Initial Polar Question Particle

Questions that elicit a response equivalent to ‘yes’ or ‘no’ are formed with an utterance-initial question particle in some languages. In Gojri as spoken in Afghanistan this is an option, as seen in (1),while similar polar questions in Gojri as spoken in Pakistan, as in (2), use intonation to differentiate them from corresponding statements. The initial polar question particle in Gojri of Afghanistan is mostly likely a loan from Iranian Dari that has been incorporated relatively recently into the language.

1. Gojri, Afghanistan [gju(a)] (Indo-Aryan)

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **aːjaː** | jeː | tiːr-iː | kitaːb | heː. |
| q | this | 2sg.gen-fsg | book(f) | be.prs.3sg |
| ‘Is this your book?’ (GJUa-DemAQ:004a) | | | | |

1. Gojri, Pakistan [gju(p)] (Indo-Aryan)

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ju | te:r-u | ba:l | he. |  |
| that | 2sg.gen-msg | ball(m) | be.prs.3sg |  |
| ‘Is that your ball?’ (GJUp-DemRN:005a) | | | | |

Approximately a third of the languages in the sample use initial polar question markers. These represent Indo-Aryan, Nuristani, Iranian, and Turkic. All of those are languages spoken in Afghanistan.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Feature value | # of varieties displaying it | % |
| Present | 20 | 34 |
| Absent | 39 | 66 |
| Indeterminate | 0 | 0 |