



DIMLĪ

DIM(D)Ī (or *Zāzā*), the indigenous name of an Iranian people living mainly in eastern Anatolia, in the Dersim region (present-day Tunceli) between Erzincan (see [ARZENJĀN](#)) in the north and the Muratsu (Morādsū, Arm. Aracani) in the south, the far western part of historical Upper Armenia (Barjr Hayk'). They are also found in Bingöl, Muş, and the province of Bitlis, as well as around Diyarbakir (Dīārbakr), Siverek, and Sivas (for details, see Lerch, p. xxi; Haykuni, p. 84; Andranik, pp. 111-16; Hadank, pp. 8-9; Erevanian, pp. 1-20; Halajian, 1973, pp. 9-100; Gasparian, p. 195; Bruinessen, 1978, p. 30). About 300,000 Dimlīs live in western Europe, mainly in Germany. Some of them are political refugees. The total population of Dimlīs at present is unknown, but it can be estimated at 3-4 million.

The people call themselves Dimlī or Dīmīla, apparently derived from Deylam (Andranik, p. 161 n. 1; Hadank, pp. 2, 11-12; Minorsky, 1932, p. 17; idem, 1965, p. 159 n. 21), as appears from Armenian *delmik*, *dīmik*, and the like (Yuzbashian, pp. 146-51), which must be derived from **dēlmīk* "Deylamite." The Deylamite origin of the Dimlīs is also indicated by the linguistic position of Dimlī (see below).

Among their neighbors the Dimlī are known mainly as *Zāzā*, literally "stutterer," a pejorative perhaps owing to the relative abundance of sibilants and affricates in their language (Hadank, p. 1; MacKenzie, p. 164; cf. *zāz'ā* "dumb" in Arm. dialects of the Vaspurakan area). Armenians also call them *Delmik*, *Dīmik*, *Dmīk* (see below), *Zaza* (Alevi) *K'rdēr*, *Č'ark'əč'ik'* (Halajian, *Dersimi azgagrakan nyut'er* [DAN], passim; Mkrtč'ian, pp. 54-55), and *Dužik* or



Dužik K'rd̄er, the last after the name of a mountain in Dersim (Spiegel, II, p. 65). The Armenian term K'rd̄er, literally “Kurds,” in this context denotes social status or mode of life, rather than nationality. Even those Armenian authors who use the term K'rd̄er explicitly distinguish the Dimlī from the ethnic Kurds (Halajian, *DAN*, p. 242; for similar use of the term in the Middle Ages, see Minorsky, 1943, p. 75). In Turkish the Dimlī are known as Dersimli and Qezelbāš (i.e., Shi'ite).

The appearance of the Dimlī in the areas they now inhabit seems to have been connected, as their name suggests, with waves of migration of [Deylamites ii](#) from the highlands of Gīlān during the 10th-12th centuries. Unlike the Kurds, the Dimlīs are mainly sedentary cultivators, though animal husbandry occupies a considerable place in their economic activities. They are especially renowned as horticulturists.

Dimlī society is tribal, a sociopolitical, territorial, and economic unit organized according to genuine or putative patrilineage and kinship, with a characteristic internal structure. It encompasses forty-five subtribes, each divided into smaller units. The most prominent are Ābāsān, Āgājān, Ālān, Bāmāsūr(ān), Baḳtīār(lī), Dūīk, Davrēš-Gulābān, Davrēš-Jamālān, Haydarān(lī), Hasanān(lī), Korēšān, Mamikī, and Yūsufān. The names of some small subtribes consist of patronymics combined with the Turkish word *uṣak* (servant), for example, Ā(r)slānušāgī, Ābāsušāgī, Farhādušāgī, Šāmušāgī, Tōpūzušāgī, and Ḳōčušāgī (Spiegel, I, p. 758; Andranik, pp. 156-57; Molyneux-Seel, p. 68; Dersimi, pp. 18-19, 24-28). The chiefs of the most important subtribes, called *seyīds* (*sayyeds*), are both religious and secular clan leaders and thus exercise considerable influence upon the tribesmen.

Religion

As the names Alevi (‘Alawī) and Qezelbāš imply, most Dimlīs are Shi'ites, often considered extremist, though some are Sunnis. The religious beliefs of the majority, in common with those of most Shi'ite extremist groups, are characterized by great variety. They venerate ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭāleb as the most important incarnation of God, but they also profess an admixture of indigenous primitive and some Christian beliefs. Within this framework the cult practice of the Dimlī inhabitants of each individual region displays specific features, reflecting the absence of a centralized religious institution, like those in Christianity and Islam, that might standardize cult practice and dogma. God is known as Hū/ūmāy, Hōmā, and Haq (Adontz, pp. 11-12; Tēr



Minasian, p. 22; Asatrian, 1991, p. 10; idem and Gevorgian, p. 502).

The Dimlīs themselves call their religion by the Turkish term *yōl-ušāgī* “followers of the [true] path” (Molyneux-Seel, p. 64), a designation with mystical overtones. The influence of folk Sufism on Dimlī religious beliefs is so thoroughly blended with indigenous elements as to permit no definite identification. It may be reflected, however, in the hierarchy of the priesthood, the structure of the community, and the cult of Xizir (Kāzer, Kežr) İlyās; in the last, however, elements of the Armenian Surb Sargis (Saint Sergius) are also recognizable. The feast of Kizir, considered an incarnation of ‘Alī/God, coincides with ‘Ali-bayrami (the feast of ‘Alī), also known as Ağa-bayrami (God’s feast) among the Qezelbāš of the Mākū region, as well as with the Armenian feast of Surb Sargis (Asatrian and Gevorgian, p. 503 n. 25; Müller, pp. 29-30; see also Abeghian, pp. 95-97). It is usually celebrated in February. Christian elements are assimilated to Shi‘ite conceptions (as in the example of Xizir) or have been adopted directly from the Armenian population of Dersim, for example, the rites of communion, baptism, and worship at Christian shrines and churches (e.g., the Sūrb Kārāpēt monastery, Hālvōrī vānk in the Dūīkbābā mountains, and Dēr Ōvā [Arm. Tēr Ohan, Saint John] monastery near Sēlpūs/zdāg). There are also perceptible remnants of “nature worship,” including worship of mountains (e.g., Mūnzūrdāg, Dūīkbābā, Sēlpūs/z, Sēl), rocks, springs (e.g., Kānīyē Hazratē Xizirī “the spring of Kežr” on the slopes of Dūīkbābā and Kānīyē ānmāhūtyan “the spring of immortality” at the foot of Sēlpūs), trees (mainly oaks), and animals (snakes, rabbits, etc.). The cult of the snake, considered a holy creature, is most distinctive. It has been symbolized by a stick called *čūē haqī* (God’s stick), the top of which is carved in the form of a snake’s head. It is preserved in a green cloth bag suspended from a wooden pillar (*ērkyan*) in the sanctuary of the village of Kištīm near Dersim. The stick is believed to be a piece of the rod of Moses and the bag a copy of the one carried by St. John the Baptist (Halajian, *DAN*, pp. 475-80; Molyneux-Seel, p. 67). The *čūē haqī* is used in cult ceremonies on the feast of Xizir İlyās, which is celebrated after a three-day fast, during which, according to some reports (Mkrtč‘ian, p. 51), even cattle and other livestock are not fed. On this day thousands of pilgrims gather in the village to gaze upon the holy staff (*ēvlīyā keštīmī* “the saint of Kištīm”; for details, see Dersimi, pp. 97-98; Halajian, *DAN*, pp. 475-80; Haykuni, p. 133; Erevanian, p. 79; Müller, pp. 27-28; Asatrian and Gevorgian, p. 508).

One noteworthy trait of Dimlī religious rituals is the equal participation of



women, which has often served as an excuse for accusing them of ritual promiscuity and calling them by derogatory names (e.g., *čirāḡ-kušān*, *čirāḡ-sōndurān*, *mūm-sōndurān*, *kurōs-kušān* “candle extinguishers”) suggesting participation in orgies (e.g., Fontanier, p. 168; Mkrtč'ian, p. 51).

The Dimlīs' profound hatred of the Turks, in contrast to their mild and friendly attitude toward Armenians, may partly reflect the fact that they, like the [Ahl-e Ḥaqq](#) and Yazīdīs, rigorously deny that they are Muslims and stress their claim to follow a distinct religion (Bruinessen, 1991, p. 12; Molyneux-Seel, p. 64). Antagonism to the Turks has also acquired a clear nationalistic character, which is currently being expressed in the powerful upsurge of a Dimlī separatist movement in Turkey (Taławarian, p. 79; Asatrian, 1992a, pp. 104-05; idem, 1992b, pp. 8-9; idem, 1993, p. 7).

Beside special public places for performing their religious ceremonies (*tekke*), the Dimlīs, like the Yazīdīs, also worship in private houses, including those of their religious leaders (Taławarian, p. 64; Müller, p. 228; Asatrian, 1992a, p. 105). They are mostly monogamous, though, according to some authors, polygamy, limited to no more than four wives, is also exercised. Divorce is strictly forbidden. Dimlīs do not practice circumcision (Trowbridge, p. 348; Müller, p. 25; Asatrian, 1992a, p. 106; Mkrtč'ian, p. 55).

Four clans (Āḡājān, Bāmāsūrān, Kurēšān, and Davrēš-Jamālān) are the traditional custodians of Dimlī religious doctrine. Religious offices are hereditary. The highest, that of *pīrī-pīrān* (cf. Pers. *pīr-e pīrān*, elder of elders) may also be conferred by ordination within the hereditary line. Successively lower levels are *pīr*, *seyīd*, *dede*, *muršīd*, and *rayvar* (cf. Pers. *rahbar*). Such terms as “mulla” and *ulem* (Ar. and Pers. *‘ālem*) are never used in non-Sunni Dimlī religious affairs. The *pīrī-pīrān* is the theocratic head of the community. His wife (*ana*) enjoys almost equal rights in managing family affairs (Halajian, *DAN*, pp. 464-65). *Dedes* and *seyīds*, who never shave or have their hair cut, perform wedding and funeral rites (Haykuni, p. 86). *Rayvars*, the lowest class of clergy, have the social status of ordinary laymen (*ṭālebs*). They are not paid for their services, which include visiting members of the congregation, performing daily religious rites, and ensuring that the religious and ethical norms of the community are observed. They can punish the guilty but are not allowed to show clemency. Only the *pīrī-pīrān*, upon the application of the supreme council (*jamā'at*), a mixed secular and clerical body, may forgive sins. The nonreligious affairs of the *rayvars* are attended to by their families or lay volunteers (Halajian, pp. 463 ff.).



A curious social aspect of the Dimlī community is the institution of *mošāḥeb* (perhaps “holy brotherhood”). Similar institutions, called *birē āxiratē* and *xūškā āxiratē* (brotherhood and sisterhood of the next world), and *šarṭ-e eqrār* exist also among the Yazīdīs and Ahl-e Ḥaqq respectively (Asatrian, 1985; idem and Gevorgian, p. 507).

Language

Dimlī (Zāzā) belongs to the Northwest Iranian language group (Windfuhr; see [DIALECTOLOGY](#)). It is known from several dialects, Sīvērēk, Kōsā, Čabāḳčūr, Kīgī, Bujāq, Ōvājīg, and others, which, however, do not differ greatly.

Phonology. The Dimlī phonological system is the same in all dialects, with only slight variations. The vowel system consists of eight phonemes and two diphthongs (Cabolov), which are transcribed variously in the recorded texts ([Chart 1](#)).

The long vowel phonemes have no significant allophones, whereas the range of allophones of the short vowels and diphthongs is quite wide: /a/: [a, i, ē/ē]; /i/: [ī/ī, a, e]; /u/: [o, ū], etc.; /au/: [au, aū, ou, eu]; /ai/: [ai, ēi, aī], etc.

The Dimlī consonant phonemes are shown in [Chart 2](#).

The affricates *c*, *j*, and *c'* and the aspirated series *p'*, *t'*, *k'* are found mainly in northern dialects (Erzincan, Dersim). Armenian influence is the most likely explanation of the existence of these phonemes, which are not otherwise found in modern West-Iranian languages (Vahman and Asatrian, p. 268). The /čá/ represents a mediopalatal surd affricate (= –tš-, Arm. č, Kurmānjī č'), which is apparently common to all Dimlī dialects. Historically Dimlī *j* corresponds to Middle Iranian *ǰ*, while čá, *c*, and *c'* all continue Middle Iranian č; for instance, *jau* “barley” (< *Mīr. *ǰau), *c/c'im* “eye” (< *čehm < *čašm), and *c'ilā* “lamp, candle” (< *čirāg); *cīcag* “flower” < *čičag, cf. Turk. çiçek, etc.).

The opposition between a rolled *r* and a simple flap *r* is found also in Kurmānjī. The marginal phonemes /ʃ/ and /ħ/ occur in some dialects under the influence of Kurmānjī Kurdish.

In certain dialects older š is commonly represented by *s*, for example, *sit* or *šit* “milk” (cf. Parth. šift), *gōs* or *gōš* “ear” (cf. Pers. gūš), *hū/ūsk* “dry” (cf. Pers. košk, Kurdish hišk), *mask(a)* “churning bag” (cf. OPers. maškā-, NPer. mašk); *sim* “drink” (probably from Mīr. *šām- from older *čyāma-, cf. NPer. ā-šām-



Khotanese *tsām-* “to digest”); and *sōn-* or *šōn-* “flow” (possibly from **xšaudna-*). Conversely *š* also replaces original *s*, for example, *šīr* “garlic” (cf. NPers., Kurdish *sīr*). There is also worth mentioning the initial *s-* in *sol(a)*, “salt,” which is probably also from *š-* (cf. Parth. *šwryn* “salt[y],” NPers. *šūr*); one, however, cannot exclude the possibility of its original character (cf. Mid. Pers. *sōr*, Baḳtīārī, *sūr*, Balūčī *sōr*, Brahui *sōr*; see Henning, 1947, p. 55). Of more uncertain interpretation is *ša* “black,” whose *š* may be from **sy* (cf. Sogd. *š’w* but Parth. *sy’w*, NPers *sīāh*), and *rāšt* or *rāst* “right” (cf. Parth. *r’št* but NPers. *rāst*, Kurdish *rāst*). A similar situation is seen in the language of those Armenians of Dersim who belong to the so-called Mirak’ian tribe, in which Armenian *š* has become *s*, for instance, *sun* “dog” < *šun* and *us* “late” < *uš*. In this dialect Armenian *ǰ*, *č*, *č’* have become *j*, *c*, *c’* (e.g., *jur* “water” < *ǰur*, *cut* “chicken” < *čut*, and *c’or* “dry” < *č’or*).

In the dialect of northern Dersim the voiceless and voiced stops *k-*, *g-* are sometimes palatalized in initial position, for instance, *čē* or *kē*, *kaya* “house, home” (cf. NPers. *kada*, Ṭālešī *ka*), *čanā*, *čayna*, *čēnak’* or *k’aynak’* “girl, maiden” (cf. Av. *kainiā-*, Mid. Pers. *kanīg*), and *ǰī* “excrement” (from MIr. **gūh*, cf. Pers. *goh*, Kurdish *gū*).

Morphology. Nouns and pronouns. Two grammatical genders are clearly distinguished in substantives, adjectives, pronouns, and verbal forms. The nominative singular masculine is unmarked; the feminine usually takes the ending short unstressed *-i*. The plural endings are *-(ā)n*, *-ī*, and *-ē* for both genders. There are two cases, direct and oblique, which are distinguished in the singular: masculine *-ī/-∅*, feminine *-ē/-i/-∅*, but not in the plural. The *ežāfa* is masculine singular *-ē/ě/*, *-ō/*, *-dē/*, *-di/*, *-dō* and feminine singular *-(y)ā/ă*, *-dā/ă(y)*. The plural form for both genders is usually *-ē*, as in *nē p’ōstālē min* “these my shoes.”

The two cases are distinguished in the personal pronouns, as well (Table 32). In addition, the third person pronouns have a possessive form derived from Old Iranian **haca* “from” plus the oblique form of the pronoun.

To be compared with the possessive forms are Kurdish *žē*, Aftarī *ǰūn*, Tākistānī *ǰā*, *ǰanā*, Ṭālešī *čay*, *čavōn*, Semnāni masc. *žō*, fem. *žin*, and the like.

Verbs. The verbal system is based on two stems, present and past, which correspond to the older present stem and past (passive) participle. The present tense is formed from the present stem plus the formant *-an-/* *-(i)n-* derived



from the Old Iranian present participle in **ant(a)-* (cf. Pers. *-anda*) for instance, *barm-an-* “weep, cry” (Parth. *bram-*). If the stem ends in *r* this is assimilated to the following *n*: *kar-* but *kan-an-* “do,” **yar-* but *yan-n-* “come.” The present stem without *-an-* occurs in the subjunctive (aorist) and imperative, for instance, *karō* “may he be.” Some verbs take the preverb *bi-* in the subjunctive and imperative, for instance, *bērī* “come!” The imperfect is made from the present stem plus the suffix *-ā/ānī* or *-inī* without personal endings, for example, *ti āgayrā-ynī* “you were walking.”

The endings of the present tense (gender marked only in the singular) are shown in [Chart 3](#).

The endings of the past tense are regular. Occasionally the feminine third-person singular of intransitive verbs takes the feminine ending *-i* (masc. *-∅*). The past tense of the transitive verbs takes the so-called “(split) ergative” construction, in which the (logical) direct object is in the direct case and the agent in the oblique case, for example, *t’ō az ašt-ā(n)* “you have left me,” literally, “by-you I left-am” (cf. Kurmānjī *ta az kuštīm* “you have killed me”).

A secondary (regular) conjugation is formed by affixing *-ā-* to the present stem, past stem *-āy-*, for example, *rāmā* “he ran away.”

The passive of transitive verbs is expressed either by periphrastic constructions or by a secondary conjugation (as in Gūrānī and Mokrī Kurdish) formed with the passive morpheme *-ya-*: present stem in *-(y)ēn-*, past stem in *-(i)yā-*. This passive is conjugated as an intransitive verb and is used only when the agent is not expressed or is unknown.

Both the infinitive and the active (present!) participle are formed from the past stem. The infinitive ends in *-ī/īš* from Middle Iranian *-išn* (only exceptionally used with past stems) and the participle in *-ōγ, -ōx*, probably borrowed from the Armenian suffix for the noun of agent *-ol/-oγ*, as intervocalic *k* does not become *x* or *γ* in Dimlī (cf. Asatrian, 1987, p. 160). Examples of the infinitive: *āmāyīš* “to come” (cf. Mid. Pers. *āmadišn*), *kardī/īš* “to do,” *rāmāyīš* “to run away,” *rōtīš* “to sell,” *wandī/īš* “to read,” *wātīš* “to say.” Examples of the present participle: *rāmāyōx* “runner,” *rōtōx* “seller, vendor,” *kardōy* “doer, maker,” *wandōy* “reader.”

A characteristic feature of Dimlī is the use of postposition *-rī, -rā* to form the ablative, as in *harzanī-rī* “from Harzand” (cf. Kurdish where *-rā* expresses the



instrumental).

Linguistic position of Dimlī. After their migration in the Middle Ages, for almost a millennium the Dimlīs had no direct contact with their closest linguistic relatives. Nevertheless, their language has preserved numerous isoglosses with the dialects of the southern Caspian region, and its place in the Caspian dialect group of Northwest Iranian is clear. The Caspian dialects comprise Ṭālešī, Harzan(d)ī, Gūrānī, Gīlakī, Māzandarānī, and some dialects in Tātī-speaking areas and in the area around Semnān. Historically the Caspian dialects belong to the “Northwest Iranian group of languages” and are related to Parthian (see Windfuhr). The isoglosses are of historical phonetic, morphological, and lexical order.

The typically North Iranian and Northwest Iranian phonetic features found in Dimlī include the developments of Indo-European **k* and (Indo-Iranian) **ts* to **s*, **k**w* to **sp*, **g*(*h*) to **z*, **dw*- to *b*- and the preservation of **θr* from Indo-European **tr*. Examples of **s* from Indo-European **k* and Indo-Iranian **ts* include *sa**ra* “year” (cf. Parth. *srd*, Pers. *sāl*), *pas* (cf. Av. *pasu*-), *dis* or *dus* “kind, form” (cf. Mid. Pers. *dēs*), *māsī* “fish” (cf. Skt. *matsya*-, Av. *masīia*-, Pers. *māhī*). Examples of **sp*- from Indo-European **k**w* include *aspār* “horseman” (OIr. **aspa-bāra*-, cf. OPers. *asa-bāra*, Pers. *savār*, Kurdish *siyār*), *āspij/ža* “louse” (cf. Av. **spiš*-, Pers. *šepes̄*). Examples of **z* from Indo-European **g*(*h*) include *zāmā* “son-in-law” (cf. Ṭālešī *zāmā*, Kurdish *zawā*, Pers. *dāmād*), *zān*- “know” (cf. Av. *zanā*-, Pers. *dān*-), *zar**n* “gold” (cf. Av. *zaraniia*-, Pers. *zarr*); *az* “I” (cf. Av. *azəm*), *dēs* and *dēz* “wall” (cf. Av. *daēza*-), *barz* “high” (cf. Av. *bərəzaṅt*-, Pers. *boland*). Examples of *b*- from Old Iranian **dw*- include *bar* “door” (Parth. *br*, but Pers. *dar*), *bīn* “other, this” (cf. Parth. *byd*, but Mid. Pers. *did*, Pers. *dīgar*). Old Iranian **θr* further became **hr*, which in initial position acquired a supporting vowel in the modern languages, as in *hī/īra/ē/i* “three” (cf. Parth. *hry*, Av. *θrāiiō*, versus Pers. *se* < **çaiiah*), but between vowels became *r*, for instance, *mār(i)* “mother” (cf. Av. *māθrō*, gen. of *mātar*-), *āwrā/ā* (cf. Av. *apuθrā*- < **ā-puθra*-, but Kurdish *āvis*, Pers. *ābestan* < **āpuçā*-).

Other typical early Northwest Iranian phonetic features include: Preservation in initial position of Old Iranian **č* and **ǰ* (as *ǰ* or *j* [*dz*]), which in other positions became *č* and *ž* or *z*, respectively, for example, **č*: *či* “what” (cf. Pers. *če*), *čarx* “wheel”; *pōnj* or *pōnǰ* “five” (cf. Pers. *panj*), *rōǰ* “day” (cf. Av. *raocah*-, Pers. *rūz*), *vāǰ*- “say” (cf. Parth. *wāž*-), (*a*)*ǰēr* “downward, below” (cf. Kurdish *žēr*, Pers. *zīr*); (*a*)*ǰōr* “upward, above” (cf. Kurdish *žōr*, Mid. Pers. *azabar*); *lōǰina* “flue, aperture” (cf. Mid. Pers. *rōzan*); *ǰana* or *ǰīina* “woman, wife” (cf. Av. *jaini*-,



Kurdish *žin*, Pers. *zan*), *daž/z* “ache, pain” (from OIr. **dajī*-?).

Dimlī *gōn(i)* “blood” corresponds exactly to Parthian *gwxn*, the relation of which to Old Iranian **wahuni*- (Gūrānī *winī*, *wun*, Pers. *kūn* = Kurdish, all from **xwaun*-, a transformation of OIr. **wahuni*-) is uncertain.

The phonetic isoglosses of Dimlī in modern times overlap to varying degree with those of the Caspian dialects, Kurdish, Persian, the **Central dialects**, and the like (see Henning, 1954, pp. 174-76; Windfuhr). The most characteristic are the following. Initial **x*- became *h*- or was lost, as in Gūrānī, for example Old Iranian initial **x*- became *h*- or was lost, as in *har* “donkey” (Av. *xara*-, Gūrānī, Lorī *har*, versus Kurdish *k’ar*, Pers. *kar*, etc.), *yānī* “spring, well” for **hānī* (Mid. Pers. and Parth. *xānīg*, Gūrānī *hāna*, versus Kurdish *kānī*). Initial **xw*- became *w*-, as in the Kandūlāyī dialect of Gūrānī, for example, *wala* “ash” (versus Kurdish *xwalī* “soil”), *wā/ā(y)* “sister” (versus Pers. *k’vāhar*), *war*- “eat” (versus Pers. *qordan*). Initial **fr*- became **hr*-, which either received a supporting vowel, as in *harā* “wide, far” (versus Pers. *farāk*), or became *r*-, as in *rōtiš* “sell” (also in the Central dialects, versus Pers. *forūkt*).

Survey of typical phonetic developments. Dimlī has preserved the Middle Iranian *majhūl* vowels *ō*, *ē* (cf. *gōs/š* “ear,” *bō(y)* “smell,” *gēs* “hair,” etc.). The corresponding diphthongs are secondary, however; *au* is from older **-aw*-, **-ap*-, **-ab*-, **-ag*-, or **-af*-, whereas *ai* is the result of phonetic combinatory changes.

The Old Iranian voiceless stops **p*, **t*, **k* remained in initial position or became the aspirates *p’*, *t’*, *k’*; **t* and **k* also remained after *s* and *š*, but became *d* and *g* after *r*. Examples of **p* include *pas* “lamb, ram” (see above) and *p’īza* “belly” (cf. Av. **pāzah*- “chest,” Parth. *p’z’h* “in front”). Examples of **t* include *t’au* “fever” (cf. Pers. *tab*), *t’ars* “fear” (Cf. Pers. *tars*), *k’ārd(i)* “knife” (cf. Pers. *kārd*), *p’ōrd* “bridge” (also *p’ird* influenced by Kurdish; cf. Kormānjī *p’ir*, Southern Kurdish *pird*; Pers. *pol*); *ā/āstik*, *ā/āsta* “bone” (cf. Av. *ast*-); *ā/āstāra* “star” (cf. Pers. *setāra*). Examples of **k* include *k’ār* “work” (cf. Pers. *kār*); *čē*, *kaya* “home” (see above); *kū/ūtik* “dog” (cf. Sogd. *’kwty /akuti/*, Oss. *kuj*, Kurdish *kūč’/čik*, etc.), *hū/ūs/šk* “dry” (see above), *varg* “wolf” (cf. Av. *vāhrka*-, Pers. *gorg*); exceptionally *k* remained in *hāk* “egg” (Fārs dialects *hāg*, Kūrī *xeik*).

Between vowels **p* became *-u/-w*-, and **t* became *y* or was lost. Examples of **p* include *āu* “water” (cf. Pers. *āb*); *āwrā/ā* “pregnant” (see above); *šau* “night” (cf. Pers. *šab*); *ārya*, *āyra* “mill” (from OIr. **ār-θry*-? cf. Kurdish *āš*, NPers. *ās-yāb*<



*āç-); *kawtiš* “fall down” (cf. Mid. Pers. *kaft*). Examples of **t* include *čē*, *kaya* “house” (from **kata-*, see above) and *wā(y)* “wind” (cf. NPers. *bād*). Exceptionally we find *d*, as in *jidā* “separated, different” (cf. Kurdish *jihē*, Pers. *jodā*). Note the secondary *-t-* in the group *sr* > *str* in *astiri*, *īštrī* “horn,” as in Kurdish *strī*, from Old Iranian **srū-*.

The Old Iranian voiced stops **b* and **d* are preserved only in initial position, **g* in initial position and in the group **rg*. The group **rd* became *r*. Between vowels the voiced stops were mostly lost. On the palatalization of *g* to *ǰ*, see above. Examples of **b-* include *bō(y)* “smell” (cf. Pers. *bū*), *biz/ža* “goat” (cf. Pers. *boz*), *b(i)raw(i)* “eyelash” (< **bruwa-*; cf. Pers. *abrū*), *aspār* “horseman” (OIr. **aspa-bāra-*). Examples of **d* include *darg* “long” (cf. Av. *darəya-*, Pers. *dīr*), *pāi* “foot” (cf. Av. *pād-*, Pers. *pā*), *saṛa* (see above), *var(a)* or *val(a)* “neck” (but NPers. *galū*, Bakhtiārī *gyēl*, Māzandarāni and Gīlakī *gē/ēl*); *zara* “heart” (cf. Av. *zərəδaiia-*, but Gūrānī *zil*, Pers. *del*), *gara* or *gara* “complaint” (but Pers. *gela*, Kurdish *gīlī*), *k’ōl(i)* “hornless (goat)” (from OIr. **kṛdu-*?). It should be noted that Dimlī words with *-i-* before *r/l*, as in *ādir* “fire,” *mil* “neck,” *vil* “flower,” are likely to be loanwords from other Iranian dialects (cf. *mol* and *vel* in Fārs dialects). Examples of **g-* include *gōs/š* “ear” (cf. Pers. *gūš*), *gā(w)* “cow” (cf. Pers. *gāv*), but *ǰī* or *gī* “excrement” (see above); *darg* “long” (see above); *rau* “swift” (cf. Av. **rayu-*).

The Old Iranian spirants, **f*, **θ*, **x*, developed variously. The **f* was lost in the cluster **-ft-* in *s/šit* “milk” (cf. Parth. *šyft*). On **fr*, see above. The group **-θn-* became *-sn-* in *ārāsna*, *ārisna* “elbow” (cf. Avestan *araθni-*, but OPers. *arašni-*, Pers. *araš*). Similarly **x* was lost in the cluster **xš-*, as in *šau* “night” (see above), but remained in words such as *čarx* (from Persian?). On initial **x-* and **xw-*, see above.

On Old Iranian **s* and **z*, as well as the interchange of *s-* and *š*, see above. The Old Iranian groups **-st-*, **-sn-*, and **-sr-* are preserved (on **sp*, see above), as in *ā/āsnāwi* “swimming” (versus Pers. *šenā*); *hars(i)* “tear” (cf. Av. *asru-*, Pers. *ašk* from **asruka-*), *askaft* “cave” (from **skā/āfta-*, versus Pers. *šekāft*). Old Iranian **š* remained in Dimlī, as opposed to Kurdish, where intervocalic *š* regularly became *h*. Examples include *goš* or *gōs* “ear” (Kurdish *guh*), *šaš* “six” (= Pers.), *pāšna* “heel” (= Pers., but Kurdish *pa(h)nī*), *pānušna*, *rōš/s(a)yā* “light, illumination” (cf. Pers. *rowšanāī*, but Kurdish *rō(h)nāyī*), *tayšan* “thirsty” (cf. Pers. *tešna*, but Kurdish *tī(h)n*).

Old Iranian **y-* became *ǰ-*, as in Persian, but **w* became *v* (rather than *b-* or *g-*,



as in Kurdish, Persian, etc.). Examples of *y include *ǰau* or *jau* “barley” (cf. Av. *yauua-*, Pers. *ǰou*, Kurdish *ǰa*, but Gūrānī *yaw*, *yaya*), *ǰidā* (see above). Examples of *w include *vazd* (cf. Av. *vazdah-*, but Kurdish *baz*), *vayšān* or *vaysān* “hungry” (but Kurdish *birčī*, Pers. *gošna* for *gorosna*), *vāris* “rain” (but Pers. *bāreš*), *vā(y)* (see above), *vayva* “bride” (cf. Kurdish *būk*, Judeo-Pers. *bayōg*), *varg* “wolf” (see above), *vinī* “lose, waste” (cf. Mid. Pers. *wanī*), *vāz-* “run” (cf. Pers. *vazīdan* “to blow” of the wind), *vā/āš/s* “grass” (cf. Parth. *w’š*, Av. *vāstra-* “fodder”). Where *b-* occurs instead of *v-* it may be assumed to be a borrowing from Kurdish or Persian, for instance, *bar* “stone” (cf. Kurdish, Lorī *bard*) and *gumān* “doubt, surmise” and *guna* “sin” from New Persian via Kurdish.

Old Iranian *m was preserved in all positions in Dimlī but not in Kurdish, where it became *v* between vowels; examples include *maǰwā/ā* “fruit” (cf. Pers. *mīva*), *dām(i)* “trap” (Pers. *dām*, but Kurdish *dāw*), *āmōr* “counting” (cf. Pers. *āmār*), *ām(i)nān* “summer” (cf. Mid. Pers. *hāmīn*, but Kurdish *hāvīn*), *(h)arma(y)* “shoulder, forearm” (cf. Av. *arəma-*), *mīr* “dough” (cf. Pers./Ar. *kaṃīr*, but Kurdish *havīr*).

Morphological isoglosses. The most important morphological isoglosses which link Dimlī with the Caspian dialects are the pronominal possessive forms from *hača plus the pronoun and the formation of the present indicative from the old present participle in *-ant(a)-. The past stem of the secondary conjugation ends in -ā from *-ād, as in Parthian. Exclusive to Dimlī are the infinitive ending -ī/īš from *-išn and the ablative use of postposition -rī/ā (Asatrian, 1990, p. 162; idem, 1992c, p. 26).

Lexical isoglosses. These isoglosses include Old Iranian *arma- “forearm” (Dimlī *(h)arma(y)*, Ṭālešī *ām*, cf. Oss. *ā/ārm*, versus *bāzu- in Pers. *bāzū*, etc.); Middle Persian *āyišm* “moon” (Dimlī *ā/āš/smā/ā*, *āsmi*, Tatī *ušmā*, Ṭālešī *ovšim*, Harzanī *ōšma*); Dimlī *baurān* “dove” (Oss. *bālon* “domestic dove”; cf. Lithuanian *balañdis* “dove”); Old Iranian *bram- “weep, cry” (Parth. *bram-*, Dimlī *barm-*, Māzandarānī *barm-*, Harzanī *beram* “weeping,” Ṭālešī *bāme*, Tātī *berām*, Gilakī *barmā*, Aftarī *burme*; cf. in the Central dialects Nā’īnī *biremba*; versus Pers. *gerya*, etc.). Old Iranian *kanya- “woman, girl” (Dimlī *k’aynak’*, *čānā*, Harzanī *kīna*, Ṭālešī *kīna*, Tatī *kīna*, Galīnqaya *kina*, *čina*, versus Pers. *kāna*; marginal lexeme in Pers. *kanīz* and Kurdish *kinik*); Old Iranian *kata- “home, house” (Dimlī *kaya*, *čē*, Ṭālešī *ka*, Gūrānī *ka*, Tatī *kā*, Galīnqaya *kar*, Harzanī *kar*, *čār*, Aftarī *kiye*; cf. in the Central dialects Kūnsārī *kī(y)a*, Nā’īnī *kiya*; marginal lexeme in Pers. *kade* and Kurdish *kadikirin* “to domesticate (animals)”); Old Iranian *ragu- “quick, swift” (Parth. *ray*, Dimlī *rau*, Harzanī



rav, Ṭālešī *ra*, Tatī *rav*, Semnānī *rayk*, cf. Oss. *rāw*, *rog* “light,” versus Pers. *zūd*; Old Iranian **uz-ayara-* “yesterday” (Av. *uzaiara-* “afternoon,” Dimlī *vīžēr(i)*, *vīžēr*, Gūrānī *uzera*, Harzanī, Tātī *zīr*, Tākistānī, Ṭālešī *azīra*, Aftarī *yezze*, versus Pers. *dī-rūz*); Old Iranian **waxš-* “burn” (Parth. *wxšyndg* “blazing,” Dimlī *vaš* or *viš-*, Harzanī *vaš-*, Ṭālešī *vaš-*, Tatī *vaš-*, versus **sauc-* in Pers. *sūktan*, etc.); Old Iranian and common Northwest Middle Iranian **xšwipta-* “milk” (Av. *xšuuipta-*, Parth. *šift*, Dimlī *š/sit*, Gūrānī *šit*, *šifta*, Ṭālešī *šit*, Harzanī, Aftarī *šet*, Tātī *še(r)t*, versus Pers., Kurdish *šīr* < **xšīra-*); Old Iranian **upa-sar(a)daka-* “spring(time)” (Mid. Pers. *ābsālān*, Dimlī *ūsār(ō)*, *vazārī*, Ṭālešī *āvāsōr*, Harzanī *āvāsōr*, classical Pers. *ābsālān*); Avestan *vazdah-* “fat” (Dimlī *vazd* “fat, oil”; cf. Kurdish *baz*); and Parthian *wāš* “fodder” (Dimlī *vā/āš/s*, Ṭālešī, Māzandarānī *vāš*, Aftarī *vāšt*, Semnānī *voš*, versus Parthian *gwy’w*, Pers., Kurdish *giyāh*, *gīhā*). Also to be noted is Dimlī *rīz*, *rēs* “rice” (**wrī/īzna-*; cf. Sogd. *ryz-*, versus Pers., Kurdish, etc., *berenj* < **wrī/īzna-*). Relatives of the negative particle Dimlī *činyō/ā* “no, not” are found in Harzanī *čini(ya)* and Āzarī *čī/īnī/ī*.

Words found only in Dimlī include *angāz*, *hangāž* “plough handle” (< **hangāza-* < **gāza-* “take, accept” found in Sogd. *pty’z-*, Khotanese *pajāys-*, etc.; it cannot be from Armenian; see Vahman and Asatrian, p. 272); *āz* “generation, offspring” (Man. Mid. Pers. *āzn(ān)*, Arm. lw. < Parth. *azn* “people, generation,” *azniw* “noble”); *āz(i)* “branch” (Mid. Pers. *azg*, Arm. loanword from Parthian *azg* “race, kind, nation”); *ask(i)* “goat” (Avestan *aza-*, Mid. Pers. *az(ag)*; different from Kurdish *āsk* “deer” from **āsuka-*, cf. Mid. Pers. *āhūg*, Pers. *āhū*); *gauš* “weak, coward, greedy” and *gaušakay* “weakness, cowardice” (possibly related to Sogd. *γβs-* “to be fatigued”); *haw(i)* or *hiw(i)* “laughter,” *hawāyīš*’ present stem *hwī/īn-* “to laugh” (cf. Oss. *xūdln*); *kay* “play, game” (Mid. Pers. *kadag* “game, joke,” Sogd. *k’t’k-*, Arm. lw. < Parth. *katak* “joke”; cf. Jowšaqānī *koy* “game”); *sīr-*, in present stem *sīn(a)n-* “I love” (< OIr. **srīra-*; cf. Av. *srīra-* “beautiful,” Sogd. *šyr’kk* “good,” Parth. *šīr-gāmag* “friend”; probably not from Arm. *sēr*, *sir-* “love”; see Asatrian, 1987, pp. 166-67); and *vistiš* and *fīnāyīš* (or *fīnā-*) “to throw,” *fīnyāyīš* “to be thrown” (Mid. Pers. *wistan* “to shoot,” present stem from **wid-na-*) with *rā-vistiš* “to spread, lay, put” (Galīnqaya *fest-*, *fesn-* “to throw, spread”), cf. Lorī *bistan* “to put down, to cast a foal” (before time).

Dimlī words without clear Iranian etymologies include *dijñ(i)* or *dižñ(i)* “rain” (< OIr. **danja-*? cf. IE **dhengwo-*); for “rain” *vāris*, *vārān* and Turkish *yāgmūr* are also used in Dimlī.

Of the numerous borrowings from Armenian (exceeding perhaps those from



Kurdish or even Turkish) the following may be mentioned: *aks/c'ig* “woman, girl,” *āvilik* “broom,” *bōč, pōč* “tail,” *būjūr* “small,” *gāb* “Rheum L.,” *hārs* “bride,” *hēsān* “whetstone,” *čirt'an* “waterpipe,” *gōjā/āg(i)* “button,” *gōm(a)* “cattle shed,” *hāst* “hard, rigid,” *hāgōs(i)* “furrow,” *hūm* “root, base,” *hēj* “cross” (Arm. *xac*), *hōllik* “hut, shack,” *hūrā/āk'* “hatchet, ax,” *jāγ/x(i)* “wire mesh,” *k'a/irōn* “beam, girder,” *kāl* “thrashing floor,” *kālān(i)* “scabbard, sheath,” *k'alandī* “scythe,” *kiray* “lime,” *kirya, kirē* “Sunday,” *kirik* “neck,” *kōra/ēk* “a kind of lentil,” *k'ušna/i* “rye,” *ōzōr* “branch,” *pāč* “pod, grain,” *p'anjār* “vegetable,” *p'ūrt* “wool,” *sāvār* “pearl barley, spelt,” *sēmiga* “threshold,” *sūnk/g* “mushroom,” *xēγ(ō), xīnt'* “mad, insane,” *xōr* “deep,” *xōnj, xōz* “pig,” *zīl(ik)* “sprout.”

Literature in Dimli

The earliest surviving literary works in the Dimli language are two poems with identical titles, *Mawlūd* (Genesis), dating from the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The earlier, consisting of 756 eleven-syllable verses, is by Malā Ahmedē Kāsī, the other by 'Otmān Efendī, mufti of Siverek. There is also a minstrel tradition going back to the medieval period; a number of Dimli bards have composed both in their mother tongue and in Turkish, for example, Daymī, Dāvūt Solārī, Pīr Solṭān, 'Alī-Akbar Čičak, Yāvūz Tōp, Arif Sāg, Sulaymān Yildiz, and Rahmī Sāltok (Zilfi, p. 6). Nevertheless, Dimli has attained genuine literary status only in recent decades, owing to the activities of a number of writers, poets, and political leaders (e.g., Eulbekir Pamukçu, Ališan Karsan, Hesēn Dewran, Zilfi, Malmisanic, K. Astare, Reme Bir, Hesēn Ušen, Heyder, Uskan), who now live abroad, mainly in western Europe. At present numerous newspapers, magazines, and bulletins are being published in Dimli (e.g., *Piya* [formerly *Ayre*], *Raṣṭiye*, *Ware*, *Raya Zazaistani*), and the number is increasing.

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