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Abstracts

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KEYNOTE LECTURES

On Zoroastrianism in Dagestan

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Abstract. This article explores possible traces of Zoroastrianism in Dagestan within the context of the pre-Islamic religious landscape of the North Caucasus. It presents methodological principles for identifying Middle Iranian lexemes with potential religious connotations in Dagestani languages, particularly Avar. The relevant data are presented as individual lemmas indicating, directly or indirectly, the spread of the religion of the Magi in Dagestan, apparently in a limited format. The study provides a detailed analysis of each lexeme related to the Middle Iranian period based on linguistic parameters. Additionally, it considers some Armenisms and Iranisms coming from Armenian and Scythian- Sarmatian milieus, though not directly related to Zoroastrianism. Meanwhile, if terms manifesting Christian influences have pronounced religious guise (such as designations of Christian objects and symbols, like the cross), and are thus easily identifiable, most purported Zoroastrian terms lack explicit religious markers, making them difficult to recognize without strict adherence to specific methodological principles. The hypothesis of a Zoroastrian past in Dagestan, despite the near-total absence of religious monuments with Zoroastrian attribution, is largely based on Emile Benveniste's thesis conditioning a Zoroastrian inheritance for a particular ethnic community on the obligatory presence in the language of a number of diagnostic terms (or at least one of them) that reflect Zoroastrian dogma. The article also includes an appendix discussing the concept of the mosque in North Caucasian languages, providing materials and generalizations relevant to the main topic.

The Complexity of Subgrouping Iranian Languages: Moving Beyond Isoglosses

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The concept of isoglosses has played a foundational role in both dialectology and historical linguistics. It serves as a central tool for delineating linguistic boundaries and hypothesising genealogical relationships. However, isoglosses often raise significant theoretical and methodological challenges. While shared innovations remain the most widely accepted criterion for linguistic subgrouping, it is critical to assess the diagnosticity of such features. Not all innovations are equally probative; certain phonological changes are typologically common

and thus prone to parallel independent developments across unrelated branches. In contrast, morphological innovations are relatively rare and more resistant to convergence, rendering them more reliable indicators of closer genetic affiliation (Campbell 1998; Nichols 1992; Bynon 1977).

This lecture explores these issues through a comparative examination of two endangered Iranian languages: Zoroastrian Dari (ZD) and Judeo-Yazdi (JY), both historically spoken in the city of Yazd. These languages present a unique test case for subgrouping and reconstructing linguistic ancestry, as they appear to preserve features of a vernacular once widespread in Yazd but later replaced by Persian in the speech of the majority population. ZD and JY share significant morphological innovations—strong evidence for a common origin—but also display phonological and lexical divergences. Importantly, these differences are not diagnostically conclusive for positing distinct genealogical pathways. Drawing on Hock & Joseph (1996), the lecture underscores the dynamism and multidimensionality of language change, noting that long-term divergence can eventually lead to the emergence of separate languages even when they began as dialects of a single tongue.

By examining both shared and divergent features in ZD and JY, the lecture contributes to ongoing scholarly debates regarding the classification of Iranian languages and the appropriate criteria for historical subgrouping. It further suggests that these two minority lects can serve as crucial tools for reconstructing the now-extinct vernacular of Yazd.

PRESENTATIONS

How close is 'Ali to Allah?
On the Status of Imam 'Ali in the Heterodox Shi'a and Yezidi Traditions
(Anatolian-Caucasian-Iranian Contact Zone)

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Among numerous Muslim elements inherited by Yezidism from its Islamic roots, there are a number of historical personalities – from the most iconic figures (Prophet Muhammad, 'Ali, Fatima) to Sufi saints (Hussein Hallaj, Rabia Adawiya).

Almost all of such characters, with the exception of the Prophet Muhammad, are fully adapted by the Yezidi tradition and presented in the religious texts as Yezidi character having nothing to do with Islam.

The most surprising fact is, most probably, that 'Ali, the first Shi'a imam, the central figure in the religious environment historically hostile to Yezidism, occupies a special niche in the tradition as well. In the "Hymn to 'Ali, the Lion of God" (*Bayt'ā A'lī Šērē xwadē*) 'Ali is depicted as a righteous Yezidi, fighting the infidels for the Yezidi faith. 'Ali is called *the Lion of God* (A'lī Šērē xwadē), i.e. by the same epithet he bears among the Shi'ites. The same hymn mentions, apart from 'Ali himself, Fatima, their sons Hasan and Hussein, Zeynab – the sister of Imam Reza, and Aysha – one of the Prophet Muhammad's wives.

However, if the mentioned examples demonstrate proper Shi'a (dogmatic) elements in Yezidism, another Yezidi text, "'Ali, the Lion of God, in the Hereafter" (A'lī Šērē Xwadē Āxiratēdā) reveals certain traces of 'Ali's veneration – a feature typical of the extreme Shi'a environment.

Considering that the deification of 'Ali is not fixed in today's Yezidi tradition, it should be assumed that this element once existed on a marginal level. The reflection of this phenomenon in the text seems to be unique for the whole Yezidi lore. Yet, it allows us to reconstruct another striking parallel between Yezidism and the extreme Shi'a environment, requiring further scrutiny.

The research is an attempt of a comparative analysis of 'Ali's niche and status among the non-dogmatic Shi 'a groups of the Anatolian-Iranian contact zone (Ahl-i Haqq in Iran, Alevi in Turkey) and in the Yezidi lore (based on the texts recorded among the Armenian Yezidis).

Migration Tendencies from Azerbaijan and the Caucasus to Turkey[1]

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This paper examines the migration patterns from Azerbaijan and the broader Caucasus region to Turkey, with a particular focus on the role of Turkish propaganda in influencing these movements. The historical, cultural, and economic ties between Turkey and the South Caucasus have long facilitated migration flows, driven by political stability, economic opportunities, and shared linguistic and religious connections.

In recent years, Turkey has leveraged its historical and cultural ties to promote soft power influence in the region, especially among Azerbaijani and Turkic ethnic groups such as Azerbaijanis, Ahiska (Meskhetian) Turks, and other Turkic-speaking communities in the North Caucasus. Although Turkey has not officially promoted large-scale immigration, certain media narratives, educational initiatives, and cultural programs have implicitly encouraged migration by portraying Turkey as a natural home for Turkic populations.

Furthermore, geopolitical factors, including Turkey's role in supporting Azerbaijan during the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and the expansion of pan-Turkic sentiments, have contributed to increased migration interest. Turkey's religious influence, particularly efforts to promote Sunni Islam among predominantly Shia Azerbaijanis, has also played a role in shaping migratory tendencies.

The study will explore the migration experiences of various ethnoses, including Azerbaijanis, Lezgins, Ahiska Turks, and North Caucasian ethnic groups, within the broader framework of Turkish foreign policy and socio-political integration strategies.

Language and Ethnic Minorities in the South Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia)

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Language plays multiple roles, such as the facilitation of communication among individuals. However, language plays a crucial role in shaping identity and strengthening cohesion within ethnic and national communities. It serves as both the home and the marker of an ethnic group's identity. Through the utilization of a common language, communities establish a unique and distinguished identity that sets them apart from other ethnic and social groups.

The role of language and governmental approaches toward the languages of ethnic minorities in Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan is a key topic that merits comprehensive research within the framework of South Caucasus linguistics. This study asks the question of what policies have Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan implemented regarding the mother tongues of their ethnic minorities in the aftermath of the Soviet Union's collapse. A descriptive-analytical method is employed in this study.

The research results reveal that, among the three countries, Armenia has been the most successful in maintaining linguistic diversity. This achievement is attributed to Armenia's adoption of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages in 2001, during Robert Kocharyan's presidency, alongside its commitment to respecting the mother tongues of ethnic minorities (such as Assyrian, Greek, Kurdish, Russian, and Yazidi).

Even though Georgia has also signed the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, certain government policies, such as a national language proficiency test for civil staff and promotion of the state language, have led to the reduced number of Russian-language schools, limited access to non-Georgian media, and prompted many speakers of minority languages to leave this country for academic education. A significant factor affecting Georgia's language policy is the multiethnic composition of its population, which has driven the government to adopt the national language.

In Azerbaijan, 92% of the population are Azerbaijani speakers as the government has focused on strengthening the status of the Azerbaijani language in the post-Soviet period. Even though Russian-language schools continue to operate, the situation has become increasingly challenging for other minority languages, particularly those spoken by the Lezgins and Talysh, two of Azerbaijan's largest ethnic minority groups, in addition to the Tats, Kurds, and Armenians. These languages are facing a significant decline in Azerbaijan due to strict governmental policies.

Lexification of The Semantic Field of Mixing in West Circassian: A Typological Perspective

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This talk focuses on verbs with the meaning 'to mix' in West Circassian, analyzed against a typological background within the frame-based approach to lexical typology (Rakhilina & Reznikova 2016). West Circassian, a polysynthetic language, displays individual patterns in the lexicalization of the semantic field in question, influenced by certain factors.

Typological studies (see Shepel et al. in prep.) have identified two most influential factors that determine the lexicalization of mixing:

1. Object Type: separate verbs depict the mixing of objects with different physical characteristics (e.g., solid granular objects, liquids, or elongated objects).

2. Stages of Mixing: some languages have dedicated verbs denoting iterative physical action, usually circular, which is performed to maintain the consistency of an object and may not imply the goal of transforming a heterogeneous set of objects into a homogeneous mass, cf. English *stir*.

In West Circassian, the choice of the verb depends primarily on the type of objects being mixed (or stirred):

- A specific verb is used for long, stretched objects, e.g. *ŝhacə-r* hair-ABS *ze-ŝʷe-na-ʁ* REC.IO-LOC-stay-PST 'the hair is tangled'.

- Another verb is used for liquids in a closed container, e.g. *še-r* milk-ABS *ʁe-səsə-* CAUS-rock 'to shake milk;
-Still other verbs describe mixing of solid or soft entities.

Notably, West Circassian lacks a specialized term for iterative movement to maintain consistency (e.g., "stir the porridge"). However, the verb used for liquids ('to rock, shake') can define physical actions that may or may not aim at mixing, thus focusing on the type of physical action rather than on its expected result.

In the absence of a dedicated verbal root meaning 'to mix', West Circassian features several verbs with broad semantics, all following the same morphological model, cf. *ze-xe-ṣ̂e-*REC.IO-LOC-do, *ze-xe-ʁe-he-* REC.IO-LOC-CAUS-enter *ze-ʔə-ʁe-he-* REC.IO-LOC-CAUS-enter. Additionally, verbs from other semantic fields, when used in this morphological environment, can function in mixing-related contexts, highlighting the flexibility of West Circassian morphology, e.g. *ze-xe-wət* REC.IO-LOC-whip, *ze-xe-ʁe-ƙʷə-h* REC.IO-LOC-CAUS-go-ILL about mixing the ingredients with a blender.

The study of morphological constructions associated with the lexical zone of mixing, contributes both to the typology of the corresponding semantic area and to our understanding of word structure and lexical meaning formation in polysynthetic languages.

The Aryan Migration to Iran The Caucasus and Anatolia:
A Physiography-Ecology-Onomastics Based Study

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The study of the Aryan/Iranian migration is based mostly on *linguistics* and *archaeology*. Subsequently, numerous studies have overlooked that the Aryans were originally semi-nomadic pastoralists whose chief economic base was cattle, and their *migrations* depended primarily on *physiography* and *ecology*, which is the subject of this paper, with close attention to other relevant evidence.

The problems of the language-based studies are that languages can change within a short period, and are not indicative of migration routes in any way. Archaeology cannot distinguish clearly between "trade relationship" and "migration" per se, nor about migration routes. While the effects of physiography and ecology are the essence of the *four* undeniable requirements of tribal migration which has existed from time immemorial to our day:

1. Ease of physical communication for the tribal members and the flock.
2. The availability of excess rain to insure the presence of pastures.
3. The existence of sufficient drinking water for the tribal members and the flock.
4. The necessary proximity to basic sustenance for the tribal members.

Our groundbreaking study has revealed very different results to the generally accepted traditional hypotheses.

According to our study, Aryans entered the present day Iranian territory from the northwest of the Caspian Sea. They settled first in the present day eco-friendly Dašt-e Moɣān in northeastern Āzarbāījān from where they diversified into four major culturally and linguistically related groupings. According to our proposed terminology for the traditional

Indo-European, those who moved to Armenia / Ararat and Anatolia / Hattusa may be called the *Northwestern Iranians*. A major part settled in the Central Zagros from where they expanded to other parts. These may be termed as the *Western Iranians*. The Scythians (Saka) of the classical sources, forming the *Eastern Iranians*. The group who moved to the northwestern part of the Indian subcontinent may be termed as the *Irano-Indians.*

The Aryan migration hypothesis from the *east* of the Caspian Sea to the Indian subcontinent is physically next to impossible and unacceptaeble due to unsurmountable physiographical and ecological barriers for a migrating tribe: two very wide, fast flowing rivers of Amō-Daryā and Sīr-Daryā, the barren Qara-qōm desert and the Alborz and the Himalaya mountains. Consequently the Aryans first move was to Iran and from Iran to North India.

The Selyeri Argot of Damavand

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Now moribund, this secret language was once spoken in an eastern valley of Mt. Damavand, in some 20 contiguous settlements, from the piedmont village of Navā to the Firuzkuh area. This region is renowned for its craftsmen, particularly smiths and masons, who provided services across the Caspian littoral and developed Selyeri as a means of secret communication during their travels. The Selyeri-speaking communities otherwise speak the Māzandarāni language and exhibit Caspian cultural traits. The earliest data on Selyeri was collected by Manucheher Sotude and Sadeq Kia in the 1960s. During visits to a dozen villages in 2015, I gathered additional data.

Selyeri is a constructed language characterized by local Māzandarāni syntax (see the sentence example below) and an exotic, substitutive vocabulary. Contrary to earlier scholarly conjectures, its lexicon is not derived from Gypsy Romani. Instead, the words are primarily invented, with a preference for compounding using a limited set of basic morphemes. For instance, kinship terms are built on seven foundational morphemes, e.g., *tur-kur-levak* ('big-female-wife') for 'grandmother'. Numerals are constructed from eight morphemes; for example, the number 8 is expressed as the compound *kaj.tâ-ger.tâ-tur* ('5.CLF-3.CLF-more') reflecting '5+3'. Polysemy is pervasive, partly due to dialectal variation within Selyeri, e.g., the verb stems (pres.) *verâz-* : (past) *verâšt-* or *verâz-i-* 'come, go, bring, carry'.

Most lexical inventions appear rooted in the native Māzandarāni language. Examples include:
cinda/cinn 'daughter' (< Maz. *cindəkâ* 'chick')
dur 'husband' (< 'far'; man who works far from home for a half year)
felte, p(e)lute 'cigarettes' (< Maz. *pəltə* 'wick')
suj 'penis' (< 'burn', cf. Pers. *suzāk* 'gonorrhea')
gure 'donkey' (< *gur* 'wild ass')
jule 'pocket' (< 'deep')
verâz-/veruz- 'go' (< *wrēj-* 'flee')

However, certain terms resist straightforward etymology and may require speculative explanations beyond the *Caspian* linguistic domain:
garaz 'rock, mountain' (< gar 'mountain'):

fu 'sister' (*f-* < **xw-*)
parun 'with' (cf. Aftari *paron*)
zâl 'salt' (cf. MP *sōr*, Zaza *sōl*; or *zāl* 'white')

Syntax example (constructed words are underlined):

Navā	*kədum*	*parun*		*taj*	*kat-i ?*
	what	toward		foot/come	fall.PST-2SG
Šādmahand	*kedum*	*kat-e*	*jâ*	*taber*	*b-emun-i ?*
	what	village-OBL	from	comePOLYS	BA-come.PST-2SG
	Where are you coming from?				
	(Pers. *az kojā āmadei/miāi?*)				

Arjomand	*in*	*cukuvârᶜtelen*	*tur-tel=e*
	this	teaᶜtrader	big-price=is
Andaruye	*in*	*teške-dâr*	*tel-telenn=e*
	this	shop-hold.PRPL	price-sell.PRPL=COP.PR.3SG
	This shopkeeper overcharges.		
	(Pers. *in dokān-dār gerānforuš ast*.)		

Hindukush and Caucasus: A Historical, Linguistic and Anthropological Parallel

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This paper draws on my experience of teaching Iranian languages and on the opportunity to have contact with teachers of Turkic and Mongolian languages, Georgian and Armenian, as well as Iranian languages in both the Hindukush and the Caucasus, particularly Pashto, Dari and Ossetian. Despite the fact that the Hindukush and the Caucasus are about 3000 km apart, the two regions have strikingly similar characteristics: the complex mosaic of ethnic groups, the multiplicity of languages belonging to different language families, stable and permanent politico-military turbulence, and so on.

The permeability between the two geographical contexts is also confirmed by the comings and goings of many scholars in the past and present: to mention just one case in point, Georges Dumézil was about to leave for the Hindukush to study the pagan rituals of the Nuristani populations, as is also shown by his correspondence with Georg Morgenstierne, a linguist who had focused his entire career on the languages of the Indo-Iranian frontier. However, upon hearing news of the discovery of a new language in the Caucasus, Ubykh (see https://pangloss.cnrs.fr/?lang=fr), he changed his destination, thus giving a definitive turn to his subsequent research activity.

In this talk, I will try to present some common features to these two areas, but at the same time emphasise the differences, starting from the linguistic level and moving on to other disciplinary fields, mainly historical and anthropological. I will start from afar, from the earliest

records of the Scythians in Herodotus, and then move with a quick overview to the current situation.

The Bagaderan Battalion: An Attempt to Integrate Russian Deserters in Persia in the First Half of the 19th Century

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One of the most important results of the Russo-Persian wars of the first third of the 19th century was the resettlement of thousands of Christians (Armenians and Assyrians), as well as Muslims from Persia to the new Russian borders. However, the opposite process also took place - Russian deserters and prisoners resettled in Persia, who not only fought on the side of the Persian army against Russia, but also tried to integrate into Persian realities after the military actions. These people are known by the name of the unit that the Persians formed from them - Bagaderan (first a battalion, then a regiment). Many Bagaderans converted to Islam, married local women (mostly Christians, however), and received land plots for their service. Since these people did not fully assimilate, and they usually lived compactly, forming their own social circle, speaking Russian and carrying Russian culture, it may make sense to talk about the possibility of creating a unique subethnos in Persia at the beginning of the 19th century. However, this did not happen. Despite the fact that the bulk of Russian defectors were extradited to Russia after the Treaty of Turkmenchay, some of them remained in their new homeland. It seems that studying this experience is interesting from both a fundamental scientific and practical point of view, given the socio-political processes occurring around Russia and the Russian people in recent years (primarily, relocation).

The Project "Original Toponyms of Dersim" —Results[1]

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Throughout its historical trajectory, Dersim (presently situated within the confines of Tunceli Province in Eastern Anatolia, Turkey) has been inhabited by various peoples, including but not limited to the Hattians, Hittites, Urartians, Greeks, Armenians, Zazas, Kurds, and Turks. Consequently, Dersim has evolved into a crucible of intertwined linguistic, religious, and cultural influences, most conspicuously reflected in its toponymic landscape.
The pervasive process of Turkification of geographical nomenclature, which commenced in 1913 under the aegis of the Ottoman Empire and has persisted through successive stages under the Republic of Turkey, has led to the replacement of thousands of indigenous placenames in

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Dersim with names of Turkish origin. The original placenames, however, have survived in Ottoman Turkish documents, Armenian literature, as well as within the corpus of travelogues and memoirs authored by individuals who either resided in Dersim or travelled to the region.

In 2022, I initiated a project with the primary objective of studying the original toponyms of Dersim, including designations of settlements and geographical landmarks (hydronyms, predominantly the names of rivers and springs, as well as oronyms, primarily the names of mountains, which bear deep cultural and religious significance for the people of Dersim). The aim of this presentation is to present the results of this project.

Unveiling the Udi Past: Narratives of Language and Identity in Abgar Payazati's Unpublished Work

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This paper provides an overview of an unpublished manuscript by Abgar Payazat, an Armenian-Udian intellectual of the early 20th century. Written in 1932 and currently housed in the National Archives of the Republic of Armenia, "Theory, Grammar, and Brief Dictionary of the Udi Language" comprises 274 pages and offers a comprehensive study of the Udi language. The manuscript includes sections on grammar, orthography, word formation, declension, numerals, and phonetics, along with a collection of proverbs, riddles, folk songs, and legends. Additionally, it presents a historical overview of the Udis and their settlements, touching upon linguistic influences, daily life, and cultural heritage. This paper highlights key insights from the manuscript, analyzing its linguistic and historical significance in the broader context of Udi studies.

Children as "Psychopomps in Reverse", Some Considerations on An Enigmatic Episode of The Nart Epic

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This paper is dedicated to an enigmatic episode, found in the tales of the Narts. The narrative, written down in the Digoric dialect of Ossetic, recounts how Soslan, one of the protagonists of the Nart epic, embarks on a journey to the underworld, while still being alive. There, seeking freedom, he is told by a woman to go to a "Paradise Garden" where many children are playing and they will be able to ask Barastyr, the lord of the dead to release him. Shortly after, in a dialogue with children, he is instructed that no one has the right to leave the underworld except for the children and the hero himself. In this study, we seek to provide a possible explanation to this particular characteristic of children by also examining their similarities to instances of the same phenomenon in other religious systems.

Language Contact and Relativization Strategies in Colloquial Armenian

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Modern Eastern Armenian, like Classical Armenian, is generally reported to have finite relative clauses introduced by a relative pronoun as its primary relativization strategy (see Dum-Tragut 2009 etc.). Grammars of literary Eastern Armenian report that it also makes use of participial relative clauses, but that these are restricted in use, with Jahukyan (1974) stating that only subjects and direct objects may be relativized in this way. Data from the spoken language, namely a corpus of 1884 RCs from spontaneous speech and responses to stimuli designed to elicit RCs, collected in the Republic of Armenia in 2014-2017 (Hodgson 2019), show that in colloquial language, particularly among older speakers, participial RCs may in fact relativize a much wider range of roles, even those very low on the Relativization Accessibility Hierarchy (Keenan & Comrie 1977), such as possessor and oblique, e.g. time or location. These data also show that there is a third strategy in common use which has not been described in grammars of the literary language, namely finite relative clauses introduced by an indeclinable complementizer, which is typically the inherited Armenian *vor* (3), but in some dialects, we find the form *ki*, borrowed from Iranian languages. Both participial relativization and relativization with an indeclinable complementizer are innovations that were absent in Classical Armenian. Both are more frequent than the Classical Armenian-type relative pronoun strategy in the colloquial spoken data of Hodgson (2019). The patterns of their use show a distribution which may reflect patterns of ethnic and linguistic contact. Some of the most striking examples of participial relativization, including the use of the subject participle for objects, which is completely unknown in Standard Eastern Armenian, as seen in (5), come from speakers whose parents emigrated from Northern Iran, and possibly reflect the use of the subject participle as the default relativizer in Iranian Azeri, where it is used more widely than in Turkey and Azerbaijan (Gandon 2016: 126). The use of indeclinable complementizers is also common among speakers of dialects originating in Iran, including Khoy/Urmia dialect, reflecting probable Iranian influence. The fact that non-standard participial RCs are mainly associated with older speakers may reflect the fact that direct contact with Azeri effectively ceased in Armenia after 1988. Relative pronouns are found to be more common in the dialects of northern Armenia, possibly reinforced by contact with Georgian, a language that also possesses this type of strategy.

An Examination of Arabic Loanwords in Van Dialect

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Throughout history, Armenians have interacted with various peoples, leading the Armenian language to adopt numerous words from the languages of its neighbors: Arabic, Iranian languages, Greek, Assyrian, Turkish, Russian, and others.

Arabic borrowings have contributed to the expansion of the Van dialect lexicon. Examining these loanwords sheds light on how languages adapt and broaden their vocabularies to accommodate new concepts. This study will help to understand the phonological, morphological, and syntactic adaptations that occurred during the borrowing process.

The objective of this study is to examine the Arabic loanwords in the Van dialect, categorize them according to semantic groups, and, where possible, illustrate their development. Some loanwords passed into the Van dialect via Turkish or Persian. This study does not distinguish between direct and mediated borrowings, as it is often impossible to determine this.

To study the Arabic borrowings in the Van dialect, several methods were employed to analyze the process and effects of language contact. Semantic analysis was used to examine how the meanings of borrowed words have changed, revealing how these words were integrated into the vocabulary and conceptual system of Armenian. Employing Morphological Analysis we studied how borrowed words were adapted to fit the morphological structure of the Van dialect, including modifications with affixes and changes in form to align with Armenian grammatical rules. Due to phonological analysis, we examined how the sounds of the borrowed word changed when integrated into Van dialect.

For this study, Arabic loanwords were collected from dictionaries, folk sayings, and native speakers of the dialect. These words were classified into the following groups: culture, state-government terminology, food, common nouns, and descriptive terms.

The examination of Arabic loanwords in the Van dialect reveals that some were transmitted through Turkish or Persian with phonetic changes. These words exhibit changes and developments in meaning, such as shifts to opposite senses or a narrowing of meaning. Additionally, new words have been formed using borrowed terms in combination with Armenian word-forming elements.

WH-Movement in Sorani Kurdish: The Application of WH Criterion in Typological Classification

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This study investigates WH-movement in Sorani Kurdish within the framework of the Minimalist Program (MP). The research reveals that Sorani Kurdish maintains WH-words in their original positions, lacking overt syntactic movement, thus categorizing it as a WH-in-situ language. Utilizing Rizzi's (1997) theory on the fine structure of the left periphery and the [Spec, CP] position for question operator, the study supports the claim that WH movement occurs covertly at the logical form (LF) to satisfy the WH Criterion. The syntactic argumentation for such a claim can be summarized as follow. In case of covert WH movement in (LF) beside the consideration of co-indexation of the moved element, the resulting structure will be grammatical with [+Q] or interrogative function. The research also explores the potentiality of the application of WH movement as a parameter for typological classification, suggesting that languages exhibiting overt WH movement categorized as having weak WH features, while those without such movement or languages, which benefitted from Wh-in-situ languages like Sorani Kurdish, possess strong WH features. The implications of this study contribute to the understanding of cross-linguistic differences and parameterization in syntactic structures, reinforcing the significance of WH movement in linguistic typology.

Ethnic and Linguistic Ties between Iran and the Caucasus: The Most Important Factor in Strengthening Regional (Cultural and Identity) Commonalities

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Since ancient times, the Caucasus, due to its geographical position, has served as a bridge between Iran and Europe, influenced by Iranian culture and languages. Languages such as Persian, Tat, and Talysh, alongside Caucasian languages, have contributed to the formation of multilayered identities in this region. In the contemporary era, these ties have continued

through literature, music, and traditional arts, strengthening cultural collaborations between Iran and the Caucasus countries. This article examines the ethnic and linguistic ties between Iran and the Caucasus, analyzing the historical and contemporary impacts of these interactions on regional identity and culture. The main question of the article is: How have ethnic and linguistic interactions between Iran and the Caucasus shaped the cultural and social identities of these regions throughout history, and what impacts have these ties had on contemporary cultural and political developments? The hypothesis of the article is that historical ethnic and linguistic ties between Iran and the Caucasus have not only led to the formation of hybrid identities in these regions but have also served as a factor in strengthening cultural and regional cooperation in the modern era. Using historical and analytical methods, this research examines documents, literary works, and ethno-linguistic data. The findings indicate that despite political changes and new borders, ethnic and linguistic ties between Iran and the Caucasus continue to play a significant role in shaping regional identities. The article emphasizes that strengthening these ties can contribute to the establishment of sustainable cultural and political cooperation in the region.

West Circassian Incorporation: An Areal Perspective

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One of the important features of the Caucasus-Iran area is the presence of complex predicates involving a verb (usually of a closed class) and a nominal or adverbial element, a phenomenon similar to incorporation (cf. Harris 2002). West Caucasian languages belong to the same area and are generally considered to be polysynthetic (with polysynthesis often being associated with incorporation), but they are usually thought to exhibit only non-canonical incorporation, with a noun (typically referring to a body part) serving as an applicative (Arkadiev 2023a) or with the resulting units not functioning as full-fledged dynamic predicates (Bagirokova & Lander 2015). In this talk, we present data from West Circassian showing that incorporated predicates also exist in this family. Our data come from Bersirov 2001, the corpus Arkhangelskiy et al. 2018 and dictionaries.

We discuss the following types of predicates (stems are given in square brackets):

(i) incorporation of body-part terms, as in *je*-[*nepe-ŝʷe-we*]- DAT-face-skin-hit- 'to give someone a slap in the face'.

(ii) incorporation of applicatives and body-part terms (e.g. [*λegʷenǯ'emə-ŝhe-rə-s*]- knee-head-LOC-sit- 'to sit on one's knees', *je*-[*λe-pe-ç'e-we*]- DAT-foot-front-loc-hit- 'to hit someone with the front of the foot').

(iii) incorporation of applicatives only (e.g, *s-e-[λə-χ^we]* 1SG.ABS-DYN-LOC-happen 'I am searching'), sometimes indistinguishable from (i), since many applicatives originate from body-part terms (Arkadiev 2023b; cf. *je-[ŝha-š'ə-ḳ^we]-* DAT-head/LOC-LOC-go- 'to bypass someone').

This process is non-productive. Moreover, the range of 'verbal' roots showing such incorporation is very limited. Nevertheless, such patterns have obvious parallels in East Caucasian and Iranian languages and can probably be regarded in this perspective.

One Source – Two Targets:
On The Two Combinations of The Numeral 'One' with The Additive Clitic 'Also' in Udi

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Cross-linguistically, numeral 'one' is a common grammaticalization source: for example, the *World Lexicon of Grammaticalization* (Kuteva et al. 2019) lists nine paths leading from 'one' to a grammatical marker (the targets are ALONE, INDEFINITE, INDEFINITE PRONOUN, ONLY, OTHER, SAME, SINGULATIVE, SOME, TOGETHER). Sometimes, it is not 'one' as a separate element, but rather its combination with another grammatical or lexical unit that becomes the input for subsequent grammaticalization or lexicalization. For example, 'one' in combination with some other morphemes is one of the sources of expressions meaning 'other' (Lander & Maisak 2022). In the present paper, I will discuss two function words in Udi (< Lezgic < Nakh-Daghestanian) which seem to share the same source structure, being the combinations of the numeral 'one' *sa* with the additive clitic 'and, also, even' *=al*. Although arguably going back to one and the same structure, the two targets are both formally and functionally distinct.

The first word *sal* 'not a...', 'at all' (not found in dictionaries) is a very frequent emphatic negative polarity item employed mainly in negative clauses like 'Not a single [*sal*] man ever went there' or 'It seemed as if it had never existed at all [*sal*]'.

The second word *saal*, which is mentioned in dictionaries as 'again, one more time', is indeed employed in this meaning (in sentences like 'I will call you again [*saal*]' or 'I will never go there again [*saal*]'), but this is not the whole story. Much more often, one finds the use of *saal* as a coordinating conjunction. In some cases, it seems to intoduce an additional participant, which is added as less central in comparison to the one(s) mentioned before, as in 'It wast Tamerlane, and also [*saal*] his companions'. However, in many other instances *saal* serves as a neutral coordinating device, without implying any asymmetry between the participants (cf. 'We bought sugar, meat and [*saal*] cheese' or 'Jesus said: Here are my mother and [*saal*] my brothers!'). In this respect, *saal* competes with an enclitic conjunction *q'a*, which is a typical monosyndetic coordinator.

The distinction between the functions of the two words may be explained by the different functions of the additive clitic which is part of it ('[not] even one' as opposed to 'also one [more]'). In the talk, I plan to illustrate the uses of the two words and to point at their structural and functional parallels in the languages of the area.

The Manuscript MK and the Pahlavi Way to Happiness

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This presentation wishes to offer some thoughts on problems relating to critical editions of Zoroastrian Middle Persian texts, together with some reflections on the production and transmission of Pahlavi manuscripts, using the codex traditionally known as MK as a reference point.

One of the main themes of Middle Persian wisdom literature is the pursuit of happiness (both earthly and spiritual), generally understood as the perfect union of virtue and knowledge. Material success is often presented in these texts as a factual manifestation of correct religious behaviour and, consequently, as an anticipation in this world of future eternal bliss. However, the ancient Pahlavi manuscript MK, produced in India in the 14th century, preserves a peculiar advice that suggests a more nuanced approach to material existence, where worldly achievements are not just economic, but also the management of life's hardships through conscious acceptance of one's strengths and weaknesses, aided, when necessary, by a symbolic medicine. The text, called *Dārūg ī hunsandīh* "Medicine of Contentment", details the recipe for this curative concoction in an uncommon way, using the medical lexicon to prescribe spiritual ingredients, quantities, and timing with subtle irony.

The critical edition of this short Pahlavi piece is the main topic of the presentation, which will also address some issues relating to the material aspects of the Zoroastrian scribal tradition and the transmission of MK. Specifically, it will deal with problems related to the colophons of MK, where a peculiar linguistic interplay between Middle Persian and Sanskrit takes place, in the belief that manuscripts are important not only for their literary content but also as transmitters of cultural evidence, since the two aspects are mutually intertwined.

West Caucasian Demonstratives Against The Typological Background

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Most Caucasian languages, including many East, West, and South Caucasian, as well as Armenian and Turkic languages of the area, have a tripartite demonstrative system (Skirgård et al. 2023a; Skirgård et al. 2023b; Mukhin 2023; Diessel 2013; Rostovtsev-Popel 2009). Some of them are described as distance-oriented and some as person-oriented, (see Anderson, Keenan 1985: 282; Diessel 1999: 39 for this distinction). In this talk, we show that this contrast is not clear-cut and several factors interact in the course of choice of a demonstrative.

We focus on demonstrative systems in two West Caucasian languages: West Circassian and (Ashqarawa) Abaza. Grammatical descriptions of their systems are inconsistent: some classify them as distance-oriented (Tabulova 1976; Klychev 2000 for Abaza; Yakovlev, Ashkhamaf 1941; Kerasheva 1957; Paris 1989 for West Circassian), while others as (at least originally) person-oriented (Genko 1955; Lomtatidze 2006 for Abaza; Rogava, Kerasheva 1966 for West Circassian), occasionally also incorporating the visibility factor.

To clarify the meanings of demonstratives, we conducted experiments based on Wilkins's questionnaire (2018), which is widely used to identify the parameters affecting the choice of a demonstrative in its exophoric non-contrastive function (Levinson et al. 2018), but previously applied in the Caucasus only to Kina Rutul (Mukhin, Nasledskova 2024). Consultants (10 West Circassian and 10 Ashqarawa speakers) translated sentences containing a demonstrative in 25 situations, varying in speaker (Sp), addressee (Ad), and referent (R) arrangement, as well as in visibility and other factors.

Our results indicate that in both languages, distance, association with one of the locutors, and visibility are significant. However, the two languages differ in certain aspects. The meanings of each demonstrative are summarized below.

West Circassian:
- I *mə*: near Sp
- II *mwe*: at a greater distance from Sp and Ad OR near Sp but closer to Ad
- III *a*: at a greater distance from Sp but near Ad OR for some respondents — invisible

Ashqarawa:
- I *arə́j*: near Sp
- II *anə́j*: at a greater distance from Sp and Ad
- III *awə́j*: at a greater distance from Sp but near Ad OR often for invisible

Although association with the addressee is an important parameter in these systems, we do not consider them polycentric, as no demonstrative is consistently used when the referent is near the second participant, and the choice in these situations also depends on distance from the speaker. We propose an alternative analysis of West Circassian and Ashqarawa demonstrative systems as speaker-oriented, where different parameters influence the degree of inclusion into the speaker's domain, and association with the addressee is only a factor preventing association with the speaker. We leave it an open question if some other demonstrative systems described as person-oriented can be interpreted as monocentric and speaker-oriented.

The Ashirets and Tribes of the Yerevan Liva in the 1728 Ottoman Tax Register

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The fall of Safavid Iran in the early of XVIII century set a series of significant developments that altered the political and territorial dynamics of several regions. One such region was the South Caucasus prevously occupied by Safavid Iran. New geopolitcal changes caused a political struggle between the Ottoman and Russian Empires. Despite their proloned competition for the control, neighter power was able to fully assert dominance over the entire region. As a reuslt, they were compelled to negotiate over division of the Caucasus which was occured with a secret document of 1724.

The Ottoman Empire occupied some major cities of the regions, inluding Tiflis, Yerevan, and other parts of present-day Armenia and Karabakh. As a result, the Sublime Port initiated extended tax registration documents (*Tapu Tahrir Defterleri*) in newly occupied territories, one of which was the *Yerevan Liva* of 1728. It contains lands belonged to major parts of the present-day Armenia and neighboring regions.

The Ottoman tax registers of *Yerevan Liva*, among other factors, are important primary sources for studying the demographic picture of the respective territories. It is important to note that, in addition to the Christian (Armenian) population, there were also Muslims, a significant portion of whom were various *Ashirets* and tribes. They typically lived in separate groups, although at times they resided in the same villages as the Armenian population.

The main goal is to find out the demographic picture of the *Yerevan Liva* particluarly focusing on the ashirets and tribes. It is important to research the names of the tribes, villages of their residence, and to indentify certain features. Also, studying the migration process and socio-economic condistions of the tribes is also important.

The Pashto Language and the Institutionalization of Pashtun Identity in the Early Modern Period

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Popular academic discourse on "imagined communities" (B. Anderson, 1983) appears to have contributed significantly to the controversial idea that the origins of modern nationalism lie in the artificial constructs of ethnic self-identity. In the case of Pashtuns, the creation of such a construct is often associated with the activities of the socio-political movements "Awakened Youth" (*Wish Zalmiyan*) and "Servants of God" (*Khuday Khidmatgar*) in Afghanistan and emerging Pakistan in the 1920–1940s. However, the surviving corpus of early modern texts in Pashto suggests that the institutionalization of Pashtun identity was a natural historical process the final stage of which took place in the 16th to 18th centuries, and that the perception of the shared language as a key component of Pashtun self-identification was shaped by long debates partly verbalized in these texts and in no way influenced by later nationalistic ideologies.

This paper argues that the very rise of Pashto literature in the early modern period within the realm of the dominating cosmopolitan Persophone written culture was a clear manifestation of a strong social demand for identity recognition and an expression of ethnic solidarity among the Pashto-speaking communities in the tribal areas west of the Indus and the large Pashtun diaspora in North India. Various ethno-patriotic motifs in the content of many Pashto-language works, the reflection of social ideology and mentality based on Pashtun tribal culture, historiographical counter-narratives and religious mythologemes aimed at legitimizing the

supremacy of Pashtun rulers, as well as such purely formal aspects as the tonic system of Pashto versification, which goes back to folklore and ancient Iranian roots, unquestionably point to the distinctiveness and ethnocentric character of Pashtun literary traditions of this period. Regular remarks of Pashtun authors about the language of their writings and their ethnic and tribal affiliations, their sporadic assessments of the literary potential of Pashto and the state of Pashto poetry, their criticism of Pashtun readership and constant calls for more fundamental education of their compatriots can be read as both direct and indirect references to the then ongoing conceptualization of the Pashto language as a basic criteria of Pashtun ethnicity and identity. The paper will focus on particular authors and their views regarding these issues.

A New Yezidi Institution in the South Caucasus: Extiyergeha Gurcistanê û Êzdîxana Serhedê

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The paper investigates the establishment and activities of the Yezidi religious-administrative unit named the *Akhtiarate* of Georgia and Yezidi Territories of Sarhad (*Extiyergeha Gurcistanê û Êzdîxana Serhedê*), which declared its independence from the Yezidi Supreme Spiritual Council of Lalish in 2020. The institution is presided over by the *akhtiar* (*extiyar*), who, as outlined in the constitution adopted by the *Akhtiarate*, serves as the primary authority for the Yezidis residing in Georgia and within the geographical boundaries of Serhed (situated along the historical border that once demarcated the Ottoman and Russian empires). The establishment of the *Akhtiarate* is a reference to the Yezidi tradition of the 5 regions of Iraq, headed by the 5 *akhtiars* ('elders'), and at the same time to the Christian tradition of patriarchates. The purpose of establishing this institution is twofold: firstly, to preserve the Yezidi religion, tradition and language, and secondly, to strengthen the Yezidi ethnic and religious identity. This paper will attempt to characterise the consequences and controversies that its establishment has generated, to shed light on its relationship with the Yezidi religious hierarchy in Iraq, and to answer the question of why the *Akhtiarate* was established in the South Caucasus.

Feast and Entertainment of Knights and Kings According to Georgian Medieval Literature and Chronicles1

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The presentation aims to draw a picture of the pastimes of the Georgian noble society of the 11th-13th cc. based on the literary and historical monuments of the period: *Amirandarejaniani*, *Visramiani*, *The Knight in the Panther's Skin*, *The History and Eulogy of Monarchs* by an anonymous author, etc.

The terms for entertainers such as mgosan-i, muṭrib-i, mošait-i / mušait-i (all of them of oriental origin) used in the texts indicate the regional background of these professions and the cultural contacts of Georgians, Armenians, and Iranians.

Even though M. Boyce (1957) used Georgian data (*Amirandarejaniani – Amiran, the Son of Darejan*) in her discussions on Parthian Gōsān (Geo. mgosan-i), the above monuments can provide much more detailed information regarding this professional's activities at noble feasts, as well as in knights' tournaments and battlefields. The presentation will illustrate close links between the Georgian literary and historical texts in describing the entertainment of kings and knights.

Most of the terms for the musical instruments mentioned in Georgian texts are also Iranian or Arabic (čang, daf, kūs, čaγāne, būq, etc.). The same is true for the wine-drinking cups and vessels (jām, dūstakānī, pārč) - borrowings from Persian. One of the secondary characters of *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* is named Čašnagir-i - a loan word from the Persian compound noun čāšnagīr- a special person at the court who tested drinks and meals. Moreover, Georgian nadimoba (derived from Arab.-Pers. "nadīm" - companion, intimate friend) stands for the "feast" in all the texts mentioned above.

The heroes of the literary and historical narrations under discussion play backgammon (nard-i), chess (čadraḳ-i), and Pollo (čogan-i) – all Georgian terms for these games are originally Iranian or entered into Georgian via Iranian languages.

The presentation also focuses on hunting (Geo. nadiroba), the favorite entertainment of kings and knights. The monuments provide some details about the hunting customs of the nobles.

Representation of the Nowruz festival in the Georgian texts will be also discussed briefly.

Putting together all the data of the researched texts the presentation will illustrate the close cultural ties between Caucasus and the Iranian world.

Old Present And New Progressives in Abkhaz-Abaza Lects: Reconstructing The Development of The TAM System

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Abkhaz-Abaza lects are part of the North-West Caucasian language family (also known as West Caucasian or Abkhaz-Adyghe) spoken mainly in the Caucasian region, as well as in Turkey. These lects have grammatical suffixes -*ra* (or -*la*) that can serve both the function of future time reference and the habitual aspect; either function is hardly derivable from the other. Suspiciously similar suffixes are also used — often in a phonologically reduced shape and in combination with other morphological material — in various subordinate and modal contexts, for instance, the "masdar" form -*ra* and the "subjunctive" form in -*raʕayt'* in Abaza. The diachronic relation between these forms (or a subset of them) has long attracted the attention

of researchers; the prevailing account is to claim that the basic function of -*r*(*a*) is irrealis, and that the diverse polysemy is derivative of the future-tense use (Hewitt 2008).

However, an alternative diachronic analysis can be proposed, which provides a clearer picture by treating all the empirical data systematically and is backed up by a typologically well-known process, namely, the semantic development of old present-tense forms (Bybee et al. 1994; Haspelmath 1998). In a nutshell, when new progressive-aspect forms emerge in a language, they can fully replace the existing present-tense ones in progressive contexts, and thus the "old present" becomes restricted to a set of contexts that can be termed "irrealis". On the proposed account, this is exactly what happened during the development of Abkhaz-Abaza TAM systems. This hypothesis is substantiated by the fact that in the neighboring languages of the circum-Caucasian among which are Persian or Armenian such a development is well-established (Haspelmath 1998; Noorlander/Stilo 2015).

Phytotoponyms of Esfahan

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This paper aims to examine a distinct category of Esfahan toponyms derived from plant names. By exploring their structural features, origins, and semantic aspects, the study seeks to present crucial information on phytotoponyms in the region. Toponym data for this study were obtained from the place names database of village of Esfahan Province. A total of 139 phytotoponyms were identified and categorized into two groups: herbaceous plant toponyms, such as Mandab, and woody plant toponyms, exemplified by Chenar. All toponyms were georeferenced. The results revealed that the most common plant names found in these place names have significant connections with religious beliefs and Iranian culture in literature.

Qirva and Conflict - A Social Kinship Practice in Times of Trouble

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A social kinship practice known as 'qirva (geo.), qaribo (syr.), qarib (arb.), kerva (zaz.), kirîv (kur.), kêrif (yez.), kirve (trk.)' has since long been of crucial importance for organizing social and religious interactions, economic cooperation, political allegiances, transmission of knowledge and conflict resolution in Anatolia, the Caucasus and Mesopotamia. Oral history provides us with vivid accounts of this peculiar practice widespread among the religious communities of Alevis, Yezidis, but also Orthodox Christians (Armenian, Rum, Syrian), as

well as Shia and Sunni Muslims (Arab, Azeri, Georgian, Kurdish and Turkish). The qirva practice serves to forge a kin-like close covenant among two families, sometimes from different ethno-religious communities, who commit to reciprocal support in good times and in bad. The present article scrutinizes the limits of this commitment of mutual help at times of conflict. A comparative analysis of this institution with special focus on Alevi and Yezidi communities allows for conclusions about changed power relations of these socio-religious communities during the transformation process from empires to modern nation-states. One of these conclusions is concerned with collective violence, the Janus-head-like inevitable companion of nation-state building, which is putting this social kinship practice to a severe test.

The 'Zoroastrian Idolatry' According to 19th-Century Europeans

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The early 19th century saw a significant expansion of British influence in Asia, creating opportunities for intellectuals to engage directly with diverse religious communities. This engagement played a crucial role in reshaping British views of the 'Other,' making the topic of religious diversity a central theme in contemporary intellectual discourse. As a result, the categorisation of non-Christian religions within a universal framework became a key intellectual pursuit. Among the various interpretative categories applied, idolatry emerged as a prominent concept in the analysis of the 'other' religions. However, British intellectuals grappled with considerable uncertainty regarding the nature of Zoroastrianism, debating whether it should be considered idolatrous or, alternatively, aligned with the Abrahamic traditions. This association with idolatry was clearly reflected in the use of terms such as 'Guebres' or 'Fire-worshippers' to refer to Zoroastrians. The latter term became emblematic of a widespread belief that Zoroastrians worshipped fire itself, rather than recognising it as a symbol of God. This question of Zoroastrian idolatry was not only a subject of academic enquiry but also a key component in the broader discourse on the nature of the Other in pre-Victorian Britain.

In this presentation, I aim to trace the origins of the issue of idolatry, focusing on the intersection of European intellectual traditions and Asian sources. I will examine how European intellectuals used Asian sources to shape their perceptions of Zoroastrianism, particularly in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Indeed, access to non-European sources often enhanced, rather mitigated, the European prejudice of idolatry, leading to misinterpretation and adaptation of Asian works and authors. By analysing selected writings of pre-Victorian intellectuals, I will explore how these Asiatic sources were employed to form the prejudices surrounding Zoroastrianism. In doing so, I will contextualise this within the broader colonial framework of British engagement with the Other, while also considering how Zoroastrianism was positioned within European intellectual movements such as Orientalism, Rationalism, and the Scottish Enlightenment.

Indwelling Spirits. Reading Mt 12:43-45 in the Light of Zoroastrian Theology

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The presentation is dedicated to a biblical parable (Matthew 12:43-45) in which Jesus Christ describes a situation in which an unclean spirit is initially successfully cast out of a person, but later, for some reason, returns to its victim with increased power. Usually interpretations of this allegory focus on what Jesus was trying to teach his audience. In contrast, I will attempt to shed light on the conditions of the evil spirit's dwelling in the person's body, which cannot be easily explained on the basis of the New Testament texts, but which have clear parallels in pre-modern Zoroastrian religious beliefs.