



# IRAN VI. IRANIAN LANGUAGES AND SCRIPTS (4) ORIGINS OF THE IRANIAN LANGUAGES

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## IRAN vi, continued

### (4) Origins Of The Iranian Languages

General historical surveys of the Iranian languages are found in several collective works, notably M. Mayrhofer's article in *CLI* (pp. 4-24). Rastorgueva and Edel'man (1975) is a typological survey of the Iranian languages, and another work of this kind is Windfuhr (ed., 2009). Comprehensive historical studies of individual branches include Edel'man (1986) on the East-Iranian languages and Rastorgueva and Efimov (1990) on the West-Iranian languages. Of the new etymological dictionary of Iranian languages by Rastorgueva and Edel'man (2000- ), two volumes have appeared, and, of the new Persian etymological dictionary by Ḥasan-dust (1383 Š./2004- ), one volume.

Describing the history of the Iranian languages is complicated by the variety of transliteration and transcription methods involved, which are often contradictory. Note especially the following common conventions used to transcribe the palatal and dental affricates:



$\check{c} = t\check{s}$  and  $\check{j} = d\check{z}$  (palato-alveolar) in all reconstructed and attested forms.

$*\acute{c} = t\acute{s}$  and  $*\acute{j} = d\acute{z}$  (palato-dental) in reconstructions of Indo-Iranian and proto-Iranian.

$c = t\check{s}$  and  $j = d\check{z}$  in transcriptions of Old Indic, Avestan, Old Persian, and Brāhmī (Tumshuqese and Khotanese);  $j = d\acute{z}$  in transcriptions of Persian; and  $j = \check{z}$  in transcriptions of the Manichean script.

$c = ts$  and  $j = dz$  (dental) in transliterations of Middle and modern East-Iranian languages/dialects where /č, ĵ/ are distinct from /c, j/.

Note also that “Old Iranian” and the abbreviation “OIr.” will be used here instead of “proto-Iranian.”

*Indo-European dialects.* The Indo-European languages were traditionally (until the early 20th century) classified as (eastern) *satəm* languages (Balto-Slavic, Armenian, Indo-Iranian) and (western) *centum* languages (Germanic, Celtic, Latin, Greek; for a general introduction to and survey of Indo-European languages, see Mallory, 1991; Fortson, 2004). This classification was based on the development of the Indo-European palatal velars  $*\acute{k}$ ,  $*\acute{g}$ , and  $*\acute{g}h$  into sibilants or velars. For instance, the word for “hundred,” reconstructed as IEur.

$*\acute{k}m\acute{t}óm$ , is OInd. (Sanskrit) *śatam*, YAv. *satəm*, but Latin *centum* (i.e., *kentum*), Gk. *he-katon* (lit. “one hundred”), and Gothic *hund-* (with  $h- < *x- < *k-$ ); IEur.  $*\acute{g}en-$  “be born,” etc., is OInd. *jan-*, Av. *zan-*, but Latin, Greek *gen-* (cf. English *kin*); IEur.  $*\acute{g}hel-$  “yellow, gold” etc., is OInd. *har-*, Av. *zar-* (cf. Greek *khlōros* “green,” Germ. *gelb*).

With the discovery around the turn of the century of Tokharian *kānt* “hundred,” however, in a language spoken in Chinese Turkestan at the eastern edge of the Indo-European area, it was realized that the situation is more complex.

An important morphological isogloss in the Indo-European language area is that between languages with or without verbal endings containing *-r-*. Languages with *r*-endings (active and middle, present and past) include Celtic, Latin, Hittite, Indo-Iranian, and Tokharian. This isogloss therefore cuts across the *satəm-centum* isogloss. Moreover, in Indo-Iranian, the *r*-endings were confined



to the 3rd plural (e.g., perf. *\*ca-kr-ārai* “they have (ever) done,” cf. Latin *fēc-ēre* “they did”), while singular middle forms were formed as in Greek and Germanic (3rd sing. present primary IIr. *\*-tai*, cf. Gk. *\*-toi*; secondary IIr. *\*-ta*, cf. Gk. *-to*, e.g., IIr. *\*bhara-tai*, *bhara-ta*; Gk. *phere-tai* “is carried,” *e-phere-to* “was carried,” Gothic (pres.) *baira-da*, Latin has the “compromise” form *fer-tu-r* “is carried” < *\*fere-to-r*).

Another morphological isogloss is that between languages with the element *-m* in the dual and plural instrumental, dative, and ablative (Germanic, Balto-Slavic) versus those with *-bh-* (Latin, Indo-Iranian, and rudimentarily in Greek; e.g., dat. *\*ġhosti-mos*, “for the guest-friends,” > Germanic *\*gasti-mz*, Russian *gosti-m*, but *\*ġhosti-bh(y)os* > Latin *hosti-bus* “for the enemies,” cf. OInd. *vásu-bhyas*, YAv. *vaŋhu-biiō* “for the good ...”).

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