

NOTES ON KABULI PERSIAN

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§ 0. Introduction

From September 1966 to February 1967, I had the opportunity to study some of the languages and dialects of Afghanistan.

This paper deals with one of these languages, namely, Persian (or more precisely Standard Kabuli Persian).

Persian is spoken in the large parts of Afghanistan, with the probable exception of Qandahar which is situated 313 miles south of Kabul and entirely Pashto speaking.

Persian spoken in Afghanistan is generally archaic, i.e. preserves the old distinction of majhūl and ma'rūf, between u: and o:, i: and e:, which is quite lost in modern Persian (Persian of Iran).

Literary Persian is the same in Afghanistan and Iran, while the spoken one presents marked differences.

The difference between both dialects is to large extent concerned with phonology and vocabulary and to a less degree morphology.

Materials which will follow are from a field-note taken in Kabul, an entirely Persian-speaking area. The scope of this paper is very limited and deals with most remarked points of differences. A more detailed description of Kabuli Persian will be made in a near future.

1. Phonology

The following are the segmental phonemes of Standard Kabuli Persian:

Vowels:

e	o	i:	u:
		e:	o:
a		a:	

Consonants:

Stops:	p	b	t	d	k	g	q
Fricatives:	f	s	z	$\underset{\vee}{s}$	$\underset{\vee}{z}$	x	r
Affricates:	c	j					
Liquids:	m	n	l	r			
Glottals:	h	'					
Semi-vowels:	w	y					

N. B. /h/, /'/: These phonemes are not part of the colloquial, undeliberate Persian of uneducated people. They occur in the speech of educated people, i.e. phonemes of formal or deliberate type of speech.

The marked phonological differences or characteristic features are mentioned below. The forms in [] are literary.

1.1. Dropping of Final /n/

ma	[man]	"I "	ami:	[hami:n]	"this very"
ko	[kon]	"Do!"	amu:	[hama:n]	"that very"
i:	[i:n]	"this"	bi:âi:	[beâi:n]	"Sit down"
u:	[a:n]	"that"	bi:bi:	[bebi:n]	"Look!"

1.2. Dropping of Final /r/

dega	di:gar	"other"	bi:gi:	begi:r	"Take!"
aga	agar	"if"			
boxo	bexor	"Eat!"			

1.3. Epithetic (or paragogic) /n/

qamci:n	"whip"
ja:man	"robe"
yaxan	"collar"
qa:li:n	"carpet"
golun	"throat"
so:n	"side, direction"
kelki:n	"window"

1.4. Paragogic /b/

ba:mb	"roof"
domb	"tail"

1.5. Interchange of /r/ and /l/. The forms with /l/ are colloquial.

de:wa:l	"wall"	zanga:l	"verdgris"
sola:x	"hole"	parka:l	"compass"
sa:tu:l	"butches's chopper"	xalta	"bag"
sayl	"stroll, walking"	yalbe:l	"sieve"
dalba:r	"court"	solfa	"cough"
da:lba:z	"acrobat"		

1.6. Verbal Personal Endings

	sg.		pl.
1.	om [am]	e:m	[e:m]
2.	i: [i:]	e:n	[e:d]
3.	a [ad]	an	[and]

1.7. Some verbs have contracted forms:

1.	/gu:y/	/g/, e.g.	me:gom	"I say"
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- | | | | | |
|----|-------|-----------|----------------------|------------|
| 2. | /raw/ | /r/, e.g. | me:rom | "I go" |
| 3. | /saw/ | /s/, e.g. | me: ^Y som | "I become" |
| 4. | /deh/ | /t/, e.g. | me:tom | "I give" |

1.8. The past tense of kadan [kardan] "to do" is as follows:

ma kadam	ma: kade:m
to kadi:	soma: kade:n
u: kad	i:na: kadan

1.9. /k/ /g/

Both phomenes are palatalised before /i:, e a/ in Teherani Persian but not in Kabuli Persian.

1.10. Teherani Persian /ey/ /ow/ correspond to Kabuli /ay/ /aw/.

1.11. Verbal Prefix /me:/

There are three allomorphs, /me:/ /me/ and /my/
This alternation is conditioned.

i. /me/: Before the verbs containing /e/ in the stems.

me ^Y enom	"I pluck"
mebenom	"I see"
me ^Y esenom	"I hear"
megerom	"I take"

ii. /me/: before the verbs expressing a rapid movement.
In this case stem initial consonants are doubled.

de meddawa	"I run"
metaka	"I precipitate"

iii. /me/: before the dissyllabic verbs. In this case verbal stems are shortened into one syllables.

mešna: [√] som	"I recognise"	Present stem	[√] šena: s-
metra: [√] šom	"I shave"		trara: [√] š-
mefro: [√] šom	"I sell"		foro: [√] š-

iv. /me/: before the verbs beginning with /a/

meftom	"I fall"	aft-
menda: zom	"I throw"	

v. /my/: Before the verbs beginning with /a:/

mya: rom	"I bring"	awor-
mya: yom	"I come"	a:

vi. /me:/: before the all verbs enumerated above.

me: zanom	"I hit, strike"	
me: so: zom	"I burn"	etc.

1.11. Present perfect tense

Present perfect Endings are as follows:

	sg.	pl.
1.	e: m	e: m
2.	i:	e: n
3.	aa a	an

These endings are all accented.

rafté: m	"I have gone"
raftí:	"You have gone"
raftá	"He has gone"
rafté: m	"We have gone"
rafté: n	"You have gone"
raftán	"They have gone"

Cf. past tense

ráftom	"I went"
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ráfti:	"You went"
ráft	"He went"
ráfte:m	"We went"
ráfte:n	"You went"
ráftan	"They went"

1.12 Syllabic Pattern CVC ₁ C₂ and Anapctic Vowels

fekər	"thought"	satə l	"pail"
sefər	"zero"	batən	"belly"
ʒokər	"thanks"	jaʒən	"feast"
xasəm	"anger"	ʒasəm	"eye"

In the above cases C₂ always nasals or liquids.

In the sequence of nasals and liquids with other kinds of consonants, anapctic vowel does not occur.

sard	"cold"	past	"low"	carm	"leather"
garm	"hot"	saxt	"hard"		

1.13. Verbal Prefix /be/, /bo/ and /bi:/

This alternation is conditioned.

/bo/ occurs after verbs beginning with labial and nasal consonants, i.e. /p, b, f, m/, or after verbs containing /o:, o/ or dissyllabic verbs (in this case stem first vowels are dropped).

bokonom	"I should do"	boso:z	"Burn!"
boco:ʒ	"Suck!"	boxo	"Eat!"
boro:	"Go!"	boma:l	"Rub!"
bobaxʒ	"Forgive!"	bopa:l	"Seek!"
boba:f	"Weave!"	bopors	"Ask!"
bopaz	"Cook!"	bofro:ʒ	"Sell!"
bogre:z	"Run away!"	bogzar	"Put!"

/bi:/ occurs only before the following verbs:

bi:gi:	"Take"
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bi:ṡ: "Sit down"

bi:ci: "Pluck"

bi:bi: "Look"

/be/ occurs before any other verbs

bezan "Strike!"

besa:z "Make!"

bejaw "Chew!"

§ 2. Morphology

Morphological structure is essentially same. Only a few typical Kabuli Persian structures are mentioned here.

2.1. /ta:nestan/ "to be able" + past participle

xa:nda me:ta:nom "I can read"

In Iranian Persian this sentence can be rendered as follows:

mi:tava:nam ke bexa:nam or mitava:nam bexa:nam

2.2. Comparative and superlative forms are missing, at least in undeliberate or familiar type of speech.

"This cat is bigger than that one" can be translated in Kabuli Persian as follows:

i: peṡak az u: peṡak kada kala:n as.

(Literally: this cat from that cat big is)

The etymology of /kada/ is not known to me.

2.3. Dubitative future form

/xa:d/ + past tense form

/xa:d/ is present 3rd person singular of /xa:stan/
"to wish"

E.g. xa:d raftom "probably I go"

§ 3. Lexcial notes

The vocabulary unknown in Tehrani Persian but in common use in Kabuli Persian is to great extent of Hindi origin.

Some words differ only semantically.

The following are the most typical words in Kabuli Persian.

1. kala:n "big"
/bozorg/ is literary, and rarely used.
2. pi:r "areligious leader"
For "old" people use the form /mu:ysafe:d/
3. kat-e "with"
Kat-e ma bya: "Come with me"
4. alla:ṣa "jaw" of unknown origin, but found in Pamir languages.
5. ko:ma "cheek" (especially swollen "cheek")
ku:ma means "heap" in Persian of Iran.
6. The suffix /ok/
/le:ro:k/ "a slaverer"
/qa:ro:k/ "a quick-tempered man"
/gerya:no:k/ "a cry baby"
/gapo:k/ "a chatterbox, gossipmonger"
/ke:ro:k/ "a man having big penis"
"man of untiring energy"
/Ṣeoṣo:ṣo:k/ "a man infested with louse"
7. gorda "kidney"
8. qaborga "ribs"

There are a lot of borrowed words in Kabuli Persian, from English, Pashto, French, Hindi. English words in the domain of culture, economics, politics etc. are increasing in number.

Only a few of Hindi borrowed words are given below. A more full detailed word list, see my "A COLLOQUIAL VOCABULARY OF KABULI PERSIAN" (presented to the Faculty of Letters, University of Kabul, as a report of linguistic studies in Afghanistan, February, 1967)

agar	"aloe tree"
a:m	"mango"
ba:jra	"a species of Indian corn" (<i>Holcus spicatus</i>)
bu:ra	"sugar, sawdust"
cal	"trick, deceit"
camca	"ladder"
cat	"ceiling"
cawki:	"chair"
ca:wni:	"police post"
co:t	"abacus"
gac	"plaster"
gara:t	"hand-mill"
godl:	"doll, puppet"
socca	"pure, genuine"
jo:r	"healthy"
kacca	"untasty"
kampal	"woolen blanket"
kelki:n	"window"
ke:la	"banana"
koro:r	"100,000,000"
latta	"tatters, diaper, loincloth"
ladu:	"horse dung"
loka:t	"loquat (<i>Eriobotrya japonica</i>)"
monda	"lopped tree branch"
sarak	"street"
tokri:	"basket"
ta:na	"fort"

tamba	"bar, door-bolt"
te:l	"oil"

The following are some of kinship terms:

father	ba:ba, padar
mother	ma:dar
brother	bya:dar
sister	xwa:r
elder brother	la:la:
grandfather	padarkala:n
grandmother	ma:darkala:n, bi:bi:
grandchild	nawa:sa
great grand child	kawa:sa
daughter-in-law	sonnu:
father-in-law	xosor
great grandfather	neka
wife's sister	xya: ^v Šna
husband of wife's sister	ba:ja
sisters husband	ya:zna
brother's wife	yanga
husband's brother	e:war
husband's sister	nannu:
paternal uncle	ka:ka:
maternal uncle	ma:ma:

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