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***Life and Works of Dr. Lutz Rzehak and his Contribution to
the Teaching of Pashto Language in Germany***

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ABSTRACT

Since the inception of the teaching of Pashto in Humboldt University Berlin, Germany in 1980, it has developed from time to time. Numerous prominent linguists and professors taught Pashto in the Humboldt University Berlin, Germany. One of the prominent name in the field of Pashto language is Prof. Dr. Lutz Rzehak, who has been teaching Pashto for the last few years. This article attempts to highlight his life and works and particularly his contribution to the teaching of Pashto language in Germany. Data has been collected through personal interviews and other documented sources.

Key Words: *Pashto in Germany, Dr. Lutz Rzehak, Humboldt University Berlin, Germany, Pashto language.*

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BACKGROUND OF THE TEACHING OF PASHTO IN GERMANY

For the first time the teaching of Pashto started abroad in 1855 in St. Petersburg University Russia by Prof. B.A. Dorn. During the second half of the nineteenth century, Pashto Munshi Fazil and Adeeb Fazil classes were included in the syllabi of the University of Punjab on the recommendation of the Allama Mir Ahmad Shah Rizwani. The teaching of Pashto in Germany has a relatively recent history, beginning in the late 20th century. Early Pashto rare manuscripts are found in Germany (Dinakhel, 2021). Earliest Pashto sound recordings are also found in the Sound Archives of the Humboldt University Berlin, Germany (Roy, Franziska et al, 2011). Pashto is the native language of the Pashtun people, who primarily reside in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The teaching of Pashto in Germany can be traced back to 1980s when the soviet-afghan war led to a significant wave of Afghan refugees seeking asylum in various European countries, including Germany. As a result Pashto speaking individuals began to establish community organizations to preserve their cultural and linguistic heritage. These organizations played a crucial role in initiating the teaching of Pashto to the younger generation growing up in Germany. These initiatives were driven by individuals who had personal connections to the language and culture. They organized language classes, cultural events and other activities to promote the learning of Pashto among the Pashtun community in Germany. Over time, the teaching of Pashto in Germany expanded beyond community initiatives. Educational institutions, such as universities and language schools, recognized the need to offer Pashto language courses to meet the growing demand. Universities in cities like Berlin began to include Pashto language programs as part of their curriculum. These programs aimed to cater to both heritage speakers and individuals interested in learning Pashto as a foreign language. In recent years, the teaching of Pashto in Germany has further developed with the establishment of dedicated faculty and the availability of resources. Language institutes provide structured courses and certifications for Pashto learners. The internet has also played a significant role in promoting the teaching and learning of Pashto. Online language-learning platforms, websites, and mobile applications have made Pashto language resources more accessible to a wider audience in Germany. These resources provide self-study materials, interactive exercises, and audio-visual content to facilitate language acquisition. Overall, the teaching of Pashto in

Germany has evolved from community-based initiatives to formalized programs within educational institutions and language institutes. The increasing recognition of Pashto as an important language, along with the growing Afghan/Pashtun diaspora in Germany, has contributed to the development of structured Pashto language education in Germany.

Students with different backgrounds of motivation, study Pashto in universities in Germany. One group of students who opt for Pashto are those who want to embark on historical studies. Pashto has an official status in Afghanistan. The status of teaching of Pashto in Germany depends on the prestige and influence of its status in the state backing it (Oesterheid, 2002, p. 113). Pashto has given official status in Afghanistan in 1936 followed by Swat state in 1937 (Dinakhel, 2020: 69). Those foreign students who study and learn Pashto in Germany intend to go to South Asia and Central Asia for anthropological field studies, for development projects and to study source materials in south Asian and central Asian studies for historical research (Oesterheid, 2002:112). A knowledge of Pashto, is of course, indispensable for those who investigate the complicated field of Dardic languages (Schimmel, 1981: 154). Some students with family background of Pashtuns from Afghanistan and Pakistan also wanted to go back to their roots. Those who intend to work in Pakistan and Afghanistan or in refugees camps also interested in learning Pashto. Only a small number of students take an academic interest in Pashto language in Germany because of its limited scope of its employment. At a present Pashto is being taught at only one German university, Humboldt University Berlin with an average ten students in class. For a student of contemporary Afghan affairs, knowledge of Pashto is important. Non-availability of teaching materials and non-availability of Pashto courses written in German are some challenges in the teaching of Pashto in Germany. Pashto textbooks written for foreigners and non-native speakers are short. Germans who studied, researched and taught Pashto language in Germany include Annemarie Schimmel, H.Ewald, Ernest Trumpp, Wilhelm Geiger, Friedrich Muller, Prof. E.Kuhn, Wolfgang Lentz, Junker, Manfred Lorenz, Isidore Loewenthal, Johannes Meyer-Ingwersen, Manfred Lorenz, H. Hubschmann, Monika Matzke and last but not the least Prof. Dr. Lutz Rzehak.

Prof. Dr. Lutz Rzehak: Life and Works

Prof. Dr. Lutz Rzehak born on 9th April 1962 in Reichenbach. His father's name is Heribert Rzehak. His mother's name is Maria Rzehak. He got his primary and middle school education from Weinhold-School and Goethe-High school respectively. He joined Martin-Luther University in Halle-Wittenberg and completed his 12th grade from this university in 1980. Martin-Luther University was a specialized university for the preparation of students for studying abroad. He was enrolled in a special faculty called Arbeiter- und Bauern-Fakultät (Faculty for workers and peasants). He had learned Russian language from the 6th grade and received an additional language training in Russian language at Martin-Luther University. He moved to Leningrad (St. Petersburg) in 1980. In the same year teaching of Pashto started on a regular basis in Berlin University. Actually the department of Pashto in HU Berlin was established in 1978-79 but the classes started in 1980. In this period Soviet Russia attacked on Afghanistan which caused the influx of Afghan refugees during the Soviet-Afghan war. First class of Pashto students started learning Pashto in 1980 and completed their studies in 1985. Manfred Lorenz was the first teacher of Pashto language. His famous book is "Lehrbuch des Pashto" published in 1979 in Leipzig. He learnt Persian, Tajiki and Ossetti languages. He did his PhD about the syntax of Tajiki language. He did his Habilitation about Ossettic language. He started learning Pashto during Dawud Khan reign in Afghanistan and published above mentioned book. Manfred Lorenz was a student of Junker. Junker was a scholar of languages at Berlin University. He was expert of ancient as well as living languages. Junker published German-Persian dictionary in collaboration with Persian scholar Bozorg Alvi. There were five to six students in the first batch of Pashto language. Among these one was Thomas Ruttig.

Dr. Lutz Rzehak, at that time, was in Russia. He graduated as Orientalist/historian from the department of history in the faculty of Oriental studies in Leningrad University in 1985. He wrote his dissertation about Pashtunwali titled "Pashtunwali: Traditional norms and values of the Pashtuns" (Rzehak, 1992). For this he had studied Afghan sources written in Pashto in the 1950s up to the 1980s that explained how Pashtuns perceive these traditions and values. He learnt numerous languages in St. Petersburg, including Dari, Persian, Pashto and to some extent Balochi from his teacher Alexander Grunberg who belonged to the Russian-Jewish intelligentsia. Dr. Lutz Rzehak also obtained

basic knowledge of Arabic and Urdu. Alexander Grunberg has also written a grammar of Pashto language. Alexander Grunburg was expert of Pashto, Persian, Nuristani, Balochi and Pamiri languages and of the anthropology of Afghanistan. After completing his master degree from Russia, Lutz Rzehak came to Berlin Humboldt University and started his PhD under the supervision of Manfred Lorenz. His external examiner was Professor Alexander L. Grünberg of the State University of St. Petersburg. Dr. Lutz Rzehak completed his PhD in Iranian Studies in 1990. He wrote his PhD dissertation on the social structure of the Baloch titled *Arbeit, Eigentum und Sozialstruktur in autarken Gemeinweisen belutschischer Wanderviehhalter und Ackerbauern – mit einer Studie über den jüngsten Wandel bei den Belutschen der Murgab-Oase* [Labor, Property and social structure in self-sufficient communities of Baloch pastoralists and Farmers - with a study of the recent changes among the Baluch of the Murgab oasis] (Zehak, 1990). For this research he also conducted a special research on the Balochs of Turkmenistan. According to Dr. Lutz Rzehak, Baloch in Turkmenistan moved from Iran and Afghanistan on the invitation of the rulers in USSR who invited them for cultivation. Originally the Baloch who had migrated to Turkmenistan had a nomadic way of life but in Turkmenistan they were settled down and became farmers. As already mentioned Dr. Lutz Rzehak learnt Balochi language at first in Leningrad University [St. Petersburg State University] and then in Turkmenistan. During his professional career Dr. Lutz Rzehak served on different positions related to teaching and research. He worked as **Research assistant** at the Chair for Iranian Studies at the Humboldt University Berlin from 1985 to 1994. He was assistant to Prof. Ingeborg Baldauf after 1990 and was teaching Iranian languages including Persian, Dari, Balochi, Tajiki and Pashto. He learnt Tajiki language while doing his research in Tajikistan. He has published his book titled *Vom Persischen zum Tadschikischen. Sprachliches Handeln und Sprachplanung in Transoxanien zwischen Tradition, Moderne und Sowjetmacht (1900–1956)* [From Persian to Tajik. Linguistic behavior and language planning in Transoxania between traditions, modernism and Soviet power (1900–1956)] (Rzehak, 2001). This research was his Habilitation project. He did his **Habilitation in Central Asian Studies / Iranian Studies from the faculty of Philosophy of the Humboldt University Berlin, Germany** in 2001. Habilitation is required for the position of professorship in Germany, Austria and

Switzerland. During 1987-1988, Dr. Lutz Rzehak participated in a ten-month intensive course for Persian interpreters at a higher level at the West Asia Department of the Humboldt University Berlin. From 1994 to 2001 he worked as Research Assistant at the Department of Central Asian Languages and Cultures at the Humboldt University Berlin. In 2001 he worked as expert of Iranian Studies at the University of Hamburg as substitute for Professor Ronald E. Emmerick. From 2003 to 2005 he worked in the department of Iranian Studies at the University of Bamberg as substitute for Professor Bert G. Fragner. From 2005 to 2006 he worked on Languages and Cultures of Central Asia at the Humboldt University Berlin as substitute for Professor Ingeborg Baldauf. He worked from 2006 to 2007 in the department of History and culture of the Middle East at the Ludwig-Maximilians-University Munich as substitute for Professor Hans Georg Majer. During 2002-2011 he remained **Heisenberg fellow** of the German Research Foundation. From 2011 to 2016 he served as senior researcher in the Crossroads Asia competence network project. He started work on a project on “Language Use and Linguistic Behaviour in Afghanistan” in 2001. During this project he worked on Balochi, Pashto, Dari and other languages of Afghanistan. He visited Quetta and Afghanistan during this project. As expert of Balochi language and culture he was invited by Baloch diaspora in Bangkok (Thailand) in 2010. He was also invited by Baloch in Afghanistan for developing a writing system for the Balochi language of Afghanistan. During this project he edited a Balochi dictionary named *Balochi Gālbānd* (Pahwal, 2007). It is a joint work with Abdur Rahman Pahwal and Bedollah Naruyi. It has published by Al-Azhar book Co. Peshawar in 2007. From Quetta he went to Kandahar and Nimroz. On his second visit he went to Nimroz via Herat. He met with Baloch and Pashtuns. According to Dr. Lutz, this journey was full of his interesting stories of mixing Balochi with Pashto. He visited northern and Central Afghanistan. According to Lutz Rzehak, some Pashtuns in Northern Afghanistan are known as Qandahari. They are Shias and speak Persian. They moved to Northern Afghanistan during the reign of Amir Abdur Rahman (1880-1901). A few of them also speak Pashto. Some of the Baloch living there speak Balochi and some speak Persian. During his field work in Afghanistan security issues were big hurdle for research in Afghanistan. At that time, it was hard to visit Pashto speaking areas due to security situation. During his field work

in Afghanistan, there was no peace in Pashto speaking areas like Khost, Paktia, Maidan Wardag and Nangrahar. As mentioned before, he was working on linguistic behavior in Afghanistan. During this study, he also focused on dialect studies. Because sometimes people speak standard dialect and sometimes their own dialect. In 2014 he conducted a two-week workshop of dialect studies in Nangrahar University. In this workshop, he interacted with people from many dialects and collected data. When he completed this project in 2018. Once again he was assigned teaching of Persian and Pashto languages in Humboldt University Berlin which he continues till today (2023). Dr. Lutz Rzehak has written a text book for the teaching of Dari-Persian in two volumes. He also plans to write a similar book for the teaching of Pashto. To conclude, Dr. Lutz Rzehak, an expert of Iranian languages, played an important role in the teaching and research of Pashto language in Germany.

CONCLUSION

The teaching of Pashto in Germany starting in 1980. The Soviet-Afghan war led to an influx of Afghan refugees in Europe, including Germany, which prompted the establishment of community organizations to preserve Pashto language and culture. These initiatives eventually expanded to include formal Pashto language programs in universities and language schools. The teaching of Pashto in Germany attracts students with diverse motivations, including those interested in historical studies, anthropology, development projects, and individuals with Pashtun heritage. However, the scope of employment for Pashto language skills in Germany remains limited, resulting in a small number of students pursuing academic interests in Pashto. Currently, Pashto is primarily taught at Humboldt University Berlin, with a limited number of students. There is a lack of teaching materials, including textbooks in English or German. Notable individuals who have contributed to the study and teaching of Pashto in Germany include Annemarie Schimmel, Manfred Lorenz, and Prof. Dr. Lutz Rzehak. Dr. Lutz Rzehak, born on April 9, 1962, in Reichenbach, is an Orientalist/historian specializing in Iranian and Central Asian studies. He received his education at various universities, including Martin-Luther University in Halle-Wittenberg and Leningrad University. During his studies, he focused on many languages including Pashto language. Dr. Rzehak's academic career involved teaching and research positions at institutions like the Humboldt University Berlin, the

University of Hamburg, the University of Bamberg, and the Ludwig-Maximilians-University Munich. Throughout his career, Dr. Rzehak worked on various projects related to the languages and cultures of Afghanistan. He conducted research on Balochi, Pashto, Dari, and other languages spoken in Afghanistan. Currently, Dr. Lutz Rzehak is teaching Pashto languages at Humboldt University Berlin.

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