

Linguistic diversity and language contact in Chahar Mahal va Bakhtiari Province, Iran
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Chahar Mahal va Bakhtiari Province (hereafter CB) is nestled in the heights of the Zagros Range in western Iran, with the mountains opening down onto the Iranian Plateau. The topography is reflected in the linguistic situation: Bakhtiari dominates the mountainous areas that cover most of the province, and three other main linguistic groups are intermingled in the lower areas of the north-east: Rural Chārmahāli and Urban Chārmahāli (both Southwestern Iranian but distinct from one another), and Turkic.

Until 1973, CB was part of Esfahan Province and (perhaps because of this) the languages of this area were overlooked in the great surveys of the early 20th century (e.g., Mann 1910, Zhukovsky 1923, Christensen 1930/1935). Existing language maps of the area (TAVO 1988, Irancarto 2012, Izady 2013, etc.) have been general and incomplete, and contradict one another.

In this paper, we address this gap in the literature through a first geographically representative overview of linguistic diversity in CB, and look at recurrent themes in the patterning of contact among the languages spoken there. Our study is based on fieldwork conducted across CB by a multi-university research team, in the context of the *Atlas of the Languages of Iran* programme (ALI 2016), between May 2015 and the present.

The first step in our research was to conduct initial assessments of language and dialect distribution for each of the province's some 800 cities and villages. In addition to gaining a geographically detailed picture of the language situation, we collected notes regarding internal diversity among the province's dialects. We also observed that Persian, which is spoken by immigrants to the province, is emerging as a mother tongue among in all of the other language communities (see Author B 2015 for a detailed case study). Coupling this data with demographic and geographic information from publically available sources (ISC 2011, NCC 2015), we then completed a point-based language distribution map for the entire province (http://iranatlas.net/index.html?module=module.landistribution.chahar_mahal_va_bakhtiari).

Guided by this initial distribution map and notes on communities and districts with higher levels of linguistic diversity, we were able to choose 30 research sites for language data collection from across the nine *shahrestān* (provincial sub-districts). Sites were selected to highlight situations of three types: 1) homogeneous rural dialects in communities with a single dominant language; 2) bi- or multilingual communities with a balanced proportion of speakers, in order to explore patterns of language contact and change; and 3) district centres, which we projected would show the greatest impact of Persian on speaker proportions and linguistic structures. We have then undertaken language data collection across the research sites using questionnaires (available from <http://carleton.ca/iran/questionnaires/>) with lexicon, phonology and morpho-syntax components. Audio- and video-recorded texts are integral to the research process.

A thorough analysis of all materials, and especially processing of the texts, will take several months to finalize. However, based on a global examination of the questionnaires, we have already observed several major patterns in the data:

- First, as might be expected, many isoglosses follow purported boundaries between languages. Lexicon and morphosyntax (with some important exceptions; see below) are for the most part determined by language, and there are a few language-defined phonological features as well. The clearest example of this is the distribution of the softened “Zagros d” [ð] (see Windfuhr 1998 and Anonby 2014:48), which is found in all 12 Bakhtiari varieties where we collected data but consistently absent in neighbouring Rural and Urban Chārmahāli dialects and Turkic.
- However, there are many cases of language-internal divergence: both with other dialects of same or similar languages in neighbouring provinces, and for the languages as spoken within CB. As a case in point, some of the stable phonemic distinctions in Bakhtiari of Khuzestan –

for example, contrast between voiceless and voiced alveolar obstruents \acute{g} [g]~[ɣ] and q [q], and long high vowels \bar{i} \bar{u} vs long mid-high (“*majhul*”) vowels \bar{e} \bar{o} (Author A 2014) – is limited to the first members of the respective sets in Bakhtiari of CB. In this way, Bakhtiari of CB shows similarity with New Persian and typical Southwestern dialects of the Iranian Plateau (Borjian 2015) rather than Bakhtiari elsewhere. As we explore in a separate paper (Author A, Author B, Haig & Schreiber, submitted), the Turkic dialects of CB are similarly distinctive when compared to Qashqai of Fars Province and Turkic varieties of Esfahan Province.

- Significant language-internal diversity is also attested within the province. Although none of the Persian and Chārmahāli varieties studied exhibit front rounded vowels \ddot{o} and \ddot{u} , there are some Turkic and Bakhtiari dialects that display this feature. Variability among the Turkic languages can be attributed to contact-induced “delabialisation” (see Bulut 2014 for Turkic elsewhere in Iran); but for Bakhtiari, the question arises: is this phenomenon related to a generalized process of vowel fronting in Iranian (Okati et al. 2010,), or has proximity to Turkic facilitated the change, as in Kurmanji Kurdish (Haig & Öpengin, in press)?

- Among other examples in morphosyntax, there is an unusual grammatical construction shared by several varieties of Bakhtiari and nearby Turkic of Boldaji, but not reported in other dialects of the two languages – a reduplicated progressive verbal form: B. *irahdom berom* (Ardal, Lordegān) / *iram berom* (Dastenā) ‘I was going’; T. *gedirdem gedem* ‘I was going’.

- Areal diffusion of vocabulary is also evident, with characteristic items of all languages in the province including *galb* ‘heart’, *jigar/jiyar* ‘liver’, *dumād/dumā* ‘bridegroom’, *māhi* ‘fish’, *rubā/ruwah* ‘fox’ *šāxa* ‘branch’. Languages other than Persian include the further items *sobā* ‘tomorrow’ and *passobā* ‘day after tomorrow’, and often the doublet *pahr~barg* ‘leaf’ as well.

After providing further examples of language contact effects in the languages of CB, our paper concludes with a reflection of the field research methods employed. Specifically, we provide suggestions to improve the language data questionnaire, and emphasize the indispensability of texts as a complement to elicited data. Finally, we open discussion on how the data will be disseminated in the open-access forum supplied by the *Atlas of the Languages of Iran*.

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