SOME REMARKS ON THE LANGUAGE OF MODERN TAJIK PUBLIC INSCRIPTIONS (PART III)

Keywords: Tajik language, public inscriptions, multilingual texts

Abstract

The present article deals with the Tajik language used in modern public inscriptions (sign-boards, sign-posts, billboard advertisements, political banners, etc.) documented in about 400 photographs taken in Tajikistan by various individuals in recent years. Some sociolinguistic problems are discussed (especially in the case of multilingual inscriptions) as well as morphology, vocabulary, word-formation and syntax of the texts in question.

1. Introduction

The present article is a third one dedicated to the study of the Tajik language used in modern public inscriptions, i.e. sign-boards, sign-posts, billboard advertisements, political banners, etc. The first part (Gacek 2018a) focused on the languages other than Tajik used in this type of inscriptions. It also included a classification of the inscriptions based on their content. Then the phonetics, phonology, orthography and morphology (Gacek 2018b) of Tajik inscriptions were analyzed. In this part of the paper their vocabulary and syntax will be discussed.

2.3. Vocabulary

It is possible to indicate higher frequency words in the analyzed corpus. The following table lists those attested at least five times:

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1 The following results are based on all the inscriptions analyzed in the three parts of the present publication.
It should be noted that among the lexemes used most frequently, forms of Arabic origin constitute over 40% of the total number. Additionally, more than 400 words appear only once in the analyzed corpus.

As far as the origins of the lexemes used in the analyzed inscriptions are concerned, not surprisingly, there are a very large number of lexical items borrowed from Arabic (over 30%), at least in the sense of their immediate sources. If hybrid forms with some Arabic element are also included, the numbers rise to over 40%. This is consistent with the results for the most frequent lexemes (see above). As a comparison, words of entirely native origin form over 40% of the vocabulary and those with at least some native element, around 55%.

These proportions are understandable, for as with all the varieties of Persian, Arabic was a major vocabulary-donor for over a thousand years. What makes Tajik different from Farsi and Dari, is the impact of Russian, which was particularly strong during the 20th century. Thus, Russian is certainly the second most important source of foreign vocabulary in modern Tajik. However, there is one interesting difference, that is while words taken from Arabic were mostly of Semitic origin (i.e. – in most cases – Arabic was both their immediate and original source), Russian mostly served as a vehicular language (the immediate source) in the transmission of words taken from other languages. Such words are often wide-spread internationalisms, e.g. институт [85], генерал [86] (originally from Latin), геодезия [87]
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Forms for which Russian served as a vehicular language constitute well over 10% of the analyzed vocabulary. A number of them clearly betray Russian as the intermediary on their journey into the Tajik language, mostly due to their phonetic features, e.g. литысей [88] from the Russian лицеей, with an affricate at the beginning of the second syllable. The Russian form was probably taken from the German Lyzeum (the primary source of the affricate), which in turn came from the Latin lyceum, with the original source being the Greek Λύκειον (Vasmer 1986: 2.506). On other occasions, certain morphological features can be seen to play the same role, e.g. the final part of the form прокуратура [89] ‘prosecutor’s office’, a derivative of прокуратор ‘prosecutor’, from either the Polish prokurator or the German Prokurator, both of which may be traced back to the Latin прокуратор (Vasmer 1986: 3.374). Forms such as техника [90] show both the phonetic (/x-/)[4] and morphological (-a) impact of Russian. However, the Russian техника, in turn, was taken from the German Technik, which was based either on the Latin technica or – directly – on the Greek τεχνική/τέχνη (Vasmer 1986: 4.54). In many other cases, there is no evidence that clearly points to Russian as a vehicular language and in these instances historical data, and a meticulous analysis of lexicographical works from the Soviet era, must be the basis for any conclusions.

Having discussed the role of Russian as a vehicular language, it has to be noted that words of Slavonic origin are scarce in the analyzed corpus. Nevertheless, some examples do exist, such as суд [91] ‘court, jury’. To this, the forms created in Russian, but based on elements from various origins, like the word комсомол [92], can be added.

There are isolated examples of words taken from other sources, such as the hybrid form чойхона [93] that contains the word for tea derived from the Chinese 茶.

2.4. Word-formation

Word-formational structure may be analyzed in both native and, to some extent, hybrid forms. Among the native forms are the following:


It is possible to find in the analyzed corpus at least one form of Greek origin transmitted via Arabic, i.e. харитасоз [94].

The change of the written form from лицеий to литысей is a purely orthographic phenomenon of the post-Soviet period.

The strongly articulated Russian /h/ tends to be rendered by /x/ in Tajik, rather than /h/.

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2 It is possible to find in the analyzed corpus at least one form of Greek origin transmitted via Arabic, i.e. харитасоз [94].

3 The change of the written form from лицеий to литысей is a purely orthographic phenomenon of the post-Soviet period.

4 The strongly articulated Russian /h/ tends to be rendered by /x/ in Tajik, rather than /h/.
• coordinate compounds (often with the joining element -o-), e.g. баробар [70] 'equal';
• more than one of the above-mentioned processes, e.g. бурунмарзӣ [99] 'foreign, external, expatriate' (determinative compound and suffixation), зироаткорӣ [85] 'cultivation'.

In some cases, the classification of the word-formational processes may be disputed, e.g. варзишгоҳ [106] 'stadium' may be described as a determinative compound of the nouns варзи 'sport, gymnastics' (itself a suffixal derivative, nomen actionis originated from the verbal stem варз-) and гоҳ 'place'. However, alternatively, after analyzing its usage in the modern language, it may be more accurate to classify гоҳ as a suffix or “virtual suffix” (Perry 2005: 436). The same phenomenon is observable in Persian (Rubinčik 2001: 148ff). The form донишгоҳ [9, 47] 'university' is a similar example.

As far as the hybrid forms are concerned, most of them may be ascribed to one of two group: Arabic-native forms and Russian-native forms. The hybrid Arabic-Tajik forms are quite diversified. They may consist of an Arabic lexeme and Tajik prefix or suffix, e.g. босаодат [107] 'happy', таърихӣ [108] 'historic', with another possibility being compounds formed by an Arabic and a native element, e.g. осорхона [109] 'museum'. Such compounds may be further developed by adding a native suffix, e.g. нусхабардорӣ [26] '[the act of] copying'.

In the case of Russian-native hybrid forms, statistically the native part is almost always the adjectival suffix -ий or the homophonic nominal suffix, cf. канселяри [110] 'stationery', театрӣ [111] 'theatrical' and агентӣ [87] 'agency', etc. This is a very different situation from the variety of possibilities in the case of the Arabic-Tajik forms.

2.5. Syntax

From the syntactical point of view, the analyzed texts may be divided into a number of types:
• single words (geographical names, names of institutions, names of products on offer), e.g. Исфара [112] ‘Isfara (a city in northern Tajikistan)’;
• izofat word groups consisting of two common nouns (the head and the modifier). These are mostly names or types of institutions, enterprises, etc., e.g. маркази бизнес [113] ‘business centre’;
• izofat word groups consisting of two nouns, where the modifier is a proper name. Structures of this type are understood as the introduction to the proper name of either an institution or an enterprise, e.g. Мехмонхонаи Тоҷикистон [33] ‘Tajikistan Hotel’;
• izofat phrases consisting of a nominal head and an adjectival modifier, e.g. савдои бузург [114] (probably an indirect calque of the English ‘supermarket’), *фуруъсоҳи маркази* [1] ‘central shop’;
• more complex izofat phrases (‘izofat chains’), e.g. фурӯши терминалҳои маблагузароии [35] ‘sale of ATMs’, минтакаи назорати гумрукӣ [115] ‘customs control zone’;
• more complicated word groups (descriptions of various events, more detailed advertisements, etc.), which are mostly complex izofat constructions combined with prepositional phrases, often with elements joined by the conjunction ва, e.g. [МУ] ЛОҚОТИ ПРЕЗИДЕНТ БО ҲАМВАТАНОНИ БУРУНМАРЗӢ [99] ‘meeting of the president with expatriate compatriots’, зангҳо ба Русия ғар вакти шаъбона [34] ‘phone calls to Russia at night’, АГЕНТИИ ЗАМИНСОЗӢ, ГЕОДЕЗӢ ВА ХАРИТАСОЗИИ НАЗДИ ХУКУМАТИ ЧУМҲУРИИ ТОЧИКИСТОН [87] ‘Agency for construction, geodesy and cartography at the public bodies of the Republic of Tajikistan’;
• complete simple sentences, e.g. Пирӯзи ми интихоби .params ast. [115] ‘Our (my?) victory is your choice’. There are a considerable number of texts (mainly political slogans) belonging to this group that show ellipsis of the verb (3rd sg. praes. copulae), e.g. ТОЧИКИСТОНӢ ОЗОДУ СОҲИБИСТИКЛОЛ ВАТАНИ МАҲБУБӢ ҲАМАИ МО! [116] ‘The free, independent Tajikistan [is] the beloved motherland of all of us!’;
• complex sentences are rare, nevertheless, examples may be found, e.g. БА ДИККАТИ ШАҲРВАНДОН РАСОНИДА МЕШАВАД, КИ БАРОИ ГИРИФ-ТАНИ МАЪЛУМОТ АЗ ШУЪБАИ ҚАБУЛ МАСЛИҲАТДИҲӢ БА МУ-ҲОЧИРОНИ МЕХНАТИ ТАНҲО БА СОКИНОНИ ШАХРИ ДУШАНБЕ ИЧОЗАТ ДОДА МЕШАВАД [74] ‘The citizens are hereby informed, that as far as acquiring information from the advisory office for the migrant workers is concerned, only the inhabitants of the city of Dushanbe are eligible’ or Роғун манбаи алонашавандаи нур аст, ки Тоҷикистонро ғар оғуши шарқи ғуҳан ба ахтари ҳамешатобои табилил ҳоҳад доҳ! [82] ‘[The city of] Royun is a not-turning-evil(?) source of light that will change the Tajikistan in the embrace of the ancient East into an everglowing star’;

Generally speaking, all the syntactical structures in the analyzed corpus are known in the Persian of Iran as well.

5 In fact, ФУРУЪСОҲИ МАРКАЗИ, as a stylized inscription, seems to lack vowel diacritics.
6 Original English translation accompanying the Tajik inscription.
3. Conclusions

A quarter of a century after gaining independence, Tajik is clearly the dominant language of public inscriptions in Tajikistan. Russian is the second most common, and the use of English is also seen. The proportions between the languages used differs depending on the content of the texts.

With regard to phonetics and phonology, the influence of the Russian language on Tajik is still visible, at least from what may be deduced from the written forms. On the other hand, a tendency seems to exist to re-harmonize the Tajik vocabulary phonetically with that of the Persian of Iran.

In morphology, only minor (not to say negligible) differences may be observed, and – particularly in the verbal system – in the majority of cases only the forms common to all the varieties of Persian are used. None of the specifically Tajik tenses or moods are observed in the analyzed material. This is significant, as it is in the verbal system where particularly important differences between Tajik and Fārsi are most clearly seen.

Similarly, even where there are differences in the morphology of other parts of speech between Fārsi and Tojiki, the forms that exhibit these variations are not to be found in the analyzed corpus (e.g. the superlative grade of adverbs), except in certain minor details that would be insufficient to influence the mutual understanding between the users of both ethnolects in question. In other words, the Tajik language of public inscriptions, at least on the grammatical level, seems to be written in a form of pan-Persian koinè and this is not a new tendency as a number of inscriptions are included in this study that were produced in the Soviet era. This situation is certainly in contrast to the native Tajik literature, where specifically Tajik forms are numerous.

This lack of specifically Tajik forms in the analyzed corpus is even more striking if its heterogeneous character is considered. Even when focusing on inscriptions that can be found in the Tajikistan of today, these, nevertheless, include those dating back to immediately after World War II, assuming that they still are extant. Moreover, the analyzed inscriptions include examples carved on stone monuments, as well as ad-hoc notices written with a pen on a piece of paper. Taking this into consideration, it can be concluded that the deliberate differentiation of Tajik from Persian by the adoption of many dialectal and even foreign (esp. Uzbek) elements into the standard proved to be much less successful in the case of public inscriptions, than, for example, in literary works (see Perry 1996: 282–283).

Of course, the potential benefits of using a common core of grammar, one shared with Dari and Fārsi, are reduced – at least in the case of inscriptions – by the different writing systems, as well as by the specifically Tajik vocabulary items. The latter is a particularly important factor, as what makes modern Tajik significantly different from Persian and Dari is the position of Russian. Numerous words present in the analyzed corpus are clearly loanwords transmitted into the language via Russian, yet while Russian has a central role as a vehicular language, words of Slavonic origin are scarce.
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References


Appendix

List of inscriptions

Examples 1–32 are included in the first part of the article (Gacek 2018a) and those numbered 33–84 in the second one (Gacek 2018b).

87. KaRiMi aLi 2010–2–22 Dushanbe АГЕНТИИ ЗАМИНСОЗ, ГЕОДЕЗИЯ И КАРТАСТРОИСТИ НАЗИ ХУКУМ АТ И ЧУМХУРИИ ТОЧИКИСТОН [at:] http://www.panoramio.com/photo/39914556
90. ramon vila 2006–6–4 Dushanbe КОРОРНАИ МУШТАРАКИ | СОВМЕСТНОЕ ПРЕДПРИЯТИЕ | РУССКИЕ МАШИНЫ | Продажа в кредит | Сервис [at:] http://www.panoramio.com/photo/24576544
94. kurbanashurov 2012–5-8 Yovon ТОЛОРИ ВАРЗИШГИЙ [at:] http://www.panoramio.com/photo/75043436
95. Шахриёр Ёров 2013–6-20 Dushanbe Амонати Бурдонког "ИКБОЛ" | БУРДИ ОЛІ | Бо гузоштани 105 | сохбати бурдон (...) [at:] http://www.panoramio.com/photo/96821497
98. Radyo-i Ozodi 2014–8-26 Tajikistan БИМОРҲОНАИ МАРКАЗИИ НОҚИЯИ Б. ФАҲУРОВ [at:] http://www.ozodi.org/content/article/26549417.html
103. klik.tj Dushanbe Клик | МОЛӢ 71-УМИН МАВСИМИ ТЕАТР | "Шайхурраис Абдулла ибни Сино“ [at:] http://www.panoramio.com/photo/61364801
104. ABLV Bank 2012–2–28 Dushanbe маркази бизнес [at:] http://www.ablv.com/content/2/0/4/5/2/8d3cc746/Dushanbe700.jpg
114. jahongard 2012–9-7 Dushanbe МИНТАКАИ НАЗОРАТИ ГУМРУКИ | CUSTOMS CONTROL ZONE [at:] http://www.panoramio.com/photo/80160075
117. husrav 2012–3-5 Dushanbe ТОЧИК ЭЙР | ТАЖИК АИР [at:] http://www.panoramio.com/photo/68032488
118. Fisher_Y 2010–12–11a Dushanbe ДОРУХОНА 36,6 [at:] http://www.panoramio.com/photo/62256924