

TWENTY FIVE YEARS OF RESEARCH WORK OF SINDHOLOGY

(Written on occasion of Silver Jubilee of Sindhology, 1989)

By

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In the opinion of present writer the Research Work on Sindhology can in brief be categorised in the following groups, irrespective of its original charter.

1. Collection of published material.

Collection of raw material (non-fictional) on Sindh in the form of published books in any language and making it available for research to students, teachers, scholars and others interested. The same is its function for other categories 2-17 discussed below:

2. Collection of raw material on Sindh (non-fictional) in form of manuscripts in any language.

3. Collection of religious, and professional materials, sanads, treaties engagements etc.

Collection of raw material on Sindh, written in the form of religious and professional texts, covering the religions hitherto practised in Sindh, occupations or professions like: medicine, agriculture, engineering and etc. The official sanads, letters, and records is another material of importance.

4. Collection of fictional literature, poetry.

Collection of literature (fictional and poetry) on Sindh.

5. **Collection of oral literature on Sindh, written or oral music, poetry, phraseology including presently unprintable oral material.**
6. **Photographing archaeological material.**
Photographing of ancient settlements and objects of interest found from these sites.
7. **Photographing of professionals tools and the professionals.**
Photographing various implements, tools and aids used in various occupations.
Photographs of people working on different aspects and phases, of various trades.
8. **Collection of objects of art.**
Collection of objects of art, decoration used in housing, ornaments, clothing, jewellery and geometrical patterns in building and study of decorating patterns, the objectives or thought behind them and interpreting of these patterns as borrowings, from ancient lingering cultures or new innovations.
9. **Epigraphical collection.**
Epigraphical collection i.e., inscriptions and numismatical material on Sindh and also from coins. .
10. **Collection of painting.**
Collection of paintings, modern or ancient, or photographing ethane.
11. **Collection of materials on fauna, flora and geological samples.**
Collecting information on flora and fauna of Sindh from literature and other-wise and also geological samples.
12. **Preparation of bibliographies.**
Preparing bibliographies and source material on Sindh.

13. Preparation of biographies.

Collection of biographical sketches, of people of Sindh or those who have worked on Sindh, during the past and present and also collection of biographies of rulers, administrators, soffis, poets, writers, reformers and others, in the form of National Biographical Dictionaries, chronologically.

14. Material on day to day life on Sindh.

Collecting material on the day to day life i.e., way of living of people in the past and present, their dwellings, furniture and fixtures, photographing of classic Sindhi or classic borrowed furniture, including collection of its working drawings and plans, housing materials and methods in building them.

15. Human and animal food and methods of preparation.

Collection of information on human and animal food, in the past and present, methods of collection, sources of supply and methods of preparation.

16. Publications.

Publishing book and articles on above subjects, in the form of journals bulletins, books and etc.

17. Museums and exhibitions.

Organising exhibitions of above materials and other similar function.

ACHIEVEMENTS.

Having said all above, we have to look into its achievements in the past 25 years. I have seen that some work has been done in all the above fields, although little in some, more in others and negligible in the third.

The reasons are simple. This type of work is highly specialised, and there is no limit either to the knowledge or scope. Sindhology as it is constituted, works under its director and is one man-show. His being responsible to Vice Chancellor of the university, is purely for financial and administrative control, but technically he is the boss.

Attempts to have a board to govern it have failed, as the board was redundant without any powers. A few sub-committees formed worked as endorsing signatories to the actions, already taken by the Director. Since the Board was arbitrarily constituted by a Vice-Chancellor for a fixed period, the succeeding Vice Chancellors not considering it a binding, did not re-constitute the Board. Even during the period it worked, some members were not notified at all, the others did not get agenda, or minutes and thus members got disinterested.

What needed to be done, was permanent committees for various functions and each committee having scope to enlarge or add in each of the above fields, members from reputed provincial, inter-provincial organisations or international specialists. A small office of one secretary could have corresponded on behalf of these committees. Since there is no dearth of material in all these fields, a system to collect material could have been built in a few years and the rest would have followed with certainty.

I can put my comment on activities 1 to 17 of the Sindhology as under:

1. Published material.

Some 70,000 volumes of printed material is reported to have been collected. This is an enormous material, but we really do not know what it is, what is collected, what is not collected and what needs to be collected, as in 25 years no library cards were made and maintained. I have a humble library on Sindh. I have a complete catalogue, as well as catalogue cards. It has also been put on computer. With help of catalogue cards, indexes, it is easy to work on any aspect of Sindh.

2. Manuscripts.

Some work in this field is an collection of manuscripts done, we cannot say how much, as the list of acquisition has not been printed. Recent collection by Dr. Dur Muhammad Pathan, from the living scholars of un-printed and printed material is comandmenable.

3. Religious and professional manuscripts.

Some material has been collected, but enormous material in libraries at Pir Jhando, Lowari Pir, and many other places, needs photographing or being brought on micro film or microfiche. Some of these may be photocopied, as there is every danger of material at these places, getting lost for ever. The books on Uniani system of medicine were difficult to get in the past. The prescriptions in them, were considered as highly professional secrets. Now that the Hakims have virtually lost their practice among masses, and their concentration is limited to, many incurable and complex auctions of human-body, these books have lost their utility. It is high time to collect all possible written material from these sources, before it is destroyed.

4. Collection literature (fiction and poetry).

There are more than 3000 Sindhi books in India Office Library and more 6000 in the Library of Congress collected from India and Pakistan (before 1977). Most of them are fiction. Sindhology having been directed by a professor of Sindhi for 21 years, will have a large collection of this material, but whether it is systematic, can be known after catalogue cards are ready.

One typist trained by me for an hour in 1983 was put on the job to prepare catalogues of my books, completed cards for about 12000 books, of which 6000 on Sindh and 6000 technical in 50-60 working days, at rate of 200 to 250 books per day of 8 hours. The included number of pages, index, charts, drawings, photographs and maps in each book. Work was completed in no more than 2 months.

5. Oral literature.

We have no knowledge about its collection. Some individuals in interviews have been taped, but it is the oral literature meant here, but not biographical material. Some work on collection of music is definitely in progress, but none has thought of unprintable or un-circulateable books. The worlds largest collection of such books in 'The British Museums' and 'Vatican'. Sindhology can have proud privilege, if they collect this type of material on Sindh from Sindh or else where.

6. Ancient settlements.

Very limited work is done on photographing of ancient settlements and objects found from them. This can supplement the work of the Department of Archaeology of the Government of Pakistan and the latter can indicate sites known to them, but not photographed. I had located about 100 such sites in Kotri Barrage in early 60's and communicated to Dr. F.A. Khan, who got them surveyed in late 60's by Dr. Rafique Mughal.

7. Photographing professional and their tools.

This is a raw field in which new professional tools are replacing old tools very fast and urgent action is needed. For example; bullockart is disappearing as Suzuki has killed it. Boats started disappearing with railways, but they have been hit the worst, by truck service on roads. Bullock drawn implements have given way to the tractor drawn. Power operated tools are coming up in carpentry and so on. Some work has been done, but it has to be systematic, profession and sequence wise, showing all operations.

8. Objects of arts.

Lot of work has been done in collection of wear of the people i.e., ornaments dresses, rallies, shawls, ajaraks, topis and etc., of symbolic Sindhi culture, but work of on collection of geometrical patterns or art in building and art and interpreting, its meaning, borrowings and new invocations, has not been touched upon.

In the opinion of present writer the decorative geometrical pattern art on Jam Nizamuddin's tomb, has been a guide line, as well as inspiration and fountain head for all decorative art of Arghoon, Tarkhan, Mughal, Kalhora and Talpur periods and patterns on the original stone were either copied in stone or were transferred to tiles in many cases. Pattern on some Ajraks, and the embroidery work are adaptations from Mohenjo Daro trefoils or quarter foils of the later pre-historical period.

9. Epigraphy.

Inscription on many monuments are disappearing, due to the lack of conservation. Photographing of all inscriptions at Thatta, Rohri, Sukkur, Larkana, Mian Nasir, Sehwan, Nasarpur, Hyderabad, Chawkhandi, scattered 15-17th century graves, ancient mosques and etc., within the Archaeological Department's jurisdiction, or outside, could be photographed and interpreted by Sindhology, as part of the preservation and record. Sindhology has a number of coin collection, but it is well known that Hyderabad Sharoff Bazar is the leading city in Pakistan in the supply of forged historical coins. It is a highly technical job to distinguish forged from non-forged. I cannot do any justice to it, but one has to be careful as many of coins were purchased from Hyderabad.

10. Paintings.

Sindhology has collected some modern paintings but there is collection of more than 1000 paintings on Sindh in UK libraries and museums. There is also a private collection. I had listed some of the UK paintings numbering about 500 for an article for 'Sindh Quarterly'. Systematic photographing of these can be done.

11. Fauna and Flora.

Karachi University has catalogued flora. Forest Department and Sindh Wild Life Board have photographed many fauna. Sindhology can borrow and duplicate the copies. My

wife has collected information on 4,500 flora, 45 mammals and 1500 birds of Sindh. We can readily supply this to Sindhology.

12. Bibliographies.

Sindhology's two bibliographies on Sindhi literature, 1947 to 1973 and 1973-1978 are a catalogue of their library acquisition rather than systematic collection. My own 'Source Material on Sindh' was based on rare material, I was able to lay hands on or read up to 1969, when it went to press and came out 8 year later in 1977. All the above three bibliographies thus are out-dated. No attempt has been done to prepare bibliography of printed material from 1853-1947. Either Sindhi Departments of Karachi and Sindh Universities or Sindhology are the organisations which should undertake this work.

13. Biographies.

Some biographical sketches have been written for preservation by Sindhology. What is required to be done is 'National Biographical Dictionary' covering the whole of past of Sindh, rather than only the contemporary period.

14. Material on day to day life in Ancient Sindh.

Some material of archaeological interests on life pattern in Sindh has been collected, but not properly catalogued, giving site of supply, exact location, strata, period, age of the object, type and its utility. This needs help of a specialists. Sindhology has not been able to find any one so far.

Some photographing of house hold articles of utility has been done by Sindhology, but less so, of furniture and fixtures of the past. In the early Victorian-era, Prince Albert

organised an exhibition of past 400 years European furniture at Grystal Place. Since then, Museums world over, started collecting antique pieces of furniture. This is what is to be aimed at, but start can be done with photographs. There are antique pieces of furniture owned by many families, but these are being replaced fast, by modern cheap and fancy versions. It certainly is very late, but quick efforts can help in its preservation on colour photographs. This will fall into 3 or 4 categories. EarlySindhi classical (Talpur furniture), Victorian, early 20th century and, modern furniture. Same applies to furnishings. Common man's furniture and furnishing have gone a little change. Some furniture of late last century or early 20th century, can be seen in some old institutes and offices. Since its collections and housing will require space and funds, to start with, photographs and working drawings can be made for preservation.

15. Human and animal food.

To know about food of past is difficult without archaeologists spade, and specially without at least one experimental trench in each of the large number of archaeological sites, but the material already collected from 8000 BC to 2000 BC by archaeologists can be elaborated and published.

16. Publications.

Journal "Sindhological Studies", is doing an excellent job of research on the past of Sindh. Thanks to its honorary editor Mazhar Yousif. But the activities of Institute of Sindhology can be projected and served thorough only, if there are more journals on Sindh, for example:

- a) Journal "Source Material on Sindh", for item 1 to 15 above.
- b) Journal "Sindhi Literature and Literary History". The present Sindhi Adab can be geared to do so.
- c) Journal of Sindh Epigraphy (archaeology inscriptions, ancient architecture, numismatics and anthropology).

- d) Journal “Sindh Biography”.
- e) Journal “Sindh Historical”.
- f) Journal “Sindh economics”.
- g) Journal “Ancient Technologies”.

These journals will published series of arcticles and in a few years, enough new material will be collected for advanced research.

These journals can not be a few-men show. Participation of outside bodies is required for example:

a) Sindhlogical studies.

Departments of archaeology at Karachi, Sindh and Khairpur Universities and Department of Archaeology Government of Pakistan and also History Departments.

b) Sindhi literature.

Karachi, Sindh and Khairpur Universities.

c) Epigraphy.

All universities in Sindh.

d) Biography.

All universities in Sindh.

e) History.

All universities in Sindh.

f) Arts.

Same as (a) and also departments of fine arts at Sindh and Karachi Universities.

g) Economics.

All universities and planting and finance departments government of Sindh.

h) Ancient technologies.

Two Engineering universities, engineering college Nawabshah, Sindh Agriculture University, Agriculture Department of Government of Sindh and Industries Department.

If for each journal, editorial panel, has specialists, from all these institutes, sense of participation will create interest and material can be systematically collected. Six new journals of some 60 pages each issued quarterly, shall not cost more than Rs.300,000, annually and Sindhology should be willing to bear this cost.

17. Sindhology has to be extremely cautious on publications of books. Manuscripts received from different authors. They would need through checking and probably also re-writing and some editing. Recent books of Sindhology on history of Sindh, old reprints of written more than 50 years ago between 1931 and 1937, without any change was not an advisable policy, as material on Sindh's history collected in the past 50 years is 100 times more, than what was known about it, in early thirties. Same applies to other publications of Pithawala, Marriwalla, Crowe, Postan and others. They should have been reprinted with exhaustive notes, pointing out errors, new developments and changes. This function could only be achieved by suitable committees and involvement of specialists in various subjects.

Sindhology has published a number of books, which in general could be categorised as:

- i) Bibliographies.
- ii) Translations.
- iii) Original works.

- iv) College text books.
- v) Selections of short stories.
- vi) Books on linguistics.
- vii) History books of other countries.
- viii) Travel accounts.
- ix) Arts.
- x) History of Sindh.

A brief review on these publication is:

- a) Bibliographies have been discussed above.
- b) Translations should cover the translations of historical, archaeological or other works mentioned in 1 to 17 above and not really translations of poetical work from Sindhi to Urdu, is no longer a low priority. Translation of Bu Ali Qalander's Persian works in Sindhi, for general information, can at the best be squeezed in to functions of Sindhology.
- c) Original works of Sarfraz Kalhora, Lutufullah Qadari and Sayed of Daira are within the scope of Sindhology and are standard works.
- d) University or college text books on politics, sociology and economics are out side the scope or work of Sindhology.
- e) A book on linguistics is within the scope and is of some standard.
- f) Selections of poems and short stories are out side scope of Sindhology as it is function of department of Sindhi.
- g) History of Moorish Spain in Sindhi, does not justify even a remote link with functions of Sindhology.
- h) Traveller accounts of Stein McMurdo, Delhoste and Crow were travels taken between 1801 to 1841. Their information on Sindh was distorted due to very short stay and lack of authentic information. These should have been printed with elaborate notes, correcting names and up to dating other information. The institute should have taken care of it.
- i) Book on Sindh's music, a compilation of 4-5 articles is incomplete and inadequate to give information on Sindh.

Thus publications of Sindhology, some of them M.A. Monographs range from below average to average and only a few of them, like that of Professor Qadri are a real good work.

- j) On history of Sindh, 5 out-of-date booklets of Sindhi Adabi Society printed between 1931-1937, is what Sindhology can claims amount standing work, but all are out of date.

In general the most authentic work of Sindhology as can be presented to the public, is the books. Out of some 250 odd publication, barring one dozen, the rest are substandard and should not have been allowed to see light of the day. The journal Sindhological studies is of course out-standing contribution.