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DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OF THE TAJIK DIALECT OF KULĀB

Abstract. Spoken in Kulāb and neighboring districts of Tajikistan, on the right bank of the Oxus River, Kulabi is a distinct dialect of Tajik, classified as Southern Tajik. This paper explores selected aspects of Kulabi phonology, morphology, syntax, and lexis, emphasizing features that set the dialect apart from standard Tajik. Notably, Kulabi exhibits unique traits within three major sound isoglosses — raised prenasal $\bar{a}$, fronted $\bar{u}$, and pharyngeal consonants — positioning it as distinctive on the eastern corner of the Iranian linguistic landscape¹.

Keywords: Iranian philology; Tajik language; Kulabi; historical phonology; pharyngeal consonants; morphosyntax; lexis; endangered dialects

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ОТЛИЧИТЕЛЬНЫЕ ЧЕРТЫ ТАДЖИКСКОГО ДИАЛЕКТА КУЛЯБ

Аннотация. Распространенный в Кулябе и соседних районах Таджикистана, на правом берегу реки Оксус, куляби является отдельным диалектом таджикского языка, классифицируемым как южнотаджикский. В этой статье рассматриваются отдельные аспекты фонологии, морфологии, синтаксиса и лексики куляби, подчеркивая особенности, которые отличают диалект от стандартного таджикского. В частности, куляби демонстрирует уникальные черты в трех основных звуковых изоглоссах — приподнятый преназальный *ā*, передний *ū* и фарингальные согласные — что позиционирует его как отличный в восточном углу иранского лингвистического ландшафта.

Ключевые слова: иранская филология; таджикский язык; кулаби; историческая фонология; фарингальные согласные; морфосинтаксис; лексика; исчезающие диалекты

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Introduction

The district of Kulāb (Kulob)² in Tajikistan includes highlands in the north and fertile plains in the south, irrigated by the Sorxāb River, which flows southward to join the Panj River, the upper course of the Oxus or Amu Darya. Formerly a distinct province, Kulāb was merged with Kurgan Tepe in 1991 to form the new province of Xatlon, leading to numerous geographic name changes.³ This study uses the traditional toponymy of Soviet-era Tajikistan.

² For Kulāb, see Borjian 2005a.

³ For Xatlon, See Borjian 2018.

Kulāb forms the greater part of the medieval province of Xottal or Xatlān. The earliest known inhabitants of the region were Iranian, and the pre-Islamic rulers held titles such as Xottalān šāh or Xottalān xudāh.⁴ The original local language, likely of East Iranian stock, eventually receded eastward into the neighboring Pamirs. Persian must have emerged the dominant language in the ninth and tenth centuries, during the Samanid rule from Bukhara. Archaic elements in Kulabi, similar to those in other Tajik varieties, date back to this early period. Subsequent linguistic developments, including the vowel shifts illustrated in Table 1, occurred over the following centuries, largely due to Kulāb's relative isolation in the mountains. The shift from *āN* to *un*, which is characteristic of Kulabi among eastern Persian varieties, likely developed independently from a similar change in western Persian.

At some point in history, there may have been linguistic contact with Arabic in Kulabi, as suggested by the presence of pharyngeal sounds. This contact could have occurred during the Arab rule under the early Abbasids or, less likely, due to an unrecorded influx of populations. However, the possibility of independent development of pharyngeals in the language, although even less likely, should not be ruled out.

Kulāb has a long history of interaction with Turkic peoples. Medieval sources report the presence of Turkic tribes in the region, and in modern times, nomadic Uzbek tribes, especially the Uzbek Laqay, have established themselves in the province, with their descendants still residing in southern Kulāb. The region features Turkic toponyms, such as the Tēraklitāg and Qarātāg mountain ranges (< Turk. *dağ* 'mountain'), while the hydronym doublets Qizilsu ~ Sorxāb and Yāxsu ~ Āqsu (< Turk. *su* 'water') attest to a degree of cultural hybridity. A notable result of this Turko-Iranic fusion is Gurughli, characterized by the adoption of Kōroğlu tales during interethnic interactions with Turkic populations.⁵ Furthermore, the Kulabi dialect has absorbed numerous Turkic elements, impacting both its vocabulary and morphosyntax (as illustrated in sentences 4 and 5 below). Nevertheless, Kulabi remains less Turkified than Bukharan Tajik, which appears to be metamorphosing into Uzbek.

The formation of Tajikistan in 1924 seemingly slowed the process of Turkification but triggered a new linguistic dynamic. With the introduction of modern, universal education⁶ and mass media, standard Tajik⁷ began to dilute local Tajik dialects, and Kulabi has not been exempt from this dialect leveling. In the age of social media, Kulabi is now classified as an endangered dialect.

⁴ For Xottal, see Bosworth 2009.

⁵ For a discussion on the origins of Tajik Gurughli, see Borjian, forthcoming

⁶ On the development of education in Tajikistan, see Borjian 1998.

⁷ On the formation and development of standard Tajik, see Borjian 2006a.

Some features of Kulabi documented by Roza L. Nemenova in the early 1950s are now unfamiliar to my informants in the 21st century.

* * *

This paper explores the distinctive features that set Kulabi apart from standard Tajik (hereafter Taj.), as outlined by John Perry (2005). Detailed documentation of the Baljovān and Xāvaling/Xavālēng dialects, situated in the remote high valley of Āb-e Mazār northwest of the Kulāb district, has been published by Nemenova (1954, 1956). Additional linguistic insights are drawn from Atobulloev (1979–1984). Unless otherwise specified, data are drawn from these publications. My fieldwork conducted in Tajikistan in 2007 and in New York in 2012 primarily aimed to verify data gathered by Nemenova.

Moreover, there is a wealth of orally transmitted literature from northern Kulāb, performed by professional storytellers, most notably the Gurughli tales,⁸ several volumes of which have been published.⁹ While these texts are significant for the study of lexicon and morphosyntax, their utility in phonology is limited, as the published editions often simplify the dialect's phonetic nuances.

Linguistic Position

Kulabi is a distinct variety of Tajik spoken in Kulāb and its neighboring districts. It is typically classified alongside the dialects of Qarātegin, situated along the middle course of the Vaxš River, and the Heṣār valley near Dushanbe, under the category of Southern Tajik.¹⁰ Southern Tajik dialects are noted for their lesser degree of influence from Uzbek, evident in both phonological and morphological aspects, compared to Northern Tajik dialects. Kulabi itself can be further categorized into the following subgroups:¹¹

(1) Northern Kulabi, spoken in the upper and middle Yāxsu and Sorxāb/Qezelsu, downstream to the confluence of the two rivers;

(2) Western Kulabi, dominant on the left bank of the Vaxš river, from Baljovān in the north to Sangtōda in the south (in Danğara District);

⁸ On Tajik Gurughli (Gūrūḡlī), see Borjian, forthcoming.

⁹ Several Gurughli repertoires from various performers have been published; for comprehensive list, see Borjian, forthcoming. For transcribed excerpts with English translation, see Borjian 2023; idem, forthcoming.

¹⁰ Rastorgueva, 1960; Abdulloev 1979–84.

¹¹ Atobulloev 1979–84, IV: 220; Nemenova 1956: 66–77; cf. Rastorgueva 1964.

(3) Southern Kulabi, indigenous to the southern plains of the Kulāb district;

(4) Kulabi spoken by the immigrant communities formed due to resettlement policies of mid-twentieth century, along the rivers Vaxš, Kāfernehān, and Varzāb.

Vowels

The vocalic system of Kulabi (Kul.) consists of three stable vowels /e o u/, which do not vary in quality even when unstressed, and three unstable vowels /a i ɪ/, which may vary in quality when unstressed. The vowel /ɪ/ (not attested in all Kulabi varieties) may be described as close unrounded central [ɪ] (defined as back [ʉ] in Russian sources); it reduces in duration or disappears when unstressed. Minimal pairs include:

bur ‘chalk; white’ ≠ *bir-* ‘cut’ ≠ *bor* ‘load’;
ser ‘satiated’ ≠ *sir* ‘secret’ ≠ *sir* ‘track; roof purlin’.

Diachronically, Kulabi has rounded the original Persian ā to /o/ and retains the front majhul ē, as /e/. However, unlike standard Tajik, Kulabi has merged the back majhul ō and ū into /u/; for example, Kul. *ruz*, Taj. *rūz* ‘day’ < rōz; Kul., Taj. *dur* ‘far’ < dūr. See Table 1.

In Northern and Western Kulabi, prenasal ā has shifted to /u/ (e.g., *nun* ‘bread’, *xuna* ‘house’, *dumod* ‘son-in-law’), a development that is unusual for eastern Persian varieties in Central Asia and Afghanistan,¹² yet common on the western Iranian Plateau. This shift is found not only in colloquial Persian but also in Mazandarani, Lori, Lārestāni, the Fārs language group, the Central Plateau language group, and partially in Komisenian. Notably, Ossetic exhibits a similar shift from āN to /on/, as seen in дон ‘water’ (< dānu-) ‘watercourse’.

The phoneme /ɪ/ originates principally from the Classical Persian u, as in *di* ‘two’, *gul* ‘flower’, *biz* ‘goat’, *dixtar* ‘daughter’, *kirta* ‘shirt’, *sirx* ‘red’, *xisir* (< xusur) ‘husband’s father’, *umr* (< umr) ‘lifetime’, *mékina* ‘he does’ (< mēkunad), and probably *livik* ‘little finger’. There are other sources for this sound: *gird* (< gird) ‘round’, *fireb* (< firēb) ‘deceit’, *nišeb* (< nišēb) ‘declivity, downslope’, *dist* (< dast) ‘hand’, *bīhor* (< bahār) ‘spring’, *kiniz* (< kanīz) ‘maid’, *xidim* (< x^wad-am) ‘myself’, *širin* (< šīrīn) ‘sweet’, *omixta* (< āmōxta) ‘accustomed’.¹³

¹² Hazaragi Persian in central Afghanistan has this feature as well.

¹³ Cf. Sokolova et al. 1952: 157–158, 165–167; Efimov et al. 1982: 51–52; Nemenova 1956; Scarfagna 2021: 53.

Table 1 hypothesizes vowel diachrony in comparison to standard Tajik and Classical Persian. A progressive chain of vowel shift in Kulabi can be idealized as follows.

$$\bar{a} > o \rightarrow \bar{o} > u \rightarrow u > \iota$$

Table 1. Vowel Diachrony

Classical Persian	Tajik	Kulabi
ī	i	<i>i</i>
ī̄		
ē	e	<i>e</i>
a	a	<i>a</i>
ā	o	<i>o</i>
ō	ũ	<i>u</i>
ū	u	
u		<i>l</i>

Consonants

Characteristic consonants are the pharyngeal stop /ʕ/ ([ʕ]) and fricative /ħ/ ([ħ]), occurring mostly in words of Arabic origin, including ‘*ayb* ‘flaw’, ‘*alaf* ‘fodder’, ‘*ši* ‘la’ ‘flame’, ‘*da* ‘vo’ ‘claim’, ‘*mi* ‘*alim* ‘teacher’; ‘*hozir* ‘now’, ‘*ħauli* ‘house’, ‘*ħikimat* ‘wisdom’, ‘*soħib* ‘owner’, and proper names, such as ‘*Raħim*. These pharyngeals also occur, un-etymologically, in a few native words: ‘*asp* ‘horse’, ‘*imed* ‘hope’; ‘*ħamsoya* ‘neighbor’, ‘*ħınar* ‘art’. Interestingly, the pharyngealized form for ‘horse’, as ‘*asb*, occurs far and wide within the Iranian linguistic domain: in the Lori of Dezful-Šuštār, Khonsāri, and Caucasian Tat.¹⁴

It is worthy of note that Kulabi stands isolated on the east side of Iranic linguistic map as having pharyngeals.¹⁵ This feature overlaps with two other aforementioned isoglosses: $\bar{u} > \iota$ (also an isolated feature on the map) and $\bar{a}N > uN$ (shared only by Hazaragi). On the entire Iranic map, as Davide Scarfagna¹⁶ demonstrated, the three isoglosses co-occur, alongside Kulab, in Dezful-Šuštār, Qeshm island and Kumzar, Khonsār, and Tat speaking area (even if the frequency of $\bar{u} > i$ is much lower in the last two locations). These localities are all on the southwestern Plateau or in the Caucasus, far away from Kulāb. How would one account for this oddity?

¹⁴ Borjian, 2021a.

¹⁵ On the distribution of pharyngeals in Iranian, see Scarfagna 2021.

¹⁶ Scarfagna 2021.

In transmitting Arabic uvular stop *q* and fricative *ġ*, Kulabi is not compatible with the etymologically designed Tajik orthography; compare Kul. *foriq* to Taj. *foriġ* ‘free, released’ (< Ar.-Pers. *fāriġ*).¹⁷ The voiced bilabial approximant *w* [β, ~ ʋ] is allophonic to /v/ within and across Kulabi varieties.

Kulabi tends to elide consonants. Initial /h/ shows considerable instability: (*h*)*amra* ‘companion’, (*h*)*ezum* ‘firewood’, *amóli* (< *hamin ħālā*) ‘right now’, *toli* (< *tā ħālā*) ‘by now’; syllable-final /h/ is subject to elision, as in *memun* ‘guest’ and *ni* ‘nine’, but resurfaces when the word is suffixed, as in *nihum* ‘ninth’. In Southern Kulabi /h/ is lost entirely, and the initial /y/ is dropped usually, as in *čira* (< *čihra*) ‘face’, *od* (< *yād*) ‘memory’, *oft* (< *yāft*) ‘he found’. Lenition of the original Persian *b* occurs in intervocalic and final positions: *tawar* ‘axe’, *ziwun* ‘tongue’, *sew* ‘apple’.

Contraction due to the loss of /d/ and final /n/ and /r/, among others, is characteristic in Kulabi; examples are *aki* (< *aknun*) ‘now’, *íqa* (< *in-qad(a)r*) ‘this/so much’, *ita(ri)* (< *in-ṭawr(i)*) ‘this way, such’), *bézi*, *bez-ay* (< *ba ġayr az*) ‘other than, except for’; elision is especially active in verb forms, e.g., *meta* (< *mēdihad*) ‘he gives’, *kan*, *kahan* (< *kardand*) ‘they did’, *kay*, *kaay*, *karday* (< *kardaast*) ‘he has done’, *ka(d)es(t)ay*, *kistay* (< Taj. *karda istoda ast*) ‘he is doing’. Omitting is allowed in spontaneous speech as far as it creates no ambiguity.

Adpositions and Enclitics

The suffix *-(r)a* (< *-rā*) is multifunctional: (a) marking the direct object (example 1); (b) supplementing the prepositions *ba(y)* ‘with’ and *ay* (another form of *az*) ‘from’ to mark the indirect object (examples 2, 3); and (c) used as attributive passive in lieu of the *ežāfa* marker, an Uzbek Turkic construction (examples 4, 5).

- (1) *gov-it-a* *firuš*
 cow-PC.2SG-RA sell.PR
 ‘Sell your cow!’

- (2) *ami* *bing-a* *ba* *tiramo-ra* *soz* *me-kin-em*
 this.very roof-RA in fall-RA fix DUR-do.PR-1PL
 ‘We’ll repair this very roof in the autumn.’

¹⁷ A comparable trait in *q* versus *ġ* occurs in Kerman. See Borjian 2017.

- (3) *dar-a maḥkam kī, murd-em ay xīnīki-ra!*
 door-RA firm do.SG! die.PST-1PL from coldness-RA
 ‘Close the door tightly; we would die from cold!’
- (4) *duxtar-a dast-aš*¹⁸
 girl-RA hand-PC.3SG
 ‘the girl’s hand’
- (5) *Savzamo-ra šu-š bisyor mardak-i xub bida-y*
 PN-RA husband-PC.3SG very man.DIMIN-EZ good be.PP-
 be.PR.3SG
 ‘Sabzamāh’s husband is (known as) a very good fellow.’

The polysemous *da* (seldom *dar*) ‘in, at’ functions as both preposition and postposition. It may signify direction (example 6), place (example 7), orientation (example 8), or duration (example 9).

- (6) *usto Šarīf čuv-a ovard dar zīmin partoft-iš*
 artisan PN wood-RA bring.PST in earth throw.PST-PC.3SG
 ‘Cobbler Šarīf brought the stick [and] threw it on the ground.’
- (7) *mi bi-y-o-m zan-im {xuna-i oča-š}-da*
 I SBJV-EPEN-come.PR-1SG wife-PC.1SG house-EZ mother-PC.3SG-in
 ‘I’ll come [with] my wife to her mother’s house.’
- (8) *amu-ra Mošarīf-da bi-te-š*
 that.very-RA PN-to SBJV-give.PR-PC.3SG
 ‘Give the very one to Māhšarīf.’
- (9) *pórīna maylis-a se so‘at-da tamom kard-em*
 last.year gathering-RA 3 hour-in whole do.PST-1PL
 ‘Last year, we finished the meeting in three hours.’

The postposition *da* also forms circompositions with *ay/az* ‘from; than’ in comparative compounds (example 10). As an adverbial enclitic, *-da* implies emotion or emphasis (examples 11, 12). Note optional omission of the copulative verb in example 10.

- (10) *ma ay ti-da kalun*
 I from you.SG-DA big
 ‘I (am) am older than you.’

¹⁸ Lit. ‘of-girl her-hand’.

- (11) *bira-da* *bi-r-em!*
 come.SG!-DA SBJV-go.PR-1PL
 ‘Come on, let’s get going.’¹⁹
- (12) *inĵa* *mun-iš-da* *bišuy-aš* ²⁰
 here put.PR-PC.3SG-DA that.she.wash-PC.3SG
 ‘Just leave it here, she’d wash it.’

The instrumental/comitative preposition *ba*, *bo* can also be used as postposition, e.g., *Ispand bo* ‘with Espand’.

Other frequent postpositions are *qatī* ‘together with’ (equaling Taj. *kāti*)²¹ (example 13); *-wori* ‘like, resembling; as if’ (cf. Māzandarāni *-vāri* ‘id.’), analogous to standard Tajik *-barin*²² (examples 14, 15); and *āfti* ‘like’ (example 16). Also note the peculiar *sin* (cf. Lori *si*) (example 17).

- (13) *qati-m* *ĵang* *kardá-y*
 with-PC.1SG war do.PP-be.PR.3SG
 ‘He has fought alongside me.’
- (14) *u* *ma-wori* *sinfi* *čor-um* *me-xon-a*
 he I-like grade-EZ 4-ORDINAL DUR-read.PR-3SG
 ‘Like me, he is in the fourth grade.’
- (15) *‘imr-i* *odam* {*asp-i* *davand*} *-wori* *raftá* *istodá-s*
 lifespan-EZ human horse-EZ running-like go.PP stand.PP-be.PR.3SG
 ‘A man’s life passes by like a galloping horse.’
- (16) *aft-i* *ažduhor* *fayrod* *kad* ²³
 like-EZ dragon clamour do.PST
 ‘He shouted like a dragon.’
- (17) *sin-um* *guftak* ²⁴ *ki...* ²⁵
 for-PC.1SG he.said that
 ‘he told me that...’

¹⁹ ~ Colloquial Pers. *de-boro berim!*

²⁰ *bišuy* is a contraction of Taj. *bišūyad* ‘that she wash’.

²¹ Perry 2005: 91.

²² Perry 2005: 101.

²³ Rajab 1962: 42.

²⁴ The diminutive *-ak* is a filler in the song.

²⁵ Rajab 1962: 369.

The particles *ku* and *ala* imply enticement or allurement; for example, *ku ma biza!* ‘Come on, let’s play [it]!’; *hadaha kini ala!* ‘Come on, hurry up!’. As enclitic, *ku* is used to express righteous indignation or desperate hope: *hozir meoyad-ku!* ‘He had better come soon’.

The interrogative clitic *-mi*, having been borrowed from Uzbek into most Tajik dialects,²⁶ play little role in Kulabi proper, though the Kulabi immigrants in Heşār have adopted it as a common yes–no question marker: *xud-iş marġeloní-mi?* ‘Is he a Marġelāni?’.

Pronouns

There are two sets of personal pronouns: freestanding singular *mi/ma*, *tí/tu*, *u*, plural *mo*, *šimo*, *uho/uvo*; and enclitic singular *-m*, *-t*, *-š*, plural *-mun*, *-tun*, *-šun*, with the infix *-i/-u-* when attached to consonants.

Verb Morphology

The dialect employs the regular causative formant *-un/-on-*, suffixed to the present stem, as in (trans.) *xambun-* : *xambund-* versus (intrans.) *xamb-* : *xambid-* ‘dismount’. An allomorphic formant, frequently used, is *-urun/-orun-*, as in *kuč-urun-*, the present stem of *kučurundan* ‘to cause to migrate’ and *aft-orun-*, the present stem of *aftorundan* ‘to make fall’. This peculiar formant can be explained diachronically as a doubling²⁷ of the plain causative formant *-un/-on-* (< *-ān-*) and rhotacism of the nasal consonant of the first element; hence, *xand-or-un-d-an* (< **xand-ān-ān-īd-an*) ‘to make (someone) laugh’. If this analysis is correct, the stability of the historical *ā* in the *-or-* component suggests that this double causative formation may have occurred before prenasal *ā* was raised to *u*.

Personal suffixes are singular *-im/-am*, *-i*, *-a*, plural *-em*, *-en*, *-an*. The third person singular ending is zero in the preterit and *-s/-y* (< *ast* ‘is’), suffixed to the past participle, in the present perfect (examples 5, 13, 15). Examples: *méra* / *mérav-a* ‘he goes’, *raft-Ø* ‘he went’, *raftá-y/-s* ‘he has gone’.

The third person singular copula is usually the clitic *-ay* (< *ast*), as in *dusturxon partoftagi-ay* ‘The tablecloth is spread’. Its locative-existential version is *hay*, which is a word of high frequency.

²⁶ Cf. Perry 2005: 294.

²⁷ Cf. “double-causative” forms in Taleqani, e.g., *ba-suj-ānd-en* ‘burn [it]!’; Borjian 2021b, §I.4.7.

Aspectual and modal prefixes are the imperfective *mi-/me-* and subjunctive *bi-*, as in *mumbiren* ‘you_{PL} (will) die’, *bimbiren* ‘that you_{PL} die’. In some Kulabi varieties, the two prefixes may coexist to produce a modal shade: *na-me-bi-šin-i?* ‘Won’t you sit?’; *me-bi-gu-m-šin, mexandan* ‘Should I tell them, they will laugh’. The prefix *bi-* may signify an incipient action (example 7).

Periphrastic forms are analogous to standard Tajik even if contracted forms often conceal the underlying construction. The progressive aspect is constructed using conjugated perfect forms of ‘stand’ as auxiliary and the past participle of the main verb: *raftá istodá-y/-s* ‘he is going’, *raftá ista^há/istodá bid* ‘he was going’. The inferential mood, used to report a non-witnessed event without confirming it, is the norm in Northern and Western Kulabi; examples: (imperfective) *mé-rafta-y/-s* ‘he is (evidently) going, used to go, will be going’; (pluperfect) *raftá bestam, raftá bidástay* ‘I/he (evidently) had gone’.

The past participle formant *-gī*, used in the perfect and the conjectural mood in standard Tajik, has rather low frequency in Kulabi.

The future participle connotes intention, as in *girim šidim* (= Taj. *giriftanī šudam*) ‘I wanted to seize/get [it]’.

For over a millennium, Persian has shown a strong tendency toward replacing simple verbs with compound verbs. However, the Kulabi dialect appears to be reversing this trend, showcasing a rich inventory of simple verbs not found in standard Tajik or Persian, with some even serving as false friends. Notably, some Kulabi verbs seem to be innovations, such as the verb *čangidan*, derived from the noun *čang* ‘harp’, which has verbalized to mean ‘to play the harp,’ as in *mečangan-u čanqovuzo-ra* ‘they play on the harp’.²⁸ A sample of these unique verbs is included in the list below, highlighting the distinctive lexicon in Kulabi.

Some Verbs

bondan ‘to put; to leave’ (for Taj. *mondan*)

bonidan ‘to look after, fatten up’ (cf. suffix *-bān* ‘protector’)

čalundan ‘to mix’

čangidan ‘to scratch, to play the harp’

čapidan ‘to plaster; to smear’

čiptidan ‘to slide, slip, glide’

čokidan ‘to smoke’

čovidan ‘to touch’ (for Taj. *palmosidan*)

dirušidan ‘to scrape’

‘eqidan ‘to wither’

fīčidan, fījidan ‘to suck, drink’

fir(u)madan ‘to come down, get off, decrease’ (cf. Taj. *faromadan*)

²⁸ Rajab 1963: 148. *-u* is a prosodic filler.

fırkıdan ‘to peel off (e.g., a dried blister)’
firovardan ‘to bring down’
foristan ‘to like, delight, be agreeable’ (cf. Taj. *foridan*)
furidan ‘to throw’
ġılıqıdan ‘to sob’
ĵogıdan ‘to bark, cry’
ĵušıdan ‘to tremble’
kalofondan ‘to carry out’
kalowıdan ‘to totter, rock’
kalıxıdan ‘to cough lightly and continuously’
kiroĵıdan ‘to cluck (the noise that a hen makes)’
kovondan ‘to snare (someone) into disclosing a secret’²⁹
laqıdan ‘to lap up, take up with the tongue’
lawıdan ‘to plaster, coat’
limbıdan ‘to collapse, implode; to beat up’³⁰
lıqıdan ‘to skid’ (cf. Taj. *laqqıdan*)
lışpondan ‘to make slip or glide’
lutıdan ‘to struggle, flounder about’
pesondan ‘to look angrily (at someone)’
quĵıdan ‘to drink’
şakıdan ‘to rub, to smear’
şilambıdan ‘to collapse, implode’
şiko(yi)dan/şıkoy- ‘to open; to spread’
şınundan ‘to set, seat’
surondan ‘to throw, hurl’
tuqıdan ‘to hide’
turıdan ‘to startle, to shy’
vardan ‘to bring’
varmosıdan ‘to swell, bulge’
vinĵıdan (tr.) ‘to crumple’
vireĵıdan (intr.) ‘to crumple, buckle, wrinkle, whither’
vızırımbıdan ‘to blister, swell’
*xambıdan*³¹ ‘to come down,³² get off or down, dismount’
xelıdan ‘to pound; to rub’
zaxıdan ‘to cough’
zgaştan/zgar- ‘to pass’ (<guzar-)
zuqıdan ‘to blame’

²⁹ Pers. *zir-e zabān-e kas-i-rā kaşıdan*.

³⁰ Cf. Kabuli Pers. *lumbıdan*, otherwise Pers. *rombıdan*.

³¹ Cf. *xanbānıdan* ‘to mimic’, *xonbıdan* ‘to clap’ (Borhān-e qāte’)

³² Cf. *fır(u)madan*, above.

Syntax

In Kulabi, quote may precede or follow the verb of speech. In other words, to incorporate quotations into the narrator's speech, the verbs 'to say' or 'to ask' can either follow the quoted string or be placed after an introductory or explanatory phrase (see examples 18–22). This construction is also found in standard Tajik and has been described by John Perry as "Turkic-style".³³ However, it appears not only in Kulabi — which is less influenced by Turkic than the Northern Tajik dialects — but also in folktales collected from neighboring Iranian languages of the Pamirs and Hindu Kush, which remained relatively isolated for centuries (see examples 23–26). Additionally, in early Persian poetry, the verb of speech is occasionally interposed within the quotation (see examples 26 and 27).

- (18) *«dar-m-a huy bumoni,» guft, «agar, metim-ut xela tanga-vu zar»*³⁴
 'Should you open the door to me', he said, 'I'll give you a lot of cash and gold'.
- (19) *Bobo Qambar galavon ki did, «či meguy,» gufta, «dodar?» pursid*³⁵
 When Bobo Qambar the herder saw [it], 'What do you say, brother', he asked.
- (20) *«guš kun, — guft, — e hokim šar»*³⁶
 'Listen', he said, 'O the ruler of the city!'
- (21) *«e qirum, — mega, — amrai bar
 tu hasti čil gaz rora durpar! ...»*³⁷
 'O my horse', he says, 'my companion (?), you are capable of jumping over a span of forty yards'.
- (22) *ay kuza sado omadas: «ey kambağal,» guftas, «šimo iqa diqqat našaven, ...»*³⁸
 From the jar (supposedly) came a voice: 'O poor man', it would say, 'don't be so curious!'.
- (23) *Yidgha: Žiŋkiko xalās šui, nayeŋ xuṛet. «Šābaš,» žiŋkiki ištȳō, «šābaš,
 wo mən xalās kəṛet [...]]»*
 The woman got rid of them, and they ate the food. 'Well done',
 said the woman. 'Well done. You have freed me of them'.³⁹

³³ Perry 2005: 322.

³⁴ Rajab 1962: 42.

³⁵ Rajab 1962: 39.

³⁶ Rajab 1963: 148.

³⁷ Rajab 1963: 105.

³⁸ Nemenova 1956: 145.

³⁹ Morgenstierne 1938: 177, §§ 112–13.

- (24) Munji: «yo ilóyi!» — *šta*, — «*ma šti fārmi?*»
‘O God’, he said, ‘what could it be?’⁴⁰
- (25) Sarikoli: *Armýtík mas yot xы, a-rápc-i wád*: «*a, žed rapc,*» — *-i levd*, —
«*šič waz a-tá na zonam-o!*»
Armytik came and grabbed the fox: ‘O thief fox’, he said, ‘this time
I won’t kill you’.⁴¹
- (26) Wakhi:⁴² *jandəvəš plos get, jandəvəš ki ji dʒaj rejda, xuʃigəvəš kert javərər
ta da xunən tse baf garm nezd: je, ʃejd plos-ə-n dra get-əvə-ʃ, ʃat!*⁴³
They used the carpet as a blanket, and when visiting a place, they
celebrated in the warmth of the house: ‘Hey, they put a new carpet’,
they said.
- (27) Persian: *zamāna pand-ē āzādwār dād marā... // “ba rōz-i nēk-i kasān,”
guft, “gām max^war-ē zinhār // basā kas-ē ke ba rōz-i tu ārzōmand ast*”⁴⁴
The path of life offered me a noble piece of advice: ‘Beware of envying
the good lives of others,’ it said. ‘There may be those who envy yours.’
- (28) Persian: “*man-am,*” *guft, “bar taxt-i gardān sipihr // ham-am xašm u ʃang
ast u ham dād u mihr...*”⁴⁵
‘I am’, he said, ‘on the throne of the rotating sphere. I am cross and
belligerent, but I also embody justice and kindness’.

Lexis

A systematic study of vocabulary in Kulabi or other regional idioms of Tajik is lacking. The following glossary is sampled from the corpus of the prominent Kulabi storyteller Qurbonali Rajab.⁴⁶

The corpus reveals at least two principal directions: *aftov-zamin* ‘east’ and *aftov-paronpar* ‘west.’ Their significance lies in the fact that the four cardinal points of the compass are poorly attested in Iranian languages. The toponymy of remote places includes *Ispion*, *Roq*, and *Silon*.

⁴⁰ Gryunberg 1972: 103, § 8.

⁴¹ Pakhalina 1966: 91, § 2.

⁴² However, my colleague Daniel Kaufman could not find any example of postposed *ʃat* ‘said’ in the extensive Wakhi corpus he compiled at the Endangered Language Alliance in New York.

⁴³ Reinhold 2006, Text 2, no. 43.

⁴⁴ Rudaki, 10th century.

⁴⁵ Ferdowsi, *Shahnama*, ed. Khaleghi, Manuchehr, line 7.

⁴⁶ Source: Rajab I (1962), II (1963). See Rajab’s biography in Borjani: forthcoming.

The dialect is rich in onomatopoeic sounds, most of which have the suffix *-ast*, as seen in *buvvast*, *ġuldurras*, *qurast*, *tungast*, and *humba(y)*.

Contraction, as pointed out above, is commonplace in the corpus, evident in forms like *baxči*, *hamoli*, and *pa'at*. However, *čum* 'eye' seems to be dialectal. Metathesis is noted in words like *muxšul* and *hutyot*. Additionally, there are instances of mispronunciation of literary words, such as *benusuli*, *mullozora*, and *halil*.

Glossary⁴⁷

aftov-paronpar — sundown, west

aftov-zamin — east

alamon — plunderer, highway thief (<Ar. al-amān 'have mercy!')

arġušt — dance

ba — (adposition) *Hasan gašta-gašta mekova // yag jo-i xub ba čen-uš meyova*
'Hasan carefully searches and finds a place appropriate for him' (I: 77)

bajo — hidden

batov — flawed; *čunki avzor batov mekuna // doimo u šaxov mekuna* 'the gun is defective because it is wrought brittle' (I: 89)

baxči — for what (contraction of *bahri či* or *baxš či*)

baxš — (preposition) for; *kašol mekunem baxš-uš kamad* 'we'll throw for him a lasso' (II: 176)

baxtaki — espionage

befara — tired

benusuli — irresponsibility (< Taj. bemas'uliyatī)

bululak — bloom

bum — land, realm; *yak ruz Qaflon-i duzd-i ru šum, // ziddi Čambul xestay az on bum* 'one day, Qaflon the omen-faced thief, set out for Chambul from that land' (II: 133-134)

buryodor — grey (horse)

buvvast — bark

čiba — for what

čira — face

čum — eye

čut — benefit; *dar in ĵangidan čut nadora* 'there is no merit in this fight' (I: 88)

čuxt — upright; *čuxt kadak du dus-š-a ru-bolo* '[the horse] held its two front legs upright' (II: 34)

da — (postposition) in *ay tu-da* (Pers. az to ham); ... *az Zangubor-um // ay yošim ba buzkaši yorum // ay tuda, bač-am, qir suvor-um* 'I am from Zanzibar; I

⁴⁷ All citations are made to Rajab 1962–63.

- want to participate in the *buzkaši* game; I am [better] than you, O son, in horse riding' (II: 229)
- dorgi* — apparent, face-to-face (Taj. *diorgī*; cf. Maz. *diâr* 'apparent'); *čun zanbur dorgi-i dušman-da tez // ba ruy čoh-i dušman buzan xez* (II: 24); *dar tamošo kull-i duxtaro // dorgi-y buzkašo doštan nigo* 'while watching, all the girls were looking straight at the horse racers' (II: 134)
- doxtan* — to throw; *čušm doxtak* 'he cast an eye'
- dubulğa* — helmet
- durman* — (measure of distance); *durmano kardan ura mehmon* 'from far away they invited him as a guest' (I: 40). *Durman* is also a settlement near Regar.
- esiz, esuz* — alas (<? *afsūs*)
- farast* — swift, agile
- fur dodan* — to throw (a compound form of *furidan*)
- furaymon* — plenty (for Pers. *farāvān*; cf. *farāmun* in Central Plateau languages)
- galaguzar* — swift (horse)
- ğalimat* — booty (Pers. *ğanimat*)
- giz* — clench; *e janvar, giz kunu yag bupar* 'O animal, clench [your teeth] and jump at once!' (II: 105)
- gul* — pretty girl (< 'flower') (in folkloric koine)
- ğulabda* — shattered
- gulak* — child
- ğuldurras* — wild sound
- gundušk* — sparrow
- halil* — silk (< *harīr*)
- hamoli* — now (<? *hamin hālā*)
- hamting* — equal in status or ability
- hang* — strength; *dar badan-i qir-ut nestay hang* 'there is no vigor in your steed's body' (II: 43)
- hučpo šudan* — to stand up
- humba(y)* — sound of pigeons
- huppa* — broken
- husus xurdan* — to desire
- hutyot* — carefulness (< *eḡtyāt*)
- huy mondan* — to open
- Ispion* — Isfahani (dagger) (I: 89)
- janra* — ragged cloths (Pers. *žanda*)
- jar šidan* — to flow, spill (<? *jāri*)
- javra* — shiver (from cold)
- jazira* — wasteland (Pers. *vērāna, xarāba*)
- jeba* — cuirass (for Pers. *jowšan*)

juḡel — ragged (for Pers. *žanda*)
kalta — short
kark — rhinoceros
kaštal — collar
kohom — which one (<? *koḏām*)
kumiston — desert (for Taj. *registon*)
kun — essence, depth, end (<? Ar.-Pers. *kunh*); *kun-i ḡor* ‘the end of the cave’;
kun-i kor ‘end results’; *kun-i čo* ‘bottom of the pit’
lat — beat up
laxča — charcoal
liko — stirrup (Taj. *rikob*)
mak — throat
mazang — black slave (< *zangī* ‘black’)
mul — much; *sabab čī, mepursen mul* ‘why are you asking much?’ (II: 46)
mullozora — argue (< *munāzira*)
munjik — fist
muxšul — busy (< *mašḡul*)
nosog — sick (< Uzb. *soq* ‘healthy’)
num-i xudo — swear to God
nuvisa, nuvasa — grandchild
osor — here (II: 36)
oyjon — sweetheart, beauty (Uzb. *oy* ‘moon’)
pa’at — (a curse, from *padar la’nat*)
par — side, near; *har yak šotir bud pari dar par* ‘each envoy was hugging a fairy’ (I: 80)
gaza — in *pargaza* ‘jump’; *pargaza mekuna u hayvon, // monand-i bod-e dar biobon* ‘that beast jumps like the wind in the desert’ (II: 152); *bodgaza* ‘windy desert’: *ay bodgaza xambidak, // purhunar ba su-i šar* ‘the champion came down from the windy desert to the city’ (II: 233). The base *gaz* can be from **waz-*, with the outcomes New Pers. *baz-*, *vaz-*, Mid. Pers. and Parthian *waz-* ‘to move; to blow’, Caspian ‘to jump’, Jowšaqāni *voz-* : *vašt-* ‘to run’.
parmuk — fresh; *lolaho-i parmuk mečarondan* (no adposition!) ‘they would graze (horses) [with] fresh tulips’ (I: 84)
payka — horserace (Taj. *poygah*)
pihil kardan — to let go (cf. Taj. *bihil* ‘allow!’)
poga — gate (< *pāyḡah*); *gurd-i poga-da yag xam šudak, // haf mašk ruḡan-a u qujidak* ‘the hero bended slightly around the gate // to drink (sic!) seven skin-bags of ghee’ (II: 135)
qinḡolbozi — covert visiting of engaged couples before wedding
qir — horse (< Uzb. *qora* ‘black’)

qirsuvor — rider
qurast — snort
quzil — horse (< Uzb. *qizil*, ‘red’)
reb — skew, deformed
ro-i kor — expediency (*rāh-i kār*)
Roq — Persian Iraq, Media; in *sobuni Roq* ‘Iraqi soap’ (I: 84)
rozimand — satisfied (< *rāži*)
rušum — inauspicious (< *šūm*)
salomči — seneschal
Silon — (hydronym; probably from *Sīr Daryā* or *Sayhūn* ‘Jaxartes’); *digar qir-i ma nametona* // *bud bupara daryo-i Silon-a* ‘My steed can no longer jump across the Silon River’ (I: 47)
simuz — weighty
sioh-tuy — funeral (lit. ‘black-ceremony’)
šotime — maybe
šotir — envoy
šulyon — food, festive
sun — direction (< *sōy*)
šunga — neigh
sur kardan — to track, chase
surob — appearance; *ay surobuš ~ az aftaš* ‘incidentally’
sur-sur nigo kardan — to look in wonder
taf — shoulder
tahsanji — scrutiny
tiro kardan — to flow, to gush
tor — above; *ba furu nigo kardak ay tor* ‘he looked down from above’ (I: 74)
tuğdor — crown holder (the title of Avaz)
tungast — voice, noise
uylā — imagination (<? *xayol*)
vang — many, countless
vaštanak — yawn (no parallel found in Iranian languages)
xavos — dismayed
xusur — wife’s or husband’s father
yiğ — back of the neck; shoulder
zantaloq — a swear involving divorcing of one’s wife if broken; *qasam xurd hama čil nafar-a.* // “*zantaloq*, — *guftan*, — *numi xudo*” ‘all forty individuals swore to *zantaloq* in the name of God’ (II: 196)
zayl — like; *zayl-i otaš-ay kokul-i zar* ‘yellowness of [his] hair resembles fire’
zīi — (preposition) with (for Pers. *nāzde*)
zod — child, offspring
zuğor — decayed

Abbreviations

Ø	zero morpheme
1, 2, 3	first, second, third person-agreement marker
AC	agent clitic
Ar.	Arabic
-DA	clitic <i>-da</i>
DIMIN	diminutive
DUR	imperfective
EPEN	epenthesis
EZ	eżāfa
Kul.	Kulabi
PC	pronominal clitic
Pers.	Persian
PL	plural
PN	proper noun
PP	past participle
PR	present
PST	past
-RA	clitic <i>-(r)a</i>
SBJV	subjunctive
SG	singular
Taj.	Tajik
Uzb.	Uzbek

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