Epistemic verb forms in Persian of Iran, Afghanistan and Tajikistan

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1. Introductory

A particularly fascinating class of utterance for linguists is that in which the speaker signals that he has not witnessed the event or state that he reports in his utterance, or not consciously realized a fact until just before he began to report it; i.e., that his announcement is founded upon hearsay, presumption, inference, surmise, or a surprise discovery (which may be expressed ironically, or as a question) virtually contemporaneous with his utterance. The occurrence of such forms has been noted under a variety of plausible labels, of which “indirective” and “mediative” are perhaps the most recent and inclusive. I propose to call all such verb forms “epistemic,” reflecting what appears to be the broadest generalization one can capture concerning their function—that they comment on the nature, limits or validity of the speaker’s knowledge of his topic. They constitute a signal from the speaker that this is a gnomic or diagnostic utterance, not a narrative; they invite the hearer to focus on the provenance or medium of the speaker’s information, to examine the content or context of the utterance for further clues to how this information was acquired, and optionally to accept, question, or corroborate what was said.

In most varieties of Persian, certain functions, and several forms of—or derived from—the “perfect tense” (past participle + auxiliary “to be”) have been recognized as epistemic in various ways. They may share this function with other aspectotemporal tasks (such as resultative or aorist) in a polysemantic package. It is this twofold ambivalence—that the form may not in itself signal any editorializing, and that the utterance may be devoid of any adverbial confirmation of its status—that makes the phenomenon so elusive. In several derived forms, the indirective component is often apparently dominant. These are, in standard Persian, a doubly compound “past perfect” (karde
bude-ast, i.e., ppart. +ppart. of aux. +aux.) and a “durative perfect” (mikarde-ast, imp. ppart. +aux., which are signaled where necessary in the interlinear glosses by –pp; and, in the case of Tajik, a secondary, derived form of the “perfect” (ppart. +agi +aux., glossed here as PERF II). These epistemic uses in Persian appear to correspond closely with categories that have been established, or suggested, for languages of the Turkic and Finno-Ugric families, and in the areas of the Balkans and the Caucasus.

The existing studies of indirectivity in Persian are confined to those forms related to perfect tenses. In one variety of Persian, however—that spoken in Afghanistan—there is also a group of forms related to the periphrastic future in Persian, which clearly function as epistemics in ways similar to the “perfect tense” forms. Examples of these are scattered throughout the still sparse literature on Afghan Dari and Kaboli; they are here integrated and examined under the same headings of tense reference and epistemic category as provisionally established for the “perfect” forms. In referring to the forms of the Persian verbs encountered, I have used quotation marks around the conventional aspectotemporal terms, since there is often no neutral formal designation: thus “perfect” and “future” designate respectively verbal forms of the type karda-ast and xâhad kard, without prejudging their function.

In order to establish a frame of reference for the more problematic examples, I have drawn initially upon the existing discussions of epistemic forms in Persian, notably Windfuhr (1982) (PW) and Lazard (1985) (PL), which present and examine a matrix of valuable material chiefly from (written) Standard Persian. Their examples are supplemented here by sentences gleaned from other varieties of Persian, which will somewhat expand the known geographical range and add to the formal repertory of epistemic types in Persian. For ease of reference, sentence examples are assigned sigla consisting of a language (or dialect-group) initial followed by a bibliographic source initial. My supplementary sources are [1] Afghan Persian: three collections of primarily spoken utterances from Kabul, though including some speech that might be more accurately characterized as (written) standard Afghan Dari (KB: Bogdanov 1930, KF: Farhâdi 1955, KG: Glassman 1970); one further example of generic Afghan Persian (KK: Kieffer 1983) and one instance from Herat (HI: Ioannesian 1987), [2] Southern Tajik Persian: a collection by R. Ghafforov and R.L. Nemenova from adjacent regions of Qarategin, Kolob and western Badakhshan (east and southeast of Dushanbe), edited by the bygone of Tajik language studies (JR: Rastorgueva 1979); and a couple of sentences from the nearby Varzob region, north of Dushanbe (JL: Lazard 1996). [3] Northern Tajik Persian: examples of (unattributed, typical) Standard Tajik, which—in its literary form, at least—is based on the dialect of Bukhara (BA: Amonova 1991); sentences abstracted from dialogue in S. Aini’s novella Margi sîdîxîr (Death of a Usurer, 1939) which purport to be typical of Bukhara dialect (BF: Farhâdi 1981); examples of literary Tajik from Rastorgueva’s grammar (BO: Rastorgueva 1954/1963); a field collection of spoken Bukharian Persian (BR: Râjâ’i 1964); and sentences that I solicited via translation (from English) from a speaker of Samarkand Persian who is bilingual in Uzbek (SA: Aminova 1996), in an attempt to recapitulate contexts exemplified in some of the Persian sentences.

This material is arranged under five subcategories of epistemicity which seem to be semantically appropriate; the terms I have used for these correspond in the main to some of those invoked by Lazard and Windfuhr or their sources, with the exception of “mirative.” Finally, I have recruited from other discussions of epistemic forms a few sentences of Turkish (TZ: Zeyrek 1994) in which the quintessentially evidential affix –mîş (glossed as -EV) provides a touchstone, and a trilingual exclamation from the Balkans (XF: Friedman 1981) as being particularly apt for comparison with certain Persian examples. The total of seventy examples falls into two temporal groupings (past and present; present and future) comprising nine semantic groups in all (derived from the five epistemic categories).

In regard to the Afghan Persian “perfects” exemplified, it should be noted that the “perfect” is distinguished from the very similar “preterit” form in spoken Kaboli in that (a) the final syllable is accented, (b) first singular and plural both end in -em, as against simple past -um/ -em, (c) third singular ends in -â. Persian “perfects” of all varieties may omit the final auxiliary, as şode-ast > şode, gofte bude-ast > gofte
bude, nadidagi-st > nadidagi; and 3rd sing. in Southern Tajik “perfects” may be realized as došta-y (for došta-ast).

2. Quotative: Past and present reference

(1) Meral evlenmiş (TZ)  
Meral marry-EV  
‘[I heard] Meral got married.’

(2) şunidum ke —xudā nā-xāsta— nājor budén (KG)  
I-heard that God NEG-wished unwell you-have-been  
‘I was sorry to hear you were unwell.’

(3) ija-ra hakim guftanı odam owot ka-as (JR)  
This-place-obj Hakim to-be-called man productive has-made  
‘Someone called Hakim farmed this place.’

(4) şenide-am ke ahmad diruz safar rafte-ast (PW)  
I-have-heard that Ahmad yesterday journey has-gone  
‘I’ve heard that A. went on a trip yesterday.’

(5) sayohat-ba rafia-ast (SA)  
Journey-on he-has-gone  
‘[I heard] he went on a trip.’

(6) agar sobh harakat karde-ast, bāyad tu hālā  
If morning set-out he-has-done must till now  
peydayāš šode bāshad (PW)  
appear-he have-become  
‘If [as you say] he left in the morning, he should have appeared by now.’

(7) dar kotob-e adabi-yē fārsī... qadimtarin še’r-e fārsī-rā  
In books literary Persian... oldest poem Persian-OBJ  
Aqlab be-ábbās-e marvazi nesbat midehand ke  
Mostly to-Abbas Marvazi attribution they-give who  
be-za’-m-e isān dar sana-ye 193...qaside’-i... gofte-bude (PL)  
by-claim-of them in year 193...ode... had-said-PP  
‘In Persian literature books...the oldest Persian poem is generally attributed to Abbas of Marv, who they claim composed a panegyric...in 193 A.H.’

(8) az suxanoni modaraš mo fahmīdem ki u  
from-words-of mother-his we understood that he  
kayho ba šahr kūčida buda-ast (BA)  
whiles to-city had-moved-PP  
‘From what his mother said we gathered that he had moved to the city a long time ago.’

In all major Persian dialects, a perfect or past perfect form may indicate (like Turkish –miş) that the speaker’s knowledge is derived from hearsay, whether explicitly acknowledged (2, 4, 8), or assumed from the context (1, 5), or inferred from the context (3): the speaker implies only that he does not personally know this ‘Hakim’, so the listener infers that someone else told him the man’s name. In sentence (2), the parenthetical xudā nā-xāsta adds the explicit hope that the report is untrue, i.e., questions the validity of the speaker’s knowledge, if only as a polite formula. Interestingly, Glassman interprets the perfect in this sentence as “resultative” (“...the action of the verb or its results are still relevant...,” 1970: 234). This is certainly possible, if one reads the statement as “Someone told me, ‘so-and-so HAS BEEN sick,’” and emphasizes the underlying inquiry, “... and are you, as I inferred from his use of the past tense, better now?” But it is at least as likely, in view of the explicit quotative verb, that the temporal dimension of the indirect speech is not that of past (Persian does not observe a temporarily-hierarchized sequence-of-tense rule): that in fact the statement means “Someone said to me, ‘so-and-so IS sick,’ but I would like not to believe it, or to hope you have made a swift recovery—how are you, in fact?” and that the “perfect tense” form is thus functioning epistemically.

Sentence (6) is representative of a common type of utterance which I shall designate “pseudo-conditional”: it is quintessentially epistemic, and illustrates the quotative and/or inferential modes particularly well. Since it is superficially a conditional construction (introduced by agar or an equivalent conjunction) it is invariably treated under the rubric of conditional sentences in both pedagogical and descriptive grammars of Persian, and its editorializing, epistemic nature is not sufficiently stressed. In reality, the stipulation is logical rather than possible or hypothetical: “if” here means “given the fact that...”. As a comment on a past event relevant to the present state, the protasis uses the postterminal “perfect” tense, as is to be expected in the temporal framework; but this same form is also natural as an indirective expressive of a reiteration of a fact known through hearsay or inference. Thus sentence (6) means not “If he should leave...” but “Granted that (as I have been informed, or otherwise led to believe) he did leave this morning, this
is the likely state of his itinerary.” English, similarly, distinguishes such pseudo-conditionals from real conditionals by reiterating the tense that would have been used in the “quoted” utterance, as distinct from a simple present or past-as-conditional: “If he has been studying, he will pass the test” (not “If he studied/should study…” but “Granted that—as is claimed—he has been studying…”). Lazard makes a similar point in reference to one of Windfuhr’s examples:

(9)  ánče az kojā dar yāfste-am in-ast ke... agar sohbathā
      what from where I-have-found is-this that... if talks
az  čand jomle tajāvoz mikarde bištar dar bāre-ye
      than some sentence exceed has-done mostly concerning
kār-e xod-aš buda-ast
      work-of himself it-has-been
‘What I have found out is that... if the talk exceeded more than a few sentences it was mostly about his own work.’

The context is inferential, the “if” (as confirmed by the English translation of the verb as ‘was’, not ‘would be’) is equivalent to “whenever.” It is to be noted that all the Tajik examples (3, 5, 8), like the Persian and Afghan, employ “Perfect I” karda-ast in arguably quotative contexts, not “Perfect II” (cf. under Inferential, etc., below).

3. Mirative

(10) meğer ne aptalmışım! (TZ)
    But what fool-I-was-EV
    ‘What a fool I am/I’ve been!’

(11) a. meğer bizim Bulgaristan’ımız çok güzelmiş (XFt)
    But of-us Bulgaria-our very beautiful-was-EV
    ‘How beautiful our Bulgaria is!’
    b. ja gledaj, če tja bila xubava našata Bulgarija (XFb)
        ex look what was beautiful our Bulgaria
        ‘Well look, how...!’
    c. gledaj što bila hubava našata Bugarija (XFm)
        Look what was beautiful our Bulgaria
        ‘Look how...!’

(12) man avval úro našinoxtam, diqgat karda
      I first him NEG-knew care having-done
    binam, Ahmad buda-ast (BP)
      I-see Ahmad it-has-been
    ‘At first I didn’t recognize him, but when I looked closely, I saw it was Ahmad.’

(13) odami xub buda-ast (BP)
    Man good he-has-been
    ‘It turns out he’s a good man (after all).’

(14) kurtay xub došta-y (JR)
    shirt good you-have-had
    ‘You have a nice shirt on.’

(15) šumo soda buded birodar— guft qorī iškamba
    You simple were brother said Qori Iskamba
    ba sartaroš (BF)
        to barber
    ‘You’re a simpleton, my friend,’ said Qori Iskamba to the barber.

(16) pul-am nabuda-y (JL)
    Money-my NEG-has-been
    ‘Oops, I don’t have any money.’

(17) pul-i mayda-am nabuda-ast, šumo puli
    Money small-my NEG-has-been you money-of
    nonho-ro dihed (BF)
        loaves-OBJ give
    ‘I don’t have any change—you pay for the loaves.’

(18) ba attor guftum: holo pulam nabuda-ast (BF)
    To druggist I-said now money-my NEG-has-been
    I told the druggist, “I don’t have the money just now.”

(19) ah nafahmidum, ovarda-y yo nē (JR)
    Oh NEG-I-understood you-have-brought or not
    ‘Oh, I didn’t realize you’d brought it.’

(20) havli-i ā ba kadom kāča buda-ast? (BF)
    House his at which street it-has-been
    ‘Which street is his house on?’

(21) ay rayi dur omadam, ay taşnagi-ra murdastam (JR)
    From way far I-came from thirst-FOC I-have-died-PERFII
    ‘I’ve come a long way, I’m dying of thirst.’
The conjunction *wa* ‘and’ following the verb makes it clear that *buda* is no mere participle but a truncated “perfect,” *buda-ast*; it can only mean that Japan has been, for an indefinite time past, and to common knowledge still is, surrounded by sea. This is the temporal situation viewed by the speaker of a typical mirative “perfect” in Tajik: he has not had money in his pocket since an indefinite time past, and continues past the moment of speech to be penniless—but he has only just realized this fact, or at least its relevance (cf. also *buda-ast* in (44), discussed in section 9).

I would therefore expand the notion of “a fact not previously known” along the lines of “awareness based on a sudden realization of an existing state of affairs” to characterize this state of mind as “sudden awareness of a fact hitherto unknown, unappreciated or not considered relevant to the present.” It seems likely that this quite complex epistemic scenario can be related to other psycholinguistic situations that may generate an “anomalous” past tense. In rationalizing Balkan Slavic admiratives, dubitatives and quotatives, Friedman compares their use of a past tense to that in English utterances of the type ‘He said he didn’t smoke’ as a report of ‘I don’t smoke’ (traditionally explained as sequence of tense agreement) or ‘Where was the yard sale?’ as an elliptical version of ‘Where did the sign say the yard sale was [= is (being held/to be held)]?’. Obviously in these cases, as Friedman notes, the pastness of the report is at issue, not that of the reported event, which may be ongoing or even projected. Just as in Balkan languages a frequent use of the admirative “past tense” occurs in ironic repetition (though not in English, or Persian), there are cases of a similar affective use of a past tense, e.g., the polite ‘What was it you wanted?’ (as also Persian *če mixāst?id?*) asked of a customer who may not yet have opened his mouth (‘What do you want?’ and *če mixāhíd?* being perceived as brusque or confrontational); or the classic exchange ‘What did you say your name was?’—‘I didn’t’; here both the polite, non-confrontational question and the ironically recapitulative, confrontational reply make reference in the past to a (non-)report in the past.

It is in this same sense that sentence (20) is to be understood—as yet another self-serving illocutionary utterance of the manipulative mi-
in xabar-a ki da-šumo dodagi? (BR)
This news-obj who to-you has-given-perf 11
‘Who told you this?’

fahmid ke hame-ye in dam-o dastgâh…
He understood that all-of this paraphernalia
xâter-e u bude, kabk mi-xorde ânvaqt
sake-of him has-been-pp quail imp-has-eaten then
dar sofe nân-e xošk. mi-gozâste… (PL)
in tablecloth bread dry imp-has-placed
‘He realized that all this show…was for his benefit, that the sheykh had been eating
quail and then put dry bread on the table…’

e’lamiye… bâ diâgrâm-hâ-ye elmi nešân dâd
communiqué with diagrams scientific show gave
ke tir… wâred-e dahân-e molukâné šode va
that shot entering mouth royal has-become and
dâste be taraf-e sotun-e fagarât… mi-rafte-ast
PROG-PP to side-of column-of vertebræ imp-has-gone
vali yekbâre tâqyir-e masîr dâde va az
but suddenly change-of route has-given and from
gune-ye čap… sar dar âvarde-ast (PL)
check left head out has-brought
‘The communiqué…showed with scientific diagrams that the bullet had entered
His Majesty’s mouth and was heading for the spinal column when it suddenly
changed course and exited through the left cheek.’

policia diagramma-aš nišon dod ki vay
Police diagram-its show gave that those
tuťl ayni O.J. Simpson buda-ast (SA)
shoes same-of O.J. Simpson has-been
‘The police diagram showed that the shoes belonged to O.J. Simpson.’

The epistemic subcategories of inferential, presumptive and speculative are intuitively related; a more general analysis would arguably subsume them all within a single category, say, “evidential” or “non-witnessed” (which might also include the broadest of these types, the quotative). But for all their semantic contiguity, they are also intuitively distinct, which accounts for the variety of labels (dubitative, predpoložitel’nyj, contingent, etc.) that observers have attached to them. Different dialects use different forms for apparently similar epistemic nuances (56, 61), while the same form under different conditions
will be felt as encoding a different nuance (e.g., first instead of second person: (42), (61)). This is one reason why it could be instructive to retain the subcategories. They may be thought of as constituting a hierarchy of probability: the inferential mode expresses presumption on the basis of evidence, claiming that which is most probably true; a presumptive sentence offers no evidence other than common experience or expectation, stating that which is probably true; speculative (or "conjectural") statements leave the question open, expressing the speaker’s judgment of what is possibly true, or asking the interlocutor to speculate (40, 41). Context is all-important; there will be cases where these categories blur or overlap, so that more than one interpretation will fit.14

In Northern Tajik, at least, there are additionally perhaps formal criteria by which one may judge the speaker to be more or less willing to vouch for his utterance. "Perfect I" karda-ast seems to be more appropriate to the higher realms of probability (mirative, quotative, and some inferential: 3, 5, 8; 12-14, 16-18; 27, 29, 33). At the fuzzy interstices, sentence (8) for instance, is arguably inferential (‘From what his mother said we gathered/learned, i.e., inferred…’) in addition to being explicitly quotative—it all depends on how explicit the mother’s information was; (29) was (according to the informant) susceptible to either form (perhaps depending on how obvious to the speaker the observed person’s destination was?); and in (33) the inference lies within a context of second-hand knowledge, quoted from an authoritative source. "Perfect II," like the "past conjectural" (see below), is evidently reserved for the expression of more overtly speculative reasoning (26, 35, 36, 37, 38, 40, 41).

In the examples given, the Turkish sentence (23) is again a classic use of miš, logically analogous to (25) and (26) in its inference from a perceived result to the most probable cause. Persian (25) uses the "past pluperfect" (paradigmatically, karde bude-ast, Lazard’s " passé sur-composé") as the editorial/epistemic counterpart to the narrative "pluperfect" karde bud to comment on an (inferred) event preceding a past (observed) event; elsewhere the "perfect" karde [ast]15 functions epistemically in relation to the "preterit" kard (28, 31, 32) and the "progressive perfect" mi-karde[ast] similarly corresponds to the "imper-

fect" or "progressive past" mi-kard (28, 31, 32); in (32) the periphrastic "progressive perfect," dâste[ast] mi-raffe-ast is used.16 In (28), the first occurrence of the "perfect," dide-and, is probably quotative, the speaker relaying the report of eye-witnesses and their inference of the person’s destination (be ... mi-raffe-ast) based on the direction he was heading or other evidence not specified.

In the Tajik samples, there are three instances of a basic "Perfect I" form (27, 29, 33) and three of a "Perfect II," kardo[-ast] (26, 28, 30). The Tajik "present" progressive is achieved by use of the desemanticized auxiliary istodan ‘to stand’ with either form of the "perfect" (29): the reduced dialect form rafaas is formally related to standard rafa istoda-ast, but my informant states that rafa istodagi-ast would also be appropriate to this sentence; cf. also (26).

5. Presumptive: Past and present

(34) morde bude-ast ke in vâqe şod (PW)
Dead he-has-been that this happening became
‘He must have been dead when this happened.’

(35) in kor şudagi-š-ba xorafatig budage-m (SA)
This act happening-its-at gone-sleep I-have-been-PERF II
‘I suppose I was asleep when it happened.’

(36) vay az şumo ğayr-i nikî hičчи nadidagi (BR)
He from you other-than good anything NEG-has-seen-PERF II
‘He has never experienced anything but good from you.’

(37) ū ba nazd-I mo omada istodagi-st,
He to near us has-come PROG PERF II
mo bošem, behûda dar tašvišem (BA)
We are in-vain in agitation-are
‘He’s probably on his way, we’re worrying needlessly.’

(38) gumen-am-ba ap-porsol to insola
Opinion-my-in from-last-year till this-year
zindagi-i tu avaz našudagi (BR)
Life-of you change NEG-has-become-PERF II
‘I don’t think/I doubt that your life has changed from last year to this.’
In the ideal Persian example (34), the “present perfect” bude-ast corresponds to a narrative “past” bud of the copula, and has no raison d’être other than as a marked comment on a situation inferred or presumed. It is glossed by Phillott, its ultimate source, as a “vulgar” means to express assumption (‘must have’). In (35), the Tajik counterpart of (34), the presumptive verb is cast not merely in the “perfect,” corresponding to the narrative past budam, but in “Perfect II” budage-m, which constitutes part of the “past conjunctural” paradigm. These sentences may of course be interpretable as inferential, if a broader context reveals the existence of evidence for the assumption. The form of the “past participle” as gerund—ûdagi—in (35) does not have any additional significance; the latter is functionally equivalent to the simple “past” participle xo-rafa, or to Persian morde in (34).

Sentence (36) similarly marks the speaker’s reluctance to confirm what she has not witnessed at first hand; use of an unmarked “Perfect I” nadida-ast could be interpreted as resultative. When a statement involves a subjective judgment, explicitly acknowledged or not, there is arguably always an element of conjecture (cf. (44), (64)). The remaining two instances, likewise taken from Northern Tajik, use “Perfect II” to recapitulate a doubt, conjecture or overt expression of opinion signaled elsewhere in the sentence.

6. Speculative: Past and present

(39) sâyad u eštebâh karde-ast (PW)
Perhaps he mistake has-made
‘Perhaps he’s made a mistake.’

(40) balki xato kardagi-m (SA)
Maybe error I-have-made-PERF II
‘Maybe I made a mistake.’

(41) û kayho az onjo gurextagi-st? (BA)
He whiles from there has-fled-PERF II
‘I suppose he fled from there a while ago?’

All three examples refer to an event that possibly took place in the past relative to the point of enunciation. Depending on the precise context, (41) could be inferential or presumptive in nature. In view of the explicitly speculative adverb in (39) and (40) (sâyad, balki ‘perhaps’), it may be asked whether the perfect in each case is not merely resultative. Aspectotemporally, this would also fit (41), in that the person in question has left and has not come back. However, the context suggests that this utterance is an attempt to elicit an unknown quantity (the time of his leaving) and is thus an invitation to speculate, or rather to confirm a speculation.

7. Epistemic verbal forms: Present and future reference

Lazard states that the mediative in Persian is concerned only with past time. This may be true for Persian of Iran, but in other dialects the scope of epistemic verb forms (which “mediate” between the speaker and his topic) extends its reference to present and future time as well.

In Tajik, the “durative perfect” forms (me-karda-ast and me-kardagi-st, glossed here as IMP) may express an indirective mode relative to present or future time. Strictly speaking, the “Perfect I” derivative is indifferent to time, and may refer also to past events, while the “Perfect II” refers only to present or future time. This is quite different from the durative (progressive or habitual) past—though still indirective!—of Standard Persian (28, 31, 32). Epistemic use of the forms (at least in Northern Tajik) extends over the whole semantic range, except for the mirative.

In spoken Afghan Persian of at least two major regions (Kabul and Herat), there is a well-attested cluster of idioms involving the auxiliary of the periphrastic “future tense” that invokes an indirective reading in reference to an event or state in present, future, or future-in-the-past time, generating inferential, presumptive and speculative modes (though not, it seems, mirative or quotative uses). This usage has been dubbed ‘dubitative’, but this seems inappropriate except for a certain negative type (45, 50, 51, 53, 54). In its signaling the speaker’s assessment of the probability of an event or state, with appropriate affective undertones, the verbal complex is as broadly indirective or mediated in relation to the real future as the epistemic perfect is to the past.
8. Quotative: Present and future

(42) padaram pagh az maskau meomadagi-st (BA)
Father-my tomorrow from Moscow IMP-has-come-PERF II
‘My father should be coming from Moscow tomorrow.’

(43) xola pago meomada-y ki guft?—rajab (JL)
Aunt tomorrow IMP-has-come who said Rajab
‘Aunt is coming tomorrow—who says?—Rajab.’

The kind of indirectivity in example (42) is ostensibly quite open. Amonova’s own Persian gloss of her literary Tajik example, using šāyād ‘perhaps’, implies speculation; an idiomatic English rendering, with ‘should be’ or ‘is supposed to’, would invoke inference or presumption at the least. In practice, when the speaker “predicts” the actions of a third person, the inference is most likely to have been made from information reported, and indeed the analogy of (43), where the interlocutor in a contextually similar situation presumes that the speaker is relaying the report of a third party, invites a quotative interpretation (contrast (61), where the first-person hedged statement of intent can only be classed as speculative).

9. Inferential: Present and future

(44) in navozandagi xudd mullogi barin buda-ast
This playing self-of learnedness like has-been
-u nanavozed, az xotir mebaroma-ast (BO)
-and NEG-you-play from mind IMP-it-has-left
‘Playing a musical instrument is like reading-and-writing; if you don’t play, you forget it.’

(45) emrōz, besyār kam abr as; barf naxāt bārid (KG)
Today very little cloud is snow NEG-will rain
‘There’s very little cloud today—I don’t think it’ll snow.’

(46) a qosh xāt didi ke šawāna
Each morning will saw-you at that
barf bārida rafqa mebāša (KF)
snow rained PROG is
‘Every morning you’ll see that it has been snowing all night.’

In the Tajik example, (44), the two instances of epistemic “Perfect I” as a gnomic present have different purposes. While the second, az xotir mebaroma-ast, lit. ‘it leaves the mind’, is logically inferred from the speaker’s first statement, this first utterance—a simile just coined by the speaker for the sake of argument—is a neat illustration of “sudden awareness of (the relevance of) a fact hitherto unappreciated”; xuddi mullogi barin buda-ast ‘... is just like reading-and-writing’ constitutes a mirative.

The Afghan Persian sentences with the morpheme xāt in this category all have an ostensibly future reference; the final verb phrase of (47) (literally ‘Since he is a scoundrel, what will he do?’—i.e., a rhetorical ‘What is his type likely to do!?’) corresponds formally to a literary Persian periphrastic future. To the extent that this construction is identical with a traditional aspectotemporal complex, we may treat it here as an epistemic verb form. However, the construction is formally unstable. Most commonly it comprises a 3rd sing. “present” of the auxiliary xāh- ‘wish, will’ (xāhad, vernacular forms xād, xā, xā) in combination with an infinitive, “short” infinitive or finite form of the main verb. The canonical form of the periphrastic future in Persian (which is generally characterized as formal or literary in style) is xāh-am raft, etc., i.e., a full six-person paradigm of the auxiliary governing the short infinitive (a non-finite form composed of the past stem with a zero ending). This corresponds in principle to the construction seen in sentences (45), (47), (50), (52), (53), (65), (67) and optionally in (54) and (64). Elsewhere, the dependent verb occurs as a full infinitive (56), a “past participle” (57); also Ioannessian, not exemplified), a finite “preterit” ((46), (62); to be discussed under section 9), “pluperfect” (59), durative past (58) and present subjunctive (51), (55), (63), (66), (54) and (64) optional; (51) and (63) also with explicit subordinator, and (60) in further combination with a series of non-finite forms of “past participle” type).

The construction with the subjunctive recapitulates that of the volitional sentence in standard Persian, with two differences: [1] in mod-
ern standard Persian the auxiliary, in addition to agreement of person, requires the aspectotemporal prefix mi-/me- (mixāḥ-am fardā be-rav-am ‘I want to go tomorrow’); and [2] volitional and dependent verb each occupy a separate clause and need not necessarily be juxtaposed. In all of the Afghan syntagms with xāh- (never mexāḥ-), whatever their variations, the two verbs are juxtaposed and appear to participate in a single sentence. Moreover, the predominant form is an invariable xāt (neg. na-xāt): only in (56) and (57) is there subject agreement, which is definitively absent in (58), (59), (60), and (62) (elsewhere the 3rd sing. of the auxiliary could be either personal or impersonal).

10. Presumptive: Present and future

(48) ma’lum ast ki u fardo merafa-ast (BO)
Known is that he tomorrow IMP-has-gone
‘It is known that he is going tomorrow.’

(49) "Gazetai muallimon"-ro ā har rūz mexondagi-st (BO)
Gazette-oft Teachers-obj he each day IMP-has-read-PERF II
‘He apparently reads the Teachers’ Gazette every day.’

(50) čand daqiqē dega-am saber kunēn
Some minute other-too patience do
—dāktar såeb dēr naxāt kad (KG)
Doctor sabih late NEG-will do
‘Wait a few minutes more—the doctor won’t/shouldn’t be long.’

(51) naxāt (ke) befa (KF)
NEG-will that he-fall
‘He won’t/shouldn’t fall.’

(52) bē-γam bās–az yādem naxāt raft (KG)
Without-worry be from mind-my NEG-will go
‘Don’t worry—I won’t forget.’

(53) eqa yax bare kуl-e mēmānā bas naxāt kad (KG)
This-much ice for all-of guests enough NEG-will make
‘This much ice won’t be enough for all the guests.’

(54) etû(r) naxāt bāśai-būd (KG)
This-way NEG-will be-SUBJ/-INF
‘I doubt it.’ (polite way of disagreeing)

(55) dar manzil xūhad bāśad(KB)
In house he-will be-SUBJ
‘He will probably be at home.’

(56) sabāh wāqit xāhid raftan? (KB)
Morning time you-will go-INF
‘Will you be going early in the morning?’

(57) rūz-rā ānjā xāhand guzāsta (sic) (KB)
Day-obj there they-will pass-PP
‘They will pass the day there.’

(58) paysē zyātagi-ra tu gerafa xāt merafti (KF)
Money extra-obj you taken (it-)will IMP-you-went
‘[I suppose] it was you who always took the extra cash.’

(59) rafta xāt budan (KK)
Gone (it-)will they-were
‘They have perhaps (already) gone.’

(60) waxtē ki kābol bud rafqāy-š ar-rōza
Time that Kabul he-was friends-his daily
dida rafta boda xāt-bāšan-ē (KF)
seen PROG been (it-)will-be-SUBJ-him
‘While he was in Kabul his friends would have seen him daily.’

The two Tajik examples could obviously be interpretable as inferential sentences if we were privy to the indirect evidence available to the speaker. That the difference of form (“durative Perfect I” vs. “durative Perfect II”) does not systematically distinguish present from future reference is shown by the irregular correspondence: the type mekarda-ast refers to present time in (44), to future time in (43) and (48); the type mekardagi-st refers to present (habitual) in (49), to future in (42) and (61).

It is perhaps significant that during the evolution of the two distinct constructions involving the verb xāstan in literary New Persian (periphrastic future and volitional clause), there are examples of mixed syntagms and other obvious transitional forms, and contexts where vari-
ous readings are possible among volitional (the primitive sense), inceptive, and future.\textsuperscript{24} (There is likewise at least one example in a modern Iranian language where a volitional verb as auxiliary, governing a dependent subjunctive, expresses a future or inceptive meaning.\textsuperscript{25}) The modern Afghan idioms, differentiated from each of the canonical constructions but not standardized, may be in course of transition. At least, the dependent verb forms are apparently in fairly free distribution between short infinitive and subjunctive (cf. (54), which is virtually a cliché in either variant).

There is a diachronic (and semantic) analogy to be made with šâyad ‘perhaps’. The source verb šâyestan in Middle and Early New Persian was a fully functional verb, ‘to be fit, able,’ tending naturally to modal auxiliation; as an auxiliary it came to be restricted to impersonal use (šâyad nayâyam ‘It may be that I not come’, with dependent subjunctive) and, in spoken Standard Persian, has finally been relexicalized as an epistemic sentence adverb (šâyad namiâyam ‘maybe I won’t come’, with non-dependent indicative). Afghan Persian xâh-[am, etc.] appears similarly to have undergone limited auxiliation (as a reflex of the literary Persian “future tense”), followed by restriction to the impersonal 3rd sing., and to be now in the process of relexicalization as an epistemic adverb xât ‘probably’. This adverbial status is obvious in cases where the main verb bears the (non-3rd sing.) person agreement. If we delete invariable xât from (58) and (59), the sentences are still fully formed, lacking only the epistemic (here, presumptive) nuance:

\begin{align*}
(58) & \text{a. payê} \text{ zyâtagi-ra} \text{ tu} \text{ gerafla merafi} \\
& \text{Money extra-on} \text{ you taken IMP-went} \\
& \text{‘It was you who always took the extra cash.’}
\end{align*}

\begin{align*}
(59) & \text{a. rafta} \text{ budan} \text{ (budan)} \\
& \text{Gone they-were} \\
& \text{‘They had (already) gone.’}
\end{align*}

Moreover, these utterances refer to events in the past; the meaningful element introduced by xât is no longer that of futurity, but purely that of the speaker’s assessment of their degree of probability. The same is true of (60). Similarly, sentence (54) comments diagnostically on the currently perceived validity of an utterance by another (‘What you (he, etc.) said is probably not so’—the event or state in the utterance may refer to any time, even past), and (55) assesses the likelihood of a present state (‘He is probably at home now’). Elsewhere, xât and related forms appear to retain a component of futurity in their polysemy.

11. Speculative: Present and future

\begin{align*}
(61) & \text{fardo meomadage-} \text{m (BO)} \\
& \text{Tomorrow IMP-we-have-come-PERF II} \\
& \text{‘We may be coming tomorrow.’}
\end{align*}

\begin{align*}
(62) & \text{âle vaxt nadår-um} \text{ fardâ} \text{ amrætân} \\
& \text{Now time NEG-I-have tomorrow with-you} \\
& \text{esâb xát kadum (KG)} \\
& \text{count (it-)will I-did} \\
& \text{‘I don’t have time now—I might do accounts with you tomorrow.’}
\end{align*}

\begin{align*}
(63) & \text{xât (ke) keškêna (KF)} \\
& \text{it-will that it-break-SUBJ} \\
& \text{‘It might break.’}
\end{align*}

\begin{align*}
(64) & \text{ba-xûâlem ke î quesm desgîr-e} \\
& \text{To-my-fancy that this kind handle-of} \\
& \text{darwâza qowitar xát bûsa /-bûd (KG)} \\
& \text{door stronger will be-SUBJ INF} \\
& \text{‘I think this kind of door handle would be stronger.’}
\end{align*}

\begin{align*}
(65) & \text{baretân taklîf xât šud (KG)} \\
& \text{For-you trouble will become INF} \\
& \text{‘It might be bothersome for you.’}
\end{align*}

\begin{align*}
(66) & \text{bibi-oštok az xaw xesta xât bûsa? (KF)} \\
& \text{Lady-baby from sleep risen will be-SUBJ} \\
& \text{‘I wonder if the baby (girl) has woken up.’}
\end{align*}

\begin{align*}
(67) & \text{ma çum[?...] îstou xâ šod? (HI)} \\
& \text{We what how (it-)will become} \\
& \text{‘How do we know what will happen?’}
\end{align*}

\begin{align*}
(68) & \text{nażod ki baroatsa man zan mešuda bošad? (BA)} \\
& \text{NEG-will that Baroat to me wife IMP-has-become-SUBJ} \\
& \text{‘Would Baroat really marry me [I wonder]?’}
\end{align*}
Semitically, no observer is in any doubt that the forms with štar signal an indirect mode—a contingent, not a neutral, future tense. Such forms, if found in verbless passages or in a sentence context, are interpreted as having a subjunctive force. In the absence of a subject, they indicate an unknown agent or a potentially benefactive action. However, in a sentence with a subject, they may express a conditional future or a polite request.

In the sentence "He will come tomorrow," the štar form indicates that the action is contingent on the future. It is a bit like saying, "If he will come tomorrow, then..." This form is used to express hypothetical or conditional situations, and it is often translated as "if..." or "suppose..."

The category of subjunctive (šstar) is used in Persian, especially in the past tense (štar). It is used in indirect speech, in requests, and in conditional sentences. In the sentence "He will come tomorrow," the subjunctive form is used to express the idea that the action is contingent on the future.
statement than the former. In Persian, a diagnostic statement about a past event or state tends to select a form of the “perfect tense,” thus differen-
tiating the statement from a narrative or eyewitness account; this is
Windfuhr’s “distanced past” and Lazard’s “médiatif,” by which the
speaker signals a degree or kind of detachment from the topic of his
utterance. Consider the following sentences of Standard Persian:

(69) dar in sarzamin hamiše bārānhā-ye seylāsā
In this region always rains torrential
mi-bārīde-and (WP)
imp-have-rained
‘In this region there always used to be torrential rains.’

(70) kasi tā be hāl be serāfat-e ān nay-ofšāde va
Person till state to idea-of that NEG-fallen and
zahmat-e tatabbo’va taftiš dar kotob-rā
trouble-of tracking and search in books-obj
dar in bāb be xod rāh na-dāde bude-ast (JL)
in this topic to self way NEG-had given-pp
‘No one so far had come up with the idea or had taken the trouble to research
this topic.’

The “durative perfect” and “past pluperfect” here are both character-
ized by Lazard as “rétrospectif,” i.e., the situation described by the
speaker has since changed; there is no suggestion that it might not have
been so, and the question of how the speaker acquired his information
(by direct experience or hearsay, inference, etc.) remains open. The
speaker’s comment is thus “distanced” from its topic by a shift in the
time frame or, following Johanson’s terminology, by the dynamics of
aspectual terminality; it is not indirective or epistemic in any of the
senses postulated above. Nevertheless, I would argue that since the
speaker frames and signals this viewpoint for a rhetorical purpose (to
dramatize the consequences of the rains, say, or the subsequent break-
through in research—perhaps by the speaker himself!), these state-
ments are to an extent epistemic in that they foreground the speaker’s
conviction of the relevance of the event or state he describes to his sub-
sequent argument. In this respect they bear comparison with the mira-
tive, which for rhetorical purposes introduces new (or neglected) infor-
mation with a dramatic flourish. Many similar uses of the “perfect” in
Persian would qualify for this interpretation; they are found in the kind
of utterance which, in oral presentation, is often prefaced by an atten-
tion-getting cliché such as arz konam (ke) ... ‘May I state (that) ...’.

I will conclude by suggesting that this and other rhetorical situa-
tions may repay further study in the context of epistemic verb forms;
and by including this type under the provisional designation “consta-
tive” in a tentative hierarchy of epistemicity in Persian. The following
list ranks the semantic categories exemplified above in descending or-
der of “perceived reliability of knowledge,” together with a note of
the varieties of Persian in which they have been observed, my short-
hand term for each category, and other designations used for them in the
literature cited.

1. “I declare that...”: P., Af., Tj. Constative (includes at least some
rétrospectif and passé révolu).

2. “I’ve just realized that...”: Tj. Mirative (admiring; some rétro-
spectif).

3. “I’ve heard that...”: P., Af., Tj. Quotative (rapport d’autrui,
non-witnessed, non-testimonial, evidential, neočévidnoe/ non-evi-
dent).

4.1 “I infer that...”: P., Af. (“perfect” and “future”), Tj. Inferential
(evidential, neočévidnoe / non-evident).

4.2. “I presume that...”: P., Af. (“perfect” and “future”), Tj. Presump-
tive (predpoložitel’noe / sarti / conditional).

4.3. “I guess that...”: P., Af. (“perfect” and “future”), Tj. Speculative
(conjectural, predpoložitel’noe, etc.).

I have hardly addressed here the main issue as it appears in the works
of Iranists who have pondered the question of “evidentiality”—indeed,
the question that seems to have suggested the detailed analysis of indi-
rectives, mediated utterances, and epistemic verb forms in Persian to
start with, viz: What is the nature of the temporal, aspectual and sem-
antic role of the “perfect tense” and its derivatives, minimally the forms
karde-ast, mikarde-ast, karde bude-ast, kardagi-st and mekar-
dagi-st? How do we unpack their polysemantic portmanteaus and relate
them, paradigmatically and syntactically, to each other and to other aspectotemporal forms of the Persian verb? Where are the boundaries between their traditional (and actual) functions as postterminals or resultatives and their intuited (and demonstrable) roles as epistemic signals? It is to be hoped that the above consolidation of new and hitherto scattered and neglected data, and the suggestions for relating them, will stimulate further investigation of this many-faceted topic.

Notes


2. As yet I have had access only to the abstract of this dissertation, not to the complete work.

3. I have only been able to examine Part II of this publication.


5. E.g., the Persian grammars of J.A. Boyle (1966: ¶ 91 I (b) note); A.K.S. Lambton (1960: 65); G. Lazard (1957: ¶ 227.3); W.M. Thackston (1993: ¶ 61.1(a)).


8. See, respectively, Johanson, Friedman, Boeder, and Leinonen, (this volume).


13. Rastorgueva (1979: 115). It occurs frequently in material presented by Rozenfel’d (1971), but in no case does it unambiguously connote an indirective sense.


15. For the elision of the copula ast, see Windfuhr (1982: 267).


22. Rastorgueva (1954: 555), (1963: 66), esp. the example beginning ana binobar in…; this is not an epistemic use, but a durative past.


30. Cf. Chafe (1986: 262–267). Chafe’s categories and rankings (esp. in Figure 1, p. 263) are not directly applicable to this listing.

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Abbreviations

EV—evidential affix, EX—exclamation, FOC—focus marker, IMP—imperfect tense form, INF—infinitive, NEG—negative marker, OBJ—(direct) object marker, PERF—perfect tense form, PERF II—perfect tense form in -agi- or -ast-, PP—past participle form, PROG—progressive tense, SUBJ—subjunctive.