

Bukhari Chancery Persian Textbook Development

non-witnessed

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Grammatical Explanation

Turkic languages distinguish grammatically between events the agent saw with their own eyes, and events that were reported by someone else who is usually unspecified. Whereas languages such as English would accomplish this with an additional clause ("I heard that" or "they say that"), Central Asian Turkic and Persian achieve the same effect more succinctly with dedicated verbal modes. Whether or not the agent 'heard' the information, learned from a report, or somehow otherwise intuited it, does not affect form of this construction: the dedicated grammatical forms are indicative of a categorical distinction in terms of the kind of information being conveyed.

Not surprisingly, the non-witnessed mood is especially common in surviving historical official documents because the person writing the document (a scribe working in the central chancery) is generally not writing from firsthand experience.

Central Asian Turki indicates that event was not witnessed in the present with ekan (ئەكەن) for the verb 'to be'. For instance: siz vafodor ekansiz: '(I have heard that) you are loyal.'

The particle ekan / ئەكەن can also be paired with the perfect verbal adjective -gan (گەن / غان) to indicate hearsay about past action. For instance: bu kishi og'rini urgan ekan: 'this man hit the thief (but I did not see the event myself)'

The -gan ekan construction is similar in meaning to the 'subjective past tense,' which conjoins the present -ip adverbial with the past tense verb 'to be'. For instance: poezd kelipti: '(I heard that) the train arrived'.

Central Asian Persian incorporates this logic by combining the past participle of the main verb and the present perfect of the auxiliary verb "to be." For instance: او را دیده بوده است: '(I) heard that he had seen him / her.' There is a construction that has a similar meaning in the 'durative' (ماضی نقلی استمری), describing a continuous action that often takes place in the present (though past / present / future temporality of the action depends on the sentence context), which makes it uncommon in historical texts (which generally describe finite actions in the past): می کرده است, '(s)he is (apparently) doing'.

Unlike some of the other features of Central Asian Persian discussed in this book, the non-witnessed mode is not categorically absent in either classical or modern Iranian Persian: it is described in some grammar manuals and sometimes appears in modern media (though usually without the final است in کرده بوده است. However, this mode is more rarely used, and generally requires additional context to clarify the non-witnessed character of the action (e.g., appearing in narration).

In some classical texts, this form may or may not clearly indicate non-witnessed mode. For instance, this example from Bayhaqi's history indicates some degree of uncertainty or conjecture: [خواجه احمد] دانسته بوده است که خداوند رأی شکار کرده است ("[Khwaja Ahmad] surmised that his lord intended to go hunting."

However, in most other cases, the construction as used in classical Persian texts indicates that an action took place in the distant, uncertain past. (In other words, the same construction of the past participle of the main verb and the present perfect of būdan often carries a different meaning than it does in Central Asian Persian and modern Tajik.) For instance: عرب...طاووس ندیده بوده اند ("The Arabs had never, ever seen a peacock.") Or a more recent example: جدش پنجاه سال عمر کرده بوده است ("His ancestor, [who lived sometime in the distant, indeterminate past], had lived to the age of fifty years." 20)

By contrast, the non-witness mode is ubiquitous in Central Asian Persian documents, in modern Tajik (both spoken and formal), and — importantly — does not require any additional context (e.g., 'I heard that...') to clarify that the action was non-witnessed.

Examples

چنین آگاهی نموده بوده اند که: bukh:

uzb: shunday **xabar bergan ekanlarki**

fars: چنین آمده است که

eng: (I was told that) **it was made known** that...

Comments:

- This is an extremely common way for information to be conveyed in official documents: the scribing author neither specifies which individuals conveyed the information, nor does he claim to have heard it with his own ears.
- In the modern Iranian Persian example the passive construction for 'it is said' (آمده است) approximates this non-witnessed meaning; گفته شده would convey the same meaning.

bukh: دعا گویشان اینغلامشانرا دیده بوده است

uzb: Janobi oliyingiz bu kaminani **ko'rgan ekan**

fars:

eng: I **have seen** [not with my own eyes, but based on what others reported] these servants of the sovereign.

Comments:

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- The -shān in this sentence refers back to the figure of the sovereign, in this case the Amir of Bukhara: the humble prayer-sayer (du‘ā-gū) refers to the author ('I') of the document whose prayers bless the sovereign; the 'slave' (ghulām) is most likely a slave in the metaphorical sense by this time period, though the term is ambiguous.

bukh: ازینوجه پرستوف دیوانه باغ استفسار نموده بوده است که مسمّاء مذکوره کشاده خط بنام خودش بوده گی را نشان داده است

uzb: shu sababdan Devona Bog'dagi nozir (pristavi) so'rab-so'rishtirganda, mazkur ayol o'zining nomiga yozilgan ochiq xatni **ko'rsatgan ekan**

fars: به همین دلیل، ناظر دیوان باغ بازجویی کرده بوده است و زن مورد اشاره گشادنامه را که به نام خودش بوده است نشان داده است

eng: For this reason, the Pristav of Divana-Bagh conducted an inquiry and exa

Comments:

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References

- Uyghur: De Jong (pp. 108-110, ch. XIV) treats the -ipti construction as "subjective past tense," which is "used when the present relevance of an event or act in the past has to be stressed. It implies that the speaker's words are based on hearsay, and/or that the speaker has become aware of something unexpected."
- Central Asian Persian: Perry (pp. 227-234) offers the most complete discussion of this mode, and suggests the terminology "non-witnessed mode" we have adopted.
- Iranian Persian: Ḥasan Aḥmadī Gīvī (p. 459) describes this form as the 'remote past' (māžī-yi ab'ad) the speaker usually conveys the occurrence of action through a quotation and wants to highlight that they were absent and unaware of the event at the time of its occurrence but learned about it afterwards. Gīvī further clarifies that the concepts of witnessed and non-witnessed or awareness and unawareness are weak and understated in classical Persian texts.