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**Persian in the Safavid Period:**

*Sketch for an *Etat de Langue*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Even if they can be isolated from the continuum, periods of linguistic evolution do not fall into the same neat segments of political history, or the less precise eras of social history, as we use for convenience in other diachronic studies. Nevertheless, it is self-evident that particular periods of political and social upheaval, characterised among other events by population movements, the promotion, destruction or neglect of particular cities and regions, and radical changes in ideology, can have direct effects on sociolinguistic phenomena and may accelerate or otherwise affect longer-term linguistic shifts. The greater Safavid period (i.e., that during which the peculiarly Safavid political and cultural ethos became and remained dominant in Iran), which extends minimally from the establishment of the dynasty through the Zand and Afsharid interregna after the formal demise of the dynasty itself (ca. 1500-1800 C.E.), was just such an era in the history of Iranian society and the Persian language. In particular, the political separation and ideological estrangement of post-Safavid Iran from Central Asia and Afghanistan anticipated the emergence of modern nation states using distinct varieties of Persian.

By "Persian in the Safavid period" I refer primarily not to the literary language, but to the spoken language of the time. The state of the written language may readily be ascertained from the copious Persian literature of the period, and indeed most references to "language" in scholarly studies of Safavid times concentrate on the written language and are asides on literature rather than language. Much of this is irrelevant and even misleading, given the lag of generations (centuries, even) before a conservative literary language basing itself on a rigid poetic tradition is likely to reflect changes in contemporary spoken usage. Obviously we
can never know directly how Persian was spoken between the late fifteenth and early nineteenth centuries; the earliest audio recordings come from the reign of Nāṣir al-Dīn Shah Qājār. However, there are abundant if indirect and disparate data scattered throughout the writings of Iranians and foreign visitors of the time, little of which have been used so far. These we may set against our sketchy ideas of spoken Persian of pre-Safavid times and our more reliable knowledge of modern Persian, to hazard some guesses as to the state of the sound system, changes in vocabulary and idiom, and sociolinguistic trends.

A few observations and caveats are in order concerning the European transcriptions of Persian words that will be cited as phonological evidence in what follows. Historians of the greater Safavid period are familiar with European (especially English and French) renditions of Persian and Turkish names and terms, varying from the amusingly recognisable to the totally opaque in accordance with the writer's degree of familiarity with the language, his consistency in his attempts to render alien sounds in the unstandardised and non-phonemic orthography of his own language, and the reliability of the typesetter in reproducing his manuscript. From Sherley to Hanway, characters such as "Oliver de Beag", "Mortis Ally", "Hoschroff" and the "Ophgoons", however barbarously assimilated to the writer's own cultural norms, generally pose few problems. With utterances other than names, there are fewer clues to the source form. Occasionally a writer will assimilate a term totally to a tempting homograph or cognate in his own language, as daughter for dukhtar 'daughter, girl'; in other cases a reproduced form evidently rests on a misunderstanding of the informant, as the gloss 'a Cloud' for sephyte (i.e. sefid 'white'). Where the representation of vowels, in particular, is inconsistent, the reader may decide for himself whether the evidence adduced is convincing.

The only European visitors to Safavid Iran who seem to have left a conscientious linguistic record of their experiences are Sir Thomas Herbert, Engelbert Kaempfer and Joseph Labrosse. The Englishman Herbert, a close friend of Charles I, went to Iran with Sir Dodmore Cotton's embassy (which also included Robert Sherley) in 1627-28 and subsequently wrote several interesting accounts of his impressions; his Travels of 1638 includes a six-page Persian-English glossary and phrasebook in transcription. Kaempfer, a German, arrived in 1684 together with a Swedish embassy, and stayed a few years as physician to the Dutch merchants in the Gulf; among his writings are a topically arranged Persian-Dutch dictionary and a Persian-Turkish-Dutch vocabulary with a Turkish phrasebook, in transcription. Labrosse, a discalced Carmelite missionary from Toulouse better known under his religious alias of Ange de Saint Joseph, lived in Isfahan from 1664 to 1678 and learned Persian well; his Gazophylacium Linguae Persarum of
1684—ostensibly an Italian-Latin-French-Persian dictionary—is a veritable encyclopedia of contemporary Iran, including a few transcriptions that indicate the colloquial pronunciation of the time. Labrosse's work has been used by linguists, but so far as I am aware the notes of Herbert and Kaempfer on Persian have not been taken into consideration. In general, the more naïve Herbert (who often does not distinguish between Persian and Turkish) seems to be a more reliable informant for the sounds and idioms he heard; Kaempfer and Labrosse, with their amateur scholarly approach, do not regularly distinguish between literary and spoken Persian.

II. PHONOLOGY UP TO THE SAFAVID PERIOD

The relative chronology of sound changes in Persian is problematic and controversial. The following survey of specific developments up to the beginning of the Safavid period is intended to establish an approximate status quo, not as a definitive statement on the questions broached.

The principal shibboleth distinguishing modern Persian of Iran from eastern dialects (Tajik of Central Asia, Dari or Kaboli of Afghanistan, Indo-Persian) and from earlier Classical Persian of Iran is the absence of the so-called majhūl vowels. Though not distinguished in the Arabic script, each of the "long" vowels represented by vāv and yā originally had two distinct realisations: /ū/ and /ō/, as in zūd 'soon' and rōz 'day' respectively, and /ī/ and /ē/, as in pīr 'old' and dalēr 'bold', or the minimal pair shīr 'milk' and shēr 'lion'. The two different vowels were not considered to rhyme in early Classical Persian verse; some time later, however, such rhymes begin to creep in, and in most varieties of western Persian of the last few centuries it is evident that the lower vowel of each pair has gradually merged with the higher vowel (/ō/ > /ū/ and /ē/ > /ī/).

The available evidence, chiefly from the incidence or absence of rhymes in these vowels, suggests that /ō/ (vāv-i majhūl) had disappeared by end of the twelfth century and /ē/ (yā-yi majhūl) by the late fifteenth or, at the outside, the early seventeenth century. Thus /ō/ in this context had almost certainly dropped from the vowel repertory of western Persian by the beginning of the Safavid era, while /ē/ was probably still to be met with in some places up to the middle or even the end of the period.

This is entirely unconnected with the question of the realisation of the diphthongs /aw/ and /ay/, by way of /ow/ and /ey/, as /ō/ and /ē/ respectively, which can occur in many varieties of western Persian under certain phonological conditions (in the colloquial pronunciation of, e.g., naxayr as /naxeyr/ or /naxēr/ or dawra as /dowre/ or /dōre/). Diphthongs are still a distinctive feature of eastern Persian dialects. Here, as in the
related question of the shift from a bilabial pronunciation of consonantal \( \text{vāv} /w/ \) (as still heard in eastern Persian) to labiodental \( /v/ \) as heard in present-day Iran, there is insufficient evidence to postulate a date. All indications in the transcriptions given by Herbert and Kaempfer are that seventeenth-century Persian was close to modern Persian in these respects.

Several other general sound changes had definitively taken place by the beginning of the sixteenth century. Consonants had disappeared, such as \( \text{vāv-i ma'dūla} \), i.e. the cluster \( /xv/ \) was reduced to \( /x/ \) in words such as \( /xvē_/ > /xē_/ \) and \( /xvad/ > /xud/, \) which in examples of the second type entailed rounding of the following vowel; and fricative \( /ð/ \), an earlier allophone of \( /d/ \) represented by dotted \( dāl \) \((zāl-i mu'ajjama)\) that was still a feature of southwestern Persian in the thirteenth century, seems to have disappeared almost everywhere by the sixteenth. The collapse of \( /q/ \) (the uvular plosive of Arabic and Turkish, not native to Persian) and \( /γ/ \) (the uvular fricative common to Arabic, Turkish and Persian), which resulted in the identical pronunciation of qāf and ghayn in most of western Iran today, appears to have been achieved by the fifteenth century under the influence of Turkish.

Another phonological shift—more accurately, an example of morphological drift in the lexicon—which had been largely completed by the onset of the Safavid period involves a class of some 1500 Arabic loanwords in Persian, namely those in the feminine ending -\( a \), which are lexicalised in Persian either as -\( a \) (ending in the 'silent \( h/ \)') or -\( at \). In the course of the past millennium, at least twenty-five percent of those originally incorporated in -\( at \) (initially a majority of the class) have shifted to -\( a \) (realised in current pronunciation of Tehran as /e/): e.g., \( tajrubat > tajruba, maqālat > maqāla \). This drift, the rationale of which need not here concern us, is a continuing process; however, it seems to have peaked during the twelfth to the thirteenth century.

The realisation of non-final /a/, the "short" vowel sometimes represented by \( fatha \), is likewise thought to be in a state of continuing evolution in Persian of Iran. Despite considerable allophonic range, there is today a clear difference of quality between the low, front, open \( [æ] \) of Tehran or "standard" Persian and the mid, central, half-open \( [ʌ] \) of Afghan, Tajik and Indo-Persian usage. These more conservative dialects are presumed to preserve more closely the articulation of this vowel in Classical Persian, before it was progressively raised in western dialects. Impressions of the degree of this raising at different periods are necessarily subjective and approximate. European visitors to Safavid Iran (including Kaempfer and Labrosse) mostly use \( e \) to transcribe this vowel, or more rarely \( a \); English visitors (including Herbert) mostly use \( a \), and more rarely \( e \). This confirms the generally open, front quality of the vowel, but leaves vague a considerable range of tongue-height as
between /a/ and /e/.

One environment where this vowel has been consistently raised to /e/ in modern Persian of Iran is in the (stressed) negative prefix before the verbal prefix mī- (formerly mē-, with yā-yi majhūl), as in /nemikonad/, /nemigoft/, etc. This must have happened subsequent to (and consequent on) the raising of the majhūl vowel; unfortunately there is no instance of a relevant verb form in Herbert to indicate whether this had happened by the early 1600s. The word yak ‘one’, today generally pronounced /yek/, was heard as such in the fifteenth century, and again in the early seventeenth, going by Herbert's transcriptions yeek, yeck, yec. Conversely, what appears to be a lowering of /e/ to /a/ in the word emruz 'today' was heard by the authors of the Codex Cumanicus in the early fourteenth century (amruz), and confirmed in Isfahan by Herbert (amrowse); apparently this is still a feature of Isfahan dialect today.

Spoken Persian of the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, then, must have sounded much like that of today, with the following exceptions. The /ē/ reflex of yā-yi majhūl, as mentioned, may have been heard in words such as pēsh, rēsh, darvēsh. Final /a/ as represented in both Persian and Arabic vocabulary by the 'silent h' (hā-yi mukhtafī), which in modern west Persian usage is typically raised to /e/ as in /xāne/, /ejāze/, was still pronounced /a/. The raising to /e/ is generally dated as recently as the later nineteenth century, and thought to have begun in and spread from Tehran. However, there are indications that this striking change (nowadays the most obvious shibboleth for Persian of Iran as distinct from Tajik and Kaboli) was already under way in the Safavid period.

III. SOUND CHANGES DURING THE SAFAVID PERIOD

A single member of this large class, the word shanba 'Saturday' and its compounds, has been pronounced /šambe/ at least since the early fifteenth century, on the evidence of its transcription in Armenian manuscripts. It even shows this same pronunciation, anomalously, in the eastern dialects, which otherwise preserve /a/ in final position. In this case, as in that of the negative prefix in /nemi-/ forms of the verb, and that of /yak/ > /yek/, a single high-frequency, semantically prominent vocable which forms part of a paradigmatic system (conjugation, numerals, dates) has anticipated and perhaps reinforced a general trend.

Almost without exception, Kaempfer transcribes the final short vowel as -è, -eh or èh (e.g., divonè, sjanbeh) which—since he mostly transcribes /a/ in any other position as e—is not conclusive evidence for a distinctive raising of final /a/. In Herbert's material we find final short /a/ in fifteen words given as -a or -ah (e.g., Cobba [qahba] 'a Whore',...
Taghtah 'a Table'). Only one word and its compounds or collocations (four instances) is transcribed with final -ey, sufficiently and consistently indicating a raised vowel: this is Conney [khāna] 'a House', as also Adam Conney 'a Privy' (perhaps for ābdast-khāna?), Ob-Conney 'a Close stoole', Conney neese 'He is not within'. There is a single exception: Quo jaas chonna sumaw? 'Where is your house?'.

It is not unlikely, I suggest, that this high-frequency vocable, at least in some idiolects and especially in the common adverbial khāna (nīst) '(he is not) at home', had already followed the lead taken by shanba and brought the raising of final /a/ one step closer to its universal application in Persian of three centuries thence.

Yet another feature of modern colloquial Persian that is generally assumed to have originated as a relatively recent feature of Tehran dialect can be found in the speech of Safavid Isfahan. This is the selective realisation of "long" /ā/ before a nasal as /ū/, e.g. /xāne/ > /xūne/, /āmad/ > /ūmad/. In fact it can be shown to be a much older tendency in New Persian and other Iranian languages. Latin transcriptions of a Persian translation of the Koran made by Spanish Carmelite monks in southern Iran between 1608 and 1622 reproduce this feature in words such as nume (< nāma), āsoni (< āsānī), biixumid (< bi-āshāmīd). Herbert has no fewer than ten familiar words showing this shift, e.g., Emoom, Noon, Dandoon, untraf, Colloom (for ghulām), Tiroon (for tehrān); the transcription of the vowel corresponds consistently to his representation of canonical /ū/ as in saboon, zood. Labrosse has occasional examples, as bigoune. As today, the feature is selective: Herbert has Roam 'Thighes' (for rān) and Zavoan 'a speech or lang[ucose]'. In general, high-register, more 'literary' words are not subject to this rule: thus zabān in its literal meaning, as in sāndvich-i zabān 'tongue sandwich', may colloquially be pronounced /zabūn/, but not in the metaphorical sense 'language'.

This facultative sound change is evidently not a 'shift', in the diachronic or telic sense of the progressive raising of /a/ or the shift of feminine-ending -at > -a, but rather a manifestation of a latent rule that may or may not be triggered at different times in different milieus. On a sociolinguistic level, it seems possible that this feature—and perhaps also the tendency to raise /a/ in final or other prominent positions—might be typical not so much of a particular time or place, such as seventeenth-century Isfahan or twentieth-century Tehran, but of "the metropolis" as an absolute, or a particular section of its potentially mobile speech community. It has often been noted that the speech patterns of the court and related high-status institutions in a capital city such as London or Paris were imitated by the upwardly-mobile in the same and more distant regions: the uvular r [R] now characteristic of much of central western Europe began in Paris in the century before the
French revolution. But what if the court and the capital were rarely in the same place for longer than a generation, as happened in Iran (with the exception of Isfahan between 1597 and the 1730s) from the late fifteenth to the early nineteenth century?

If we consider that the Safavid court (accompanied by its bureaucracy, army, camp followers and other personnel) migrated twice from one city to another (Tabriz to Qazvin to Isfahan), and that subsequently the Zand capital of Shiraz and the Qajar capital of Tehran were of necessity 'staffed' by the same classes of people, including many of the same individuals, it should not surprise us if a distinctive court or metropolitan sociolect should evolve, not only passing on its peculiar features to later generations of the same classes but distributing them more widely to the citizenry of different centers who would tend to imitate high-status speech patterns. The effects of just such a mobile sociolect are evident in the lexicon, as demonstrated in the next two sections, so why should they not also affect phonology?

IV. THE LEXICON

The most significant lexical (and grammatical) innovation of Timurid times, well established in Safavid historiography, was the induction of the demonstrative adjective ān 'that' into the pronominal system to represent the third person neuter pronoun 'it', in contrast with ā 'he/she'; modern Persian usage was thus differentiated from Classical (and Turkish), where the third person pronoun ā (Turkish o) does not distinguish between animate and inanimate, human and non-human, or male and female. This limited introduction of grammatical gender, distinguishing human from non-human, marks an isolated step in the direction of de-turkicisation for Persian of this and the ensuing period, which is otherwise characterized by a continuing turkicisation of the lexicon and some of the syntax of Persian.

Herbert's vocabulary and phrasebook preserve several terms and expressions which strike the modern ear as archaic, or even as characteristic of the Persian of Afghanistan; such are Hackeam 'a Physitian', Farsang (nowadays more usually farsakh), Respun 'Thred' (cf. Persian rīsmān, Kaboli rēspān, but subjected to the /ān/ > /ūn/ shift), Hali 'Now' (cf. Persian hālā, Kaboli hālē), paola [piyāla] 'cup', Chaldery 'How doe you?' (cf. Persian hāl-i shumā/ hālat chetawr ast, Kaboli che hāl dārī), and the reply Shoocoro-Whoddaw (shukru-khudā, cf. literary Persian khudā-rā shukr; spoken Persian came to prefer al-hamdu li-llāh, Kaboli and Tajik shukr-ullāh). Lexically as well as phonologically, it appears that western Persian has changed more rapidly than eastern
Persian in the course of the past 350 years.

The Mongol and Timurid invasions had already introduced a stratum of Mongolian and Turco-Mongolian vocabulary into Persian, some of which continued in use into the Safavid period. Much of this, having to do with the military and administration (dārūgha, bulāk, etc.), was ephemeral, being superseded during Safavid, Qajar, or at the latest early Pahlavi times. Among the few still in general use are nōkar 'manservant', qadagan 'forbidden', qeychī 'scissors', kumak 'help' (which has formed a verb) and jelōw 'bridle', which has expanded its scope to adverbial and prepositional use, 'in front of'.

The scope of Arabic as a living literary language continued to diminish (though the volume of religious writing increased with the establishment of state Shi'ism); inscriptions on metalwork and other artifacts are increasingly to be found in Persian rather than Arabic. However, official documents and hack historiography suffer a fresh upsurge of bureaucratic Arabisms (fi'l-ju'mla 'in sum', fi'l-vāqi' 'actually', hisbu'l-amr 'as instructed' and its barbarous synonym hisbu'l-farmān, 'alā hida 'separate(ly)')—the last is common in colloquial Kaboli as /alayda/. It was Safavid bureaucrats, too, who popularised the use of the Arabic feminine plural in -āt to form collectives such as māliyāt 'taxes, taxation, finances', nivishtajāt 'writings' and regional toponyms such as gīlānāt, shamīrānāt.

Native Persian words and long-assimilated Arabic loanwords were of course changing subtly in meaning, or at least gained connotations in speech which did not always surface in writing. One such was suhbat (<Arabic suhba 'company, friendly relations'), which combines with the auxiliary kardan to form an everyday Persian verb. The original meaning of the verb, 'to keep company, socialise (with)' specialised in two distinct directions: in modern Persian it is the common idiom for 'to chat, talk, speak', while in Indo-Persian and subsequent Urdu usage its primary meaning is 'to have sex'. (This in part closely parallels the evolution of English intercourse, which up until the early years of this century connoted 'communication, social intercourse', but which now means 'sexual intercourse' unless otherwise glossed.) As used in Persian poetry, especially the suffixed sabk-i Hindī verse popular in both Iran and India in the later Safavid period, suhbat and its verb are mostly ambiguous (deliberately so, one often suspects), and the translator faced with a phrase like suhbat-i yār in a ghazal may not be sure whether to plump for a friendly chat, a passionate copulation or a metaphorical soul-mating, or to play it safe with the still-valid cover-sense of 'companionship, company.' I do not know of any citations from this period that would indicate convincingly whether the respective semantic specialisations were already established in either western or eastern Persian; however, there is an attestation of yet another specialized use of
the word in early Safavid court custom. The Venetian Michele Membré, visiting the court of Shah Tahmāsb at Tabriz in 1540, describes an all-night party held by the shah's brother, with alcohol and music, as a suhbat (sopeti), which accords with (Ottoman) Turkish usage of the time.30

A formal court banquet, we learn from Olearius (at Isfahan during 1636-38), was sufra (/süfre/ in Turkish, which was the language in which the grace was pronounced).31 This old Arabic borrowing, basically meaning a tablecloth or napkin, comes naturally (like English 'table') to denote a meal: in present-day Persian it refers regularly to a votive repast given in thanks for a vow fulfilled. It is obviously the source of the Georgian sopra, a structured banquet with abundant liquor and a series of ritual toasts; the court of Tiflis, a vassal of the shah for most of this period (except when prudence dictated a switch of allegiance to the Ottoman sultan) borrowed or adapted a great deal of Safavid ceremonial together with its Turco-Persian terminology.

V. TURKICISM

Though the Safavid family may not have been ethnic Turks in origin, by the time they came to power in Iran they were turcophone by choice, and their principal tribal and other military supporters were Turks. Persian, however, was already established among speakers of every vernacular in the Turco-Iranian world as the superordinate written language and (increasingly in competition with Turkish) the major supraregional contact vernacular. As is well known, both Turkish and Persian literatures were patronised by the shahs, who themselves wrote and spoke in both languages. Officers of the court and army, and evidently lower ranks, switched codes with a facility that passed over the head of occasional visitors like Herbert, however sympathetic and conscientious in their language studies. Eight of his "Persian" phrases, and a sprinkling of words in his glossary, are pure Turkish, e.g. Oglan 'Boy', Whotoon 'Mayden', Sekym 'Stones' (properly, 'penis'), Ojam '[I am] Hungry', Man San O 'I Thou He', choggee 'Healthie', Ecbar Tanghy/-Tanghea, i.e. the "Turkish ezāfa" form of Tang-i Allāhu akbar, a gorge near Shiraz.

There is even an amusing hybrid, Na-choggea 'Sick' (i.e. the Persian negative prefix added to Turkish choq iyi 'very good/well').32 This might be dismissed as a joke, except that the Danish traveller Niebuhr lists a series of terms for officers of provincial musketeers (tufangchī) campaigning for the Zand ruler on the Gulf littoral in the 1760s, which are Persian-Turkish hybrids: modelled on the Turco-Mongol decimal system, the ranks nevertheless express some of the numerical qualifiers
in Persian, as mīn-bāshī, yūzbāshī but pānsad-bāshī, panjāh-bāshī, dah-bāshī.\textsuperscript{33}

The most obvious way in which post-Timurid Persia and its language was subject to turkicisation was in the presence, and acceptance, of a large and important Turkish speech community in the country, as exemplified above in Herbert's half-digested experience of Turkish as the everyday spoken language alongside and interwoven with the "official" language, Persian. Sir Thomas, on his way from the Caucasus to Gilan and thence to Isfahan, was inevitably thrown into the company of soldiers, courtiers, and other subjects and servants of the shah who were not native speakers of the nominal language. My own first experience of Iran was strikingly similar to Herbert's, in that I was not suddenly dropped into Mehrabad and whisked to the north of Tehran, listening to Persian as expected; I journeyed overland from the Turkish frontier, passing through towns where Turkish continued to be spoken, in the company of truck drivers and, finally, even in south Tehran, the owners and staff of musāfir-khānas who spoke Turkish rather than Persian. Overland travellers to Iran, from Timurid through Safavid to Qajar times and up to the present, have inevitably found themselves in corridors, both geographical and sociological, where through quirks of economic and social history they hear more Turkish than Persian.

Chardin also noted this, and Pietro della Valle stated that spoken Turkish was so common among all classes in Iran as to be the lingua franca. At the same time, it enjoyed high prestige as the language of the ruling family and the Qizilbash tribes; Olearius writes that Persians actively learned Turkish, and Kaempfer claimed: "From the court it spread to the leading families of the Persians to such an extent that it is now almost shameful in Persia for a man of distinction to be ignorant of Turkish."\textsuperscript{34} If Arabic, the language of the evangelists of Islam, had such a profound effect on Persian, it is hardly surprising that Turkish, the language of the evangelists of state Shi'ism, did not remain simply an alternative vernacular in Iran, but by dint of increasing bilingualism exerted a direct influence on the lexicon and grammar of Persian. This is manifested overtly in the many loanwords of obvious Turkish origin (āqā, khānum, yawlāq, qishlāq, qāchāq, etc.), and more revealingly in the way some of these terms parallel Persian synonyms on a more vernacular level of the lexicon: of the words for 'knife', Persian kārd is the hero's blade or the neutral kitchen implement, Turkish čāqū tends to connote the ruffian's switchblade; of the words for 'horse', Persian asb is the riding steed, Turkish yābū is the pack nag; Persian murgh 'hen, chicken' is originally the literary, generic term 'bird', jūja (probably of Iranian etymology, but shared with Turkish) is the more vernacular 'chick' and 'chicken' when cooked.

Turkish has also infiltrated Persian in more subtle, covert ways that
have not been identified as turkicisms. A striking example from the field of popular Shi'i ritual is the word ta'ziya, referring in Iran (like its Persian synonym shabīh or shabīh-khwānī) to the "passion play" or dramatic representation of the tragedy of Karbala as presented during the Muharram mourning holidays. In the Subcontinent, ta'ziya designates a cenotaph, a model of the martyr's mausoleum carried in procession on the tenth of Muharram. This Arabic word was originally incorporated into Persian as ta'ziyat with the meaning 'mourning, condolence', and together with its verbal form ta'ziyat guftan 'to offer condolences' remains in this form in Persian of today. In this same meaning, however, Turkic languages (Ottoman and modern Turkish, Azerbaijani, Uzbek, Tatar—to the extent that the word has not been replaced in the lexicon by teselli or another synonym) consistently show the shifted form ta'ziya. Most of them do not have the Shi'i cultic sense 'passion play' as found in Persian, since this is alien to their Sunni culture. Azerbaijani, however, in addition to the Shi'i meaning, has the unspecialised, evidently transitional, sense 'funeral (obsequies)'; the drama of Husayn, or the ʿāshūrā procession, or its cenotaph, are in fact a re-enactment of the martyr's funeral as it evolved in Safavid Iran (and was taken, at an earlier stage of its evolution, to India). The continued use of the earlier doublet ta'ziyat in an unspecialised sense and the existence of a transparent Persian synonym for ta'ziya clinches the evidence that the latter is a Rückwanderer, an Arabic loan in Persian subsequently borrowed into Turkish, specialised and differentiated, then reborrowed into Persian.35

A similar example of semantic shift in an Arabic loanword in Persian which has probably been incubated in Turkish and returned to Persian (though this is harder to prove) is musāfir 'traveller, passenger; transient, (hotel) guest'. Both meanings are present in Persian and in Turkish of Turkey and Azerbaijan, but whereas in (literary) Persian the original sense of 'traveller' is primary, in Turkish the derived sense (backformed from musāfir-khāna 'transient hotel') is primary. I believe that a frequency-count of occurrences in spoken Persian would show the derived meaning to be primary here as well, arguing that the immediate provenance of Persian musāfir 'hotel guest', as of ta'ziya, is not medieval Arabic but Turkish in recent centuries.

In an earlier article I argued that the shift in word order in royal titulature from the type with a preposed title (Shāh Ismāʿīl, Shāh ʿAbbās, Shāh Sulaymān) to the type with a postposed title (Nādir Shāh, Fathʿalī Shāh, Rizā Shāh), which is standard in Iran from the end of the Safavid dynasty, is simply the unconscious adoption of Turkish syntax (i.e. modifier before head) in what had previously been a Persian noun phrase (head before modifier). This was merely a belated stage of a process that had been under way since Timurid times or earlier: in, e.g., Tāhmāsb Mīrzā and Īraj Mīrzā, a Persian title is postposed to designate a prince of
the ruling (Turkish) house, whether Safavid or Qajar, imitating the postponing of Turkish titles such as khān and āqā. These particular Turkicisms, expressing the political dominance of Turkish military dynasts over the Iranian world, left the way clear for the titles shāh, mīr and mīrzā (lit. 'born of an emir') to be preposed, as per Persian syntax, for metaphorical use in the titulature of Sufi leaders (Shāh Ni‘matullāh Valī, Shāh Mīr Hamza, Mīr Haydar) and of bureaucrats and writers (Mīrzā [Muhammad] Sādiq Nāmī, Mīrzā [Abu’l-Qāsim] ‘Ārif), which represented social niches in which Persians could enjoy cultural prominence. A variety of other collocations, including culinary delicacies such as barra kabāb and sabzī pulau, are frozen Turkish syntagms from this same period.36

VI. CONCLUSIONS

The high status that Turkish attained as the language of the ruling elite has diminished in Iran with the assimilation and ultimate demise of the turcophone dynasties of recent centuries. Turkish vocabulary and turkicisms, never as pervasive in Persian as the Arabic element, have been seamlessly assimilated and, where there is any sociolinguistic difference, are to be found in the lower registers of present-day Persian speech. The contrast with Central Asian varieties of Persian, especially the strongly turkicised Tajik of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, is illuminating. The infiltration and subsequent invasion and settlement of Turkish populations on the Iranian plateau occurred later than in the Oxus basin, but not by much, and both regions were ruled by turcophone dynasties from about 1400 until the 1920s (except for the Zand interlude in western Iran, ca. 1750-1800). More significant was the pattern and depth of settlement. Generally speaking, Turkish speech communities in Iran were more scattered, and even where they were concentrated, as in Azerbaijan, they seem to have remained nomadic pastoralists, complementing rather than competing with the agrarian and urban Persian population, for longer than in Central Asia. As a result, the linguistic picture in and around the Oxus basin, where the Tajiks were confined to oasis cities and mountain refuges or soon assimilated with the Turks, was one of persophone islands in a Turkish sea; on the plateau, it was more a panorama of turcophone islands (and reefs) in a Persian sea.

The decisive factor was most likely the degree to which Persian had already established itself on the western plateau, not only as a literary language but as a widespread vernacular, by the thirteenth century. Although literary New Persian had been born in the Oxus basin under the Samanids during the tenth century, it was nevertheless a dialect of Fārsī of southwestern Iran, and spread rapidly as a spoken tongue over
the territory of its related western dialects; whereas in Central Asia it had barely replaced the indigenous, and quite distinct, Iranian vernaculars such as Sogdian and Khwarazmian when its range was overrun by waves of Turkish speakers in the vanguard and wake of the Mongols.\textsuperscript{37} Since that time until the Soviet period, Persian of Central Asia evolved in diglossic channels, distributed by the implacable \textit{mīrāb} of declining literacy between a nostalgic, conservative literature and an increasingly turkicised vernacular. On the western plateau, even when the Safavid conquest of Iran to an extent recapitulated the traditional turco-phone invasions (though from west to east, reversing the traditional direction), the endorsement by the bilingual rulers of literary Persian secured its status, blunting the effects of turkicisation and permitting the development of Persian vernaculars homoglossically, in sociocultural proximity to the literary language.

It is worthwhile adding a coda to this disparate collection of remarks, tending as they do to underline both Persian's continuing membership, though under pressure, in the Indo-European confraternity and our indebtedness to the curiosity of European travellers for clues to its status in Safavid times. The recognition of the unity of Indo-European and the resulting rise of comparative philology is generally attributed to Sir William Jones's address to the Royal Asiatic Society in 1786, focusing on Sanskrit. However, as Benedict Anderson points out in this connection: "From the earliest days, Portuguese, Dutch and Spanish seamen, missionaries, merchants and soldiers had, for practical reasons... gathered word-lists of non-European languages..."\textsuperscript{38} Some at least of these adventurers realised intuitively that certain exotic vernaculars might be related to their own tongue, though the rationales they proposed were as yet unscientific. A century and a half before Jones, Sir Thomas Herbert (and here we call to mind his transcription of \textit{dukhtar} as \textit{daughter}) justifies his inclusion of a section on the Persian language not only because it may "peradventure benefit the future Traveller" but because "it may shew thee the affinity it has with the Saxon in many words (for from the \textit{Sacae} a people neere Mount \textit{Taurus} they borrow both Name and Descent)".\textsuperscript{39}

\section*{NOTES}

\begin{itemize}
\item[1.] E.g., \textit{The Cambridge History of Iran}, Vol. 6, pp. 950-52, 979.
\item[2.] Respectively to be identified as Allāh Verdī Beg, Murtazā ‘Alī, Ashraf, Afghans.
\item[3.] Thomas Herbert, \textit{Some Yeares Travels into Africa & Asia the Great...} (London 1638), p. 245.
\item[4.] Herbert, pp. 244-50.
\end{itemize}


9. Pisowicz, pp. 121-3; Kāmyār, pp. 70-75.

10. Pisowicz, pp. 107-11; Kāmyār, pp. 82-84.

11. Pisowicz, pp. 112-4, 117.


13. Pisowicz, p. 79 (based on a Russian traveller’s transcription *jek*).


15. Pisowicz, p. 77; Herbert, p. 246.


17. Pisowicz, p. 76.


21. Passim, pp. 245-8; Sādiqi, p. 61.

22. Pisowicz, p. 81.

23. Herbert, respectively pp. 246, 245.

24. For further discussion see Margaret Kahn and Jared Bernstein, Progress of the unN change in Persian: *dabestān* vs. *tābestun*, *Acta Orientalia Hungarica* 35/i (1981), pp. 133-40, and Sādiqi’s article, which is in part a response to Kahn and Bernstein.


27. Sequentially, pp. 245, 246, 247, 249.

28. For an extensive list, see Bahār, pp. 242-3.
32. Herbert, p. 248.
34. Gandjei, pp. 311-12, 315.
35 Perry, *Form and Meaning*, pp. 182-3.
39. Herbert, p. 244.