

The Iranian and Azari languages

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Abstract

persian predominant [ethnic group](#) of [Iran](#) formerly known as [Persia](#) and a significant minority community in western [Afghanistan](#). Although of diverse ancestry the Persian people are united by their language, [Persian](#) (Farsi) which belongs to the [Indo-Iranian](#) group of the [Indo-European](#) language family. The name of Azarbaijan has been one of the most renowned geographical names of Iran since 2000 years ago. Azar is a New-Persian word derivative from Middle-Persian (Pahlavi) Athur, Adur which means fire. In Pahlavi inscriptions the region located south of Aras river has been recorded as Athurpatekan while it has been mentioned Azarbayegan and Azarpadegan in Persian writings. In many references Azerbaijanis are designated as a [Turkic people](#) due to their [Turkic language](#). However modern-day Azerbaijanis are believed to be primarily the descendants of the [Caucasian](#) and [Iranic](#) peoples who lived in the areas of the Caucasus and northern Iran respectively prior to [Turkification](#). Various historians including [Vladimir Minorsky](#) explain how largely Iranian and Caucasian populations became Turkish-speaking.

Key words: Language, Iranian languages, The Indo-European languages, Language of Azari people, Azeris.

1. Introduction

What language is spoken in Iran? It is Persian, Farsi or Iranian? This article looks at language in Iran. Iranian languages form a major subgroup of the Indo-Iranian branch of the Indo-European Language family. It is interesting to note however that Iranian languages are not limited to Iran – they are diverse in nature and are spoken by over 70 million people across southern and south western Asia. The reason why they are called Iranian languages is that they have been spoken across the Iranian plateau for thousands of years. The majority of modern Iranian languages have been adapted from the Arabic script. Many people are confused about whether to term the Iranian language Persian or Farsi which is due to linguistic changes which have taken place over the years. However the Iranian language has been referred to as Persian for centuries and is the official name of Iran to describe the language spoken there. The name Persian evolves from the name of the language spoken by a nomadic group of people in southern Iran known as the Parsa. The Parsa lived in the southern Iranian region of Persis. The term Persian also describes the languages spoken by Afghanistan and Tajikistan. The Iranian peoples (Iranic peoples) are an Indo-European ethnic-linguistic group that comprise the speakers of Iranian languages a major branch of the Indo-European language family as such forming a branch of the Indo-European-speaking peoples. Their historical areas of settlement were on the Iranian plateau, and comprised most of Iran and certain areas of Central Asia such as Tajikistan and Uzbekistan and most of Afghanistan some parts of western Pakistan northern Iraq and eastern Turkey and scattered parts of the Caucasus Mountains. Their current distribution spreads across the Iranian plateau and stretches from Pakistan's Indus River in the east to eastern Turkey in the west and from Central Asia and the Caucasus in the north to the Persian Gulf in the south – a region that is sometimes called the Iranian cultural continent or Greater Persia by scholars and represents the extent of the Iranian languages and influence of the Persian People through the geopolitical reach of the Persian empire. The Iranian group emerges from an earlier Iranian unity during the Late Bronze Age and it enters the historical record during the Early Iron Age. The Azerbaijanis, [Azerbaijani](#) - Azərbaycanlılar or Azarbaijanis are [Turkic](#)-speaking people living mainly in northwestern [Iran](#) and the [Republic of Azerbaijan](#) as well as in the neighboring states [Georgia](#) [Russia](#) ([Dagestan](#)) and formerly [Armenia](#). Also referred to as Azeris or Azaris or Azerbaijani Turks (Azərbaycan türkləri) they also live in a wider area from the [Caucasus](#) to the [Iranian plateau](#). The Azerbaijanis are predominantly [Shi'a Muslim](#) and have a mixed cultural heritage including Turkic Iranic and [Caucasian](#) elements. The term Azeri or Azerbaijani is usually a reference to people who speak a certain dialect of a Turkic language who are generally Shia Muslims. Most live in [Azerbaijan](#) and Northern [Iran](#) with some in adjacent areas of [Georgia](#) and [Turkey](#). Before the [Karabakh War](#) a significant number also lived in Armenia. In many references Azerbaijanis are designated as a Turkic people due to

their Turkic language and partial descent from the Oghuz. However, there is a debate regarding the ethnic origins of the Azeris. The debate has to do with modern nationalism and historic claims over Azeri territory. The debate involves three viewpoints whether the Azeris are of a Turkic background from Central Asia are an Iranian people who simply changed their language following Turkic invasions or are indigenous to the Caucasus and have adopted the Azerbaijani language, Persian culture and Islam. Thus, determining whether a Turkic Iranian or Caucasian background defines the Azeris has much to do with the historical views of Azerbaijan's neighbors (Raies niya, 2007).

2. The Indo-European languages

The Indo-European languages are a family or phylum of several hundred related languages and dialects including most major current languages of Europe the Iranian plateau, and South Asia and also historically predominant in Anatolia. With written attestations appearing since the Bronze Age in the form of the Anatolian languages and Mycenaean Greek the Indo-European family is significant to the field of historical linguistics as possessing the longest recorded history after the Afroasiatic family. Indo-European languages are spoken by almost three billion native speakers the largest number for any recognised language family.

Of the twenty languages with the largest numbers of native speakers according to SIL Ethnologue twelve are Indo-European: Spanish, English, Hindi, Portuguese, Bengali, Russian, German, Marathi, French, Italian, Punjabi, and Urdu, accounting for over 1.7 billion native speakers. Several disputed proposals link Indo-European to other major language families. Suggestions of similarities between Indian and European languages began to be made by European visitors to India in the 16th century. In 1583 Thomas Stephens an English Jesuit missionary in Goa noted similarities between Indian languages specifically Konkani, and Greek and Latin. These observations however were included in a letter to his brother which was not published until the twentieth century. The first account by a western European to mention the ancient language Sanskrit came from Filippo Sassetti born in Florence Italy in 1540 a merchant who traveled to the Indian subcontinent. Writing in 1585 he noted some word similarities between Sanskrit and Italian these included *devah/dio* God *sarpah/serpe* serpent *sapta/sette* seven, *aṣṭa/otto* eight, *nava/nove* nine. However, neither Stephens's nor Sassetti's observations led to further scholarly inquiry.

In 1647 Dutch linguist and scholar Marcus Zuerius van Boxhorn noted the similarity among Indo-European languages and supposed that they derived from a primitive common language which he called Scythian. He included in his hypothesis Dutch, Albanian, Greek, Latin, Persian and German later adding Slavic, Celtic and Baltic languages. However Van Boxhorn's suggestions did not become widely known and did not stimulate further research (Saidiyan, 1991).

Gaston Coeurdoux and others had made observations of the same type. Coeurdoux made a thorough comparison of Sanskrit Latin and Greek conjugations in the late 1760s to suggest a relationship between them. Similarly Mikhail Lomonosov compared different language groups of the world including Slavic Baltic Kurlandic Iranian Medic Finnish, Chinese Hottentot and others. He emphatically expressed the antiquity of the linguistic stages accessible to comparative method in the drafts for his Russian Grammar published 1755. The hypothesis reappeared in 1786 when Sir William Jones first lectured on the striking similarities between three of the oldest languages known in his time Latin, Greek and Sanskrit to which he tentatively added Gothic, Celtic and Old Persian though his classification contained some inaccuracies and omissions.

It was Thomas Young who in 1813 first used the term Indo-European which became the standard scientific term through the work of Franz Bopp whose systematic comparison of these and other old languages supported the theory. In some nations the term Indo-Germanic is in use in Germany as the standard scientific term, while in other languages it is the more common term. Bopp's Comparative Grammar appearing between 1833 and 1852 counts as the starting point of Indo-European studies as an academic discipline.

The classical phase of Indo-

3. The Iranian languages

The Iranian languages also called Iranic languages form a subfamily of the Indo-Iranian languages which in turn are a subgroup of the Indo-European language family. The speakers of Iranian languages are known as Iranian peoples. The Iranian languages are considered in three stages of Old until 400 BCE Middle 400 BCE – 900 CE and New since 900

CE. From the Old Iranian languages the better understood and recorded ones are Old Persian a language of Achaemenid Iran and Avestan the language of Zarathushtra. Middle Iranian languages included Middle Persian a language of Sassanid Iran) and Parthian a language of Arsacid Iran. There are many Iranian languages the largest amongst them are Persian, Pashto, Kurdish, and Balochi. Today, there are an estimated 150–200 million native speakers of Iranian languages. The Ethnologue lists 87 Iranian languages. Persian has about 65 million native speakers Pashto about 50 million Kurdish about 18 million Balochi about 7 million and Lurish about 2.3 million. The term Iranian language is applied to any language which is descended from the Proto-Iranian parent language. While unattested Proto-Iranian was first spoken by presumably people/tribes in Central Asia sometime in the late 3rd to early 2nd millennium BCE. The area in which Iranian languages i.e. descendants of Proto-Iranian have been spoken stretches from western China to western Europe. Proto-Iranian was related to also unattested, Proto-Indic. Proto-Indic gave birth to the various northern Indian languages over time. Taken together all Iranian Indo-Aryan and Nuristani languages form the Indo-Iranian branch of the Indo-European language family. The term Iranian was introduced in 1836 by Christian Lassen followed by Wilhelm Geiger and his *Grundriss der Iranischen Philologie* 1895 whereas Friedrich von Spiegel in 1859 preferred the term Eranian. Robert Needham Cust, however used the term Irano-Aryan as early as 1878 (Saidiyani, 2004).

Orientalists such as George Abraham Grierson and Max Müller also differentiated between Irano-Aryan and Indo-Aryan. Grierson also uses the term Eranian. Some recent scholarship - primarily in German - has revived of the term Irano-Aryan in analogy to Indo-Aryan. The linguist Ahmad Hasan Dani uses the term and asserts Iranian is short for Irano-Aryan. The linguist Gilbert Lazard specialist for Persian, has been using the term consequently in his publications whereas Mohammad Djafar suggests to establish Aryan for the branch. Still Iranian remains the standard term used by the vast majority of English-language linguists. Soon after postulating an Indo-European family in the 19th century, the Iranian languages Avestan, Old Persian, Pahlavi together with Indic Sanskrit, Prakrit were recognized by works of the linguist Rasmus Rask in 1826 as the eastern branch of Indo-European languages. The Armenian language was also considered as an Iranian language but was very soon (in 1875 effectively) established as a separate language in the Indo-European group of languages. Iranian languages are divided into Eastern and Western subfamilies, totalling about 84 languages (SIL estimate). Of the most widely-spoken Iranian languages Kurdish, Persian and Balochi are all Western Iranian languages while Pashto is an Eastern Iranian language.

3 - 1 Proto-Iranian and Old Iranian languages

Together with the other Indo-Iranian languages the Iranian languages are descended from a common ancestor, Proto-Indo-Iranian. The Indo-Iranian languages are thought to have originated in Central Asia. The Andronovo culture is the suggested candidate for the common Indo-Iranian culture ca. 2000 BC. It was situated precisely in the western part of Central Asia that borders present-day Russia and present-day Kazakhstan. It was in relative proximity to the other satem ethno-linguistic groups of the Indo-European family like Thracian Balto-Slavic and others, and to common Indo-European's original homeland more precisely the steppes of southern Russia to the north of the Caucasus according to the reconstructed linguistic relationships of common Indo-European. Proto-Iranian thus dates to some time after Proto-Indo-Iranian break-up or the early second millennium BCE as the Old Iranian languages began to break off and evolve separately as the various Iranian tribes migrated and settled in vast areas of southeastern Europe the Iranian plateau and Central Asia. Avestan mainly attested through the Avesta a collection of sacred texts connected to the Zoroastrian religion, is considered to belong to a central Iranian group where only peripheral groups such as southwestern represented by Old Persian and northeastern Sogdian and Sakan language (Scythian) had developed. Among the less known Old Iranian languages is Median spoken in western and central Iran which may have had an official status during the Median era (ca. 700–559 BC). Apart from place and personal names some words reported in Herodotus' Histories and some preserved forms in Achaemenid inscriptions there are numerous non-Persian words in the Old Persian texts that are commonly considered Median. Some of the modern Western and Central Iranian dialects are also likely to be descended from Median. Other such languages are Carduchi the predecessor to Kurdish and Parthian which evolved into the language of the later empire (Bosworth, 1968).

3 - 2 *Middle Iranian Languages*

What is known in Iranian linguistic history as the Middle Iranian era is thought to begin around the 4th century BCE lasting through the 9th century. Linguistically the Middle Iranian languages can be classified into two main families Western and Eastern.

The Western family includes Parthian (Arsacid Pahlavi) and Middle Persian while Bactrian, Sogdian, Khwarezmian, Saka, and Old Ossetic (Scytho-Sarmatian) fall under the Eastern category. The two languages of the Western group were linguistically very close to each other but quite distinct from their eastern counterparts. On the other hand the Eastern group retained some similarity to Avestan. They were inscribed in various Aramaic-derived alphabets which had ultimately evolved from the Achaemenid Imperial Aramaic script though Bactrian was written using an adapted Greek script. Middle Persian (Pahlavi) was the official language under the Sasanian dynasty in Iran. It was in use from the 3rd century CE until the beginning of the 10th century. The script used for Middle Persian in this era underwent significant maturity. Middle Persian, Parthian and Sogdian were also used as literary languages by the Manichaeans whose texts also survive in various non-Iranian languages, from Latin to Chinese. Manichaean texts were written in a script closely akin to the Syriac script (Yarshater, 1987).

3 – 3 *New Iranian Languages*

Following the Islamic Conquest of Persia (Iran) there were important changes in the role of the different dialects within the Persian Empire. The old prestige form of Middle Iranian, also known as Pahlavi was replaced by a new standard dialect called Dari as the official language of the court. The name Dari comes from the word *darbâr* which refers to the royal court where many of the poets protagonists and patrons of the literature flourished. The Saffarid dynasty in particular was the first in a line of many dynasties to officially adopt the new language in 875 CE. Dari may have been heavily influenced by regional dialects of eastern Iran whereas the earlier Pahlavi standard was based more on western dialects. This new prestige dialect became the basis of Standard New Persian. Medieval Iranian scholars such as Abdullah Ibn al-Muqaffa (8th century) and Ibn al-Nadim (10th century) associated the term Dari with the eastern province of Khorasan while they used the term Pahlavi to describe the dialects of the northwestern areas between Isfahan and Azerbaijan and *Pârsi* (Persian proper) to describe the Dialects of Fars. They also noted that the unofficial language of the royalty itself was yet another dialect *Khuzi* associated with the western province of Khuzestan. The Islamic conquest also brought with it the adoption of Arabic script for writing Persian Pashto and Balochi. All three were adapted to the writing by the addition of a few letters. This development probably occurred some time during the second half of the 8th century when the old middle Persian script began dwindling in usage. The Arabic script remains in use in contemporary modern Persian. Tajik script was first Latinised in the 1920 under the then Soviet nationality policy. The script was however subsequently Cyrillicized in the 1930 by the Soviet government (Yarshater, 1987).

The geographical areas in which Iranian languages were spoken was pushed back in several areas by newly neighbouring languages. Arabic spread into some parts of Western Iran Khuzestan and Turkic languages spread through much of Central Asia displacing various Iranian languages such as Sogdian and Bactrian in parts of what is today Turkmenistan Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. Sogdian barely survives in a small area of the Zarafshan valley east of Samarkand, and Saka as *Sariqoli* in parts of southern Xinjiang as well as Ossetic in the Caucasus. Various small Iranian languages in the Pamirs survive that are derived from Eastern Iranian.

4. Ancient period

Caucasian Albanians are believed to be the earliest inhabitants of the region where the modern day Republic of Azerbaijan is located. Early Iranian settlements included the Scythians in the ninth century BC. Following the Scythians the Medes came to dominate the area to the south of the Aras River. The Medes forged a vast empire between 900–700 BC which was integrated into the Achaemenids Empire around 550 BC. During this period Zoroastrianism spread in the Caucasus and Atropatene. The Achaemenids in turn were defeated by Alexander the Great in 330 BC but the Median satrap Atropates was allowed to remain in power. Following the decline of the Seleucids in Persia in 247 BC an Armenian Kingdom exercised control over parts of Caucasian Albania. Caucasian Albanians established a kingdom in the first century BC and largely remained independent until the Persian Sassanids made the kingdom a vassal state in 252 AD. Caucasian Albania's ruler King Urnayr officially adopted Christianity as

the state religion in the fourth century AD and Albania remained a Christian state until the 8th century. Sassanid control ended with their defeat by Muslim Arabs in 642 AD.

Azerbaijani, any member of a [Turkic people](#) living chiefly in the Republic of [Azerbaijan](#) and in the region of [Azerbaijan](#) in northwestern [Iran](#). At the turn of the 21st century there were some 7.5 million Azerbaijani in the republic and neighbouring areas and more than 15 million in Iran. They are mainly sedentary farmers and herders although some of those in the republic have found employment in various industries. Most Azerbaijani are Muslims. They speak Azerbaijani a language belonging to the southwestern branch of [Turkic languages](#). The Azerbaijani are of mixed ethnic origin the oldest element deriving from the indigenous population of eastern [Transcaucasia](#) and possibly from the [Medians](#) of northern Persia. This population was Persianized during the period of the [Sāsānian dynasty](#) of Iran 3rd–7th century ce. Turkicization of the population can be dated from the region's conquest by the [Seljuq](#) Turks in the 11th century and the continued influx of Turkic populations in subsequent centuries including those groups that migrated during the Mongol conquests in the 13th century (Minorsky, 1953)

The greater portion of the tribes that formed the Mongol forces or were stimulated by the Mongol conquest to migrate were Turkic. Parts of the region later passed variously under the [Kara Koyunlu](#) and the [Ak Koyunlu](#) rival Turkic tribal confederations and at the beginning of the 16th century the turcophone [Safavid dynasty](#).

5. Caucasian origin

The Azerbaijani are of mixed ethnic origin, the oldest element deriving from the indigenous population of eastern Transcaucasia and possibly from the Medians of northern Persia. There is evidence that, despite repeated invasions and migrations aboriginal Caucasians may have been culturally assimilated first by Ancient Iranian peoples and later by the Oghuz. Considerable information has been learned about the Caucasian Albanians including their language, history, early conversion to Christianity and close ties to the Armenians. The Udi language still spoken in Azerbaijan may be a remnant of the Albanians' language. This Caucasian influence extended further south into Iranian Azerbaijan. During the 1st millennium BC another Caucasian people the Mannaean Mannai populated much of Iranian Azerbaijan. Weakened by conflicts with the Assyrians the Mannaean are believed to have been conquered and assimilated by the Medes by 590 BC. There are an estimated 22 to 35 million Azerbaijanis in the world but census figures are difficult to verify. The vast majority live in the [Republic of Azerbaijan](#) and [Iranian Azerbaijan](#). Between 11.2 and 30 million Azerbaijanis live in Iran mainly in the northwestern provinces. Approximately 8 million Azerbaijanis are found in the Republic of Azerbaijan. A diaspora of over a million is spread throughout the rest of the world. According to [Ethnologue](#) there are over 1 million speakers of the northern Azerbaijani dialect in southern [Dagestan](#), [Estonia](#), [Georgia](#), [Kazakhstan](#), [Kyrgyzstan](#), [Russia](#), [Turkmenistan](#), and [Uzbekistan](#). No Azerbaijanis were recorded in the 2001 census in Armenia, where the [Nagorno-Karabakh conflict](#) resulted in population shifts. Other sources, such as national censuses, confirm the presence of Azeris throughout the other states of the former [Soviet Union](#). Ethnologue reports that 1 million South Azeris live outside Iran but these figures include [Iraqi Turkmen](#) a distinct though related Turkic people.

6. Azerbaijanis in Azerbaijan

Azerbaijanis are by far the largest ethnic group in Azerbaijan (over 90%). The literacy rate is very high and is estimated at 99.5%. Azerbaijan began the twentieth century with institutions based upon those of Russia and the Soviet Union with an official policy of atheism and strict state control over most aspects of society. Since independence, there is a secular democratic system. Azerbaijani society has been deeply impacted by the war with Armenia over [Nagorno-Karabakh](#) which has displaced nearly 1 million Azerbaijanis and put strain on the economy. Azerbaijan has benefited from the oil industry but high levels of corruption have prevented greater prosperity for the masses. Despite these problems there is a renaissance in Azerbaijan as positive economic predictions and an active political opposition appear determined to improve the lives of average Azerbaijanis (Saidiyani, 1991).

7. Azerbaijanis in Iran

While population estimates in Azerbaijan are considered reliable due to regular censuses the figures for Iran remain questionable. Since the early twentieth century successive Iranian governments have avoided publishing statistics on ethnic groups. Unofficial population estimates of Azerbaijanis in Iran range from 16–33%. Azerbaijanis in Iran are

mainly found in the northwest provinces [East Azerbaijan](#) [Ardabil](#), [Zanjan](#), parts of [Hamedan](#), [Qazvin](#), [West Azerbaijan](#) and [Markazi](#). Many others live in [Tehran Fars Province](#) and other regions. Generally Azerbaijanis in Iran were regarded as a well integrated linguistic minority by academics prior to [Iran's Islamic Revolution](#). Despite friction Azerbaijanis in Iran came to be well represented at all levels. The Azerbaijanis speak Azerbaijani sometimes called Azerbaijani Turkish or Azeri a Turkic language descended from the Western Oghuz Turkic language that became established in Azerbaijan in the 11th and 12th century CE. Early Oghuz was mainly an oral language, and the later compiled epics and heroic stories of Dede Korkut probably derive from an oral tradition. The first accepted Oghuz Turkic text goes back to 15th century. The first written classical Azeri literature arose after the Mongol invasion. Some of the earliest Azerbaijani writings trace back to the poet Nasimi died 1417 and then decades later Fuzûlî (1483–1556). Ismail I Shah of Safavid Persia wrote Azerbaijani poetry under the pen name Khatâ'i. Modern Azeri literature continued with a traditional emphasis upon humanism as conveyed in the writings of Samad Vurgun Shahriar and many others. Azerbaijanis are generally bilingual often fluent in either Russian (in Azerbaijan) or Persian (in Iran). As of 1996, around 38% of Azerbaijan's roughly 8,000,000 population spoke Russian fluently. An independent telephone survey in Iran in 2009 reported that 20% of respondents could understand Azeri the most spoken minority language in Iran and all respondents could understand Persian (Raies niya, 2007).

8. Language of Azari people

The ancient language spoken in Azerbaijan was one of the dialects of the Persian language which was known to us as Azari tongue. Ahmad Kasravi has proven that based on evidence the local language of Azari people at least to the end of Mogul era (mid-14th century) has been Azari. After that during a 150-year interval from the time that Chengiz dynasty became defunct since establishment of Safavids the Azari language was gradually replaced by Turkish dialect. During recent year Manouchehr Mortazavi, in an article on the ancient language of Azerbaijan had opined that Azari has been the language of Azerbaijan people and it has included various dialects. However since there has been a discrepancy with regard to the original language of Azerbaijanis the compendium of research results is as follows

Ibn al-Nadim writes in his book *al-Fihrist* that the language of Iranian people could be divided in five classes including Pahlavi, Dari, Persian, Khuzi ancient language of people in Khuzestan and Soriani. Relying on what Ibn Muqaffa' said he opined that Dari was the language of courtiers while Persian was the language of priests and scientists and the language of people of Fars. Khuzi was the language that kings and dignitaries used in their intimate talks. Soriani was the language of people of Iraq while Pahlavi was spoken by people of Isfahan, Rey, Hamedan, Mah (Mede), Nahavand and Azerbaijan. Out of the above-mentioned languages only two languages including Dari spoken in eastern Iran including Khorassan and Pahlavi that was spoken by people in Isfahan Rey, Hamedan Nahavand and Azerbaijan are of concern here (Henning WB, 1954). The authors belonging to the 8th century CE have called the language of people of Azerbaijan as 'Azari Pahlavi' and sometimes 'Azari' and maintained that the said language was different from the language spoken in east Iran. However the difference was not so big as to make them incapable of comprehending what other peoples said. Nasser Khosrow in his itinerary says I arrived in Tabriz in 1046.... I saw a poet in Tabriz named Ghetran. He was a good poet but could not speak Persian correctly. He came to me with poetry books of Manjik and Daqiqi and asked any word that he could not understand... I presume that Nasser Khosrow meant Dari Persian which was known to him but some of whose words were not known to Khorassani poet. Marquat? The famous Iranian scholar has written that Pahlavi language is, in fact, the same as Azari language. Yagoubi who lived in the 10th century in his book *al-Boldan*, he says the language of Azari people was Azari Pahlavi. Abu Abdollah Bashari Moqaddasi in his book divides Iran into eight climatic regions noting The language of these regions is Persian however some of them speak Dari and some complicated and all those dialects are called Persian. According to Masoudi Pahlavi Dari and Azari were of the same origin and combination of their works was the same and all of them were considered among Persian dialects. Abu Abdollah Mohammad ibn Ahmad Kharazmi who lived in the 11th century attributes Persian language to people of Fars and the language of priests and believes that Dari was the language of courtiers. With regard to Pahlavi language he writes Pahlavi is one of the Iranian languages used by kings. The work has been attributed to Pahlev which encompasses five lands Isfahan, Rey, Hamedan, Nahavand and Azerbaijan. Estakhri says in his book *al-Masalek and al-Mamalek* that the language of people of Azerbaijan is Arabic and Persian. Despite its tremendous pressure, Arabic could not overwhelm Persian and was rejected first in Khorassan and then in other parts of Iran. Eranski The famous Russian scholar writes After pushing Arabic back in Khorassan and other regions, Persian did the same in other areas.

Two factors were influential in this regard. Firstly Arabs were controlling a wide empire from Sir Darya River to Spain and their dominance in Iran was not so much as to be able to overwhelm the Iranian element. Secondly the conflict between Iranians and Arabs especially in political, military and literary fields was intense. According to Ibn Hauqal The language of people of Azerbaijan and most people of Arminiye is Persian and Arabic if rife too. There are few merchants and landlords that speak Persian and who don't know Arabic. Two points are worthy of mention Firstly the language of Azerbaijan people was Persian. Secondly, Arabic was not common among villages and lay people and only part of people knew it. Ibn Hauqal says the languages spoken by people of Armenia and Aran were part of Persian. He writes Some tribes from Armenia and the like speak languages that are like Armenian. The same is true about people in Dabil and Nahvi (Nakhichevan). The language of Barza'eh people is Arani and the mountain known as Caucasus is theirs around which heathens with various languages live. Yaghout Hemavi who lived in the sixth and seventh century A.H. says with regard to the language of Azaris They speak a language called Azari and nobody can understand it but themselves. There were many dialects in Persia that were not intelligible to anybody but those who spoke them. One of them was the dialect of Tالش people in Gilan which is unintelligible to people from other regions. Hamdollah Mostofi, who lived in the seventh and eighth centuries A.H. refers to language of people of Maragheh and writes Their language is altered Pahlavi. With regard to people of Tالش and their language he writes People there are white and follow the religion of Imam Shafei. Their language is Pahlavi with Jilani dialect he noted. Homam Tabrizi, the renowned poet of Azerbaijan who lived in the 14th century has written many poems in Azari Pahlavi. Ezzoddin Adel ibn Yousof Tabrizi who lived during 15th century has also written poems in Azari dialect of Pahlavi. There is no sign of Turkish words in those poems. Undoubtedly the dialect of Azari Pahlavi was spoken in Azerbaijan until the advent of Safavid period but it became obsolete in villages and cities since the middle of the Safavid period and only remained in hard-to-pass regions. After this introduction it is clear that if some try through sophistication to prove that Azerbaijan has been inhabited by Turks from ancient times and it was only afterwards that some Aryans speaking Iranian languages conquered there accidentally their claims would be nothing but purposeful lies. Now it has become evident that the Turkish language rife in Azerbaijan has been the language of what people from the start and how it has been imposed on people living there. It is ridiculous that some people consider it as the mother tongue of Azari people and invite the people to replace it for the official Persian language. It is obvious that no learned people will get themselves down to forsake the language of Ferdowsi Sa'adi Mowlavi Khayyam and Hafiz and trade it for the faulty backward language that was brought in by the marauding Turkmen. This is a foreign language that did not belong to the language of Iranian ancestors and was imposed on them (Diakonoff, 1990).

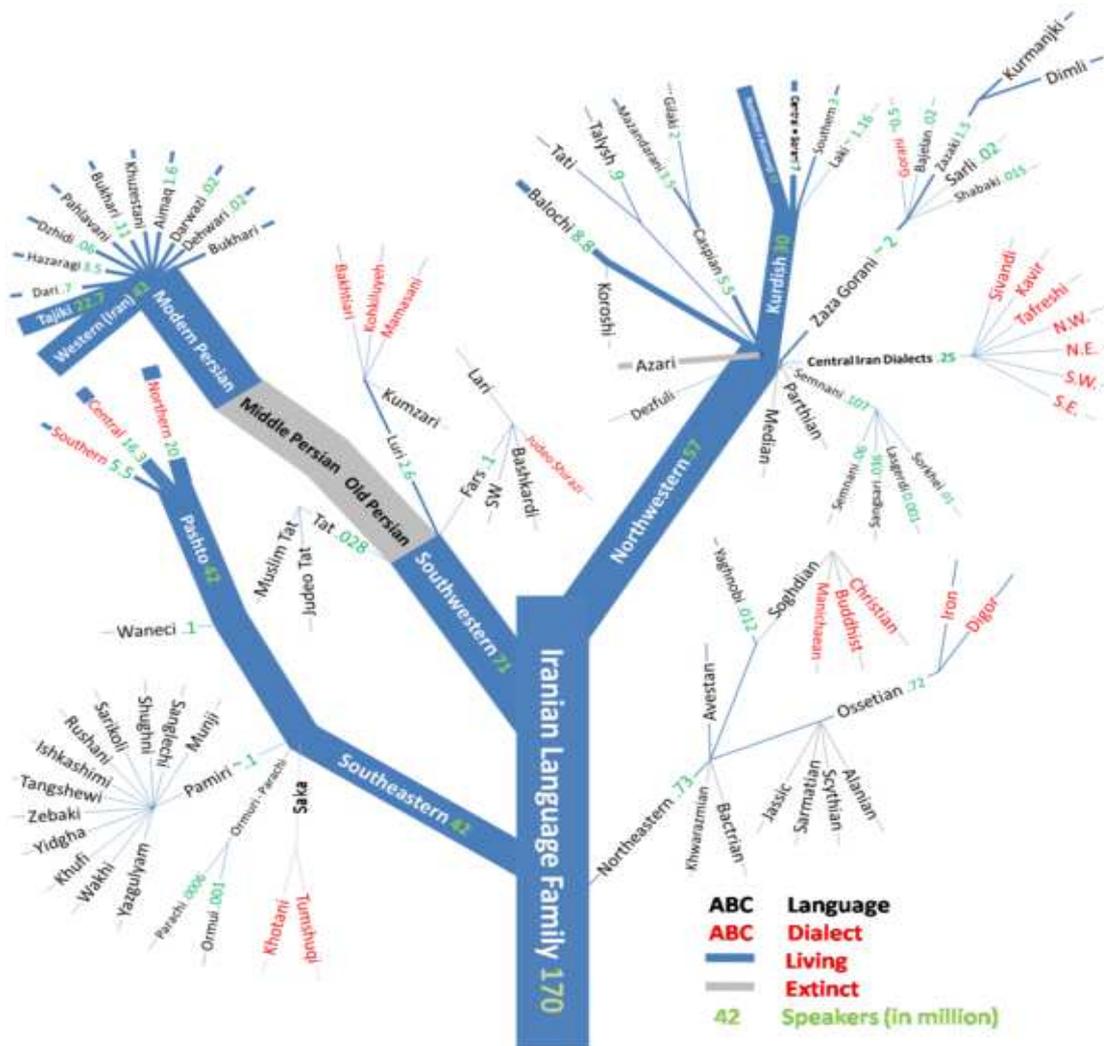
Conclusion:

The Azerbaijanis speak [Azerbaijani](#) (sometimes called Azerbaijani Turkish or Azeri), a [Turkic language](#) that is mutually intelligible with [Turkish](#) despite minor variations in accent vocabulary and grammar. Other mutually intelligible Turkic languages include [Turkmen](#) and the Turkish spoken by the [Turkomans of Iraq](#) and the [Qashqai](#). The Azerbaijani language is descended from the Western Oghuz Turkic language that became established in Azerbaijan in the 11th century CE. Early Oghuz was mainly an oral language. It began to develop as a [literary language](#) by the 13th century. Early oral Azerbaijani, derived from the Oghuz language began with history recitations (*dastans*) including the [Book of Dede Korkut](#) and *Koroglu* which contained [Turkic mythology](#). Azeris are generally bilingual often fluent in either Russian in Azerbaijan or Persian in Iran. Around 5,000,000 of Azerbaijan's roughly 8,000,000 population speaks Russian. Moreover in 1999 around 2,700 Azeris in the Azerbaijan Republic (0.04% of the total Azeri population) reported Russian as their mothertongue. An Iranian survey (2002) revealed that 90.0% of the sample household population in Iran is able to speak Persian 4.6% can only understand it and 5.4% can neither speak nor understand Persian. Azeri is the most spoken minority language in an Iranian household (23.3%). The current [Turkic Azeri language](#) spoken in Azerbaijan replaced the old Pahlavi only by the beginning of the [Safavid](#) dynasty's rule in Persia. Earlier many Turkic speaking nomads had chosen the green pastures of Azerbaijan Aran and Shrivani for their settlement as early as the advent of the [Seljuqs](#). However they only filled in the pasturelands while the farmlands villages and the cities remained Iranian in language. The linguistic conversion of Azerbaijan went hand in hand with the conversion of the Azeris into [Shiism](#). By the late 1800 the Turkification of Azerbaijan was near completion with the old Iranian speakers found solely in tiny isolated recesses of the mountains or other remote areas such as Harzand Galin Guya Shahrud villages in Khalkhal and Anarjan. The city of [Tabriz](#)--capital of Azerbaijan however maintained a

number of distinctly Old Azari-speaking neighborhoods well into the [Qajar](#) period of the Persian history. The poet [Ruhi Onarjani](#) still composes an entire compendium in Old Iranic Azari language in the 19th century. It seems the nail was driving into the coffin of the old language in [Tabriz](#) by the selection of that city as a second capital of Persia / Iran in the course of the 19th century where the crown prince [Muzaffar al-Din](#) later the Shah resided for nearly 50 years. Muzaffar al-Din used Turkic Azeri as the sole language of his court and himself could barely speak Persian upon assuming the throne in 1892.

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