Morphosyntactic Changes in Persian and their Effects on the Syntax

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The present paper deals with the origin of the *ezafe* construction in Persian. It demonstrates how in Old Persian a relative pronoun (*hya-*) 'who/ which' in sentences with omitted copula was interpreted as a "connector"/ "linker" (*ezafe* marker) coming between a noun and another noun or adjective. As a result of this reanalysis a relative clause was recast into a noun phrase. I will argue that the loss of agreement and case marking (which were present in Old Persian) has affected the syntax of the noun phrase in Middle Persian and New Persian. The emergence of the *ezafe* construction to mark the genitive and attributive constructions (which were formerly implemented by the genitive case and agreement) compensates for this loss. Key words: Persian grammar, morphosyntax, noun phrase, *ezafe* construction.

1. Introduction

The history of the Persian language is divided into three periods:
1. Old Iranian (including Old Persian (henceforth OP), Avestan, Median and Saka). OP came down to use in cuneiform inscriptions from the time of the Achaemenid kings, who ruled ancient Persia during the 6th to 4th c. B.C. Avestan is the language in which the Avesta, the sacred book of Zoroastrians, was composed. The Avesta probably dates from about the 7th to the 5th c. B.C., but apparently was handed down orally and was not recorded in writing until much later. These languages are highly inflectional. There are no records of Median and Saka except for some words.
2. Middle Iranian (Western Middle Iranian including Middle Persian (henceforth MP) - also called Pahlavi - and Parthian; Eastern Middle Iranian including Kharazmian, Soghdian and Saka).The Middle Iranian period, dating from the 3rd c. B.C. to the 7th c. A.D., when the Sasanian empire collapsed, is characterized by reduced inflection of the noun and verb. Western Middle Iranian languages are analytic.

3. New Iranian period with New Persian (henceforth NP) as its dominant language dates from the 9th c. to the present. The NP is divided into three stages. The earliest records of NP - called Early NP - appear in the 9th cent. and the bulk of Early NP texts dates from the 10th to the 12th c. The NP texts belong to the following centuries spanning the Mongolian period to the end of the 18th c. The beginning of the Modern NP period is linked with the political, economic and literary influence of Western powers during the 19th c. (cf. Khanlari, 1998, Vol.1:359). NP is an analytic language.

Based on the structural resemblances, it is known that NP goes back to MP which in itself goes back to OP. Having this historical pathway in mind, I will describe some major syntactic and morphosyntactic changes happening in each period and their effects on the other parts of the language. On the one hand, morphosyntactic changes bring about syntactic changes. On the other hand, syntactic changes have morphological consequences. In this paper I will focus on the interplay of morphology and syntax within the language system during its long history. More specifically, I will focus on the emergence of the *ezafe* construction.

As for the *ezafe* construction, I will demonstrate that in OP in sentences with omitted copula a relative pronoun was interpreted as an article, or a linker. On the phonological side, the relative pronoun *hya* of OP changed to *ī* in MP (*hya > hyə > yə > ī*). In MP *ī* was used both as a relative pronoun and as a linker or *ezafe* marker. This form has changed to *–e* in NP. In NP the *ezafe* marker, called in Persian linguistics *kasre*[1]*-y-e ezafe:* 'e of addition', is an enclitic attached to a noun followed by another noun or adjective making a genitive or adjectival construction. In fact the *ezafe* marker does double duty: it can both (1) mark genitive and (2) link an adjective to its noun. Any noun phrase formed by an *ezafe* marker is an *ezafe* construction:

> (1) ketâb-e   ali (Noun-Genitive)
>   book=EZ   Ali
>   'Ali's book'

> (2) ketâb-e   bozorg (Noun-Adjective)
>   book=EZ   big
>   'big book'

Contrary to English, the genitive marker is cliticized to the possessee not to the possessor.

Many scholars including Khanlari (1377, Vol. 3:161), Abolghasemi (1375:36) and Rastorgueva (1347:111) consider the MP /i/ as the origin of the *ezafe* marker; the MP /i/ goes back to the OP relative pronoun *hya-*. This paper attempts to show how the elliptic relative construction (of the

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[1]- The Arabic term *kasre* means the vowel *i* in Arabic and the vowel *e* in Persian.

type 'Gaumata who [is] Magus') was reanalysed as the appositive phrase ('Gaumata the Magus') whose former relative pronoun became the phrasal linker/ connector. In a sense, a relative clause was transformed into a noun phrase. In order to show the different stages of this development, first of all in section (2) I will investigate the genitival and adjectival constructions in Old Iranian languages. In section (3) I will examine these constructions in Middle Iranian. Section (4) deals with the *ezafe* construction in NP and the last section provides my conclusions.

2. Old Iranian

Old Iranian languages possess eight morphological cases (nominative, genitive, dative, accusative, vocative, locative, instrumental, ablative) three genders (masculine, feminine, and neutral) and three numbers (singular, plural and dual). In Old Iranian the possessor is marked by the genitive case. In the following OP example, the genitives are underlined:

(3) adam Dārayavauš,   xšāyaΘiya   xšāyaΘiyānām, Vištāspahyā
    I   Darius   king-NOM   king-GEN.PL   Hystaspes-GEN

    pussa   [DPe 1-5; Kent 1953: 136]
    son-NOM
    'I am Darius… king of kings…son of Hystaspes'

As is evident from the above example, the genitive may come before the noun (*vištāspahyā pussa,* son of Hystaspes, Genitive-Noun) or after it (*xšāyaΘiya xšāyaΘiyānām,* king of kings, Noun-Genitive). A propos this syntactic 'freedom' Kent (1953: 95) maintains that "a genitive used as a genitive (not in a dative use) precedes that noun or adjective, unless the genitive is attached to its noun by the article, in which instance it follows: *manā pitā* (my father), but *kāra hya manā* (my army)." According to Kent (ibid.) the postposing of the genitive in governmental and religious formulas (as in *xšāyaΘiya xšāyaΘiyānā*m) is exceptional and reflects a Median 'usage'. In the next sections, it will be shown how the structure of those phrases in which *hya-* acts as the article (genitive-article-noun) is reflected in MP and NP genitives.

Turning now to the adjectival construction in Old Iranian, the relationship between a noun and its adjective is shown through agreement. The noun and the adjective agree in case, gender and number. The adjective may come before or after the noun, immediately or within some distance; as in the following OP example:

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(4) baga   vazraka   Auramazdā … [DNa1; Kent 1953: 137]
    god-NOM great-NOM   Ahuramazda-NOM
    'A great god [is] Ahuramazda'

 In the following Avestan example, the adjective *huapō* 'good' agrees with the noun *nipāta* 'guardian' in gender, number and case:

 (5) azəm vīspanam dāmanam   nipāta   ahmi   huapō
     [Abolghasemi 1375/1996: 55]
      I   all-GEN   sheep-GEN.PL guard-NOM be-1SG good-NOM
     'I am the good guardian of all sheep'

   As for the relative clauses, they are linked to the head noun by the relative pronoun *hya-* . In Old Iranian languages the relative pronoun (as noun and adjective) has eight cases, three numbers and three genders. The relative clause comes immediately or within some distance before or after the noun and agrees with the head noun. In the following OP example *hya-* agrees with *Auramazdā* in gender, number and case:

 (6) baga   vazraka   Auramazdā   hya   imām
     god-NOM great-NOM Auramazda-NOM REL-NOM this-ACC

     būmīm   adā [DNa1; Kent 1953: 137]
     earth-ACC   created
     'A great god [is] Ahuramazda who created this earth'

But as pointed out by Abolghasemi (1375/1996: 359) in the following example *hya* does not agree with the noun in the accusative:

 (7) Dārayavahum hya   manā pitā   avam xšāyaϴiyam
     Darius-ACC   REL-NOM   my   father-NOM him   king-ACC

     akunauš [XPf 22-24; Kent 1953: 150]
     made-3SG
     'Darius, who was my father, him he made king'

In those clauses where the copula is omitted, *hya* is interpreted as a weak demonstrative pronoun meaning "this" or as a definite article. For example, Hudson-Williams (1963:12) translates *hya-* as 'the':

(8) Gaumāta   hya   maguš   [omitted copula] adīnā
     Gaumata-NOM REL-NOM magus-NOM   deprived

     Kambujiam … [DB I 45-6; Kent 1953: 118]
     Cambyses-ACC
     '<u>Gaumata the magus</u> deprived Cambyses'

(9) yaθā   adam <u>Gaumātam</u>   tyam   <u>magum</u> [omitted copula]
     untill I   Gaumata-ACC   REL-ACC magian-ACC

     avājanam   [DB I 73; Kent 1953: 118]
     slew
     'until I <u>Gaumata the magus</u> slew'

It is interesting that these relative constructions (or parallel English constructions) are translated into Persian by the *ezafe* construction:

(10) Gaumata the Magus
     gumâte-y-e   moq

     Alexander the Great
     eskandar-e   kabir

     Ivan the Terrible
     Ivan-e   maxuf

According to Kent (1953:84) the original dominant use of *hya-* has been that of the relative; in attributive clauses modifying a nominative the omission of the copula has led to its understanding as an appositive marked by the article; this use has been extended to accusative antecedents, and rarely to substantives in other cases; The appositive has shifted to a mere attribute and ultimately it has been preposed to an adjective in a generic sense. In the next section, I will show how the omission of the copula in attributive clauses which is a typical feature of the OP and MP syntax, has lead to a reanalysis in MP.

3. Middle Iranian

This section deals with the adjectival construction (noun - adjective), genitival construction (possessee - possessor) and relative clauses in

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Western Middle Iranian languages (Parthian and MP). These languages have lost their case system, so we expect them to mark their genitival /adjectival constructions differently.

3.1 Parthian

a. Genitives:
In most instances, the head noun comes before the genitive modifier and *če* acts as a linker coming between the noun and the genitive. As can be seen in (11) and (12), the inflections are gone so neither 'happiness' nor 'Saturday' is marked for the genitive. In this 'new' construction *če* indicates possession. The Parthian examples which follow show the double function of particle *če*:

> (11) srod   če   šadīft [Rezayi 1381/ 2002: 56]
>   song LINKER   happiness
>   'song of happiness'

> (12) šab   če   šambat [ibid.]
>   night LINKER Saturday
>   'Saturday night'

Since *če* is a free morpheme, other elements may come between the head noun and *če*:

> (13) rošnīft   ay   če-mān [ibid.]
>   light   be-2SG   LINKER us
>   'you are our light'

It should be mentioned that sometimes the head noun comes before or after the genitive without a linker:

> (14) ādur Ardaxšīr [ibid.]
>   fire   Ardaxšīr
>   'fire of Ardashir'

> (15) maran žamān [ibid.]
>   death time
>   'time of death'

b. Adjectives:
In adjectival constructions, the adjective may precede or follow the noun. If a linker is used it will be *če:*

(16) wažan čē   šahrdār kirbag [Abolghasemi 1375/1996: 36]
     speech LINKER king   good
     'speech of the good king'

c. Relativizer:
čē also acts as a relativizer. In most cases the term relativizer refers to a relative pronoun, but in some cases it may refer to a relative conjunction:

(17) abžīrwānag išnohrag hēm   čē   az bābil zamīg
     thankful   student be-1SG who from Babil land

     wisprixthēm [ibid. 104]
     rise-PP.1SG
     'I am a thankful student who rose from Babil'

As it can be seen, *čē* functions as both a linker and a relativizer. The Parthian examples are discussed here just to show the double function of *čē*. There is no etymological connection between OP *hya-* and *čē* (< PIE *syos* and *kwe*). What is of importance for the discussion is the MP state of affairs.

3.2 Middle Persian:

In MP the relationship between the head noun and the genitive modifier or the adjective is the same as in Parthian except that the linker is *ī* or *īg,* which is derived from the OP *hya-*:

(18) kanīg   ī   hučihr [ibid. 36]
      maiden LINKER beautiful
      'beautiful maiden'

(19) (gumbad ī   ātaxšān) ī   wahram [*Shayest*; Mazdapur
      1369/1990: 21]
      dome LINKER shining LINKER Bahram
      'the shining dome of Bahram'

Here *gumbad* is the head noun, *ātaxšān* is the adjective and *Wahram* is the genitive modifier for the preceding adjectival construction. If the adjective or the genitive modifier comes before the head noun, the linker does not appear.

(20) abāg <u>dušăgāh mard</u> hamrāz   mabāš [Abolghasemi1375/
     1996: 63]
     with silly man   sharing secret NEG=be-IMP.2SG
     'Do not share your secrets with silly men'

In MP *ī* also acts as a relativizer:

(21) če   ast   dēn   ī   āwarē? [ibid. 105]
     what be-3SG   religion which bring-2SG
     'What is the religion that you bring?'

(22) pahrēz   ud šnāyēnišn ī ēn haft amahraspand   ī
      avoidance and   admiring of this seven amharaspand   which

     to   guft [*Shayest*; Mazdapur 1369/1990: 218]
     you say-P.1SG
     'Avoidance and admiring this seven *amharaspand* which I told
      you about'

Here the first *ī* is a linker, the second one is a relativizer.

   To sum up, *ī* in MP, as *hya-* in OP, had a double usage. The difference is that in OP *hya-*'s function as a relativizer dominated, but in MP its dominant use was that of a linker; even in late Pahlavi texts *ī* rarely acted as a relativizer. It seems that the origin of the reinterpretation of a relativizer as a linker should be sought in those sentences in which the copula was omitted and the relativizer connected the adjective to the head noun. We should remind ourselves that in Parthian *če* also acted as both a linker and as a relativizer. This reanalysis changes a clause to a noun phrase.

   It must be added that Western Middle Iranian languages had other relativizers. Abolghasemi (1996: 104) lists the following: *kē/ čē* (Parthian) and *ī (g), kē* and *čē* (MP). In both Parthian and MP *kē* and *čē* would also function as interrogative pronouns.

   In the following example *ī* and *kē* are used as relativizers:

(23) ātaxš ī   pad   ān xānag andar barēnd __kē__   nō
     fire   which in   that house   in   take.3PL which nine

     šabag ud   māh… [*Shayest*; Mazdapur 1369/1990: 21]
     night and month...
     'fire which they take in that house which nine nights and months
     [is necessary for its purification]'

In (23), both *ī* and *kē* are relativizers, but in MP *ī* is mostly used as a linker. The usage of *ī* as a relativizer decreases so that in Modern NP (*i >*) *-e* is only a linker and *(kē>) ke* is the relativizer (relative pronoun or relative conjunction).

Although *ī* in MP is a free morpheme, its place within the noun phrase is fixed and in most cases it is the only element that comes between the head noun and the adjective or the genitive modifier. This fixing of word order prepares the ground for the change of *ī* to the enclitic *-e* in NP (unlike in OP *ī/i* is a single vowel). The following examples show that in MP *ī/i* is a free morpheme:

1. In Pahlavi orthography *ī* is written separately.
2. In some cases, another element comes between *ī* and the head noun:

   (24) sag-iz   ī   kōr [*Shayest*; Mazdapur 1369/1990: 9]
         dog too LINKER blind…
         'blind dog too'

3. In NP the indefinite marker and the *ezafe* marker do not co-occur, while in MP the *ezafe* marker *ī/i* appears after the indefinite marker:

   (25) šamšer –ē   i   handuk (the copula is omitted)
         [Kârnâme; Farahvashi 1378/1999: 30]
         sword –INDEF LINKER Indian
         'An Indian sword'

In cases where *ī* appeares after the indefinite marker, it is possible to interpret it as a relative clause whose copula is omitted. In fact, as mentioned before, it seems that these ambiguous structures could be interpreted as the *ezafe* construction:

   (26) ud ka ēdōn tuwān kardan kū   az āb-ē
          and if such could do   which   from water-INDEF

         ī   meh [omitted copula] o   āb-ē   ī
         LINKER small [omitted copula] to   water-INDEF LINKER

         keh [omitted copula] barēd ...[*Shayest*; Mazdapur 1369/1990:
         32]
         big [omitted copula] take-3SG
         'and if [one] can take [something] from a small [amount of]
         water to a big [amount of] water…'

In this example one can interpret *āb-ē ī meh* as 'water which [is] small' instead of 'a small water'.

4. The appearance of an intrusive consonant [y] before the indefinite marker *-ē* to avoid vowel hiatus and its lack before *ī* indicates the independence of *ī*. The independent *ī* is claimed to begin with a glottal stop not shown here, thus preventing the hiatus between *–ē* and *ī* in (27.a) and *ā* and *ī* in (27.b):

(27) a. nasā-y-ē   ī   sag – ne – did [*Shayest*;
      Mazdapur 1369/1990: 26]
      carcass-[y]-INDEF LINKER   dog-not-seen
      'a carcass not seen by a dog'

(27) b. nasā   ī   sag –ne-dīd [ibid.]
      carcass LINKER dog-not-seen
      'carcass not seen by a dog'

As mentioned before, *ī / i* is used mostly as an *ezafe* marker rather than a relativizer. The analysis of a portion of a Pahlavi text "Shayest Nashayest" (Mazdapur, 1990) shows that out of 122 cases of *i*, in 94 cases it is an *ezafe* marker and in 28 cases it is a relativizer. The analysis of a later Pahlavi text "Kârnâmeye Ardašire Babakan" (Farahvashi, 1999: 2-24) shows that only in 4 out of 64 cases it is a relativizer.

4. New Persian

Before dealing with the *ezafe* construction in NP, it must be pointed out that the phonetic form of the *ezafe* marker and the indefinite marker in NP has changed, so that the *ezafe* marker has become *-e* (from MP *ī*) and the indefinite marker has become *-i* (from MP *ē*). Records from Early NP show the overlap stage preceding this change. Considering the pronunciation of the *ezafe* marker, Khanlari (1998, Vol 3: 163) makes the point that in Persian orthography in some Early NP texts the *ezafe* marker *(kasreye ezafe)* is written as ﯽ *[ī]*, which apparently indicates that its pronunciation was very close to [i] (the pronunciation of the indefinite marker). On the other hand, in some other Early NP texts the indefinite marker is written as *kasreye ezafe*, again showing the closeness of their pronunciation. This closeness of *kasreye ezafe* to *-i* shows its affinity with *ī/i* in MP. The different stages of this change are shown below:

	OP	MP	ENP	NP
ezafe marker:	*(h)ya-* (who, which) >	*ī/i* >	*-i/-e* >	*-e*
indef. marker:	*aiwa* (one) >	*ēw/- ē* >	*-e/ -i* >	*-i*

In NP the *ezafe* construction is very common. It can act as a head for a chain of *ezafe* constructions (*tatâbo'-e ezâfât* 'chain of *ezafes*'). The following examples are from Modern NP:

(28) (hame-y-e (deraxtân-e (jangalhâ-y-e (šomâl-e (kešvar-e irân)))))
    all   of   trees of   forests   of   north of   country of Iran
    'all of the trees of the northern forests of Iran'

(29) (in   ketâb-e (dastur-e   (zabân-e   fârsi)))
    this book of grammar of language of Farsi
    'this grammar book on Farsi language'

In Modern NP the order Noun-Genitive, Noun-Adjective and Noun-Relative has become fixed. If the adjectival modifier is preposed, *ezafe* is omitted and the resulting form becomes a compound, behaving as a unit ready to enter another *ezafe* construction.

a. Noun- Adjective:
(30) nâm-e   bad >   badnâm   >   mard-e badnâm
    name-EZ bad   badname   man-EZ badname
    'bad name'   'infamous'   'infamous man'

(31) bu-y-e   xoš >   xošbu   >   gol-e   xošbu
    smell-EZ   good   goodsmell   flower-EZ goodsmell
    'good smell'   'good smelling' 'good smelling flower'

b. Noun- Genitive:
    Preposing a genitive modifier to the head noun and omitting the *ezafe* marker is a strategy for making new compounds:

(32) dâruxâne   <   xâne-y-e dâru
    medicine room   room-EZ medicine
    'pharmacy'   'medicine room'

(33) ketâbxâne   <   xâne-y-e ketâb
    book room   room-EZ book
    'library'   'book room'

As is evident, the order of elements (within a phrase) determines their function. In the first instance a noun phrase was recategorized as an adjective and in the second a noun phrase was recategorized as a compound noun. In some frequent combinations the *ezafe* marker is omitted, but the order of constituents does not change. As shown in (34) these words tend to become a compound:

(34) mâdar-e zan > mâdarzan (lit. mother of wife: 'mother-in-law')
    xâhar-e šovhar > xâharšovhar (lit. sister of husband: 'sister-in-law')
    šovhar-e xâhar > šovharxâhar (lit. husband of sister: 'brother-in-law')

In adjectival constructions, if the head noun is indefinite and the indefinite marker is attached to the noun, the *ezafe* marker can not be added:

(35) ketâb-i   bozorg
    book-INDEF big
    'a big book'

But if the indefinite marker is added to the noun phrase containing an adjective, the *ezafe* marker has to be used:

(36) (ketâb-e bozorg)-i
    book-EZ big-INDEF
    'a big book'

Similarly, in the genitival construction, the indefinite marker *-i* appears only after the noun phrase:

(37) (divâr-e xâne)-y-i
    wall-EZ room-[y]-INDEF
    'wall of a room'

As we saw above, in MP the *ezafe* marker (*ī /i*) could be separated from its head noun by the indefinite article, as in (25): *šamšer –ē i handuk*
In Farsi, however, no element can intervene between the *ezafe* marker and its phonological host (= possessee). As shown in (36) the indefinite article can only be attached to the noun phrase; alternatively, the *ezafe* marker has to be omitted and the indefinite article is hosted by the head noun of the noun phrase as in (35).

5. Conclusions

In this paper I described and explicated how the elliptic relative construction (of the type 'Gaumata who [is] Magus') was revamped as the appositive phrase 'Gaumata the Magus'. Its former relative pronoun was reanalysed as the phrasal linker / connector. In a sense, a relative clause was transformed into a noun phrase. This change is reminiscent of Givón's famous slogan that: "Today's morphology is yesterday's syntax" (Givón, 1971: 394, in Campbell and Janda, 2001: 96).

It seems that the motivation for this change is to compensate for the loss of grammatical morphology. Old Iranian languages were inflectional and the relationship between the head noun and the genitive/adjective was marked by inflection and agreement. With the gradual loss of inflectional morphology, the language had to develop another device to mark this relationship. The loss of case system at the end of OP is compensated in MP and NP in two ways: (i) The use of adpositions to mark grammatical relationships and (ii) The fixation of phrasal word order to mark these relationships. In the emergence of the *ezâfe* construction these two mechanisms are at work. My emphasis in this paper has been on the order of elements within the noun phrase. As the language moves from OP to MP, Early NP and Modern NP the word order becomes more and more rigid.

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