

Why borrow verbs when you can borrow participles?: Turkic participles in the Iranian languages

Shinji Ido (Tohoku University / University of Sydney)

This paper examines the strategies employed by the Iranian languages to incorporate Turkic verbs into their lexicons. In particular, it focuses on the borrowing of participles. Participle-borrowing is of particular interest from both typological and historical points of view, because the Iranian varieties that employ this strategy are geographically distant from one another and belong to different genetic groups, which allows the hypothesis that they developed the same strategy independently from one another.

Different dialects of Tajik, a south-west Iranian language, employ different strategies to borrow Turkic verbs, a few of which are exemplified below. The verb *tuqon-* in the following Bukharan Tajik example is the Uzbek verb stem *tiq-* ‘thrust’ to which the Tajik verb (present stem) forming suffix *-on* is attached.

- 1) *tuqondan, kašida gitan*
 thrust.inf pull.ger take.inf
 ‘to thrust, to take in’

In the example shown below, which is also taken from Bukharan Tajik, another verb-borrowing strategy, namely an addition of the light verb to a borrowed verb stem, is used.

- 2) *o‘yla kun*
 think do.imperative
 ‘think (about it)’

In this example, the light verb *kardan* ‘to do’ immediately follows the Uzbek verb stem *o‘yla-* ‘think’. The two types of verb-borrowing exemplified in (1) and (2) involve no change of word classes in the process of borrowing. However, some Tajik dialects employ a verb-borrowing strategy that is quite distinct from the ones explained above; they borrow Uzbek participles in *-miš* and combine them with the light verb *kardan*.

- 3) *bitir-miš kardan*
 finish-ptpl do.inf
 ‘to finish’

In (3), which is a verb used in the dialect of Čust (Rastorgueva et al 1970: 719), the Uzbek participle consisting of the verb stem *bitir-* ‘finish’ and the participle-forming

suffix *-miš* is followed by the light verb *kardan*. This is a rather roundabout method of borrowing verbs, particularly in comparison with the method exemplified in (2). However, it is this method that is shared by Iranian languages/varieties of wide variety in borrowing verbs from the Turkic languages. An example from Sariqul (Gao 1985: 28) is shown below where the *-miš* participial form of the Turkic (Uyghur) verb meaning ‘to check’ is followed by the Sariqul light verb *tšeiğ* ‘to do’:

- 4) *takšur-miš* *tšeiğ*
 check-ptpl do.inf
 ‘to check’

The Iranian varieties that borrow verbs from Turkic languages in their *-miš* participial forms include some dialects of Tajik, which belongs to the south-west group, Talish and Kurdish (Rastorgueva et al 1970: 719), which belong to the north-west group, and Sariqul, which is a Pamir language that belongs to the south-east group of the Iranian languages.

Why do these Iranian languages that are both geographically and genetically distant from each other all borrow Turkic participles in *-miš*? It appears unlikely that these Iranian varieties that comprise both the western-most and the eastern-most of the Iranian languages and span across all the major genetic groups of the Iranian languages have conspired to adopt this particular method of participle-borrowing. Sariqul in particular is known for its geographical isolation and divergence from the other members of the genetic group to which it belongs (Payne 1989: 418) and hence is not likely to have adopted from (or exported to) other Iranian languages a method of borrowing Turkic lexical items of a specific word class.

A tentative conclusion that can be drawn from the facts explained above is that the borrowing of Turkic participles in *-miš* was developed by various Iranian varieties independently from one another. However, this conclusion is not satisfactory in that it does not give any clue as to why and when different Iranian languages developed the same method of participle-borrowing. Accordingly, I would like in this presentation to 1) discuss the possible reason why a particular method of participle-borrowing has emerged, apparently autonomously, in languages that appear to have had little direct contact with each other for centuries, 2) explore the possibility that the method was somehow transmitted through contact between the languages, and also 3) consider the possible involvement of word class distinction (i.e. verb-participle distinction) in the emergence of this particular method of participle borrowing.

References

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