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Some Developments in the use of Latin Character for the Writing of Kurdish

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IN the *JRAS.* of January, 1931, I offered some "Suggestions for the Use of Latin Character in the Writing of Kurdish". A certain number of changes in these first proposals subsequently appeared desirable in the light of criticism and of further experiment and experience. In the meantime Tewfiq Wehbi Beg, on whose modified Arabic alphabet my suggestions had been based, finding that his new system made little appeal to his compatriots, decided to abandon it, for the purposes of his future work, in favour of Latin. European students of Iranian philology will welcome the appearance in Latin character of the work of an accomplished native Kurdish scholar; how far the books now in the press and under preparation will appeal to other Kurds remains to be seen.

The following modifications of the first system have recommended themselves:—

(1) The distinction between *d* and *dh*, *t* and *th*, described as being restricted to part of the Sulaimani *liwa* only, has been abandoned, with a view to making the system as widely acceptable as possible.

(2) The preservation of the distinction between the two *h*'s for the sake of three or four native Kurdish words (only the sophisticated mark the distinction in Arabic borrowings) appeared hardly justified, and has been abandoned.

(3) The letter *x* is thus released to replace *kh*.

(4) The adoption of the letter *j* with the German value proved most unpopular not only with English but also with Kurdish critics; the difficulty has been met by using *y* both with its English consonantal value and also for pure short *i*, a comparatively rare sound in Kurdish.

(5) The letter *i* now represents the neutral vowel (except as provided by rules (8) and (13) below); to use a letter with a diacritical mark would have been out of the question owing to the high frequency of this sound.

(6) The letter *j* is thus released for use with its Turkish, i.e. the French, value; this may be distasteful to English readers but is liked by Kurds.

(7) The sound for which the rather clumsy digraph *uy* was first suggested is now represented by *ö*, and since the sound is rare little violence is done to the principle of avoiding diacritical marks; it is not spoken alike by all Kurds; the majority seem to pronounce it like French *ué*, but with the two vowel sounds run more together; it is not *uê*.

(8) Long *i* is now written *iy* (instead of *ii*) except after a vowel when it is written *yi*; since the combination of the neutral vowel and pure short *i* must form long *i* (see rule (e) at p. 34 of the "Suggestions") no difficulty arises; thus: *bi-xo* "eat!" makes *bi-y xo*, i.e. *biy xo* "eat it!"

(9) Similarly long *u* is now written *uw* instead of *uu*; after a vowel it is *uu*.

(10) Hemze is no longer represented since it appears, except as the initial soft breathing, in no native Kurdish words, and in Arabic borrowings merely has the effect of lengthening the adjacent vowel. Vowels found in juxtaposition are pronounced separately.

(11) Similarly ' for 'ain is no longer considered as a letter of the alphabet; it is detected as an initial sound in a very few native Kurdish words; in Arabic borrowings it generally, like hemze, lengthens the adjacent vowel, and sometimes, at the beginning of a word, aspirates it: thus عباس makes Hebbas, عمر makes Homer; in his recent work کرد و کردستان (Dar-ul-Islam Press, Baghdad, 1931) Amin Zaki Bey, recently Minister of Economics and Communications in the Iraqi Cabinet, who seldom spells Arabic words otherwise than in the correct Arabic way, writes on

p. 2 مۆتالا for مطالعه; where it is desired to represent the ع in a borrowed word the symbol ' can nevertheless be used unobjectionably.

(12) In consequence of (10) the apostrophe becomes available for its natural function of representing an elided vowel: *l'êrewe* for *le êrewe* "from here".

(13) Since a syllable cannot begin with the neutral vowel, initial pure short *i* is written *i* and not *y*.

These modifications, which all arise out of the abandonment of the superfluous symbols *dh*, *th*, *x* (for ح), ' and ' (for hemze), and the adoption of *i* for the neutral vowel, have been achieved without violence to the fundamental principles (1) that diacritical marks must be reduced to a minimum, and (2) that the system must be adequate to reproduce the nicest subtleties of Kurdish grammar.

A restatement of the five rules given in the "Suggestions" (p. 34 of the JOURNAL, January, 1931) now becomes necessary.

(a) This rule must be worded as follows: "The vowel *u*, if brought into juxtaposition with another vowel, is changed into *w*, e.g. *keuti-bu* "he had fallen", makes the subjunctive *keuti-bw-aye*; other vowels in juxtaposition are pronounced separately.¹

(b) This rule holds *mutatis mutandis* and might read: The combination *iy* is not possible and is shortened to *iy*, the suppressed letter being represented by apostrophe; thus, *tanciy* "gazelle-hound" makes *tanciy'an* "their gazelle-hound", not *tanciyyan*, and *tanciy' Puwsho* "Pūsho's hound", not *tanciy y Puwsho*.

(c) The rule holds *mutatis mutandis*, but further experience has suggested that the fall of the accent in some measure limits freedom in the dropping of the neutral vowel; e.g. *leshkir* "army" makes *leshkreke* "the army"

¹ Such juxtaposition occurs as a result of dropping the symbol for hemze in pure Kurdish words only when the present tense particle *de-* is prefixed to a verb beginning with a vowel.

(since the definite article *-eke* takes the accent), but *leshkirêk* "an army" (since the indefinite article *êk* does not take the accent).

(d) With the dropping of the hemze the need for this statement disappears: A word like *serêshe* "headache" is simply written as one word; a new convention regarding the preposition *e*, "to" is referred to below.

(e) The new orthography represents this change of sound automatically and no statement of rule is necessary (see modification No. 8 above).

The alphabet now being used by the leading native Kurdish philologist thus contains thirty-three letters (instead of the thirty-eight of the original "Suggestions"); these are the ordinary twenty-six letters, with two vowels having diacritical marks *ê* and *ö*, and five digraph consonants, *ch*, *gh*, *lh*, *rh*, *sh*.

TABLE

- a* always long as in father.
- b* as in English.
- c* with Turkish value, English *j*.
- ch* as in English church.
- d* as in English.
- e* short *a* as in English bat.
- ê* the open sound, not the diphthong which is *ey*.
- f* as in English.
- g* as in English.
- gh* as in Arabic *ghain*.
- h* as in English.
- i* the neutral vowel.
- j* with Turkish value, French *j*.
- k* as in English.
- l* as in English.
- lh* velar *l*.
- m* as in English.
- n* as in English.
- o* always long.
- ö* like French *ué*.
- p* as in English.

- q* guttural *k*.
r as in English.
rh rolled *r*.
s always sibilant.
sh as in English.
t as in English.
u always short.
v as in English.
w bilabial.
x as Arabic خ
y consonant as in English and also short pure *i*.
z as in English.

The following examples are appended to illustrate the modified system :—

- I. "The Adventure of the Goat-herd," with translation.
- II. Kurdish translation of an extract from the Simon report.

No. II is something of a *tour de force* done for me by a group of Kurdish friends. The intention of the inclusion of this is to suggest that the Kurdish language is so rich as to be capable of expressing any normal conception of the European mind almost without recourse to borrowing.

For greater clearness the izafe *y*, the preposition *e* "to" (with its compounds *enaw* "into the middle of", *eser* "to the top of", etc., which are easily recognizable in that they are not followed by izafe), and the conjunction *u* "and" (except in compounds) are written separately; they must, however, be pronounced in liaison with the preceding word. Kurdish is particularly rich in compounds in every part of speech, and it is not always easy to judge how far the component parts should be written together or separately, or how far the aid of hyphens should be resorted to. In the examples I have endeavoured to follow consistently a set of experimental conventional rules, but it would be premature to state them at this stage.

EXAMPLE I

Beser Hat y Xawensabrên

Piyawêk y ladêyi buw ; sabrênêky hebu : zory xosh dewyst ; herchiy xwardinêk y chaky des bikewtaye, derxward y ewy deda. Jinekey Leser eme rhiqy lêy helh sa we êwarêyêk legelh sabrênekey, l'em dê bo ew dê, dery kirdin. Kabra rhêy lê helhe buw ; her derhoyi w nedegeyisht e dêyêk. Sabrênekey leber birsêtiy w manduwiy desy kird be harhjîn. Kabra dilhy pêy suwta we be giryanewe desy kird e mily, we wuty ; " Xozge bimirdmaye w tom wa nediyaye."

L'ew demeda le nziykewe deng y segwerhêk hat ; eme dêyê bu ; rhuwy tê kird. Ke geyisht, chuw e berdem y malh y köxa ; le dergay da. Jin y köxa hat episht dergake we pirsîy : " Ewe kêye ? " Kabra pêy wut : " Biy kerewe, miywanim." Jine lêy gêrhayewe : " Köxa le ashe ; derga nakemewe." Kabra göy neda yê ; sabrênekey xist eser shany w be serbanda ser kewt we chuw e xwarewe ; legelh sabrênekeyda chuwn e kayênekewe.

Buw be niyweshew ; le dergayan da ; köxajin chuw, kirdyewe. Xawensabrên chawy pê kewt ke ewa köxajin legelh kabrayêkda des lemîl yek, be machu muwch gerhanewe w chuwn e juwrewe. Lepash nextêk le derga drayewe. Xawensabrên temashay kird ke ew kabraye y legelh jine bu hat, xoy kuta ye kayênekewe. Köxajinysh chuw, dergay kirdewe we diysanewe legelh kabrayêk y tazehatuw be machu muwch gerhayewe, we chuwn e juwrewe.

Hemdiysan le derga drayewe ; kabra y duwemysh xoy kuta ye kayênekewe. Xawensabrên rhuwy tê kirdin : " Bragel, pê nenên we sabrênekema." Kabrakan, ke em dengeyan byst le tariykaiyekeda, pêyda helh shaxiyn : " Wis, deng meke."

Jine chuwbû be deng y dergawe ; tumez eme mârdekey bu ke le ash ard y alêstay des kewtibu, legelh genimekeyda gorhiybuyewe w be pêchewane y hiywa y köxajin zuw gerhabwewe. Jine dergakey lê kirdewe, we pêkewe hatin e hewshê. L'ewêwe köxa piyawekey, ke leber derga westabu,

we nawy Cherkesiy bu, bang kird : "Cherkesiy !" Xawensabrên le kayênekewe qiyrandy : "Sê kes u sabrênêkyn." Kôxa l'em denge sery suwrh ma ; diysanewe bangy kird : "Cherkesiy !" we göy girt. Xawensabrên be mirqe mirq hawary kird : "Sê kes u sabrênêkyn ; eyhawar ! kushtyanim." Duw kabrake y dyke desyan kirdibu be siyxurme têwejandiny, belham, ke zaniyan ewa kôxa berew kayên d'êt, boy der chun. Kôxa chuw e juwrewe ; xawensabrêny be diz zaniy w desy kird be tê helhdany we lêy helh kêsha ye xencer ke biy kujêt. Kabra y tayen, ke chawy be xencer kewt, sabrênu mabrêny becê hêst u der perhiy w rhuwy kird e dêyêk y dyke.

Weku cardy le derga y malh y kôxay da. Kôxajin pirsy "Ewe kêye ?" Xawensabrên wuty : "Miywanim, biy kerewe." Kôxajin wuty : "Kôxa le ashe ; nay kemewe." Kabra y xawensabrên weku car y pêshuw göy neda yê we be serbanda chuw e xwarewe w l'ewêwe bonaw kayêneke.

Le prhêka le derga dra. Xawensabrên dilhy da xurpa ; wuty : "Hemysan tê helhdan nebêt ?" Kôxajin dergakey kirdewe w babayêky kird e juwrewe. Kayêneke beramber be hodew heywaneke bu ; xawensabrên l'ewêwe chawy lê bu ke jineke kabray le hodeke da na, xoy hat e derewe ; le heywaneke agirêky kirdewe, taweyêky xist eser, shtêky lê na w day girt ke sard bêtewe ; we chuwewe juwrê. Xawensabrên y le birsda mirduw helh sa, be penapena chuw eser taweke ; gezow rhony têda bu ; desy kird be xwardiny. Ke be layen y xoyda wurd bwewe le heywanekeda beranêk y dabestrawy diy. Chuw, beranekey kirdewe w hênay, ewe y lebery mabwewe suwy le demu lmoz u sim y beraneke. Beranysh ney kird e namerdiy ; le nakawda qochêky le pishtewe lê da, le pew rhuw frhêy da yenaw derk y juwrekewe. Xawensabrên hawarêky kird : "Eyhawar ! Bawke rho ! Pishtim shka." Kabra w kôxajin l'em denge rha perhiy we pirsyan : "To kêyt, krabawgaw ?" we pelamaryan da yê w desyan kird be tê helhdany. Duwbare le derga dra. Be herduwkyan xawensabrênyan helh girt u xistyan e

kenduweke y ardewe; we jine'sh kabrakey na yenaw tenguwrekewe w pneyêky xist eser, we chuw dergakey kirdewe.

Tumez em köxaye'sh ard y alêstay des kewtibu, genimekey pê gorhiybwewe w be bedbextiy' köxajin xêra gerhabwewe. Köxa be barashewe hat e juwrê, we be jiney wut: "Ard y nawhorheke biker e kenduwekewe." Jine wuty: "Pele pely chiye? Beyaniy." Köxa pêy lê da girt, wuty: "Her debêt êsta horheke betalh keyt." Jine her xoy lê la deda; köxa pelamar y horhy da, birdy eser kenduw y xawensabrên, we desy kird be ard rhjandin e nawyewe. Hêshta horheke niywey mabu, kenduw pirh buw. Köxa pirsy: "Afret, xo to wutit ardman nemawe?" Jine y zerd helhgerhaw wuty: "Lepash to biyrim kewtewe ke ardman mawe."

Köxa neqiyzeyêky girt be desewe we peyta peyta kirdy be kenduwekeda ke ardeke chak bichêt e xwarewe. Em neqiyzane dekewtin le seru gölak y xawensabrên, ke le tawana xoy rha piskand, kenduwy kird be duw kertewe w der perhiy. Köxa, ke chawy b'em kabra ardawiye w seru chaw xönawiye kewt, be cnokey zaniy, da chlhekiy we hawary kird: "Naw y Xwa! A! Afret, ew tfengem bo b'êne."

Xawensabrên y zaretrek desy kird be lalhanewe: "Boch dem kujyt? Min her gezow rhonekem xwardibu; sza y xom diy; belham herchiy kirdy Agha y nawtenguwr kirdy; emca nore y ew bêt." Kabra y nawtenduwr, ke emey byst, der perhiy e derewe; xeriyk bu boy der chê, köxa qiyrh girty. Be Xwa, legelh köxada kewtn e seru gölhak y yektiry. L'em helhkewteda xawensabrên perhiy e serban; l'ewê temashay kird ke leshy be dwayda nayêt; wuty: "Xo, emane minyan kusht; ba tolheyan lê bikemewe."

Gerha bo berdê, pêyanda bikêshêt; kurtanêky le serbaneke doziyewe; xisty eser sery we hat egeragh serbaneke ke biy kêshêt beser herduw kabrada ke le hewshê le yek ber buwbun. Ney zaniy ke qushqun y kurtaneke kewtuwet episht mily; hêzy da ye xoy ke biy da be seryanda; qushqun ewyshy rhapêch kird; kabra girmha be xoy u kurtanewe

kewt e xwarewe ; nqeyêky lê'we der hat : " Bawke rho ! Psam."

Sherhkerekan desyan l'êk ber bu, we kabra y dosteyan boy der chu. Köxa emca pelamar y xawensabrênny da w desy kird be tê helhdany. Xawensabrên wuty : " Besye ; mem kuje ; rhastiyeket pê bêjim." Köxa desy lê ber da ; xawensabrênnysh ew shewe chiy' beser hatibu boy gêrhayewe. Leser eme köxa jinekey der kird we kerêk u tuwrekeyê ardy da be xawensabrên we nardyewe dêyeke y xoy.

Minysh hatmewe w hychyan nedam ê.

TRANSLATION

The Adventure of the Goatherd

There was a villager : he had a billy-goat ; he was very fond (of it) ; whatever good food came to hand he used to give it to it to eat. His wife thereupon got annoyed and one evening turned them, him with his billy-goat, right out of the village. The fellow lost his way ; he kept going on and not arriving at any village. His billy-goat began to whimper with hunger and fatigue. The fellow's heart burned for it and he tearfully put his arms round its neck and said : " Would that I might die and not see thee thus."

At that moment there came a sound of barking from nearby ; this was a village ; he turned towards (it). When he arrived he went to the front of the headman's house ; he knocked on the door. The headman's wife came to behind the door and asked : " Who is that ? " The fellow said to (her) : " Open it, I am a guest." The woman answered (him) : " The headman is at the mill ; I shall not open the door." The fellow did not listen to (her) ; he hoisted the billy-goat on his shoulder and climbed up on the roof and went down ; they went, he with the billy-goat, to the straw-store.

Midnight came ; someone knocked on the door ; the headman's wife went and opened (it). The goat-herd saw that, lo, the headman's wife and a fellow came back, arms round

each other's necks, kissing and bussing, and went into the room. After a little there was a knock on the door. The goat-herd saw that that fellow who was with the woman came and thrust himself into the straw-store. The headman's wife also went, opened the door, and again came back with a new-comer, kissing and bussing, and they went into the room.

Yet again there was a knock on the door; the second fellow also thrust himself into the straw-store. The goat-herd turned towards them: "Don't tread atop o' my billy-goat, mates." The fellows, when they heard this sound in the darkness, scolded him: "Sh-sh, don't make a noise."

The woman had gone to investigate the noise at the door; but this was her husband, who had found flour ready at the mill, had exchanged (it) for his wheat and returned early, contrary to the expectation of the headman's wife. The woman opened the door to (him) and together they came into the courtyard. From there the headman called his man who was standing in front of the door and whose name was Homany: "Homany!" The goat-herd bawled from the straw-store: "We are three men and a billy-goat!" The headman was astonished at this sound; again he called: "Homany!" and listened. The goat-herd yelled plaintively: "We are three men and a billy-goat. . . . Help! They have killed me." The two other fellows had begun to punch him, but when they realized that, lo, the headman is coming towards the straw-store they decamped. The headman went into the room; he took the goat-herd for a thief and began to thrash him, and threatened him with a dagger, to kill him. The poor fellow, when he saw the dagger, abandoned billy-goat and all and fled and made towards another village.

Like last time he knocked at the door of the headman. The headman's wife asked: "Who is that?" The goat-herd said: "I am a guest, open it." The headman's wife said: "The headman is at the mill; I shall not open it." The goat-herd fellow, as the time before, did not listen to (her)

and by the roof went down and from there inside the straw-store.

At once there was a knock on the door ; the goat-herd's heart beat fast ; he said : " I hope there will be no thrashing again." The headman's wife opened the door and let an individual into her room. The straw-store was opposite the room with the verandah ; from there the goat-herd could see that the woman put the man in the room and herself came outside ; she made a fire on the verandah, put on a frying-pan, cooked something and took it off to cool ; and she went into the room. The famished goat-herd got up and went stealthily up to the frying-pan ; it had manna and butter-sauce in it ; he began to eat it. When he had taken in what was around him he saw a ram tied up on the verandah. He went and untied the ram and proceeded to wipe his leavings over the muzzle and feet of the ram. The ram did not fail to play the man. Unexpectedly he gave him a butt behind and threw him sprawling into the doorway of the room. The goat-herd gave a yell : " Help ! Mercy on an orphan ! My back is broken." The fellow and the headman's wife started at this sound and asked : " Who are you, son of sin ? " And they attacked (him) and began to thrash him. A second time there was a knock on the door. The two of them picked up the goat-herd and put him into the flour-jar ; and the woman too put the fellow into the oven and set the pastry-board on top, and went and opened the door.

But this headman too had found ready-milled flour, had exchanged the wheat for (it) and, unfortunately for the headman's wife, had come back quickly. The headman came into the room with the mill-load and said to the wife : " Put the sackful of flour into the jar." The wife said : " What's the hurry ? To-morrow." The headman insisted and said : " All the same you must empty the sack now." The wife kept trying to avoid it ; the headman rushed at the sack, carried it on to the goat-herd's jar, and began to pour flour into it. Half the sack was still left when the jar was

full. The headman asked : " Woman, you said, didn't you, that we had no flour left." The wife, coming over all pale, said : " After you (had gone) I remembered that we had some flour left."

The headman took up a goad and pushed it into the jar so that the flour should go well down. These prods kept coming down on the goat-herd's cranium so that in consequence he struggled with his elbows, broke the jar in two pieces, and jumped out. The headman, when he saw this fellow all covered with flour and with his head bleeding, took (him) for a demon, started up and yelled : "'S truth ! Ho ! Woman ! bring me that gun."

The terrified goat-herd began to implore : " Why will you kill me ? I had only eaten the manna and butter-sauce ; I have had my punishment ; whatever anyone has done the gent in the oven did ; so let it be his turn." The fellow in the oven, when he heard this, jumped out ; he was about to decamp, the headman gripped him. Then, by God, he and the headman fell to scragging each other. At this juncture the goat-herd fled to the roof ; there he saw that he can hardly drag himself along ; he said : " Well, they knocked me about ; let me have my revenge on them."

He looked about for a stone to throw at them ; he found a pack-saddle on the roof ; he put (it) on his head and came to the edge of the roof to throw it at the two fellows who had set about each other in the court-yard. He did not know that the crupper of the pack-saddle has fallen behind his neck ; he braced himself to throw it on to their heads ; the crupper dragged him along, too ; the fellow bumped and fell down below, (himself), pack-saddle, and all ; a gasp escaped from him : " Mercy on an orphan ! I'm bust."

The combatants broke apart and the lover fellow decamped. Then the headman rushed at the goat-herd and began to thrash him. The goat-herd said : " That's enough ; don't kill me. Let me tell you the truth." The headman took his hands off him ; the goat-herd, too, that night related

to (him) what had happened to him. Thereupon the headman expelled (his) wife and gave the goat-herd a donkey and a bag of flour and sent (him) back to his own village.

I too have come back and they gave me nothing.

EXAMPLE II

Kurdish Translation of an extract from the Simon Report

15. Komelhe gewre y nawcheyi' Asiya, bo la y rhojawa, b'ew diyw Uralekan-da, ew kerte kyshweryy frhê dawe ke pêy delhêyn Ewruwpa, we bo la y niywe rho, b'ew diyw qorte here berzeke y Hymalaye-yshda, ew kerte kyshweryy frhê dawe ke pêy delhêyn Hyndistan. Gelê rhag y cöcheshn, ke hemuw le yek rhechelhak y Ariy buwn we ke, rhenge, le serdemêk y zor konda her le nawcheyêkewe kochyan kirdibêt, xoyan l'em duw kerte kyshweryy da mezranduwe. Cêga y hatinyan, we besh y têkelhawî'yan legelh rhegekan y tir we legelh rhege kontrekan, babet y gumane, we zor qse helh degrêt. Herchy Hyndistane, l'ewêda, her chonê bê, weku le dwayida hel y l'êy dwanman des dekewêt. jmareyêk y zor gewre, ke birhwa dekrêt ke wêne y danyshuwekan y ber le Ariyekan bin, we gelêk y tir, ke le serchawe y tirewe tê rhjawin, legelh netewe y Ariye dagiy kerekanda, be têkelhawiyê mawnetewe. Gelê sharistanêtiy heye, ke legelh hiy Hyndistan le koniyda hawtan, we ke be tewawiy beser chuwn; belham le zor y Hyndistan-da temashayêk y negorhaw bo jiyân, bastanêk y yekbiyneyi' komelhiy, we feylesuwfiyêk y taybetiy' payedar heye. Yasayi' Hinduw êstaysh firmanber y l'êk danewe y nawerok y Vêdakane. Ew cheshne pezyshkiyane, ke legelh Hyppokrates-da hawdem buwn, êsta'sh bekar hên u pêwe nuwsawyan heye. Legelh ew arezuwe gewreye'shda, ke Hyndistan y siyasiy pêyewe biyre bawekan y dewlhetgêrhiy des lemil dekat, terze kon y komelhiy' Hinduwayetiy, ke, her le Bramen-ewe biy gre heta dêt eser Gihawekan, têkelhawiyêk y chiyinchiy y hozêk y bêjmarey da hênawe, ke beser jiyân u biyr y le duw sed milwên ptir y danyshuwekan y sê sed u biyst milwênîy' Hyndistan-da be rhiq we deselhatêk

y ewtowe le zalhiyda payedare, ke le gêtîy' rhojawada be xew nebiynrawe.

Original English

The central mass of Asia throws out to the west, beyond the Urals, the sub-continent which we call Europe, and to the south, beyond the higher barrier of the Himalayas, the sub-continent which we call India. Various races of the same Aryan stock, presumably migrating from some common centre in distant ages, have established themselves in both these sub-continents. Whence they came, and what proportions they bear to other and earlier races, are matters of doubt and controversy. In the case of India, at any rate, there remain intermingled with the descendants of Aryan invaders, as we shall have occasion to point out later on, very large numbers who are believed to represent pre-Aryan inhabitants, as well as considerable infiltrations from other sources. There are civilizations of equal antiquity with that of India which have passed completely away ; but in much of India there is an unchanged outlook on life, a continuing social tradition, and a characteristic philosophy that endures. Hindu orthodoxy is still governed by interpretations of the contents of the Vedas. Systems of medicine which are coeval with Hippocrates still have their exponents and their adherents. In spite of the eagerness with which political India is embracing modern ideas of government, the ancient social system of Hinduism, which has evolved a rigid complication of innumerable castes, from the Brahmin at the top to the pariah at the bottom, continues to control the lives and thoughts of more than two hundred out of the three hundred and twenty millions of the population of India with a persistence and authority undreamed of in the Western world.

Remarks on the Romanized Kurdish Alphabet

By V. MINORSKY

MR. C. J. EDMONDS'S "Suggestions for the use of Latin characters in the writing of Kurdish" merit the attention of all those interested practically and theoretically in Kurdish, for no one probably has had better opportunities for studying the practical side of the question than Mr. Edmonds in his surrounding of Kurdish intelligentsia.

The inconvenient side of all Semitic alphabets is their disregard of vowels (not only short ones, but some of the long ones and the diphthongs). Those alphabets are sufficiently adapted to the languages for which they were invented and in which the consonantic frame (cf. Arabic, mostly trilateral, roots) forms the real backbone of the word of which the basic sense is more or less recognizable from the consonantic symbols.

This system is entirely unsuitable for languages with a developed vocalic system where vowels are not accessories of the consonantic frame but integral parts of the stem. In Kurdish *dār* "tree" and *dūr* "far" have nothing to do with each other in spite of their similar consonantic frame (*d.r*). Here the vowels make all the difference of the basic meaning, whereas the vocalic system itself is considerably complicated by the existence of *ē*, *ō* (> *üē*) which the Arabs in their own terminology call *majhūl*, i.e. "unknown" to themselves.

The Arabic script has been occasionally used for writing many different languages (Albanian, Turkish, Malay, numerous Caucasian, African, and Indian idioms and occasionally even Spanish and Serbian), but whenever the considerations of direct convenience of the writing were no more obscured by any reflexions of political and religious order, phonetic alphabets have triumphed all along the line.¹

¹ We leave for the moment out of the question such languages with developed literatures closely associated with Muslim (Arabic) culture, as Persian, for instance.

Nothing can be said against the special phonetic alphabets of long standing, such as Greek, Russian, Armenian, Georgian, well adapted to their object, but as the Latin script is the most widespread in the world and has reached the highest technical perfection in its printed form (artistic consistency of the outer form of the whole scale of signs, lack of confusion in characters, existence of different varieties of type), only Latin script comes into question when a new form of phonetic script is under consideration for a language just acquiring a literary importance.

For the success of the reform in Kurdish it is essential that the Latin alphabet should be utilized in its most simple form with as few additions of conventional signs as possible. In this respect Mr. Edmonds's effort to remain within the possibilities of the ordinary type seems quite comprehensible and well founded. The Kurdish alphabet as a practical instrument need not aim at an absolutely rigorous application of the principles: "Each sound to have a single and non-compound sign, each sound to be pronounced only in one way." For example, there is no practical inconvenience of writing *sh* (ش) instead of the Czecho-Slovakian *š* (whatever its well-known scientific convenience in connection with the other special signs), or the Turkish *ş* (borrowed obviously from Rumanian).

I should formulate the principles underlying Mr. Edmonds's scheme as follows:—

(1) Avoidance of any unusual signs which would embarrass the Kurdish presses.

(2) Use of double signs for "long" vowels [only in Mr. Edmonds's first article !].

(3) Use of *h* after some consonants to connote some aberrant use of these characters.

(4) To these points I should add the desideratum of the slightest possible variance from the established use of the original Latin script. All alphabets are conventional and even if instead of *a*, *b*, *c* we write respectively *k*, *l*, *m* (as in

some unsophisticated schoolboys' cipher) it can be learnt after some practice, yet any queer functions of the familiar signs are apt to mislead the Kurds in the scientific study of their language in comparison with the other Iranian languages. In this respect the new Turkish alphabet, which gives a practical solution for local use, is certainly inconvenient for comparative purposes, such words as *gelecek* necessitating their retranscription into *gelejek*, etc. It is likewise undesirable to introduce new peculiar spellings for the words belonging to international scientific vocabulary.

The following are my more detailed observations on, and suggestions in regard to, the systems proposed by Mr. Edmonds in his two articles which hereafter will be respectively referred to as E 1 and E 2.

As regards the "long" vowels their exact duration as compared to that of the "short" ones may need some further investigation, but there is no doubt that the respective sounds of the two classes—*a*, *i*, *ū* and *a*, *i*, *u*—are felt as distinct phonemes, and, in the case of *ā* and *a*, differ in timbre; *ē* (closed sound palatalizing the preceding consonant) has no corresponding short sound; and *o* in *dost* and *xosh* (*xwosh*?) (though entirely of distinct origin) seems to be confused in Kurdish while the typical treatment of the original long *ō* in Kurdish is the diphthong *üē* (with palatalization of the preceding consonant), e.g. *k'üēr* (< *kōr*) "blind", *g'üēz* < *gōz* "nut". There is consequently no practical need for introducing a distinction of *ō* and *o* but the sign *ō* (E 2) will be quite welcome as a comparatively simple conventional expression for *üē*, and find its justification in the etymological origin of this sound (from *ō*).

Following the principle of reduplication of the characters in order to express the length of a vowel, I should write *aa* for Kurdish long *ā* and leave simple *a* for its corresponding short sound. Such a system is one of the practical characteristics of the Dutch script. As a matter of fact, short Kurdish *a* sounds like *ā* (cf. English "man"), or even

as a real short *ä*, while with the use of *e* (E 1 and E 2) we are distinctly drifting to a different class of sounds. The proposed use of *aa* and *a* will allow us to restrict the use of *e* to the real *e* (see above). This unique *e* will be written without any diacritical sign (as against E 1 and E 2: *ê*), just as in Sanskrit transcriptions *e* stands exclusively for a long *ē*.

The signs *ii* and *i* are quite natural, but there exists in Kurdish a characteristic sound of an extra-short *i* perfectly distinguishable on account of its dull timbre. It somewhat reminds one of Russian *ы* (Polish *y*) and Turkish *ı* (*î*) in *aldı* (الدى), but is a furtive intermediate sound which for an untrained English ear would perhaps resemble the vowel in "but". In E 1 and E 2 it is conveniently expressed by *y* (cf. Polish *y*!), but it would be very desirable to reserve to *y* the obvious function of *ی* (English and French *y*). One could think then of the new Turkish *ı* (without dot), but even the Turks admit now that this sign is conducive to confusion and seem disposed to replace it by *î*. As we have obtained the elimination of one character with diacritic sign (*ê*) by a simple one, we could afford to introduce in the present case *î*¹, but perhaps it would be more advantageous to adopt for our case *ı* (with a dot underneath) which would be better distinguishable from both *ii* and *i* and in case of emergency could be easily improvised by the printers; it would suffice for them to place an ordinary *i* upside down.

I should rather not follow E 2 in transcribing *ū* by *uw* and *î* by *iy* for the "Dutch" principle of doubling letters of the long sounds seems to me to possess all the advantages of clearness,² but I should admit the use of *uw-* and *iy-* in the cases when the long *ū-* and *î-*, being followed by a vowel, phonetically become a group composed respectively of

¹ The special signs in our alphabet would consequently remain restricted to two: *î* and *ô*.

² In E 2 *y* has a threefold use for expressing consonantic *y*, short *ı*, and the length of *î* (*iy*).

$u + w$ or $i + y$. This orthographical rule would be conditioned in this special case by the phonetic modification.

Coming to the consonants I should reserve simple j and c respectively for ح and چ, in conformity with the very clearly established use (see the hallowed Sanskrit transcription) and the historical tradition of c which in all the systems derived from Latin stands for voiceless k , $č$, or ts . The only exception is the new Turkish alphabet, but we have mentioned its philological inadequacy for scientific purposes.

Zh and sh seem to be quite suitable expressions of ژ and ش logically consistent with z and s for ز and س.

The use of h as an auxiliary sign in lh and rh as differentiated from l and r is a happy idea already realized in Albanian script. Kurdish lh is a hard cerebral l pronounced with the tip of the tongue upturned (a characteristic very distinct from Turkish and Russian hard l (л); rh is the rolled r pronounced with the tip of the tongue (a similar distinction between r and $r̄$ exists in Armenian and Albanian).

As regards the harsh guttural sounds, the use of x for خ (as in Spanish, Greek, Russian) would be consistent with the general scientific practice. As we connote the corresponding voiced غ by gh , it was first suggested (E 1) to express this sound with xh , but as خ is frequent in Kurdish the new simplification (E 2) will be very welcome. On the other hand, Mr. Edmonds feels inclined to disregard the ح sound, occurring in Kurdish, and not only in Arabic loan-words, but also in some purely Iranian words as حوت *hawt* "seven". This sound, though rare, is very characteristic of Kurdish and I should allot to it precisely the conventional xh , where $-h$, following our practice, will indicate an aberrant use of the original symbol x .

Contrary to the Turks and Persians, the Kurds very naturally pronounce ع (and prefix it even to such an

Iranian word as *asp* "horse" which in Kurdish sounds (عسب). It would be helpful to express ع with an apostrophe whenever the Kurds pronounce it: 'ajbat عجت but there is of course no question of simply reproducing Arabic forms: if عباس and عثمان are pronounced Habbās and Watmān they will be spelt accordingly.¹ On the contrary, there is no need to transcribe the Arabic hamza in the beginning and at the end of words (أنس رجا), though in the middle of words it would be helpful to express it by a hyphen هيتت hay-at.

Likewise no special mark of elision seems to be necessary in such words as *lērā* < *l'ērā*, any more than in separating the locative ending *-da*, but, if so desired, the same hyphen could be used for such purposes as well.

We need not be more precise about Kurdish sounds, as time will show what particular nuances and *sandhi* phenomena will be discovered by specialists in phonetics. Under this ruling come the Sulēmānī spirants δ (ذ) and θ (ث), which can hardly be considered as real phonemes and do not represent a general phenomenon even in southern Kurdish.

It must be finally well understood that the suggested Kurdish alphabet has in view principally the convenience and development of printing. As regards the writing in Kurdish considerable simplifications will be introduced in due course: for instance, double vowels *aa*, *ii*, *uu* will be easily replaced by some signs like *ā*, *ī*, *ū* or *á*, *í*, *ú*. Many people in Europe instead of double consonants still write only one with a dash over it (as a substitute for an Arabic *tashdīd*). Kurdish orthography and calligraphy will follow their own ways, while we are trying to find some practical and simple solution of the fundamental problem of the basic alphabet.

¹ In handwriting ع could be expressed still better by spiritus asper '.

The following is the comparative table of Kurdish sounds as figured in Mr. Edmonds's two articles and in my additional remarks :—

A. VOWELS

	E 1.	E 2.	M.
\bar{a}	<i>a</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>aa</i>
\check{a} (<i>ā</i>)	<i>e</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>a</i>
\bar{e}	\hat{e}	\hat{e}	<i>e</i>
\bar{i}	<i>ii</i>	<i>iy</i>	<i>ii</i>
\check{i}	<i>i</i>	<i>y</i>	<i>i</i>
\bar{i} (dull)	<i>y</i>	<i>i</i>	\bar{i} (or <i>y</i>)
<i>o</i>	<i>o</i>	<i>o</i>	<i>o</i>
$\bar{ü}$	<i>uy</i>	\bar{o}	\bar{o}
\bar{u}	<i>uu</i>	<i>uw</i>	<i>uu</i>
\check{u}	<i>u</i>	<i>u</i>	<i>u</i>

B. CONSONANTS (disposed by groups)¹

<i>b</i>	—	—	—
<i>p</i>	—	—	—
<i>v</i>	—	—	—
<i>f</i>	—	—	—
<i>w</i>	—	—	—
<i>d</i>	—	—	—
<i>t</i>	—	—	—
δ (δ)	<i>dh</i>	?	?
θ (θ)	<i>th</i>	?	?
\check{j} (\check{j})	<i>c</i>	<i>c</i>	<i>j</i>
\check{c} (\check{c})	<i>ch</i>	<i>ch</i>	<i>c</i>
<i>k</i>	—	—	—
<i>g</i>	—	—	—
\check{q}	<i>q</i>	<i>q</i>	<i>q</i>
<i>h</i>	—	—	—

¹ — means "no change", and ? "not expressed".

غ	<i>gh</i>	<i>gh</i>	<i>gh</i>
خ	<i>xh</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>x</i>
ع	'	?	' or '
ح	<i>x</i>	?	<i>xh</i>
ل	—	—	—
ل	<i>lh</i>	<i>lh</i>	<i>lh</i>
ر	—	—	—
ر	<i>rh</i>	<i>rh</i>	<i>rh</i>
م	—	—	—
ن	—	—	—
ز	<i>z</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>z</i>
س	<i>s</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>s</i>
ژ (ژ)	<i>zh</i>	<i>j</i>	<i>zh</i>
ش (ش)	<i>sh</i>	<i>sh</i>	<i>sh</i>
ی (ی)	<i>y</i>	<i>y</i>	<i>y</i>

P.S.—The above suggestions are based on the assumption that, for the facility of Kurdish printing, signs with diacritical points must be avoided as far as possible. On the other hand, as shown by the latest experiments in Erivan and Damascus, this practical consideration need not be over-estimated. Under such conditions, a more liberal use of diacritical points would very likely represent a further convenience and simplification in Kurdish writing.—V. M.



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