



IRAN VII. NON-IRANIAN LANGUAGES (7) TURKIC LANGUAGES

IRAN vii, continued

vii(7). Turkic Languages of Iran

In Iran, there are two distinct branches of Turkic: Oghuz Turkic languages and dialects that represent the southwestern branch of Turkic, and Khalaj, which presents a tiny branch of its own. Most widely spoken is Azeri (varieties of which are spoken in eastern Turkey and the Republic of Azarbaijan, where it is the official language, and in northern Iraq; see [Azarbaijan vii](#)). The Iranian Oghuz languages and dialects include: (1) Azeri; (2) the transitional Central Oghuz dialects; (3) Sonqori; (4) South Oghuz, prominently Qašqā'i; (5) Khorasan Turkish; (6) Turkmen of northern Khorasan. Distinct from the latter is the Turkmen of northern Iraq, which is closely related to the southern Oghuz dialects. Overall, the variety of Tabriz has developed as the prestige variety for Azeri and partially also for the speakers of central, and less so of southern, Oghuz.

Oghuz languages. 1) Iranian Azeri, which includes four regional variants: (a) the Tabrizi dialects in northern and central Azarbaijan; (b) the Urumia'i dialects in the west; (c) the Ardabili dialects in the east along the Caspian Sea;



and (d) the Zanjāni dialects in the southeast. Scattered pockets can be found throughout Iran, including the SE corner of Caspian Sea (Galugāh) and in North Khorasan (Daragaz, Loṭfābād).

2) Central Oghuz. Central Oghuz is spoken in a broad band of dialect varieties extending eastward from Azarbaijan up to Qazvin and Tehran, and southward to Qom and up to some 70 km north of Qašqā'i territory. A variety of these is also spoken by an Afšār group in Kabul: (a) The dialects of the Qazvin area and northeast of Tehran, as well as the Solaymānābād dialects southwest of Hamadān, are close to that of Qašqā'i. (b) The dialects north of Kālajestān, Pugerd, and Āštiān (34° N and 50° E) are yet closer to Qašqā'i Turkish, and the dialectal source of the Afšār in Kabul.

3) Sonqori. This is spoken in an isolated enclave in southern Kurdistan, the town of Sonqor and two neighboring villages north of Senne (35° N and 48° E). It has features notably distinct from the Afsharoid varieties.

4) Qašqā'i is the most prominent variety of all South Oghuz dialects. These dialects, including the Aināllu, are spoken south of the line of Hamadān-Qom up to Fars and Lārestān in the south.

5) Khorasan Turkish. This group is found in Northeast Persia, Turkmenistan, and Northwest Afghanistan, with six dialects: Bojnurd, etc. (northwest), Qučān, etc. (north), Gujgi, etc. (northeast), Solṭānābād, etc. (south), Kārv-e 'Olyā, etc. (southeast), and Langar.

6) Turkmen. This group is found in Khorasan, Turkmenistan, and northern Afghanistan. It is quite distant from the main Oghuz group, and with its verbal system and auxiliaries is close to the Central Asian group of Turkic, including Uzbek.

Kalaji. This distinct Turkic language is spoken north of Arāk in Central Province. Its speakers are believed to be descendents of the Arḡu tribes fleeing from Central Asia to central Iran in the 13th century. It is one of the most archaic Turkic languages spoken.

Hendrik Boeschoten (in Johanson and Csató, eds., 1998, p. 13, Table 1.1) gives the following estimates for speakers of Turkic languages in Iran (with a total population then of 62 million): Azarbaijanian, 13 million; Qašqā'i, 570,000; Khorasan Turkish, 400,000; Turkmen, 500,000; Kālaḡ, 28,000 (Bulut, 2005, estimates 40,000).



LINGUISTIC FEATURES OF TURKIC

Phonology and morphology reflect the typical features which the Turkic languages have inherited from Altaic (q.v.).

Phonology. 1) absence of initial clusters; roots have mostly the form *CVC-*; 2) front-back sound harmony (a) of vowels, (b) of prevocalic consonants (e.g., *qal-maq* “to remain,” *käl-mäk* “to come”).

Morphology. 1) The derivational and inflectional morphology is agglutinative and right-branching. 2) Subordination is left-branching: adjective-noun, dependent noun-head noun; demonstratives precede the noun phrase. 3) Possession is marked by suffixes. 4) Grammatical function is marked in phrase-final position by a developed set of case markers. 5) There are three persons in singular and plural. 6) Indefiniteness in noun phrases is indicated by the absence of possessive marker, and by the absence of the case marker in the accusative (direct object). 7) The verb forms are essentially nominal, that is, gerunds and participles, and person is marked by personal pronouns and possessive suffixes. 8) There is no gender.

Several of these typological characteristics are shared with Indo-European, and thus with various Iranian languages and dialects encountered, most prominently the varieties of Persian. This contributed to the shift towards inflectional typology, particularly in the southern and western Turkic languages: 1) Most notably affected are sound harmony and the aspect-mood-tense system. 2) Morphological borrowing is rare. 3) A number of dialects have the Iranian comparative marker *-tar* (vs. *-rAK*, or absence of such marker). 4) Sentence syntax, particularly subordination, is strongly affected by the adoption of finite subordinate clauses and corresponding conjunctions and conjunctive phrases, typically *ki*, contrasting with the inherited left-branching gerundival and participial clauses. 5) Songori has (a) the Kurdish definite marker *-aka*, and has (b) virtually shifted from the Turkic left-branching noun phrase construction to the right-branching Iranian-Persian *ežāfa* construction, *N-i N* (Bulut, 2005). In turn, there is one feature of Turkic which has affected Persian (Windfuhr, 1982) and numerous Iranian languages and dialects. This is the morphological marking of evidential (indirective) experience, Turkic *emiš*. The Iranian equivalents are mostly based on perfect forms and are confined to past tenses (Johanson and Utas, eds.).

For references, see Azarbaijan viii-ix, III, pp. 245-51; C&ARKAS, IV, pp. 816-19;



CAUCASUS ii. LANGUAGE CONTACT. CAUCASIAN LANGUAGES IN IRAN, V, pp. 94-95.

LINGUISTIC SKETCH OF AZERI

Phonology. Vowels distinguish front-back, high-low, and high further rounded-unrounded. Length distinction has been lost, similar to Persian, where the lowering of the short high vowels *i, u > e, o* has resulted in the pairs *i/e, u/o, ā/a* [ā/æ]. There is high and low vowel harmony (conventionally symbolized by *-I-* and *-A-*) in post-stem morphology: [Chart 1](#).

Consonants include the Persian non-sibilant fricatives, the glottal stops, and *h*, due to massive lexical borrowing: [Chart 2](#).

There is consonantal front/back sound harmony, which is conventionally reflected in writing only for the velars front vs. back < *q* >. Fronted *k g* are often strongly affricate [*k' g' > ts dz*], while backed *k g* are often fricative *x, γ* in intervocalic and final position. The uvular *q* may have positional variants like Persian, *q ~ γ* (e.g., *mašqul/mašyul* “busy”). Similarly, the lateral *l* has front-back distinction, not indicated in writing. There is no initial cluster, as in Persian. The syllable types found are CV, CVC, CVCC, (e.g., *dört* “four”). In final clusters of stop and continuant a homorganic vowel may be inserted (e.g., *fikir* “thought,” *metir* “meter”).

Morphology. The morphology is agglutinative and right-branching. There is no prefixation. Word classes are defined by distinct sets of derivational and inflectional suffixes that express a single grammatical function each. There is a rich derivational morphology for converting nominal stems to verbal stems, and vice versa. There is no gender distinction.

Nominal system. The basic agglutinative sequence is stem-number-possessive-case. There is a single plural marker, *-lar*, and eight postpositional cases. The nominative is zero; the other cases have overt markers: accusative, dative, locative, ablative, instrumental, benefactive, and genitive (for the genitive construction, see Syntax, below): [Chart 3](#).

Person is expressed by independent pronouns and corresponding personal suffixes in the singular and plural. Deixis has been reduced to a binary opposition, neutral/far *o* vs. near *bu* (sing. oblique cases *on-*, *bun-*). It does not distinguish animacy (cf. Persian *u* “he, she,” *ān* “that,” *in* “this”): [Chart 4](#).



Verbal system. Verbs have only one stem as opposed to the Iranian so-called present and past stems (e.g., Pers. *kon-/kard-* “to do”), and there are no verbal prefixes. Similar to the case of Persian, compound verbs which consist of nominal elements and a small set of function verb are frequent, mostly using *ela-* “to do,” *ol-* “to become,” and a few others (e.g., *tešekkür ela-* “to make thanks, to thank”). The verb distinguishes the following categories, in the following sequence: 1. voice, causative/transitive —*dIr*; 2. passive —*Il* (and some others); 3. negation —*mA*; 4. aspect and mood, mutually exclusive: (a) continuous —*Ir*; (b) habitual —*Ar*; (c) future, —*AjAk*; (d) subjunctive, —*A* (*s-A* in conditional clauses); (e) perfective-resultative —*mIš*. 5. tense and evidential markers, mutually exclusive: (a) past —(*I*)*dI*; (b) evidential (*e*)*mIš*: [Chart 5](#).

There are three sets of person markers: present, past, and hortative/imperative): [Chart 6](#).

The combined aspectual-modal markers and the personal endings are shown in the following paradigms (Tehrani): [Chart 7](#).

The copula “to be” is identical with the present person markers; the negative is *deyil-* (regionally *deyr-*) + the present and past forms of the copula. The existential verb is 3rd person *var-*, neg. *yox* “exist”: [Chart 8](#).

As to aspect and mood, the Azeri present and past perfect (resultative-stative) forms are copied from Iranian-Persian by the functional split of the inherited indefinite perfective formant —(*I*)*mIš* into perfective-resultative —*miš* and evidential —*emiš*: [Chart 9](#).

In turn, Persian (like several other Iranian languages) has developed evidential forms, which are not documented in earlier stages of Persian. Unlike Azeri and Tajik-Persian, however, they are confined to the past tense :past imperfective *mi-resid-a ast*, perfective/aorist *resida ast*, resultative-stative *resida buda ast* (cf. Windfuhr, 1987, 2005). Reflecting the process of erosion of semantic-functional range, Azeri (like the other Turkic languages) has developed a new progressive based on the locative of the infinitive, —*mAk-dA*. This in turn corresponds to the Persian progressive with *dār-/dāšt-* “to keep, hold, have” + imperfective indicative. In comparison, the approximate relative ranges of these formants in Azeri and Persian are as follows: [Chart 10](#).

Syntax. Noun Phrase. As an Altai-Turkic language, Azeri is a head-final language. Adjectives precede the head, and are unmarked. The comparative is



unmarked, but Iranian *-tar* is used. The same sequence adjective-noun is found in Tati-Talyshi and other modern and Middle Iranian languages, thus showing typological similarity.

The dependent noun precedes the head noun. The head noun is obligatorily marked for possessor by the possessive suffixes. The dependent noun, however, is unmarked if non-specific: *ana dil-i* “mother tongue” (lit. “mother tongue-her”). That is, reminiscent of Suffixaufnahme (cf. Elamite and Urartian, above), specific noun phrases double-mark the possessor on both the dependent and the head noun: *män-im qardaš-īm* “my brother” (lit. “I-my brother-my”; *siz-in kītab-iz* “your (pl.) book”; *Aydīn-īn ana-sī* “Aydin’s mother” (-s-I after vowels). Number and case endings follow the possessive noun phrase as a whole: [*män-im qardaš-īm*]- *īn āl-i* “[my brother]-’s hand-his.”

Persian-type *ežāfa* constructions are borrowed as lexical units. These include Persian prepositional *ežāfa* construction like *barāy-e* “for (the purpose, benefit of),” alternating with Turkic *-İçin*, also in combination: *N-için, barāy-e N, barāy-e N-için*. The instrumental *-InAn* also functions as coordinator, equivalent to the connective *vā*. The instrumental also functions as copulative comitative: *Ali-y-inān Kazīm* “Ali with Kazem, Ali and Kazem.”

The personal suffixes are strictly possessive. They do not function as oblique cases as in Persian (Pers. *did-am-aš* “I saw him [-aš]”). They do, however, function to express possession (“to have”) in combination with the existential verb: possessor-possessed *var-:* *bir kītab-īm var* “I have a book.” This construction, genitive/dative + “to be,” is found in early New Persian and classical Persian, as well as in numerous non-Persian Iranian dialects, including Tāti-Talessi, but has been fully replaced in Persian by *dār-/dāšt-* “to keep, hold, have.”

Word order. The basic word order is subject-object verb. This order is syntactically and semantically marked. It is required for distinguishing the subject from indefinite direct object when both are unmarked: *ušag alma ye-ydi* “the child ate an apple/apples.” This distinction corresponds directly to the absence of the marker of definite-specific objects, *-rā*, in modern Persian.

Complex sentences. Coordination as well as subordination is typically based on participles and gerundives. There are three types of coordination (cf. Dehghani, 2000): (a) the conjunctive *-İb*; (b) no overt segmental connector, but pause; (c) the loaned conjunction *vā*: [Chart 11](#).



I. Nominalized clauses. (1) Relative clauses are based on the participle in *-An*; also the possessive *-dIk* construction if it is accusative, dative, or ablative. Tense, mood, and aspect are determined by the matrix clause: (a) subject, object: *män [gäl-än kiši]-n-i tanış-ır-am* “I know the man who is coming,” *[kiši sür-än] at get-ti* “the horse which the man rode went away,” and *[kiši-n-in sür-düg-ü] at get-ti*; (b) dative, ablative: *[Ali yetiş-än] baq/[Ali-n-in yetiş-dig-i] baq* “the garden which Ali came to,” *[Ali cık-an] baq/[Ali-n-in cık-dig-i] baq* “the garden from which Ali came”; (c) genitive: *[sän sac-ı-n-ı istä-y-än] qız/[sän sac-ı-n-ı istä-dig-in] qız* “the girl whose hair you like.”

(2) Subject and object clauses, as well as most adverbial clauses, are syntactically nominal possessive constructions, of the form [agent-genitive *-mAx*-possessive] followed by case endings. For most of these there are Persian-type head-initial finite clauses: (a) subject clauses, nominative: *[kiši-n-in oyan-mak-i] çok cätin di* “it is difficult for the man to wake up” (“the person’s waking up”); (b) object clauses, accusative: *[Ali-n-in gäl-mäx-i]-n-i gör-dü-m* “I saw that Ali came.” Adverbial clauses are similarly marked by case endings added to the verbal noun: (a) purpose clauses, *-mAx-IcIn* (benefactive); (b) circumstantial clauses, *-mAx-InAn* (instrumental); (c) inception, *mAx-A* (dative) + *başla-* “to begin.” However, temporal clauses are mostly constructed with the gerundive in *-An* + case ending and/or postposition: *-An-dA* “when,” *-An-dAn sonra* “after,” *-An-jä* “before, as soon as.”

II. Finite clauses. Most of these types have Persian-type correlates, typically introduced by *ki*. Even both non-finite and finite types may co-occur: *o [gäl-än kiši] ki sän gör-dü müdür dü* “the man who came, whom you saw, is a manager.” Unlike Persian, in these copied constructions anaphoric pronouns are not permitted in case of the subject and object: *o kiši ki män *on-u gör-dü-m* “that man whom I saw” (cf. Pers. *ke u-rā*). More significant, Azeri has copied so far only the definite-specific type of Persian, which is overtly evident by the obligatory demonstrative adjective, mostly *o* “that, the,” but not indefinite relative clauses of the type *N-i ke*.

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