



INDO-IRANIAN FRONTIER LANGUAGES

INDO-IRANIAN FRONTIER LANGUAGES. Since the time of the Achaemenid Empire, the territory of present-day Pakistan has been under the cultural and linguistic influence of successive stages of the Persian language. The political history of Persian in South Asia and its spread as the language of literature and politics is traced in Alam (1998, 2003), while its role in South Asian education is discussed in Rahman (2002, pp. 121-60).

The northern and western parts of this region are now occupied by speakers of Khowar, Kalasha, and Shina (Indo-Aryan, “Dardic” languages: see [DARDESTĀN ii](#)), and recently Urdu (Indo-Aryan); Balochi (Western Iranian; see [BALUCHISTAN iii](#)), Pashto and Wakhi (Eastern Iranian); Brahui (q.v., Dravidian); and the isolate Burushaski (q.v.). Since Urdu became the national language of Pakistan in 1947 and increasingly functions as the country’s lingua franca, it has replaced Persian as a compulsory language in the curriculum. From the 1980s the presence of Persian in the educational system became negligible. Despite this, a significant influx of additional Perso-Arabic words has entered the lexicons of all the languages of Pakistan through Urdu. Several recent publications deal with such loanwords: Bukhari (2003) lists 1,003 words of Persian and Arabic origin common to Urdu and Khowar; Akbar (1992), a similar work, lists numerous words common to Urdu and Shina. Khatkhaty et al. (1977), lists some 3,700 nominal forms common to Urdu, Sindhi, Pashto, Panjabi, and Balochi; of the 200 basic verbs listed there, most are not shared.



The great majority of the shared words are of Perso-Arabic origin and, in addition to their nominal or adjectival function, provide the raw material for new verbs, since the primary mechanism for formation of new verbs in these languages is the combining of a nominal loan element (Perso-Arabic or English) with a native verbalizer, most frequently “be” or “do.”

Persian models have served as the stimulus for the beginnings of literary production in most of these languages, and Persian poetic forms are still highly influential in Khowar and Balochi. The contemporary Balochi poet Gul Khan Nasir wrote first in Persian and Urdu, then in Balochi, and his Balochi poetry employs the prosodic structures and poetic genres of classical Persian (Jahani, 1994-95). Persian has also been the principal vehicle for the transmission of Arabic vocabulary throughout the Islamic culture area (Perry, p. 3). The strength and influence of the Perso-Arabic and Islamic cultural heritage is the major reason for the decisions of most writers in these languages to retain the original spellings of their numerous Perso-Arabic loans, rather than to devise more phonologically based orthographies. The case of Balochi differs somewhat in this respect; a significant percentage of Perso-Arabic words are written with “balochified” spellings (Jahani, 1989, p. 159), e.g., *tufān* “storm” instead of *ṭufān*.

Persian has influenced the phonology, lexicon, and syntax of all these languages, both directly and indirectly; Khowar and Balochi, for example, show a pervasively direct influence. In turn, Khowar has been a channel of secondary transmission of Persian lexical items and grammatical features to Kalasha and Burushaski. Balochi has been the vector for secondary transfer of many Persian words into Brahui. Pashto too has functioned as a vehicle for Perso-Arabic words into languages spoken in areas where it is the regional contact language. For example, in Torwali, spoken in upper Swat (Inamullah), we find *laṛaz-u* “to tremble” (< Psht. *laṛz-edal* “id.” < Pers. *larzīd-an* “id.”); *adōs* “ritual cleansing before prayer” (< Psht. *awdas* “id.” [Bellew, p. 7]) < Pers. *ābdast* “id.” [Steingass, p. 6]), in which the meaning has remained constant. In some cases, meaning has shifted; e.g., Torwali *barē* “possibly, presumably” reflects a change from Pashto *bāre* “once, at last, then” (Bellew, p. 10), and Persian *bāra* “once, sometimes, at length, in short, at all events” (Steingass, p. 143).

Persian grammatical features, such as subordinate clauses introduced with the multi-functional conjunction *ki* “that, when,” and to lesser degree the *eżāfa* (q.v.) construction and compounds formed with unstressed, enclitic *o* “and,”



have entered most of the languages of this region. Even Urdu relative clauses, which are formed with an inherited Indo-Aryan relative word in *j*-, now often exhibit the *j*-element supplemented with *ki*, e.g., *jo ki*, “which” instead of *jo*. These influences are so massive and pervasive that one can discern, in the area where Urdu is now the lingua franca, an emerging Pakistani linguistic area (*sprachbund*), superimposed on the earlier, Persian-induced cultural/linguistic area and the larger South Asian linguistic area (cf. Masica, 1976, *passim*). Of the languages in this area, Pashto, Shina, and the Kohistani languages seem to show fewer of these structures. For example, Pashto employs its native conjunctions *ce* and *tse* to construct relative clauses; Shina employs prenominal finite clauses in the relative function, and Kalam Kohistani employs either participial relatives or a finite clause including the head noun and introduced by an indefinite element *kā~* (Baart, pp. 26-27).

In most of the languages under consideration, the phonemes /x/, /ɣ/, /f/, /q/, and /z/ are marginal, reflecting relatively recent NPers./Urdu influence, and speakers frequently replace them with /kh/, /g/, /ph/, /k/ and /j/, respectively. In Balochi, their status varies from dialect to dialect: /q/ is normally replaced by /k/ in all dialects (Jahani, 1989, pp. 81-82), while in Rakhshani, /f/, /x/, and /ɣ/ are usually preserved, and in Makrani they are usually replaced by /p/, /k/, and /h/. Khovar and Burushaski (see below) are exceptions in this regard.

Balochi dialects spoken in Pakistan reflect an earlier stage of Persian influence, in comparison with the more recent and ongoing direct influences of New Persian on Iranian Balochi discussed in Jahani (1999), who concludes that influence from Iranian Persian is likely to be the source of divergence between Pakistani Balochi and that of Afghanistan and Iran. Both Eastern (EB) and Western Balochi (WB) form relative clauses (RC) with *ki/ke*, in addition to participial constructions. For example: WB *amā mard* RC[*ki rāh-ā rawag-ā int*] *manī māmā int* “The man RC[walking on the road] is my uncle,” and EB *hawā~ mard* RC[*ke oḍā jakkiθī e~*] *maī~ bābā e~* “The man RC[(who is) standing there] is my uncle” (Bashir, 1991b, p. 169). Relative clauses constructed with *ki* are found in Brahui as well. For example: *amo banday* RC[*ke nī oṛ-tun īt karesa/ kanā syāl ass*] “The man RC[with whom you were talking] is my relative” (Bashir, 1991a, p.153).

The Brahui lexicon reflects several strata of Persian (and other Iranian) influence, analyzed in Rossi (1979). Rossi (pp. 1-55) enumerates 418 borrowings from Balochi, of which at least 247 are ultimately of Persian origin, e.g., *ārtī/ārtī* “flour used for a wedding feast” (Bal. *art*, Pers. *ārd* “flour”



[p.2]); and 1,461 borrowings from Persian (and Balochi) or non-Iranian languages (mainly Urdu), e.g., *swārī* “riding” (Pers. *suwārī*, Ur. *sawārī*, “rider; vehicle,” Rakshani Balochi *sUari* [p. 270]). Some of these have Brahui forms identical to Persian and Urdu but not to Balochi, e.g., *fauj* “army” (Pers. *fawj*, Ur. *fəuj*, Rx. Bal. *pəwj*, Bal. *p’əwj* (Rossi, p. 191).

Khowar shows substantial influence from Iranian languages at various time depths (Morgenstierne, 1936). Among the languages of northwestern Pakistan, it shows the greatest direct influence of New Persian. In Chitral, until quite recently Persian dominated both the secular and the religious spheres. It is second only to Arabic as a language of religion, and, except for the Qur’ān, basic religious texts are in Persian. Even today in the Chitral area, the *niyyat* “intention (to say prayers)” is taught in Persian in many homes. Persian was the only language of written communication and government of the princely state of Chitral until 1953, when it was replaced by Urdu as the official language. Pre-1940 education was informal, conducted in the homes of the royal family and the elite, and the curriculum included five canonical Persian literary texts, the *pānč kitāb*. When formal education was introduced in Chitral in 1940, Persian was a required part of the curriculum until about 1950, when it became elective. During the fighting of the 1990s in Afghanistan, a large number of refugees, mainly from Panjshir and Badakhshan, were living in Chitral, and familiarity with spoken Persian was partially revived, in that a significant number of local people in Chitral town learned some Dari Persian during dealings with the refugees, and a few new words entered Khowar, e.g., *taxtabandi* “arrangement in hotels for sitting on a raised platform to eat.” A dialect of Persian is still spoken in the Madaglasht valley in Chitral (Lorimer, 1922).

The first preserved literature from Chitral dates back to the 17th century. Poets wrote first in Persian, then in a mixture of Persian and Khowar. Important among these are: Ataley Muhammad Šukūr Ġarīb (late 17th century), Muhammad Sayyar (Bābā Sayyar, late 18th- to mid-19th century), Tajammal Šāh Maḥvī, and Muazzam Xān Lāl. The Persian diwan of Bābā Sayyar, consisting of 224 *ġazāls*, four *ḥamd* and *na’t*, four *mok-ammās* and eight *robā’ī*, has recently been translated into Urdu by Maula Nigah Nigah, a prominent Chitrali poet (Sayyar, 2004). The poetry of Tajammal Šāh Maḥvī has been compiled and translated into Urdu by Muhammad Irfan Chitrari, another well-known poet (Maḥvī, 2003). Muhammad Šukūr Ġarīb’s diwan, as yet untranslated, includes poetry in Persian, Khowar, and a mixed style,



exemplified in this line, quoted by Inayatullah Faizi: *gurzéna mo angyé hargiz zāy o zāydān rā* “Don’t ever bring crows and owls into (my) garden,” in which *gurzéna mo angyé* “don’t bring into the garden!” is Khovar and *hargiz zāy o zāydān rā* “ever crows and owls” is Persian. Some contemporary poets also employ this mixed style.

Persian words and phrases have been integrated into the spoken language at various stages. Some earlier borrowings reflect phonological and/or semantic changes, e.g., Pers. palatal > Khovar retroflex sibilants and affricates: Kho. *šéyun* “liver” (cf. Pers. *šugūn/šugūn* “auspicious (omen)”; Kho. *nišán* “gift” (cf. Pers. *nišān* “sign”); Kho. *dašmán* “mullah” (< Pers. *dānišmand* “wise”; contrast the later borrowing *dúšman* “enemy” from Urdu); Kho. *č’hīr* “milk” (cf. Pers. *šīr* “id.”); Kho. *č’hoi* “six” (cf. Pers. *šaš*, and Urdu *che*). Semantic doublets are found, e.g., *xošani* “festivity, marriage, happiness” (Pers. *koš* “happy”) and *šādi* “marriage” (< Ur. *šādī* “marriage” < Pers. *šādī* “festivity, marriage”). Repeated borrowing of the same element at different stages also results in doublets, e.g., *we-sóoru* “widow” (lit. “lacking a head”), an earlier borrowing, and *be-talím* “uneducated,” a recent Urdu loan. Some entire phrases have entered the spoken language, e.g., *anč-e-bayād* “as much as necessary”: *ma brār ma-sum anč-e-bayād madát areér* “My brother helped me as much as was needed.” The Persian names for days of the week are used in Khovar, as in Balochi and Brahui.

Grammatical influences on Khovar include subordinate clauses introduced by *ki*, the *ežāfa* construction, and a spreading use of the Persian (animate) plural marker *-ān*. Direct case plurals in *-ān* (< Pers.), originally used with Persian words denoting animate beings, e.g., *buzurg-án* “elders,” are spreading to native words, e.g., *Ḍaq-án* “boys,” replacing the older, unmarked direct plural. Relative clauses employing *ki* (< Pers. and Ur.), as opposed to indigenous constructions employing sentence-initial finite clauses, participial relative clauses, or agent nouns, are increasingly used, especially in writing. One of the most common types of these relative structures is *kya* [Noun Phrase] *ki* ... “the [NP] which...”, followed by a demonstrative pronoun in the matrix clause. For example: RC[*kya wólTi-áar ki gáan ošói*] *haté wólTi č’hamúT-o haté hisá d’heér* “The part of the finger on the side RC[from which the wind is (coming)] feels cold.” Kalasha, whose speakers are almost all bilingual in Khovar and many in Urdu, is acquiring *ki* clauses indirectly, through Khovar (and Urdu). For example: RC[*kúra ki khú~ḍiái áyis*] *šasé bač’áas č’hu* “The one RC[who called you] was a king’s daughter.”



The status of /f/, /x/, /ɣ/, /q/ and /z/ in Khowar, where they belong to the basic phonological inventory of the language, is unique. This may reflect an earlier stratum of Iranian/Persian influence, but may also result from substratum influence from Burushaski. Notably, they are also part of the basic Burushaski and Wakhi inventories, with the status of /q/ being marginal in Wakhi. Of these, only /z/ is shared by Kalasha, which has not acquired /f/, /x/, /ɣ/, or /q/ from Khowar.

Burushaski has numerous Perso-Arabic loans, acquired first through Khowar and later through Urdu. In Yasin Burushaski (YB), this process has reached the point where, in the language of some young speakers, more than 50 percent of the lexical items used are Urdu borrowings (Patry and Tiffou, p. 9). Semantic and phonological changes are observed: /h/ > /q/ (> /k/), e.g., Hunza Burushaski (HB) *aqmaq* “bloom of youth; drunkenness” (Berger, III, p. 20; cf. Kho. *aqmaq/aḥmaq* “fool”; also > Kal. *hakmák* “fool,” < Pers. *aḥmaq* “fool”; /x/ > /qh/, e.g., HB *qharáp* “bad” (Berger, III, p. 353; < Ur. *xarāb* “id.”); /h/ > /x/, e.g., Kho. *ambóx* “much” < Pers. *anbūh/anbūh* “large, full” (Steingass, p. 104), also YB *amboh* “much” (Lorimer, 1962, p. 14); Pers./Ur. /f/ > /ph/, e.g., YB *phiryát* “request, plea” (cf. Ur. *faryād* “id.”). Epenthetic consonants develop, e.g., YB *ambrōz* “kind of pear” (Lorimer, 1962, p. 14), Kho. *ambróz* “id.” < Pers. *amrūd* “pear, guava” (Steingass, p. 100). Yasin Burushaski and Khowar share some of the (early) phonological changes affecting Persian loans; for example, YB *šūra* “saline material” with the retroflex sibilant (cf. Kho. *šóor* “[too] salty” vs. Ur. *šor* n. “salinity,” adj. “brackish”) indicates borrowing from Khowar rather than from Urdu. Subordinating constructions with the complementizer *ke* “that, when,” an influence from Khowar and Urdu, are increasingly frequent. For example, [*je girámar ke in*] *ními* “[When I came to the village], he left” (Berger, I, p.191).

Wakhi, spoken in Pakistan, Tajikistan, and Afghanistan, is subject to increasing influence from Tajiki Persian in Afghanistan and Tajikistan and from Urdu in Pakistan. Pakistani Wakhi shows two strata of Persian influence, a waning presence of former direct contact, and an increasing indirect influx of Perso-Arabic words through Urdu. Until about 50 years ago, the majority of the male population of Gilgit is said to have been able to speak Persian (Reinhold, 1992), and some words and phrases used in Pakistani Wakhi still reflect the Persian rather than the Urdu pronunciation of the “long a” sound, e.g., *az sar tápâ* “from head to foot.”

Wakhi has a long history of close contact with Khowar (Bashir, 2001), and they



share some Eastern Iranian developments of early Persian loans, like the change of palatal sibilants to retroflexes, e.g., Kho. *šalmú* “turnip” and Wakhi *šolm* “id.” (cf. Pers. *šalam/šalyam* “id.” > Ur. *šalyam* “id.”); Kho. *šošp* “type of halwa” and Wakhi *šušp* “id.” (cf. Tajik Pers. *šošp* “id.”). The main native Wakhi subordination marker is *tsə* (pre-verbal)/*tsəy* (clause-final). However, Wakhi has also borrowed Tajik Persian *ki*, which, like *tsə*, introduces a wide range of subordinate clauses, including relative clauses, various adverbial clauses, and complements of verbs of cognition. For example, *yem xun-i ha-yá halg-ev-en RC[kumd-ar ki sak-e xi degit detk]* “This house belongs to the people [to whom we have given our daughter]” (Bashir, forthcoming).

Pashto too has incorporated a large number of Perso-Arabic borrowings, the earlier of which have undergone change of palatal sibilants to retroflex and palatal affricates to dental: e.g., *dušmán* “enemy” (Pers. *dušman* “id.”); *doJák* “hell” (cf. Parthian *dōžak* “id.”); *tsarx* “circle” (Pers. *čark-* “id.”); *dzigár* “liver” (Pers. *jigar* “id.”). Later loanwords retain the palatals, e.g., *jism* “body” (Pers./Ur. *jism* “id.”; Elfenbein, pp. 757-58). Some borrowed elements have been morphologically verbalized with the indigenous infinitive ending *-edal*, e.g., *šarmedal* “to blush, be modest, etc.” (< Pers. *šarm* “bashfulness, modesty, shame” [Steingass, p. 742]). However, Pashto has adopted fewer Perso-Urdu grammatical features than other languages of the area. For example, it forms its relative clauses using the Pashto conjunction *če*, rather than the Persian/Urdu *ki*. The gender assignment of Arabic words reaching Pashto through Persian and/or Urdu has been restructured according to the dominant Pashto pattern, in which consonant-final nouns are masculine and vowel-final nouns are feminine. Thus e.g. *zanjīr* “chain” is feminine in Urdu, but *dzandzir* “id.” is masculine in Pashto; *darwāza* “door” is masculine in Urdu, but *darwaza* “id.” is feminine in Pashto; *ḥālat* “condition” is feminine in Urdu, but masculine in Pashto; *izāfa* “increase” is masculine in Urdu, but feminine in Pashto.

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