

West Iranian *ezafe* as a Contact-induced Feature

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The study of structural interference between Iranian and Elamite has thus far been largely focused on the restructuring of Achaemenid Elamite (see e.g. Gershevitch 1979). The purpose of this presentation is to demonstrate that grammatical restructuring also likely went in the opposite direction.

One of the better-known typological correlations concerning word-order is the overwhelming presence for GenN order among OV languages (Dryer 1992: 98). Persian and a number of other West Iranian languages represent exceptions from this generalization, in that they combine the verb-final word order with the postposition of possessors in the so-called *ezafe* construction, as in (1):

- (1) *bāzār-i* *butān* *šikast* *gīrad*
 market-LNK idol.PL defeat receive.3SG.PRS
 ‘The fair of idols suffers defeat’

The same noun phrase structure is traceable back to Middle Persian, e.g. *pahrag ī kušān* ‘watch-post of the Kushan’ alongside the less frequent left-branching construction, e.g. *hwarāsān wimand* ‘frontier of Khorasan’. Old Persian counterpart of the *ezafe* construction is the morphologically marked noun phrase where the postposed possessor is linked to the possessum by means of a relative pronoun, which agrees with the head-noun in gender, number, and case, as in (2). At the same time, Old Persian also features the unmarked GenN construction, e.g. *Vištaspahya puça* ‘Vishtaspa’s son’.

- (2) *kāra* : *haya* : *manā* : *avam* :
 host.NOM.SG REL.NOM.SG.M I.GEN that.ACC.SG.M
kāram : *tayam* : *hamiçiyam* : *aja*
 host.ACC.SG REL.ACC.SG.M rebellious.ACC.SG.M. smite.3SG.PRT
 ‘My army smote the rebellious army’

The left-branching noun phrase syntax is thought to reflect the Indo-Iranian state of affairs and finds counterparts in the bulk of Middle Iranian languages, e.g. Parthian *man bōdestān* ‘my garden’, Sogdian *xmyr xws’nty’kH* ‘emir’s satisfaction’, or Khotanese noun phrase (3). At the same time, the *ezafe* construction is found in modern Iranian languages that are territorially adjacent to the Persian core area, for example in Kurdish.

- (3) *ttye* *uysnori* *kāḍāgānīnei* *hambīsā*
 that.GEN.SG.M being.GEN.SG.M karma-related.NOM.SG.M. heap. NOM.SG.M.
 ‘karma-heap of that being’

Thus the ancestor of the Persian *ezafe* construction was probably a regional innovation, which combined morphological complexity with typological markedness. Therefore, it seems worthwhile to enquire whether its rise and spread represented a contact-induced development. Given that syntactic restructuring frequently correlates with language shift, substrate influence emerges as a likely source of the transformation *manā kāra* → *kāra haya manā* ‘my army’.

Now, the Elamite language, which was spoken in southwestern Iran before the arrival of the Iranian tribes to this area, also displays the unusual combination of the OV word order and the postposition of the possessor. Furthermore, it features nominal class agreement between the possessum and the possessor, which is typologically reminiscent e.g. of the

situation in the Bantu languages. The Middle Elamite examples below feature the following agreement markers: animate *-r* (4), inanimate *-me* (5), and “locutive” *-k* (6).

(4) ^dInšušinak nap-ir u-ri
Inshushinkak god.ANIM I.ANIM
‘Inshushinak, my god’

(5) siyan ^dInšušinak-me husa-me
temple Inshushinak.INAN wood.INAN
‘wooden temple of Inshushinak’

(6) u ^mUntaš-DINGIR.GAL šak ^dHumbanummena-ki sunki-k Anzan Susun-k-a
I Untash-Napirisha son Humbanumena.LOCUT king.LOCUT Anshan Susa-LOCUT-REL
‘I, Untash-Napirisha, son of Humbanumena, king of Anshan and Susa’

I submit that the Old Persian construction *kāra haya manā* represents a likely calque of the Elamite noun phrase morphosyntax, which arose as a result of imperfect learning of Persian by Elamite native speakers. Since Iranian nouns are not declined for gender, the use of relative pronouns as likers in right-branching possessive constructions was the best available equivalent of Elamite class agreement in right-branching possessive constructions. Since there are good reasons to believe that Elamite survived till the Sasanian period as a spoken language, it is possible that the ongoing Elamite and Persian bilingualism continued to influence the proliferation of the *ezafe* construction in Middle Persian. Interference with Arabic may have naturally contributed to its complete triumph in Classical Persian.

In conclusion, I intend to address a number of potential objections to the proposed scenario. One of them is the presence of the relative pronoun *ya-* in a function resembling the *ezafe* marker in certain Young Avestan texts. In my opinion, the respective constructions arose in the course of the liturgical transmission of the Avesta in West Iranian environment. My main argument is the analysis of metric fragments, where the addition of *ya-* appears to distort their original meter, as in the following passage (7 = Yasna 10.1).

(7)	viša apam̄ iḍa patəntu vī daēuuāṅhō vī daēuuaiiō vaṅhuš sraoṣō mitaiiatu ašiš vaṅ ^v hi iḍa miθnatu ašiš vaṅ ^v hi rāmiiaṭ iḍa upa imat̄ nmānəm yaṭ āhūiri yaṭ haomahe ašauuazaṅhō	wiš’ apām ida patantu wi daiwāhah wi daiwayah wahuš srauśah mitāyatu artiš wahw’ ida miθnātu artiš wahwī rāmyāt ida up’ imat dmānam <yat> ahuri <yat> haumahya artawazahah	8 syllables 8 syllables 8 syllables 8 syllables 8 syllables 8 syllables 8 syllables
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Another potential objection is the presence of the *ezafe* in Bactrian (e.g. Sims-Williams 2009: 261). There is indeed a particle *ι* occurring in Bactrian noun phrases, but whether it continues the relative pronoun **ya-* or the demonstrative pronoun **ayam* is a matter of debate. The philological analysis of Bactrian texts leads me to the conclusion that the second hypothesis is preferable and the resemblance between Bactrian and Persian constructions is fortuitous, except for a few cases where secondary Middle Persian influence may be reckoned with.

Gerschevitch, Ilya. 1979: “The Alloglottography of Old Persian”. *Transactions of Philological Society* (1979): 114-190.
Dryer, Matthew S. 1992. “The Greenbergian word order correlations”. *Language* 68: 81-138.

Sims-Williams, Nicholas.2009. "The Bactrian Fragment in Manichaean Script (M 1224)".
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Meisterernst et al. (eds.). Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2009. Pp. 245-260.