



## IRAN VII. NON-IRANIAN LANGUAGES (9) ARABIC

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### **IRAN vii, continued**

#### vii(9). Arabic

During Sasanian times, several large Arab tribes moved into the Fertile Crescent. Some tribes were moved to the Persian hinterland by Shapur II (r. C.E. 309-79) to the area of Bam, others to Dālaki in Fars and Kerman. Beginning in the early seventh century, administrators and troops with families as well as tribes moved or were moved to cities, towns, and countryside in all regions of the former empire. Settlement occurred in various waves, developing in a pattern of immigration and subsequent assimilation to local varieties of Iranian and later also Turkic, differing from region to region. Most extensive was the Arab settlement in eastern Iran and Greater Khorasan (including northwestern Afghanistan, and Central Asia, including Marv and Bukhara). At its height, the total population of Arab immigrants is estimated to have totalled about a quarter of a million.

Most of the original settlers have lost their native language. The Arab origin may still be remembered (sometimes erroneously) and be reflected in tribal names, often of sub-tribes of larger confederations, and in toponyms. In order to indicate the erstwhile extent of the Arab settlement, the detailed descriptions by E. Daniel, P. Oberling, and B. Hourcade on present-day tribes,



Arab-speaking or not, may be summarized as follows; cf. also ‘Abbāsi (1999) on Arabs in Khorasan; Sehampur (1999) on the Arabs of the Khamsa in Fars; and the comprehensive overview by ‘A.-Ḥ. Zarrinkub on the Arab conquest in the *Cambridge History of Iran* (1975):

(1) Khuzestan: Arab tribes in the province and along the southern littoral of the Persian Gulf.

(2) Fars hinterland: (a) the Il-e ‘Arab of the Khamsa tribal confederacy; (b) two branches of the ‘Arab Jabbāra and ‘Arab Sheybāni, speaking a mixture of Arabic, Persian, and Lori; (c) further, the formerly independent Arab tribes, the Bahā’-al-dini and the Shiri, now absorbed by the Qashqā’i tribal confederacy and the Arab tribe of the Khamsa tribal confederacy, respectively.

(3) Kermān province (some Arabs of Kerman province are said to have still spoken Arabic in the 1930s): (a) Sirjān region, the ‘Aṭāḍallāhi; (b) Bardir (Māshiz), the ‘Arabkhāni Sorkhi and three Badu’i tribes; Pāriz region, the ‘Arab-e Ḥāji Ḥosayni and a fourth Badu’i group.

(4) Sistan: the Mir ‘Arab and Sayyed tribes.

(5) Makrān and Persian Baluchestan: the Pishi and Mand on the Pakistan border, the Rend (doubtful) and the Kalmati.

(6) Lorestan: several of the Lori and South Kurdish Lakki tribes.

(7) Kurdistan: several of the main clans in Kermān-shāhān and Māhidasht.

(8) Azarbaijan: two tribes of the Shahsavan, and a clan of the Qaraqalpaq, who are now Turkicized.

(9) Mazandaran: a small group in the eastern province, and sayyeds in Gorgan and Fenderesk.

(10) Tehran province: semi-nomadic tribes in the Tehran region, the ‘Araba, now diminished by the sprawl of the capital, in the dehestān Jalilābād south of Varāmin, still transhumant; around Tehran, a heterogeneous amalgam of tribal fractions, deported there at one time or another, the Bāqeri, possibly a splinter of the Khamsa; the Mishmāst from Khuzestan; and the Koti from Shiraz, now dispersed around Varāmin.

(11) Central Iran, several groups: (a) some clans around Qom and Kāshān; (b)



the Ardestāni tribe between Kāshān and Nā'in; (c) further south, the 'Arab tribe of the Haft Leng of the Bakhtiāri tribal confederacy.

(12) Khorasan, with a large Arab population: (a) Shahrud area (still called 'Ajam o 'Ajam, probably the Bastami tribe); (b) the Arabs in the dehestān of Taht-Jolga, west of Nishapur; (c) the Il-e 'Arab tribe in the dehestān of Kandakli, west of Sarakhs, where Arabic was still spoken in two villages in the 1950s (*Farhang* IX, pp. 309, 350); (e) the Arabs around Torshiz (Kāshmar) and Torbat-e Jām, mostly 'Arab Mishmāst; (f) the Arabs around Torbat-e Heydari, between Torshiz and Torbat-e Jām, where also Arabic was still spoken in the 1950s (*Farhang* IX, p. 86); (g) the Arabs around Tun (Ferdows); (h) the Arabs in the dehestān of Zir Kuh, between Qāyen and the Afghan border, where also Arabic was still spoken in the 1950s (*Farhang*, pp. 227, 345, 418); (i) the Arabs of the dehestān 'Arabkhāna, southwest of Birjand, where also Arabic was still spoken in the 1950s; (j) the Arabs in two villages in the neighboring dehestāns of Nahārjāt and Nehbandān.

In present-day Iran Arabic speakers are found in the areas adjacent to Arabic-speaking countries, mostly Khuzestan and the Persian Gulf region (between 200,000 to 500,000), in Fars, possibly Kerman, and in three pockets in Khorasan.

Linguistically, the dialects of Khuzestan are part of the continuum of Iraqi dialects. Their linguistic setting and features were outlined by B. Ingham (1973, 1976), who also identified Persian and Turkish loans in northeastern Arabia (Ingham, 2005) and an overview of the languages of the Persian Gulf (Ingham 1980).

The remnant Central Asian Arabic has been subject to linguistic research since the 1930s, in recent years foremost by Jastrow as the leading scholar of Arabic and Neo-Aramaic dialects in the Fertile Crescent (see discussion and references in Jastrow, 2005).

However, no linguistic data on the Arabic of Khorasan had been known until the field work by U. Seeger (2000) and S.-O. Dahlgren (2002-2003, 2005). They thereby could verify the informations in the *Farhang* of the 1950s on the Arabic-speaking villages in Khorasan (Sarakhs, Torshiz and Torbat-e Jām, Tun in Zir Kuh, and 'Arabkhāna of Birjand; see above). Dialectologically, they identified three small areas with villages fully or partially speaking Arabic: (1) the *dehestān* 'Arabkhāna southwest of Birjand; (2) Zirkuh, 100 km northeast of



Birjand at the Afghan border; (3) Sarakhs at the far northeastern border with Turkmenistan, apparently emigrants from ‘Arab-khāna. The latter two communities also identify themselves as ‘Arab-e Khazā‘i. Dahlgren also found Arabic-speakers in the Māhidasht near Persepolis.

The linguistic material in these pioneering articles on Khorasan Arabic is necessarily limited, and leaves many questions open. The grammatical descriptions include brief sections on phonology, morphology, and some notes on syntax, and a total of five short sample texts, of which Dahlgren’s are provided with interlinear translation. It is hoped that all recorded materials will be published in due time.

In terms of Arabic dialectology, they have retained features by which they can be related to Mesopotamian (Iraqi) dialects prior to the so-called *qeltu/gelet* split, and thus to the immigrations during the ninth and tenth centuries (Dahlgren, 2002-03, 2005), based on the criteria that were established for Central Asian Arabic by O. Jastrow (1998).

#### LINGUISTIC SKETCH OF KHORASAN ARABIC (‘ARABKHĀNA)

*Phonology.* A feature inherited from the Mesopotamian source dialects is the shift of the interdental fricatives  $\theta \delta \delta > s z z$  (as in Central Asian Arabic; cf. Ratcliffe, 2005). The major later change is the loss of pharyngealization, except *há* and ‘(‘ayn). *Q* and *k* merge; dentals show strong palatalization before *i e a*: *a-ctā* “the book.”

*Morphology.* Much of the inherited morphology and morphophonology has been retained. Thus, masculine and feminine gender are distinguished in the nominal and verbal system in both second and third persons singular and plural. However, particularly the noun phrase and sentence syntax differ radically from the common Arabic typology.

Nominal system. Case distinction (nominative, genitive, accusative) is lost. Plural formations by suffix or ablaut (broken plural) are retained, and extended to loans: *mīz* > *əmyāz* “tables,” *kešvār* > *kešāver* besides *kešver-āt* “countries.” The definite article is *al-/a-*, which assimilates to dentals: *ar-rūziyy* “the child,” and is fully assimilated to the initial consonant in Zir Kuh: *ab-bājir-a* “the cow” (< *baqara*), which shows the feminine marker *-a(t)*. The indefinite article *fārd* (< *fard* “individual”) is innovated: *fārd emrāyye* “a, one woman” (cf. Persian *yek*). The personal pronouns and suffixes and the deictic pronouns are



as follows: [Chart 1](#).

Verbal system. The ablaut system defining the aspect forms and nominal forms, and derived stem forms (derived stem classes II, III, V, VII, VIII) have been retained to a considerable degree. Person and gender are marked by affixation: [Chart 2](#).

Progressive forms found are formed, as in most Arabic dialects (already classical), with \**kāna* + present: *kun ni-rāī-hinne* “we (*ni-*) used to let them (3rd plur. fem.) graze.” Typical for these dialects, as for the Central Asian dialects, is the use of the present participle to express a perfect tense/aspect form corresponding to the Persian perfect (*raft-a am*; for Central Asian Arabic, cf. Windfuhr, 2005): masc. *lāgt-unnā-h* “he has picked him (3rd sing. masc. *-h*) up” < \**lāgiṭ-in-hu*; fem. *āxiz-t-inn-ah* “I took her (*-ah*) [as wife]” < \**āxiz-at-in-hu*. As in other Arabic dialects, the formant *-inn-* shows the derivation of these suffixed forms from the generalized nunation *-in*. In turn, the inherited Arabic perfective (“preterit”) corresponds to the Persian preterit (*raft-am*). The general negation is *ma-*: *mā-ya-ʾref-īn* “they don’t know.”

The expression of the copula continues a common innovation. In 3rd person forms it is marked by the personal suffixes: *dē xošmez-aw* “this is delicious,” *aksar-hum fi kermān-hum* “most of them are in Kerman.” It can be marked for all persons by Persian existential *hast-* as follows (with *halāk* “tired”): [Chart 3](#).

Syntax. Noun phrase. Definiteness is marked by *al-/a-* prefixed to the dependent noun and copied onto the adjective: *ʾurubiyy-et el-kešver-āt el-uxra* “the Arabic of the other countries,” *dīc ā-māntay-et el-uxra* “that other region.” Indefiniteness is marked by *-in*; it is attached to the head noun: *ketāb-in* /*kutub-in* *zēn* “a good book/good books,” *mamālik-in qadīmiyy-ā* “the former countries,” with feminine *-a* of the adjective. As evidenced by *masal-in mā hū* “it’s no problem” (cf. Persian *mas’ala’i nist*), this development of the Arabic nunation corresponds to the Persian indefinite *-i*, attached to both singular and plural: *ketāb-i*, *ketāb-hā’i* “a, some certain book/books.”

Word order. Word order has shifted from VSO to Persian SOV: *aḥne fi-j-jidīm māl-dār kun-ne* “formerly we were herders” (< *fi al-qadīm*); *kul-na ʾurubiyyā nā-hanžem* “we all speak Arabic” (< *H-N-J-M* “to speak”).

Complex sentences. Unlike Central Asian Arabic, Khorasan Arabic does not appear to have copied the universal Persian conjunctive *ki*; at least it does not



occur in texts. Instead, definite-specific relative clauses are introduced by the definite article: *mantey-et el-ehna hast-i-na*, ‘Arabxāne, *ḥudūd fi sād kilomētr-ēt Birjand* “The area that we are in, Arabxāne, is approximately 100 km from Birjand.” Note the absence of a copula, and the calque on Persian *dar sad kilomētr-í-ye Birjand*. Persian conjunctive phrases are regularly calqued: *ba’d-a el-tarayyag-t* “after I had breakfast”; cf. Persian *ba’d az in ke*.

*Lexicon.* The lexicon and phraseology freely borrow from Persian, including compound verbs, and usually shift to the phonology and articulation of Persian: *fārḡ ya-sānnā* “they (3rd plur. fem.) are different,” lit. “they make a difference.”

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