

**GRAMMAR OF THE PUKKHTO OR  
PUKSHTO LANGUAGE, ON A NEW AND  
IMPROVED SYSTEM COMBINING  
BREVITY WITH PRACTICAL UTILITY, AND  
INCLUDING EXERCISES AND DIALOGUES**

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Grammar of the Pukkhto or Puksho Language, on a New and Improved System Combining Brevity with Practical Utility, and Including Exercises and Dialogues by Henry Walter Bellew

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**HENRY WALTER BELLEW**

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BY  
HENRY WALTER BELLEW,  
ASSISTANT SURGEON, SIGNAL ARMY.

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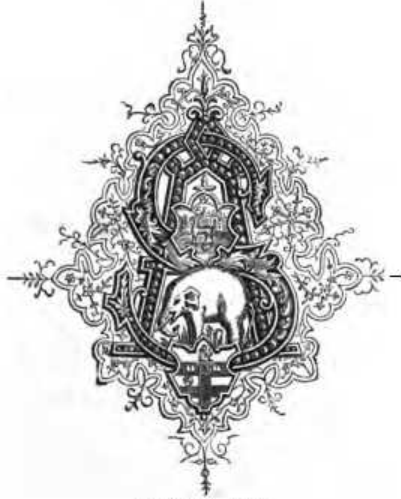
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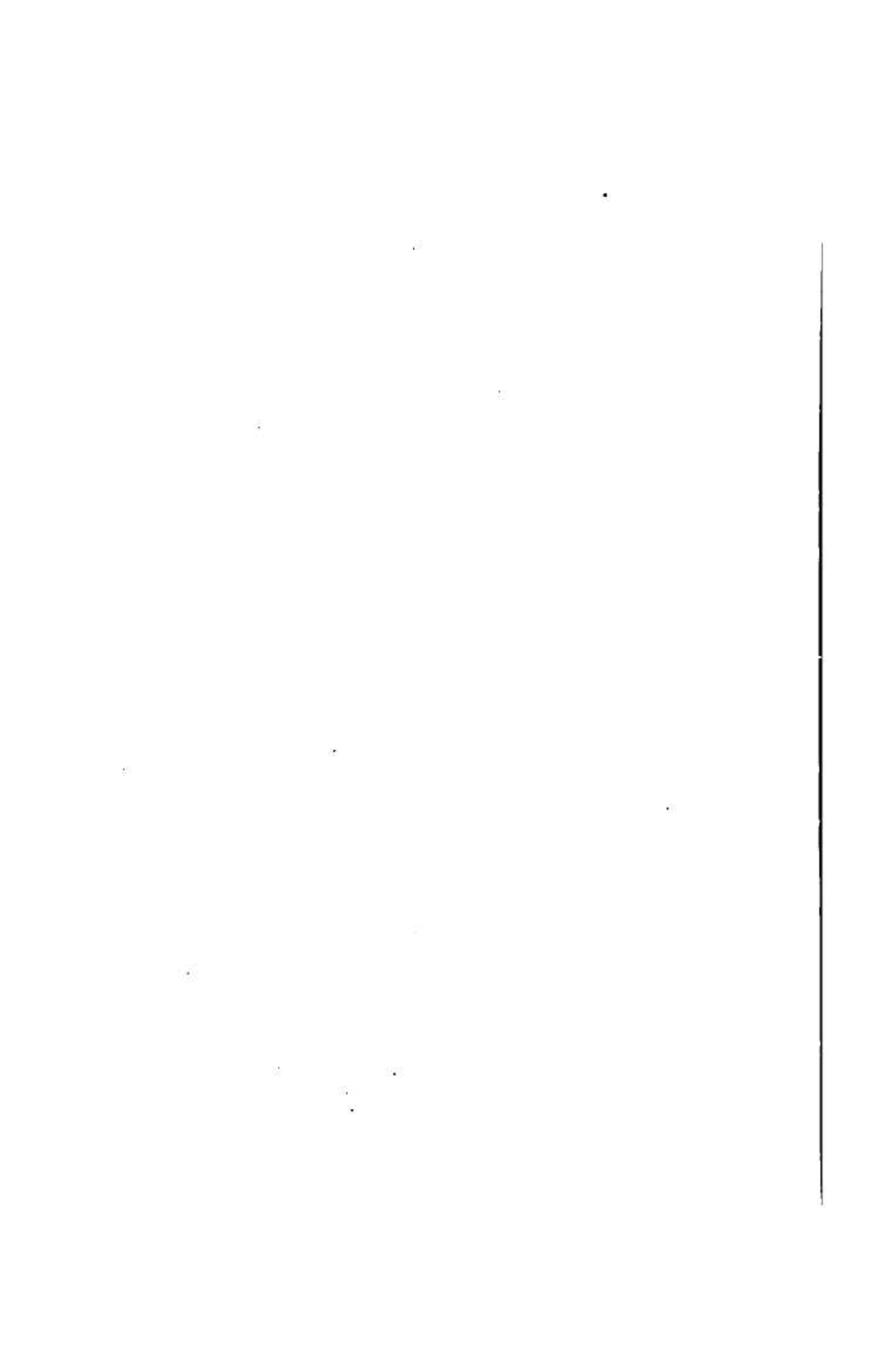
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H. W. BELLEW.

*Hand. 12 June 1937*





## P R E F A C E.

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IN submitting my Grammar of the Pukkhto or Puksho language to the notice of the public, it is necessary that I should offer a few words of explanation as to the object of the Work, and the reasons that have induced me to publish it.

During ten years' service, more or less continuously on the Trans-Indus Frontier of British India, it has often occurred to me as a notable fact, that comparatively very few of the Frontier officials possessed any knowledge of the language of the people they ruled, or at all events, amongst whom they dwelt. And this the more so, as the Pukkhto Works of Vaughan and Raverty had already appeared, and for the past decade, at least, have been well known to Frontier officers.

But, notwithstanding the aid to be derived from these Works in the study of the language of the Afghans, the number of Pukkhto-speaking officers is, nevertheless, at the present time very small, though, in all probability, greater now than at any preceding period since our tenure of the Trans-Indus States.

This fact was exemplified in a remarkable manner, and their paucity no less severely felt, during the Ambela campaign at the close of 1863, at which time the officials with the British Force who could claim any acquaintance with the Afghan language were to be counted on the digits.

In January 1863, examinations in the Pukkhto language were

first held; and in the following month, a money reward of 500 rupees was sanctioned by Government for candidates who should pass successfully in the colloquial. Subsequently, in 1865, the test for Pukkhto was assimilated *mutatis mutandis* to that for the second standard Hindūstānī. With this encouragement on the part of Government, some half-dozen candidates have passed in the colloquial, but none, as far as I am aware, have as yet passed in the newly fixed test.

Apart from the absence, until recently, of encouragement on the part of Government, there have been few inducements to the study of the Pukkhto language, which has always been looked upon as an incomprehensible jargon, beset by difficulties and irregularities that rendered its acquirement a hard task to the stranger; whilst by many its study was considered a useless waste of time and trouble, owing to the limited period of their sojourn amongst the people by whom it is spoken.

Few, in consequence, have taken the trouble to enter upon its study, and the Pukkhto has remained to the present time, practically a neglected and unknown language; and thus have been prolonged the errors in regard to it, which at first resulted in ignorance or in an insufficient acquaintance with the language.

During my residence amongst the Afghans I have, times without number, heard both gentry and peasantry, as well as members of the soldiery, deplore their misfortune in not being able to meet with an official acquainted with their language, to whom they could appeal in matters affecting their interests more or less gravely (under circumstances in which their welfare or otherwise depended on the decision of a civil or military officer, when he acted as judge in the one case, or to whom they were subordinate in the other), and lament their own helplessness in the matter, owing to ignorance on their part of Hindūstānī, which is the medium of intercourse by means of interpreters, who are too often and too justly complained of as incompetent, and unscrupulous withal.

In the spring of 1864, shortly after the close of the Ambela

campaign, it occurred to me that, with the practical knowledge I had acquired of their language during a prolonged residence amongst the Afghans, I might be able to compile a Grammar and Dictionary of the Pukkhto language, with the view to render its study a more interesting occupation, and its acquirement a less difficult task than either had, from all appearances, hitherto proved.

With this object I sought the aid of the Pukkhto Grammars by Vaughan and Raverty, and with an increased stock of information derived from them and other sources, set to work to arrange my materials somewhat on the model of Forbes' Hindūstānī Grammar. The results are shown in the following pages.

One principal aim, both in the Grammar and Dictionary, has been to show the regularity of its grammatical construction as regards the former, and the affinity in this respect of the Pukkhto to the Hindī, whilst in respect to the latter, the words (which, as is shown in the Dictionary, are for the most part derived from the Persian and Hindī) have been analysed and reduced to their originals, and thus identified with others already familiar (for it is here taken for granted that the student of Pukkhto is already acquainted with the Hindūstānī), by which means is removed one of the greatest difficulties in the study of the language.

Bearing these points in mind, then, a careful attention to the changes, noted in the following pages, will soon dissipate the dreaded difficulties of the Pukkhto, which are in truth more apparent than real, and by the proficient in Hindūstānī, or one acquainted with Persian, may be very easily overcome with a little ordinary application.

The Pukkhto, in fact, like the Hindī, is a dialect of the Sanskrit as regards its grammatical construction, only Persianised in respect to the bulk of the words composing it. That is to say, in Pukkhto the nouns take corresponding inflections (where such do occur) in the oblique cases to those under like circumstances in the Hindī, whilst its adjectives and verbs undergo the same kind of, or corresponding, inflections for