based on the Arabic alphabet at home because of rumours that such literature would be confiscated and the owners arrested. So, books based on the Arabic alphabet were being destroyed again – just as they were after the October Revolution. The Arabic alphabet, too, began to disappear from billboards, announcements, street signs and magazines. But after the ending of civil and relative peace in Tajikistan the debate about changing of the script is once again picking up. There are two groups of opinion one favouring the change and another favouring no-change.

Table-3.1: Shows the points mentioned by the groups, those who favour change and those who don’t.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pro Changers</th>
<th>No Changers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language is an important tool for the formation of national identity</td>
<td>Every Tajik knows the language, script hardly matters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phonetically what Tajiks speak is closer to Persian/Arabic sounds</td>
<td>Cyrillic is more scientific because it has word for each sound and is easy to learn</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^1\) Islamic Revival Party was subsequently banned
Chapter III

Languages in Tajikistan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most of the religious literatures are produced are in this script</th>
<th>By virtue of knowing the Tajiki script one can easily learn the Russian language, which is the lingua franca of the region.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There is not much material available in Tajiki language on the internet. More materials are available in Khatte Niyakan script.</td>
<td>Nowadays hundred percent of Tajiks know the Cyrillic script and not many know the Khatte Niyakan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tajikistan is surrounded by the Turkic speaking people, the exclusive language will give a sense of edge over these states because of the religious materials available only Tajiki with Persian/Arabic script</td>
<td>Huge amount of money would be required for changing because of the requirement of books, teachers, soft wares and many more things. The economy of Tajikistan cannot sustain this at this juncture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All the Central Asian Republics have changed their language to Turkic, we should also change ours</td>
<td>There are chances of going back into the medieval period and threat of increase in Islamism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People have long been familiar with that script, its only during Soviet period, the script was changed, it has not yet stabilized, we can easily go back to our original script</td>
<td>There is whole lot of world literature available in Russian language, due to its small economy Tajikistan cannot translate all those materials.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tajiki literature, which are world famous, are in Khatte Niyakan</td>
<td>Almost all the famous works have been translated into Russian, and/or transcribed into Cyrillic script.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Presently a large of publishing works in Dushanbe and other cities in Tajikistan is done in Tajiki Cyrillic script, and most of the books in Persian alphabets are published outside Tajikistan, mainly in Iran.
TAJIKI DIALECTS AND OTHER LANGUAGES IN INDEPENDENT TAJKISTAN

Tajiki is usually divided into Northern Tajiki and Southern Tajiki, which are not very different except that the former has borrowed generously from Turkic languages, especially Uzbeki, whereas Iranian languages and specially Dari have influenced the latter.

Tajiki and Other Languages Tree

![Language Tree Diagram]

- Indo-European
  - Indo-Iranian
    - Iranian
      - Western Iranian
      - Eastern Iranian
        - Yaghnobi
        - Tajiki
          - northwestern
          - central
          - southern
          - southeastern
            - Ishkashimi
            - Shughno-Rushan
            - Wakhi
            - Yazgulemi
              - Rushan
                - Khufi
                - Bartang
              - Shughni
                - Orokhor
                - Sarykol
                - Bajui
                - Shahder

- Gorno-Badakhshen

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Tajik Dialects

There are some dialects of Tajiki language which are distinct from one another but it should also be mentioned that in most cases these distinctions are not well defined or deep set. There are, however, distinctions that the inhabitants of the region insist upon as ethnic and linguistic markers distinguishing their respective communities such as; Lowland Tajiks use an extensive number of Arabic, Turko, Mongol and Russian words, whereas mountain Tajiks have relatively smaller numbers of borrowings and also its literary form is relatively free from the spoken form. Farther east in the Badakhshan region, Tajik is spoken as second language, often as third language also, hence is saturated with local forms of Badakhshani sometimes to the point of incomprehensibility.

The Tajik speakers on the north of the Panj river were Sovietised to some extent under the Soviets. They started using Russian words in their conversations. However, after the breakup of the Soviet Union most of the speakers returned to their original homes, re-establishing the ancient ties. Owing to enhanced communication Tajik being spoken in around Dushanbe is gradually assimilating other dialects of the languages.

Other Languages

In Tajikistan there are many languages spoken other than the Tajik, these include, Yaghnobi and the languages of the Pamir and Badakhshan highlands. Linguistically 'the Pamir languages' is a tentative term for it is not clear whether they are a genetically separate group descended from the hypothetical Proto-Pamir language, or if they have independently developed from the ancient Common Iranian/Tajik language. In may be noted here that none of the Pamir languages, including Shughni, has a written form and education has been received in Tajik. In comparison with the other Tajik/Persian languages the Pamir Group has retained a lot of ancient characteristics of Old and Middle Tajik, brought about by territorial seclusion. The relative homogeneity of the Pamir languages is evident in contrast to other current Tajik/Persian languages. The ethnic groups that speak the languages of Gorno-Badakhshan straddle the Panj River, the border separating Tajikistan from Afghanistan, thus occupying both sides. All the inhabitants of the region are Muslim. Only the speakers of Yazgulemi and those who previously spoke Vangi are Sunni, the rest being Ismaili Shiites.
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Shughnani

It is spoken by about 20,000 of Ismaili Shiites living in the middle valleys of the Panj and its tributaries the Gunth and Shab Darya. It is the largest linguistic group among the six groups that constitute the Gorno-Badakhshan peoples. People of this region tried but failed in their attempt to establish Shugnani as the lingua franca and as a literary language for the region in 1920s. Shughnani language has dialects of which some are mentioned here:

• the Bajuvi dialect
• the Khufi dialect
• the Roshani dialect
• the Bartangi language
• the Oroshori language
• the Sarikoli language

Ishkashemi

To the west of the Wakhan is a small community of Ishkashems, barely 2,500, living on both banks of Panj. The speakers are bilingual in Tajik and Ishkashemi, which is again not a written language.

Wakhi

It is spoken in the highest valleys in the south central region of Badakhshan, valleys of the Pamir and the Wakhan corridor along the Wakh river, notable for two major events; first it served as a major link in the Great Silk Road system connecting China to Europe, and secondly it was the point where, at the end of the Great game the Russian and British influences met and forced to make a compromise regarding the fate of Central Asia and Afghanistan. The estimated 29,000 Wakhi speakers are distributed in Afghanistan, Pakistan and China also. Wakhi is not a written language.
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Rushani

It is spoken in the valley of the Bartang river in the north of Badakhshan range. The Shughnans and Tajiks influence the 20,000 Rushani speakers.

There is a gradual perishing of these languages and their assimilation with the Tajik, for example, among the Pamir languages, the Vanji language has almost become completely extinct. The Vanjis lived in the valley of the River Vanj (Vanch) belonging to the Emirate of Bukhara. Forced imposition of the Islamic faith (Sunnite) served to assimilate them with the Tajik quicker than any other of the Pamir peoples. Records of the Vanji language are very few. In the 1920s I. Zarubin was able to make a list of 50 words in the Vanji language. The extensive propagation of the Tajiki language in the Pamirs is mainly a phenomenon linked to the Soviet era.

Yaghnobi

It is spoken by some 6000 speakers in the high valley of Yaghnov river in the upper ridges of the Zarafshan, and is different from the groups mentioned above. It is a remnant of Soghdian, the language of the ancient kingdom of the Samarkand. Even though absolutely annihilated by the Muslim invaders, Yaghnobi survived and indeed flourished in the middle ages. The Yaghnobis are Sunni Muslims and bilingual in Tajik and Yaghnobi, which is not a written language and are only used for daily communication.

TAJIKI LANGUAGE SINCE INDEPENDENCE

In the mid-1970s, Tajik intellectuals and religious leaders formed a clandestine group in Qurghanteppa, a hundred miles south of the capital of Dushanbe. The Tajiks on both sides of the Soviet/Afghan border contributed to the effort and a stiff resistance against the Soviet communists started. The revival of the Tajiki language was one of their most sacred goals. Being one of the first nations in Central Asia to pass the Law on the State (Farsi) Language, Tajikistan initiated the transition to the Arabic alphabet. Today, however, the promotion of Farsi and the imposition of the Arabic alphabet have slowed to give way to the Russian language.
REVIVAL OF TAJIK LANGUAGE

Tajikistan’s Language Law of 1989, spearheaded by the reformists declared Tajik as the official language of the republic and relegated Russian as the language of international transactions. The decision to propose a new language law grew out of the frustration of the Tajiks who, for seventy years, had been deprived of the use of their native language. Tajikistan has been and remains a predominantly rural Central Asian nation – a circumstance that has a direct bearing on the Tajik languages being preserved. Unlike Soviet-era Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, with Russian-speakers accounting for about half their populations and with more than 50% of the natives speaking Russian – a fact they took pride in - Tajikistan was a country with about 70% rural population. Naturally enough, they poke Russian worse than the neighboring nations but, luckily, retained their mother tongue. The other Central Asian nations did not have such facilitating conditions as Tajikistan for the preservation of their mother tongues.

The decision to accept and implement that law initially led to tension between the Russians and their Tajik hosts. Later on, gradually, this tension grew into a wider conflict between the communists and the democratic-minded, Muslim Tajiks. Then, on February 12, 1990, riots broke out in Dushanbe and caused the death of a number of Tajik citizens. Furthermore, the untenable situation that followed led to the departure of many Russian and other national and ethnic groups from the republic. The migration took two distinct forms. Some people moved simply to stay out of harm's way. In general, this group left the south (mostly Dushanbe) for the north (Khujand and Chikalovsk). The others left the republic permanently for Russia or the other European republics of the former Soviet Union. Later on it was decided that after 1995 all official business would be conducted in Tajik. Tajik and Russian are the languages used by local newspapers and media, and are medium of discussions in public meetings.

**Promotion of the Tajiki language by the Government**

State language issues are referred to in Tajikistan annually on **Language Day**, marked July 22. Tajikistan is the only CIS country celebrating Language Day as a state holiday. Prior to annual celebrations, language matters figure prominently in press.
publications and other mass media. The President of Tajikistan speaks mostly Tajik and demands that ministries prepare reports in the state language. In general, the Tajiki language is gradually returning to the household level and increasingly becomes a tongue of home use. In 1992, there remained only two Russian-language television programs – “News” and “Every Monday Evening”, a youth show. At the time, the Ministry of Television and Radio was headed by Mirbobo Mirrakhimov, an opposition member, politician and scholar. When accused of having cut the number of Russian-language programs, he would riposte that the programs’ air time limit was fixed at ten percent, thus being proportionate to the percentage of Russian-speakers. No doubt, contributing to such a state of affairs was the Law on the State (Farsi) language – Central Asia’s first law of its kind enforced in October 1989. There were a lot of factors urging society to get the Tajiki language revived.

**Tajiki language as a Unifying Factor**

Tajiki proper, spoken by over 10 million people, serves as the lingua franca of the peoples of the lowland, the mountain Tajiks and the Tajiks of the Badakhshan highlands and is mutually intelligible with Dari of Afghanistan and Farsi of Iran, making it a medium to interact and develop close contacts with the people in the country and its neighbours.

There are some impediments hindering the formalization of Tajik Persian language as a language for the country, two are main. First, according to the Constitution of the Republic of Tajikistan, the ‘Tajikistan’ denomination is derived from the main tribe or chunk of people that gradually settled in Tajikistan i.e. to say the Tajik speaking people. All other former Soviet republics in Central Asia have taken their official state languages from the same model. Due this reason, Tajiks dwelling north of Tajikistan, oppose the adoption of the Tajik language. The second problem is that countries who have dismembered the Greater Iran are opposing another Greater Iran or Iranshahr. An adoption of the Persian language in Tajikistan is construed as a serious step by the government to return to the Greater Iranshahr.

**Assistance from Iran in Promotion of Tajik**

Tajiks and Iranians have been connected historically, racially and culturally for thousands of years. Tajiks, like the majority of Iranians, are Aryan people and speak the Tajik language, which is also the (Persian with Arabic script) official language of Iran. It was
one of the first countries to extend diplomatic recognition of the newly independent Tajikistan in 1991 and the first nation to establish an embassy in Dushanbe. Iran provided diplomatic assistance and built new mosques within Tajikistan. Due to the resurgence of Iranian culture within Tajikistan, Iran helped encourage cultural exchange through conferences, media, and film festivals. Iranian television programs, magazines, and books became increasingly common in Tajikistan.

Recently President Ahmadinejad of Iran visited Tajikistan, the visit was to open an underground tunnel build together by Iranian and Tajik engineers, also on this visit came along Hamid Karzai. President Ahmadinejad commented that "Iran and Tajikistan are one spirit in two bodies". He also added that there are no limits to the expansion of relations between the two countries.

Earlier, Iran had also supplied to Tajikistan computers and softwares related to Tajiki language to propagate Persian/Arabic script for the Tajiki language. Iran has donated 400,000 Persian language text books to Tajikistan with a view to revive the Farsi language and writing in Central Asia (BBC July 24, 1996). Iran has also established six libraries in Tajikistan (BBC August 28, 1996). In September 1992 World Tajik Forum held a conference in Dushanbe to discuss the contributions of Iranian nations to the development of world civilizations. In addition to Tajik scholars the conference was attended by specialists from Iran, India, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and other countries. The forum also laid down a solid foundation for cultural co-operation and for the spiritual reunification of the Tajiks (BBC September 19, 1992).

However, despite the many things the nations have in common, there are also vast differences. Tajikistan's post communist government is secular while Iran's is Islamic. Furthermore, Iran is a predominantly Shia nation while Tajikistan is Sunni. The leading figures of the Islamic revival movement in Tajikistan have stated that Iran would not be a model for whatever Islamic government they advocate for Tajikistan.
Chapter III

Languages in Tajikistan

TAJIKI LANGUAGE IN UZBEKISTAN AND AFGHANISTAN

It is an irony of the Tajik people that almost equal number of Tajiks live outside Tajikistan than in the Tajikistan itself. Their centres of civilization, Samarkand and Bukhara, two most important cities, were given to Uzbekistan by the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic while demarcating the national boundaries, even today these cities have population of with majority of them being Tajik speaking, though in surrounding areas majority of them speak Uzbeki language. In the north and north-east of Afghanistan live over 3.5 million Tajiks. They also live in the frontier regions of Kyrgyzstan (between in Batken and Osh provinces), western China and south-west of Kazakhstan.

Tajiki in Uzbekistan

Tajiks in Uzbekistan are settled in the valleys of rivers Zerafshan, Shirbadarya, Fergana valley (all around: Chust, Kasansoy, Marghilan), Sorkh (to the south from Kokand), Jizzakh province, on the right inflows of the river Surkhandarya, Chorvok area, in the upper Kashkadarya, Burjmolla, Sukh enclave, Khiva and other areas. The majority of Tajiks are forced to be registered as Uzbeks (the Tajiks on the official Uzbeki data, make about 4% of the population of this republic), but the real number of Tajiks living in Uzbekistan believed to be nearly 42 percent (11-14 millions) of the population.

Tajiks are the majority population in cities of Samarkand and Bukhara. These cities served as major centres of trade and enlightenment on the crossroads of the Great Silk Route linking the civilizations of the East and the West. Some of the world's most audacious and beautiful examples of Islamic religious buildings are to be found in the land of Tajiks, especially in the cities of Bukhara and Samarkand. There is an ongoing process of assimilation of other nationalities, and they are trying hard to keep their culture and linguistic identity intact because, as some scholars said for better employment opportunity one has to learn the Uzbeki language too, and often they are given preference over the ethnic Tajiks who are living there.
Chapter III

Languages in Tajikistan

Tajik/Dari in Afghanistan

The Tajiks are the second largest group after the Pashtuns in Afghanistan. They are also the Pashtuns' closest rivals for power and prestige. However, with two brief exceptions, one in the 14th century and one for nine months in 1929, they never ruled that region where they live. The Tajiks are a sedentary people, numbering about 3.5 million, who live in many sections of Afghanistan. There are several important concentrations of Tajiks in Afghanistan. The plains-dwelling Tajiks live mainly in Herat Province on the Iranian border, in Parwan Province, and around Kabul. They are town dwelling traders, skilled artisans, and farmers, many of them prosperous enough to be regarded as middle class. Because they have settled in the towns, they have replaced tribal organization with village orientation and a strong sense of community loyalty. Another group of Tajiks lives in the northeastern mountains of Afghanistan, where they are poor, village-dwelling farmers.

The Tajik people of Afghanistan have maintained a somewhat purer form of the Tajiki language and call it Farsi-e-Dari in Afghanistan. They are often called Farsiwans, meaning "Persian-speaking".

Since its origin Tajiks have been proud of their language and fiercely protected it from foreign attacks. It is evident that during the period when Islam was being spread, wherever Arabs went, deliberately or otherwise language of that region was replaced by Arabic. The most ancient civilisations like, Egyptians, also changed their language and till date Arabic is used there. But in case of Central Asia including Tajikistan, they accepted the religion but did not accept the language. They successfully thwarted the attempt by many Arabs who wanted Arabic to prevail in the region. Tajiks and other Central Asians in returned enriched and help the expansion of Islam in their own language and today Tajiki/Persian is second most revered language across the Muslim world. Tajik writers during the medieval period produced great literature about religion and other different subject, which is a treasure for the world.