

## Iranian People and the Origin of the Turkish-speaking Population of the North-western of Iran

### LE PEUPLE IRANIEN ET L'ORIGINE DE LA POPULATION TURCOPHONE AU NORD-OUEST DE L'IRAN

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#### Abstract

The world is a place containing various racial and lingual groups. So that as far as this issue is concerned there is no difference between developed and developing countries. Iran is not an exception, because it can be called a multi-national or multi-racial community. The name of Azarbaijan has been one of the most renowned geographical names of Iran since 2000 years ago. Azar is the same as "Ashur" which means fire. In Pahlavi inscriptions, Azarbaijan has been mentioned as 'Oturpatekan', while it has been mentioned Azarbayegan and Azarpadegan in Persian writings. In this paper, attempt is made to study the race and people living there from the perspective of anthropology and ethnology. In fact, it is based on this question that whether or not, the people resided in Atropatgan have an Aryan race as other Iranians? According to anthropological and ethnical criteria of people in Atropatgan, we came to this conclusion that they have the same race (i.e. Aryan) similar as other Iranians who are the reminders and grandchildren of Aryan and Parse Medes. Therefore, the opposite is completely rejected on the view of the racial characteristics and all documents accounts for their Aryan race.

**Key words:** Iranian people; Atropatgan; Azaris; Anthropology; Genetic origin

#### Résumé

Le monde est un endroit contenant divers groupes raciaux et linguales. Alors que dans la mesure où cette question est concerné il n'ya aucune différence entre les pays développés et en développement. L'Iran n'est pas une

exception, car il peut être appelé une communauté multi-national ou multi-raciale. Le nom de Azerbaïdjan a été l'un des plus grands noms géographiques de l'Iran depuis 2000 ans. Azar est le même que "Ashur", qui signifie feu. En Pahlavi inscriptions, Azerbaïdjan a été mentionnée comme «Oturpatekan», alors qu'il a été mentionné Azarbayegan et Azarpadegan dans les écrits persans. Dans cet article, la tentative est faite pour étudier la course et les gens qui y vivent dans la perspective de l'anthropologie et l'ethnologie. En fait, il est basé sur cette question que si oui ou non, les gens ont résidé dans Atropatgan une race aryenne comme les autres Iraniens? Selon les critères anthropologiques et ethniques de personnes dans Atropatgan, nous sommes arrivés à cette conclusion qu'ils ont la même race (c.-à-aryenne) similaire à celle d'autres Iraniens qui sont les rappels et les petits-enfants de aryenne et Parse Mèdes. Par conséquent, le contraire est complètement rejeté sur le point de vue des caractéristiques raciales et tous les comptes des documents pour leur race aryenne.

**Mots clés:** Peuple iranien; Atropatgan; Les Azéris; Anthropologie; Origine génétique

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#### INTRODUCTION

The primitive anthropologists tried to determine the multi types of mankind's nature by classification under the title of race based on geographical areas and physical apparent characteristics like color and others. Race is applied to a group of people who have kept the common physical or biological characteristics in successive

generations (Hunter, 1976, p.198). Or a group of natural people inherited a common physical feature; they have the same race even with different languages and customs (Saidiyani, 1991, p.231). According to this definition what makes difference between two races is physical inherent characteristics and nothing else. In 1350 B.C., scientists found the present physical differences among human populations and classified them into three groups regarding to the color: black, white and yellow. Experts of heredity and biologists do not have a common idea about the reasons of variety in races. It means that some of them know this difference resulted from heredity and others believe in environmental effects (Fakuhi, 2006, p.287). The people of different places in the world are so mixed and it seems unlikely to determine the exact racial location. But it is not out of ambiguity, because the most anthropologists and scientists believe that human has always exposed to immigration and racial integration. Racial integration is, not only a historical reality, but also it is more intensive than the past in this active world. The relations between nations and repetitive marriages of different races during centuries and their continuous changes have caused not to remain a fixed race. It means that we can not point to one factor only like color of skin to determine the race of a group. Other factors are considerable such as height, the form of skull, head, hair, face, forehead, eyebrows, eyes, nose, and size of cheek, jaw, and also scattering of people on the base of blood group (genetics). Meanwhile, particularly white race has had much integration with other races. One of the main ways to determine a race is skull. Skull is a bone case contained brain and special senses and is responsible to protect them. Skull itself is made of different bones including frontal, back of head, temporal, and molar bones (Sobbotka, 2001, p.125). It is possible to determine the race of a person completely by the exact studying of skull applying different tools as well as comparing and contrasting with others skulls and even with the skeletons remained from past. Measuring the parts of the body and skull is completely practical and we can determine the form of the body by obtained numbers.

Of course, the times of measuring and investigating the skulls to classify the race depend on the individual's interest and invention. For example, a skull can be measured 10 or 1000 times. In this paper, it is tried to study special racial features in one of the old centers of human life, on the view of anthropology and ethnology. In fact, it is based on this question that whether or not, the people resided in Atropatgan have an Aryan race as other Iranians.

All donors were selected only if their paternal grandfathers were from the same region and they were unrelated to other donors at the grandfather level.

## The Iranian Plateau

Asia continent as the largest and the most populous continent and the cradle of a developed civilization has different peoples with various races and with their special physical characteristics. On the other hand, it is the origin of different races, including yellow (Mogul), Siberia, northern and Mogul, central Mogul, Indonesia, Mediterranean, Transoxania (Kyrgyz, Turkman, Tatar, Anatolian Turk). Although there have been intercourse among these ethnical groups, but all of them have their own special characteristics on the view of color, the form of skull and face. The Iranian Plateau as a special geographical place in Asia continent has had different nations with various races.

Iran is located in the Middle East, between Turkey and Iraq on the west and Afghanistan and Pakistan on the east; it borders the Persian Gulf and Gulf of Oman in the south and Armenia, Azerbaijan, the Caspian Sea, and Turkmenistan in the north. Library of Congress – Federal Size: Iran's total area is nearly 1.65 million square kilometers, of which 1.64 million square kilometers—an area slightly larger than Alaska—is land mass. Land Boundaries: Iran is bounded by Afghanistan (936 kilometers), Armenia (35 kilometers), Azerbaijan proper (432 kilometers), Azerbaijan's Nakhichevan enclave (179 kilometers), Iraq (1,458 kilometers), Pakistan (909 kilometers), Turkey (499 kilometers), and Turkmenistan (992 kilometers). Disputed Territory: Iran and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) dispute sovereignty over three islands in the Persian Gulf that are occupied by Iran. Iran's coastline includes 2,440 kilometers on the Persian Gulf and Gulf of Oman and 740 kilometers on the Caspian Sea. Iran has rugged mountain chains surrounding several basins collectively known as the Central Plateau, which has an average elevation of about 900 meters. East of the Central Plateau are two large desert regions, a salt desert in the north and a rock and sand desert in the south. There are lowland areas along the Caspian coast, in Khuzestan Province at the head of the Persian Gulf, and at several dispersed locations along the Persian Gulf and Gulf of Oman coasts. Principal Rivers: Iran has no major rivers. The only navigable river is the Karun, which is 830 kilometers long. Other rivers include the Safid Rud (1,000 kilometers), Kharkeh (700 kilometers), and Zayandeh Rud (400 kilometers) (Darvish zadeh, 2002, p.87). The first Iranian state was the Achaemenian Empire, established by Cyrus the Great in about 550 B.C. Alexander the Great conquered the empire in 330 B.C. The Greeks were followed by the Parthians, who ruled from 247 B.C. until A.D. 224, and the Sassanians, who ruled from A.D. 224 until the Arabs conquered Iran in A.D. 642. The Arabs brought with them Islam, which eventually became the predominant religion. In the centuries that followed, Iran was ruled by a succession of Arab, Iranian, and Turkic dynasties. In the thirteenth century, the Mongol leader

Genghis Khan invaded the disunified territory of Iran, and Mongol dynasties subsequently ruled Iran for nearly two centuries. In 1501 the Iranian Safavids created a strong centralized empire under Ismael I and also established Shia Islam as the official religion. In the eighteenth century, Iran was weakened by civil wars, new dynasties came to rule, and a new regional rival, Russia, arose. The Qajars and Pahlavis: In 1795 the Qajar family established a dynasty that would rule Iran until 1925. In the nineteenth century, Iran, under the Qajars, lost much of its territory in the Caucasus and Central Asia to Russia (Bosworth, 1968, p.778).

### Iranian People

Iran's population is about 70 million according to preliminary data from the decennial census conducted in late 2006; of that number, approximately one-third is rural and two-thirds urban. Urbanization has been steady; in 1976 only 47 percent of the population lived in urban areas. Population density averages 42 people per square kilometer, but with significant regional variations.

In 2008 the estimated annual population growth rate was less than 1 percent (0.79 percent). Net migration in 2008 was an estimated -3.28 persons per 1,000 population. In 2006 Iran hosted more than 660,000 Afghan and 54,000 Iraqi refugees. According to a 2008 estimate, 22.3 percent of Iran's population is 14 years of age or younger, and only 5.4 percent is 65 and older. The median age is 26.4 years. There are 1.03 males for every female. Estimated life expectancy is 70.86 years overall (69.39 years for men, 72.4 years for women). The birthrate is 16.89 per 1,000; the death rate, 5.69 per 1,000; and the infant mortality rate, 36.73 per 1,000 live births. The fertility rate remains at about 1.7 children born per woman, a significant reduction from the estimated rate of 7.0 in 1979.

The main ethnic groups in Iran are Persians (65 percent), Azerbaijani Turks (16 percent), Kurds (7 percent), Lurs (6 percent), Arabs (2 percent), Baluchis (2 percent), Turkmens (1 percent), Turkish tribal groups such as the Qashqai (1 percent), and non-Persian, non-Turkic groups such as Armenians, Assyrians, and Georgians (less than 1 percent). Persian, the official language, is spoken as a mother tongue by at least 65 percent of the population and as a second language by a large proportion of the remaining 35 percent. Other languages in use are Azeri Turkish and Turkic dialects, Kurdish, Luri, Arabic, and Baluchi. Azeri and Kurdish autonomy movements arose in the 1940s, and a Kurdish autonomy movement was active in the period 1979-83. The constitution declares Shia Islam to be the official religion of Iran. At least 90 percent of Iranians are Shia Muslims, and about 8 percent are Sunni Muslims. Other religions present in Iran are Christianity (mainly Armenians and Assyrians, more than 300,000 followers), the Baha'i faith (at least 250,000), Zoroastrianism (about 32,000), and Judaism (about 30,000).

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The constitution recognizes Christianity, Judaism, and Zoroastrianism as legitimate minority religions (Margaryan, Andonian, & Harutyunyan, 2010). The term Iranian is derived from the Old Iranian ethnical adjective Aryana which is itself a cognate of the Sanskrit word Arya. The name Iran is from Aryānām; lit: "[Land] of the Aryans". The old Proto-Indo-Iranian term Arya, per Thieme meaning "hospitable", is believed to have been one of the self-referential terms used by the Aryans, at least in the areas populated by Aryans who migrated south from Central Asia. Another meaning for Aryan is noble. In the late part of the Avesta (Vendidad 1) one of their homelands was referred to as Airyanem Vaejah. The homeland varied in its geographic range, the area around Herat (Pliny's view) and even the entire expanse of the Iranian plateau (Strabo's designation).

The term "Ariya" appears in the royal Old Persian inscriptions in three different contexts:

- As the name of the language of the Old Persian version of the inscription of Darius the Great in Behistun;
- As the ethnic background of Darius in inscriptions at Naqsh-e-Rostam and Susa (Dna, Dse) and Xerxes in the inscription from Persepolis (Xph) and
- As the definition of the God of Iranian people, Ahuramazda, in the Elamite version of the Behistun inscription. For example in the Dna and Dse Darius and Xerxes describe themselves as "An Achaemenian, A Persian son of a Persian and an Aryan, of Aryan stock".

By the early 1st millennium, Ancient Iranian peoples such as Medes, Persians, Bactrians, Parthians and Scythians populated the Iranian plateau, and other Scythian tribes, along with Cimmerians, Sarmatians and Alans populated the steppes north of the Black Sea. The Saka, Scythian, tribes spread as far west as the Balkans and as far east as Xinjiang. Scythians as well formed the Indo-Scythian Empire, and Bactrians formed a Greco-Bactrian Kingdom founded by Diodotus I, the satrap of Bactria. The Kushan Empire, with Bactrian roots/connections, once controlled much of Pakistan, some of Afghanistan and Tajikistan.

The Kushan elite (who the Chinese called the Yuezhi) were either a Tocharian-speaking (another Indo-European branch) people or an Eastern Iranian language-speaking people. The division into an "Eastern" and a "Western" group by the early 1st millennium is visible in Avestan vs. Old Persian, the two oldest known Iranian languages. The Old Avestan texts known as the Gathas are believed to have been composed by Zoroaster, the founder of Zoroastrianism, with the Yaz culture (ca. 1500-1100 BCE) as a candidate for the development of Eastern Iranian culture. Old Persian appears to have been established in written form by 519 BCE, following the creation of the

Old Persian script, inspired by the cuneiform script of the Assyrians.

### **Western Iranic Peoples**

During the 1st centuries of the first millennium BCE, the ancient Persians established themselves in the western portion of the Iranian plateau and appear to have interacted considerably with the Elamites and Babylonians, while the Medes also entered in contact with the Assyrians. Remnants of the Median language and Old Persian show their common Proto-Iranian roots, emphasized in Strabo and Herodotus' description of their languages as very similar to the languages spoken by the Bactrians and Soghdians in the east. Following the establishment of the Achaemenid Empire, the Persian language (referred to as "Farsi" in Persian) spread from Pars or Fars Province to various regions of the Empire, with the modern dialects of Iran, Afghanistan (also known as Dari) and Central-Asia (known as Tajiki) descending from Old Persian. Old Persian is attested in the Behistun Inscription (ca. 519 BCE), recording a proclamation by Darius the Great. In southwestern Iran, the Achaemenid kings usually wrote their inscriptions in trilingual form (Elamite, Babylonian and Old Persian) while elsewhere other languages were used. The administrative languages were Elamite in the early period, and later Imperial Aramaic. The early inhabitants of the Achaemenid Empire appear to have adopted the religion of Zoroastrianism. The Baloch who speak a west Iranian language relate an oral tradition regarding their migration from Aleppo, Syria around the year 1000 AD, whereas linguistic evidence links Balochi to Kurmanji, Sorani, Gorani and Zazaki.

### **Eastern Iranic People**

While the Iranian tribes of the south are better known through their texts and modern counterparts, the tribes which remained largely in the vast Eurasian expanse are known through the references made to them by the ancient Greeks, Persians, Indo-Aryans as well as by archaeological finds. Many ancient Sanskrit texts make references to tribes like Sakas, Paradas, Kambojas, Bahlikas, Uttaramadras, Madras, Lohas, Parama Kambojas, Rishikas, Tukharas or Tusharas etc. and locate them in the (Uttarapatha) (north-west) division, in Central Asia, around Hindukush range in northern Pakistan. The Greek chronicler, Herodotus (5th century BCE) makes references to a nomadic people, the Scythians; he describes as having dwelt in what is today southern Russia. It is believed that these Scythians were conquered by their eastern cousins, the Sarmatians, who are mentioned by Strabo as the dominant tribe which controlled the southern Russian steppe in the 1st millennium AD. These Sarmatians were also known to the Romans, who conquered the western tribes in the Balkans and sent Sarmatian conscripts, as part of Roman legions, as far west as Roman Britain. The Sarmatians of the east

became the Alans, who also ventured far and wide, with a branch ending up in Western Europe and North Africa, as they accompanied the Germanic Vandals during their migrations (Saidiyan, 2004, p.139).

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### **The Azerbaijan Plateau (Atropatgan)**

The great part of Iranian plateau located among the Oxus and Indus valley, Zagros and Caucasian mountains, makes Azerbaijan plateau (Atropatgan) in the north. Azerbaijan was covered by the Big Sea in the early of third era and called Titus. Consequently, great changes in earth's crust, mountain-making movements and volcanic actions have made the final geographical form of Azerbaijan plateau (Atropatgan). The effect of the natural and geographical form have affected on the fate and historical events of this place. Iranian Azerbaijan is generally considered the northwest portion of Iran comprising the provinces of East Azerbaijan, West Azerbaijan, and Ardabil and sometimes Zanjan, and comprising an area of 122,871 square kilometres (47,441 sq mi). It shares borders with the Republic of Azerbaijan, Armenia, Turkey, and Iraq. There are 17 rivers and two lakes in the region.

Cotton, nuts, textiles, tea, machinery, and electrical equipments are main industries. The northern, alpine region, which includes Lake Urmia, is mountainous, with deep valleys and fertile lowlands. The region is bounded in the north by Armenia and the Republic of Azerbaijan and in the West by Lake Urmia and Kurdish-inhabited areas of Iran, and in the East by the Talyshstan and Gilan. Azerbaijan is called the gate of the east and strategically it indicates the importance of this zone. It has always been one of the most famous historical names in Iran with 2300 oldness and also one of the most valuable geographical places in Iran and the world where shone in different historical fields and left famous faces, too. Its name is taken from an old tribe, Atropatgan. Ater is Avesta and old pronunciation of Azar who was one of the Old Iranian Goddesses and means the fire of brightness. Also, Patik means keeper and worshipper.

The name Azerbaijan itself is derived from Atropates, the Satrap (governor) of Medea in the Achaemenid empire, who ruled a region found in modern Iranian Azerbaijan called Atropatene. Atropates name is believed to be derived from the Old Persian roots meaning "protected by fire." The name is also mentioned in the Avestan Frawardin Yasht: âterepâtahe ashaonô fravashîm ýazamaide which translates literally to: We worship the Fravashi of the holy Atare-pata. According to the Encyclopedia of Islam, the name of the province was pronounced as: In Middle Persian the name of the province was called Āturpātākān, older new-Persian Ādharbādhagān, Ādharbāyagān, at present

Āzerbāydjān/Āzarbāydjān, Greek Ἀτροπατήνη, Byzantine Greek Ἀδραβιγάνων, Armenian Atrpatakan, Syriac Adhorbāyghān. The name Atropat in Middle Persian was transformed to Adharbad and is connected with Zoroastrianism. A famous Zoroastrian priest by the name Adarbad Mahraspandan is well known for his counsels. Azerbaijan, due to its numerous fire-temples has also been quoted in a variety of historic sources as being the birth place of the prophet Zoroaster although modern scholars have not yet reached an agreement on the location of his birth (Raies niya, 2007, p.243).

The oldest kingdom known in Iranian Azerbaijan is that of the Mannea who ruled a region southeast of Lake Urmia centered around modern Saqez. The Mannaeans were a confederation of Iranian and non-Iranian groups. The Mannaeans were conquered and absorbed by an Iranian people called Matieni, and the country was called Matiene, with Lake Urmia called Lake Matianus. Matiene was later conquered by the Medes and became a satrapy of the Median empire and then a sub-satrapy of the Median satrapy of the Persian Empire. The Medes were an Indo-European people, related to the Persians, who entered northeastern Iran probably as early as the 17th century BC and settled in the plateau land that came to be known as Media. After Alexander the Great conquered Persia, he appointed (328 BC) as governor the Persian general Atropates, who eventually established an independent dynasty.

The region, which came to be known as Atropatene or Media Atropatene (after Atropates), was much disputed. In the 2nd century BC, it was liberated from Seleucid domination by Mithradates I of Arsacid dynasty, and was later made a province of the Sassanid Empire of Ardashir I. Under the Sassanids, Azerbaijan was ruled by a marzubān, and, towards the end of the period, belonged to the family of Farrukh-Hormuzd. Heraclius, the Byzantine emperor, briefly held the region in the 7th century until peace was made with the Sassanids. After the Islamic Conquest of Iran, Arab invaders converted most of its people to Islam and made it part of the caliphate.

During the Islamic invasion of Azerbaijan, the name of the general of Iran, was Rustam the son of Farrukh Hormuz also known as Rustam Farrokhzad. Rustam himself was born in Azerbaijan and lead the Sassanid army into battle. The Sassanid Persian army was defeated in the battle of Qadisiya and Rustam was killed in the same battle. In 642 A.D., Piruzan, the Persian commander fought the Muslims in Nahavand, which was a gateway to the provinces of Azerbaijan, Armenia and Albania. The battle was fierce but the Sassanid troops failed in battle. This opened the gateway for Muslims into Azerbaijan. Muslims settled in Azerbaijan like many parts of Iran. According to the historian Kasravi, the Muslims also settled in Azerbaijan more numerously than other

provinces due to its wide and green pastures. Local revolts against the Caliphate were common and the most famous of these revolts was that Persian Khurramite movement.

After the revolt of Babak Khorramdin who was a Zoroastrian of neo-Mazdakite background, the grip of the Abbasid caliphate on Azerbaijan weakened, allowing native dynasties to rise in Azerbaijan. Later on Azerbaijan was taken by the Kurdish Daisam and the Daylamite Marzuban. The Daylamites were succeeded by the Kurdish Rawadids. After confrontations with the local Kurdish populations who had already established their own dynasties and emirates in vast areas of Azerbaijan, the Seljuks dominated the region in the 11th and early 12th centuries, at which point Turkification of the native populations began. In 1136, Azerbaijan fell to the lot of the Atabakan-e-Azerbaijan and Atabakan-e-Maragheh. It was invaded by the Khwarizm Shah Jalal ad-din until the advent of the Mongol invasions.

The Mongols under Hulagu Khan established their capital at Maragheh. The Safina-yi Tabriz is a book that describes the general intellectual condition of Tabriz during the Ilkhanid period. After being conquered by Timur in the 14th century, Tabriz became an important provincial capital of the Timurid empire. Later, Tabriz became the capital of the Qara Qoyunlu empire.

It was out of Ardabil (ancient Artavilla) that the Safavid dynasty arose to renew the state of Persia and establish Shi'ism as the official religion of Iran. After 1502, Azerbaijan became the chief bulwark and military base of the Safavids. In the meantime, between 1514 and 1603, the Ottomans frequently occupied Tabriz and other parts of the province. The Safavid control was restored by Shah Abbas but during the Afghan invasion (1722-8) the Ottomans recaptured Azerbaijan and other western provinces of Iran, until Nadir Shah expelled them.

In the beginning of the reign of Karim Khan Zand, the Afghan Azad Khan revolted in Azerbaijan and later the Dumbuli Kurds of khoy and other tribal chiefs ruled various parts of the territory. With the advent of the Qajars, Azerbaijan became the traditional residence of the heirs-apparent. At this time, the final northern frontier of Iran with Russia (along the Araxes) was established in 1828 (Turkmanchay Treaty). After 1905 the representatives of Azerbaijan were very active in the Iranian Constitutional Revolution.

The Russian (Tsarist) army occupied Iranian Azerbaijan in 1909, and again in 1912-1914 and 1915-1918 period, the Ottoman forces occupied her in 1914-1915 and 1918-1919 periods, the Bolshevik forces occupied Iranian Azerbaijan and other parts of Iran in 1920-1921, and the Soviet forces occupied Iranian Azerbaijan in 1941, creating a very short-lived autonomous, Soviet-supported state in May 1946, which was dissolved after reunification of Iranian Azerbaijan with Iran in November of the same year. The history

of Iran, especially its contemporary history has proven that Azerbaijani people are one of the most patriotic people in Iran. Iranian Nationalism is partly the product of Azerbaijani Intellectuals. Azerbaijani provinces have played a major role in the cultural and economic life of Iran in both the Pahlavi era as well as the Iranian Constitutional and Islamic revolution.

### **Caucasian Origin of the Azerbaijanis and Iranian Origin of the Azerbaijanis**

The Iranians display considerable genetic diversity consistent with patterns observed in populations of the Middle East overall, reinforcing the notion of Persia as a vital crossroad for human disseminations. The geographic area is remarkable for its high level of ethnic and linguistic diversity, comprising the major language families (Indo-European, Altaic, and Afro-Asiatic) currently spoken by more than seventy ethnically different populations. This demonstrates the role Iran played in population dispersal across the latitudinal belt spanning from Western Anatolia to the Indus Valley. However, there have been gaps in high-resolution genetic analyses for this region to uncover population history at a fine scale, for example, for particular ethnic and linguistic groups. Among them, the Turkic-speaking Iranian Azari population constitutes the largest ethno-linguistic group after Persian-speakers, accounting for 24 percent of Iran's population. Some sources tend to designate them as the descendants of the Turkic ethnic groups who invaded the area from 11th century onward during several military campaigns. Still, the majority of sources view the Azaris as having mixed ethnic origin going back to indigenous Caucasian populations and Iranians, who were influenced by Turkic languages throughout centuries of occupation under Turkic dynasties. The Iranian roots of Azaris, according to protagonists of this view, can likely be traced back to ancient Iranian tribes, such as the Medes, who lived on the territory of Azerbaijan (ancient *Āturpatakān*, roughly covering the modern Iranian provinces of Eastern Azerbaijan, Western Azerbaijan, and Ardabil), and Scythian invaders, who arrived during the 8th century B.C. Some information is also available about the Caucasian Albanians as the main ethnic constituent of the inhabitants of the modern-day Republic of Azerbaijan in the South Caucasus, called Azerbaijanis by the name of the state.

According to the scholar of historical geography, Xavier de Planhol: Azeri material culture, a result of this multi-secular symbiosis, is thus a subtle combination of indigenous elements and nomadic contributions.... It is a Turkish language learned and spoken by Iranian peasants. According to Richard Frye: The Turkish speakers of Azerbaijan (q.v.) are mainly descended from the earlier Iranian speakers, several pockets of whom still exist in the region. According to Olivier Roy: The mass of the Oghuz Turkic tribes who crossed the Amu Darya towards the west left the Iranian plateau, which remained Persian,

and established themselves more to the west, in Anatolia. Here they divided into Ottomans, who were Sunni and settled, and Turkmens, who were nomads and in part Shiite (or, rather, Alevi). The latter were to keep the name Turkmen for a long time: from the 13th century onwards they "Turkised" the Iranian populations of Azerbaijan (who spoke west Iranian languages such as Tat, which is still found in residual forms), thus creating a new identity based on Shiism and the use of Turkish. These are the people today known as Azeris.

According to Rybakov: Speaking of the Azerbaijan culture originating at that time, in the XIV-XV cc., one must bear in mind, first of all, literature and other parts of culture organically connected with the language. As for the material culture, it remained traditional even after the Turkicization of the local population. However, the presence of a massive layer of Iranians that took part in the formation of the Azerbaijani ethnos, have imposed its imprint, primarily on the lexicon of the Azerbaijani language which contains a great number of Iranian and Arabic words. The latter entered both the Azerbaijani and the Turkish language mainly through the Iranian intermediary. Having become independent, the Azerbaijani culture retained close connections with the Iranian and Arab cultures. They were reinforced by common religion and common cultural-historical traditions.

The Iranian origins of the Azeris likely derive from ancient Iranic tribes, such as the Medes in Iranian Azerbaijan, and Scythian invaders who arrived during the eighth century BCE. It is believed that the Medes mixed with an indigenous population, the Caucasian Mannai, a Northeast Caucasian group related to the Urartians. Ancient written accounts, such as one written by Arab historian Abu al-Hasan Ali ibn al-Husayn al-Masudi (896–956), attest to an Iranian presence in the region:

"The Persians are a people whose borders are the Mahat Mountains and Azerbaijan up to Armenia and Aran, and Bayleqan and Darband, and Ray and Tabaristan and Masqat and Shabaran and Jorjan and Abarsahar, and that is Nishapur, and Herat and Marv and other places in land of Khorasan, and Sejjistan and Kerman and Fars and Ahvaz...All these lands were once one kingdom with one sovereign and one language...although the language differed slightly. The language, however, is one, in that its letters are written the same way and used the same way in composition. There are, then, different languages such as Pahlavi, Dari, Azeri, as well as other Persian languages."

Scholars see cultural similarities between modern Persians and Azeris as evidence of an ancient Iranian influence. Archaeological evidence indicates that the Iranian religion of Zoroastrianism was prominent throughout the Caucasus before Christianity and Islam and that the influence of various Persian Empires added to the Iranian character of the area. It has also been hypothesized that the population of Iranian Azerbaijan was predominantly Persian-speaking before the Oghuz arrived. This claim is supported by the many figures of

Persian literature, such as Qatran Tabrizi, Shams Tabrizi, Nezami, and Khaghani, who wrote in Persian prior to and during the Oghuz migration, as well as by Strabo, Al-Istakhri, and Al-Masudi, who all describe the language of the region as Persian. The claim is mentioned by other medieval historians, such as Al-Muqaddasi (Minorsky, 1953, p.178). Other common Perso-Azerbaijani features include Iranian place names such as Tabriz and the name Azerbaijan itself.

Given to the explorations and invention of some bones from primitive human beings in Atropatgan belonged to native inhabitants in this area and also measuring the skulls and anthropological studies, the following results are obtained. People in this area have a rather round heads. It means that upper part of skull called tinsel in medicine is round and has no special projection. It has caused that the bone of the face becomes big, extended and ellipsoid. The frontal bone is a little big, protuberant, extended and smooth. Eye socket is big, square, semicircle or round. Of course in some skulls, eye sockets are different on the view of smallness and bigness. Nostrils are wide and big. The width between the arches of molar bones is one of the main characteristics; especially that much width may show intercourse with Moguls and Turks. According to the studies on the cheek of Atropatgan inhabitants, it was determined that they have delicate and narrow cheeks. But Moguls and Turks have wide and big cheeks. This difference is clearer between Aryans and Turks by the color of skin.

Now we consider apparent characteristics of inhabitants in this area. As a result of field study in Atropatgan, the following outcomes have been obtained:

- People in this area have white or wheaten or to some extent brown and a little dark skin. According to this research, %95 of residents in mountainous areas, specially in Sahand Heights, have white or light color as if we can point to Kandovan village in south of Azerbaijan (Atropatgan).
- The size of head is the most important difference between people in Azerbaijan and other races. They have round heads. It has caused ellipsoid faces in this area as if the length of face is a little more than its width. People of Azerbaijan have small and semicircle heads on the view of length. The width of their head is less and narrow. The width and length of the head are a little different in cities and villages, but it is not significant.
- In the north of Azerbaijan, people have brownish black hair. Gray hair can be observed rarely until before 40 years old. The color of hair in %60 of Azeri's (Atropatgan) is between black and brown. 90% have thick hair and generally it is straight.
- People have high, wide, big, smooth and extended foreheads. The length of forehead is to some extend more and width is not completely extended. Most of

the time, it is wrinkled and have grown well.

- People in these areas have mostly thick eyebrows, and even sometimes it has covered above of the nose. But there are separate eyebrows, too. They have had semicircular, extended, and a little curved form.
- Eyes are to some extent round and generally brown. A few of them have brown-green and most of them have brown-blue eyes, too. Only a few ones have had reddish brown eyes. The light colors indicate the factor of blond among them.
- One of the most important physical features to determine a race is the length, width and a profile of nose. In regard to size, nose is big and a little smooth. It means that %80 of people have big and extended noses. Tip of nose is wide and lowly inclined to earth and others have medium and a few have small and delicate noses observed in women more.
- We can not give a special opinion about height. Maximum is between 160 or 190 cm and more than half are classified as medium. Moreover, there was a considerable variety. It has not unusual variety while sitting and it indicates the equal size between body and foot length.

To further test the hypothesis of Central Asian and Caucasian origin of Azaris we used special software designed for admixture analysis, Admix v2.0, which enables the evaluation of the relative genetic contribution of any source population in the origin of the given group ([http://web.unife.it/progetti/genetica/Isabelle/admix2\\_0.html](http://web.unife.it/progetti/genetica/Isabelle/admix2_0.html)). The genetic contribution of Turkmens and Adyghes is much less (4-5 times) while compared with the contribution of Persian-speakers (living, for instance, in Fars). Concluding, the results obtained indicate that genetic distance between the populations considered depends in the first instance on the geographic proximity than on the common linguistic background.

The Azaris, being situated between the Republic of Azerbaijan and Eastern Turkey, had more possibilities of genetic contacts with the closest neighbours, while gene flow between the populations of the same Republic and Eastern Turkey could have been rather limited.

Relying on the results, we can make rather strong inferences about the genetic relatedness between the populations under consideration. The principal one is that the Azaris have much weaker genetic affinity with Turkmens and Adyghes than with their immediate neighbours — Persians, Kurds, Azerbaijanis, and Armenians. We have all grounds to suggest that language replacement might have taken place through “elite dominance” phenomenon rather than “demic diffusion” model. In addition, the modal genetic variant of Turkmens (most frequently encountered in the given population), which could be considered as a signature of this group is

virtually absent in Azaris, thus confirming our findings about the mode of the language change.

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## CONCLUSION

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The Iranian peoples are an Indo-European ethnic-linguistic group, consisting of the speakers of Iranian languages, a major branch of the Indo-European language family, as such forming a branch of Indo-European-speaking peoples. Their historical areas of settlement were on the Iranian plateau, consisting of most of Iran and certain areas of Central Asia such as Tajikistan and most of Afghanistan, some parts of western Pakistan, northern Iraq and eastern Turkey, and scattered parts of the Caucasus Mountains. Their current distribution is spread across the Iranian plateau, stretching 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 termed the Iranian cultural continent, or Greater Persia by scholars, representing the extent of the Iranian languages and influence of the Persian People, through the geopolitical reach of the Persian empire. The origin of the Turkic-speaking population of the north-western provinces of Iran, the so-called Azaris, is the subject of long-year debate.

- The Azaris are the descendants of the Turkic ethnic groups migrated from Central Asia;
- They have an autochthonous origins;
- They are of Iranian origin; and
- They have mixed ethnic origin with unknown proportions of source populations' contribution.

The results show that Azaris have much weaker genetic affinity with the populations from Central Asia

and the Caucasus than with their immediate geographic neighbours. Relying on these outcomes one can suggest that language replacement (change) with regard to Azaris occurred through “elite dominance” mechanism rather than “demic diffusion” model.

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