
TEXTS AND MANUSCRIPTS: DESCRIPTION AND RESEARCH

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THE DAWN OF PASHTUN LINGUISTICS: EARLY GRAMMATICAL AND LEXICOGRAPHICAL WORKS AND THEIR MANUSCRIPTS

One finds the first attempt at a study of the Pashto language in the introductory section of one of the oldest works in this language to have come down to us in manuscript form, the treatise *Khayr al-bayān* by Bāyazīd Anṣarī (1525—1579). Written in the mid-sixteenth century, the work is represented by only two manuscripts, one copied in 1061/1651 (it was discovered in the twentieth century and changed hands several times; today at the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin) [1] and another in 1079/1668 (today in the Salarjang Museum in Hyderabad, India) [2]. It was published in Peshawar (1967) and Kabul (1975) on the basis of the first manuscript. The introductory part of the treatise contains instructions for conveying the sounds of the Afghan language in writing and a full list of the letters of the alphabet. This leads one to believe that the treatise was the first work to be written in the alphabet employed there, which is confirmed by a remark by one of Bāyazīd's pupils and followers, the poet Dawlat Lawāñay: "The Afghan language was difficult, no one read or wrote in it, and he (Bāyazīd — V. K.) created 13 letters for it" [3]. G. Morgenstierne, a great authority in Iranian studies, believed that Bāyazīd created a "special writing system for Pashto". His view is shared by contemporary philologists at the Pashto Academy of Peshawar University [4].

Later, the writing system and suggestions for its improvement were treated by Bāyazīd's junior contemporary and ideological opponent Ākhūnd Darweza (1533—1638) and his son, 'Abd al-Karīm, in their joint work *Makhzan al-islām* [5]. The best-known Pashtun literary figure, statesman, and military leader Khushḥāl-khān Khaṭāk (1613—1689) also contributed to the subject. It was he who proposed special graphemes for specific sounds in Pashto [6]. But actual linguistic works with an investigation of grammar and lexicon began to appear only in the second half of the eighteenth century. The first of them were elementary and relatively primitive teaching materials and conversation books. The earliest of them was the Pashto textbook *Ma'rifat al-afghānī* ("Learning of the Afghan Language") by *mullā* Pīr Muḥammad Kākār in 1186/1773, a well-known poet who also gained fame as a preacher and theologian and was invited by Aḥmad-shāh Durrānī (1747—1773) to be the teacher and tutor of members of the Shah's family. He presented his work to the Shah's brother Sulaymān during this prince's brief reign.

Ma'rifat al-afghānī was published in 1341/1923 in Lahore to fill an order by Kandahar book-traders and was reissued in 1356/1977 in Kabul, edited and with a forward by Ḥabībballāh Rafī'. The edition follows the text of a manuscript dated to 1230/1815 held today in the collection of the Academy of Sciences of Afghanistan [7]. The work consists of 10 chapters, but the main body of the text begins with the fifth chapter following versified glorification of Allah, the Prophet Muḥammad, his *aṣḥābs*, and the reigning ruler. The fifth chapter contains phrases and words often used by rulers of various levels, grandees, dignitaries, and *dīwān* officials (on drawing up *firmāns* and other documents, rewards and punishments, the organization of meetings, etc.). The sixth chapter explains works and expressions used in everyday life (commerce and prices, agriculture, gardening, irrigation, etc.). The seventh chapter treats clothing, food, and drink. The eighth gives words and phrases used by nomads, livestock-breeders, and shepherds. The ninth chapter contains hunting terms. The tenth chapter is a general dictionary with five thematic sections and one alphabetical section. It is clear that the *Ma'rifat al-afghānī* is not a grammar, as some researchers have presented it, but a textbook whose author pursued the aim to create a guide for studying the Afghan language. The Pashto-speaking prince Sulaymān probably had little need to use it; it was more likely intended for Dari-speaking governors, city heads, courtiers, and officials who were supposed to learn the basis of Pashto syntax and morphology in order to draw up court documents and official correspondence so that Pashto could become the language of administration and other matters in the then capital. These goals dictated the content and structure of the textbook for adult students. It presumed that grammar would be absorbed from phrases and individual words given in various grammatical forms. A sentence of identical content is given with the verb in more than 20 forms for various persons, numbers, and tenses. Although the work is hardly a scholarly achievement even by the standards of the time, it is of interest for the author's methodology and has great practical significance. In our day, it can be viewed as a relic of cultural life in the administrative, economic, and literary centre of the Durrānī state.