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Sort of Grammaticalised: New Approximative Morphology in Persian and Azeri

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Dorian Pastor, Murad Suleymanov. Sort of Grammaticalised: New Approximative Morphology in Persian and Azeri. *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, 2022, 173 (2), pp.411-440. <hal-03878716>

HAL Id: hal-03878716

<https://hal.science/hal-03878716v1>

Submitted on 29 Nov 2024

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Sonderdruck aus/Offprint from

Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft

Im Auftrag der Gesellschaft herausgegeben von
Roland Steiner
unter Mitwirkung von
Christian Bauer, Dragomir Dimitrov,
Desmond Durkin-Meisterernst, Lutz Edzard,
Herrmann Jungraithmayr, Karénina Kollmar-Paulenz,
Joachim Friedrich Quack, Florian C. Reiter,
Julian Rentzsch, Jens Scheiner und Michael Streck

Band 173 – Heft 2
2023



Harrassowitz Verlag

Vorstand der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft e.V. (DMG)

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Erscheinungsweise: Jährlich 2 Hefte

Bezugsbedingungen: Jahresabonnement € 148,-, Einzelheft € 74,-, jeweils zuzüglich Versandkosten. Ein Abonnement gilt, falls nicht befristet bestellt, zur Fortsetzung bis auf Widerruf. Kündigungen müssen bis zum Ablauf eines Jahres erfolgen. Mitglieder der DMG erhalten die Zeitschrift für den Mitgliedsbeitrag (€ 70,- p. a.). **Bestellungen** an den Harrassowitz Verlag (s. u.) oder über jede Buchhandlung. Die ZDMG kann auch in elektronischer Form als *E-Journal* kostenpflichtig über Harrassowitz (<https://www.harrassowitz-library.com/>) bezogen werden.

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Herstellung und Vertrieb der ZDMG

Satz und Layout: Claudius Naumann, Ernst-Thälmann-Str. 79, 14532 Kleinmachnow, E-Mail: claudius.naumann@snafu.de

Lektorat: Dr. Juliane Müller

Verlag: Harrassowitz Verlag, 65174 Wiesbaden, Fax: +49 (0)611-530999, E-Mail: verlag@harrassowitz.de,

<https://www.harrassowitz-verlag.de>

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Gedruckt auf alterungsbeständigem Papier

Printed in Germany

ISSN 0341-0137

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Sort of Grammaticalised: Morphology of New Approximative Suffixes in Persian and Azeri

By DORIAN PASTOR and MURAD SULEYMANOV, Paris

Summary: This paper presents cases of grammaticalisation leading to the formation of new suffixes in Persian and Azeri. Persian already features the suffix *-gune* (related to the suffix *-gun*, cf. *gun* “colour, type”), whose use in all Persian varieties (Iranian Persian, Dari, Tajik) is a sign of a relatively old grammaticalisation. More recently, the suffix *-ṭōr* (from *ṭour* “sort”) has emerged, albeit only in Iranian Persian. In Azeri, the suffix *-təhər* (from *təhər* “type,” likewise from *ṭour*) has been widely acknowledged, and its use predating that of *-ṭōr* in Persian suggests an independent grammaticalisation. Colloquial Azeri has also seen the emergence of the suffix *-fason* (from Russian *fason*, from French *façon*). The data indicate that all of the above suffixes are adjectival, carrying the meaning “being of the type, of the kind; having the quality of.” We offer a diachronic description of these suffixes and their synchronic analysis in Persian and Azeri.

1 Introduction

The present study¹ provides a description of certain cases of grammaticalisation leading to the formation of new approximative suffixes in colloquial Persian² and Azeri and gives an overview of their semantics.

While Standard Persian and to a lesser extent standard Azeri are well described, their colloquial varieties are still awaiting thorough analyses of typologically notable phenomena, such as the emergence of new morphology through grammaticalisation of lexical items.

Taking up the definition of KURYŁOWICZ³, HEINE and KUTEVA⁴ define grammaticalisation as the development of a grammatical form either from a lexical form into a grammatical form, or from a grammatical form into a more grammatical form. According to the authors, grammaticalisation can be represented in four stages (bearing in mind that not all four are necessarily always present):

¹ The authors express their gratitude to GASANGUSEN SULAIBANOV and PEGAH EBRAHIMI for providing data and to AGNES KORN (CNRS, Paris) for her useful comments. The authors are also grateful to the ZDMG for their comments.

² Colloquial Persian differs significantly from the standard variety, see LAZARD 1957.

³ KURYŁOWICZ 1965, p. 69.

⁴ HEINE/KUTEVA 2002, p. 2.

1. Semantic bleaching of the form;
2. generalisation of the context in which the form is used by speakers;
3. decategorialisation, i. e. the loss of original morphosyntactic characteristics;
4. phonetic reduction, i. e. the (partial) erosion of the phonetic form.

The grammaticalisation path from lexeme to suffix is a cross-linguistically widespread phenomenon. Noteworthy cases of grammaticalization, similar to the ones presented in this paper, are the English morphemes *-type (of)* and *-like*. Both are used to express close properties and qualities with the element being compared. The notion of approximation is mentioned by QUIRK et al.⁵, who introduces the term “downtoner.” The latter is defined as a category whose semantic function is to perform a “lowering effect on the force of the verb or predication.” Certain semantic values associated with “downtoners,” involving expressions like “somewhat” and “to some extent,” could be likened to those of the suffixes that are studied in the present article. ALBRESPIT mentions the term “valeur d’approximation” (i. e. “approximative value”) for the English suffixes *-esque* (suffix referring to “having the [artistic, bizarre, picturesque] style of”⁶) and *-ish*. For our purposes, these notions will be grouped under the term “approximative,” which thus covers everything that expresses sort, kind and manner.

In Azeri, the suffix *-təhər* has been mentioned in grammar textbooks⁷ though its origin has not been explored. There exists in addition the so far undescribed suffix *-fason* with similar semantics, which has emerged relatively recently out of a word of French origin borrowed through Russian.⁸ In Persian, the suffix *-tōr* has also emerged very recently. Another suffix, *-gune*, a relatively older grammaticalisation of the word *gune* “mode, manner, kind,” is less frequently used but appears in several varieties of Persian. Azeri *-təhər* and Persian *-tōr* are adaptations of Arabic *ṭawr* “phase, time.”

Table 1a: Approximative suffixes in Persian

suffix	noun/adjective	derivation
<i>-tōr</i>	<i>ābi</i> “blue”	<i>ābi-tōr</i> “blue-like”
	<i>vahši</i> “savage”	<i>vahši-tōr</i> “savagely”
<i>-gune</i>	<i>pedar</i> “father”	<i>pedar-gune</i> “father-like”

⁵ QUIRK et al. 1985, pp. 597–598.

⁶ Cf. ALBRESPIT 2006, p. 23, quoting HANS MARCHAND.

⁷ KAZIMOV 2010, p. 121.

⁸ Such loanwords have entered Azeri starting in the second half of the nineteenth century but mostly throughout the twentieth century.

Table 1b: Approximative suffixes in Azeri

suffix	noun/adjective	derivation
-fason	<i>oğlan</i> “boy”	<i>oğlan-fason</i> “boyish”
	<i>yumru</i> “round”	<i>yumru-fason</i> “roundish”
-təhər	<i>sarı</i> “yellow”	<i>sarı-təhər</i> “yellowish”
	<i>kişi</i> “man”	<i>kişi-təhər</i> “man-like”

Approximative suffixes appearing on nouns of colour are cross-linguistically particularly common, with the French suffix *-âtre* (*bleuâtre*) and the English suffix *-ish* (*bluish*) being notable examples.

2 Ways to express the approximation

Cross-linguistically, there is a large range of possibilities to express approximation, including syntactic, compositional and morphological means. For instance, in French, *un type de* “a type of,” *une sorte de* “a sort of,” and *un genre de* “a kind of” are the main syntactic ways to express manner. The French adverbial construction *en quelque sorte* may also be viewed as a way to express manner or type, as can English *somewhat*.

French, MED—*Ouest-France*, 2020

(1a) *Ça reste du journalisme, c'est un genre de reportage.*

“It’s still journalism, it’s a kind of report.”

The construction *une espèce de* (literally “a species of” and frequently used in the sense of “a kind of”), found exclusively in colloquial French, is parallel to the constructions mentioned above.

French, MED—*RTBF.be*, 2021

(1b) *J'ai ressenti une espèce de racisme parce que j'étais différent.*

“I felt a kind of racism because I was different.”

In Persian, the syntactic way to express the approximation is by means of the words *jur*, *tour* or *nou* “kind”: *yek jur-hā=yi* “a sort of” and *yek tūr-hā=yi* “a kind of,” or, depending on the context, “somewhat.”

Colloquial Persian, LIT—*Awaiting*, GEZERSEZ 2019

(2) *na, ye jur-ā=yi motevaje šod.*

no one kind-PL=IDV realise become:PST:3

“No, she/he somewhat understood.”

Azeri uses *cür* and *növ* “kind” while Turkish uses *tür*⁹ and *çeşit* “kind” in the same way:

Azeri, WEB

- (3) *düşün-ür-lər ki, bu da bir növ grip-dir.*
 think-AOR-3PL SUB DEM too one kind flu-COP:3
 “They think that is a kind of flu.”

Turkish, MED—*Euronews*, 2020

- (4) *nadir gör-ül-en bir tür kan kanser-i.*
 rare see-PSV-PTCP one kind blood cancer-POSS:3
 “A kind of blood cancer that appears to be rare.”

Finally, the morphological way to express the approximation can be found in the French suffix of manner adverbs *-ment* or in the English suffix *-ly*, both well-known and expressing something that is “in the manner, in the way of,” as in *doucement* from *doux* “sweet, mild” [*douce+ment*], literally “mildly,” but meaning also “slowly, carefully.”

3 Persian suffixes

3.1 *-gune*

The use of *gune* “sort, type” as a suffix is not a recent phenomenon in Persian. It is found in classical and literary words in Persian such as *bāzguna* “reversed.”¹⁰ Apart from SKALMOWSKI¹¹, who presents Parthian *-gwn* as an extension of the suffix *-gwn* (see Section 3.1.1), it has never been duly addressed in grammars. For instance, *-gune* is included in the same entry as *-gun* by SAEED¹² and both are defined as “used to show similarity, making adjectives of quality and color.” There is no mention of *gune*, whether as a suffix or as a compositional element, in HORN 1901, PHILLOTT 1914, SHAKI 1964, or LAZARD 1957, and there are no references to Middle Persian *-gōnag* in SALEMANN 1901 or DURKIN-MEISTERERNST 2014. Though *-gōnag* is mentioned by KORN and OLSEN¹³ in forms such as *ham-gōnag* “in the same way,” its functions are not discussed. Recent works on Persian or Tajik such as PERRY 2005 and 2007 or WINDFUHR/PERRY 2009 offer no

⁹ Turkish *tür* may seem related to Persian *tōr* but is in fact related to Old Turkic *tör* “origin, kind” (STACHOWSKI 2019, p. 334; NIŞANYAN 2018, p. 883), the Turkish equivalent of Persian *tōr* being *tavir* “attitude” (NIŞANYAN 2018, p. 835).

¹⁰ STEINGASS 1892, p. 145; MAJIDI 1995, p. 138.

¹¹ SKALMOWSKI 1967, p. 85.

¹² SAEED 2018, p. 152.

¹³ KORN/OLSEN 2012, p. 213.

description of this suffix either. The word *gune* is also known to be used in the forms *ān-gune* “that way,” *in-gune*, *hamin-gune* “this way,” *če-gune* “what kind,” *hič-gune* “no way, no how” and *čand-gune* “some ways.”¹⁴

The use of *gune* as a free noun is common in Persian as illustrated in the example (5):

Standard Persian, WEB

(5a) *yek gune=ye nabang*
one kind=EZ whale

“a kind of whale”

(5b) *yek gune=ye jadid*
one kind=EZ new

“a new species”

In Persian, the head of a noun phrase is linked to its modifiers by means of a morpheme known as “ezafe.”¹⁵ Therefore, the word *gune*, when used as a head noun, requires the ezafe =(y)e to be connected to the other constituents of the noun phrase.

3.1.1 Etymology

The word *gōn* is widely used as a suffix in Middle Iranian and has also been borrowed into Armenian¹⁶:

Table 2: Some use of **gauna-* as a suffix in Iranian and beyond¹⁷

stage	language	suffix
Middle Ir.	Parthian	- <i>γōn</i>
	Sogdian	- <i>γwn</i>
	Middle Persian	- <i>gōn</i>
New Ir.	Persian	- <i>gun</i> ¹⁸
borrowing	Armenian	- <i>agoyn</i> ¹⁹

¹⁴ Collected in MAJIDI 1995, p. 138.

¹⁵ See WINDFUHR/PERRY 2009, pp. 470–471.

¹⁶ We have not found any trace of Old Iranian **gauna-* or Middle Iranian *gōn* (noun or suffix) in Georgian.

¹⁷ See KORN/OLSEN 2012, p. 213.

¹⁸ Old Iranian **gauna-* following a vowel should yield *-yun* in New Persian but this form is only found in a small number of words (with *-gun* being the dominant form, owing, in part, to the morpheme break), KORN/OLSEN 2012, p. 213. See also HORN 1901, pp. 179, 192, 198.

¹⁹ See also OLSEN 1999, p. 859. It should be noted that “the simplex *goyn* is inflected as an *o*-stem in the oldest texts” while *-agoyn* follows the *i*-declension (ibid., pp. 219–220).

STEINGASS²⁰ translates *gune* (*gūna* in Classical Persian) as “colour; species; form, figure, external appearance, mode, manner, kind; the cheek; the buttocks; various, diversified; red paint for the face; construed with the verbs *dādan*, *šekastan*.” It is a descendant of Middle Persian *gōnag* “kind, sort,”²¹ a derivative of *gōn* (*gun* in modern Persian) “colour, complexion.”²²

Middle Persian, M 741 R²³

(6) *pad was gōnag ud brahm*
in many way and manner

“in many ways and manners”

The word goes back to Old Iranian **gauna-*, cf. Avestan *gaona-* “hair, coat colour,”²⁴ and derived via the Old Iranian suffix *-*aka-*, which yielded Middle Iranian *-ag*.²⁵

There is a parallel with the suffix *-gnik* found in Ishkashimi, an Eastern Iranian language (spoken in the Pamir, Tajikistan), which is used with approximative semantics, e.g. *urwēsak-gnik* “fox-like,” *xūg-gnik* “swine-like.”²⁶ If this suffix is genetically related to Persian *gune*, as suggested by the authors, it is unlikely to be inherited in Ishkashimi. Since the normal reflex of word-initial Old Iranian *g* in Ishkashimi is *ɣ*,²⁷ the phonological shape of *-gnik* rather implies a borrowing. The vowel *i* and the final velar indicate that *-gnik* might stem from Old Iranian **gauniyaka-*²⁸, which would yield Middle Persian **gōnīg*, and not from Old Iranian **gaunaka-*, which yielded Middle Persian *gōnag* and ultimately Persian *gune*. Therefore, despite showing similarities in function and form to Persian, Ishkashimi *-gnik* cannot have been borrowed as *gune* or any of its earlier forms. One may suggest that Middle Persian *gōn* was borrowed into an older stage of Ishkashimi and was then suffixed with *-īg*.

Such a parallel development would not be surprising since compounds involving *gaona-* served to create adjectival compounds from nouns or

This could indicate that *-agoyn* goes back to an Iranian compositional stem *-*gauni-* (ibid., p. 859), although “it is impossible to decide whether this is a reflection of preserved stem vowels in the source language [i. e. Iranian] or a generalization of the indigenous [Armenian] type *gin*, *gnoc* ‘price’ vs. *canragin*, *-gnic* ‘costly’.” (ibid., p. 220).

²⁰ STEINGASS 1892, p. 1106.

²¹ MACKENZIE 1971, p. 37.

²² See HORN 1893, p. 211.

²³ BOYCE 1951, p. 911.

²⁴ HORN 1901, p. 192.

²⁵ KORN 2009, p. 208.

²⁶ RASTORGUEVA/ÉDEL’MAN 2007, p. 242.

²⁷ Cf. *ɣu* “cow,” *ɣül* “ear,” *ɣāž-* “say,” PAXALINA 1959, p. 202.

²⁸ For *-*iya-ka-*, see HORN 1901, pp. 179–180.

adjectives meaning “X-coloured” as early as in Avestan,²⁹ e.g. *spita.gaona-* “white-coloured.” In addition, some compounds containing *gaona-* indicate that *gaona-* could have also served to express a close property or a quality, thus “which has the colour of” ~ “which has the quality of”: Avestan *haos-rao.gaona-* might mean “du type de H,”³⁰ “von der Art des Haosravah (?)” (i.e. “which is of the type of Haosravah”).³¹ Middle and modern languages provide some clues regarding the meaning(s) of Old Iranian **gauna-*. In Middle Iranian (Parthian and Middle Persian) and in Classical Persian, the semantic ambiguity between the short form (*gōn*, *gūn*) and the long form (*gōnag*, *gūna*) still exists with doublets such as Middle Persian *ham+gōn* and *ham+gonag* “in the same way”³² and Persian *digar+gūn* and *digar+gūna* “altered, changed.”³³ We find other words derived exclusively through *-gōn* and conveying resemblance in Middle Iranian, such as Parthian *-γōn* yielding *fri(h)+γōn* “friendly, lovely,” *hu+γōn* “of a good kind” and Middle Persian *-gōn* yielding *āzād+gōn* “noble.”³⁴ In Modern Iranian, there are also similar instances with Persian forms involving the suffix *-gūn*, such as *tīra+gūn*, “muddy, turbid,”³⁵ i.e. “obscure colored; which has the quality of darkness,” which is reminiscent of Avestan *vohu.gaona-* “black.” Another example is *roz+gūn* “resembling the day, bright,”³⁶ i.e. “which has the colour / the quality of day.” There are less ambiguous forms such as *gāv+gūn* “ox-like, stupid”³⁷ and *gurba+gūn* “cat-like, wily, cunning, deceitful.”³⁸ However, these occurrences are much rarer than the forms containing *gūna*. Pashto has *yūna* with the meaning “colour, face, complexion, kind.”³⁹ Interestingly, the range of meanings in Pashto might be seen as representative of the semantic chain of the polysemy of Old Iranian **gauna-*, namely: colour → hair → appearance → type. Note that Pashto *yūna* does not go back to Old Iranian **gaunaka-* but to the plural neuter of the bare stem **gaunā*.⁴⁰

Thus, one may presume that Proto-Iranian **gauna-* conveyed the meaning “kind, type” as well. The Middle Iranian nominaliser suffixes *-īg/-ag*

²⁹ DUCHESNE-GUILLEMIN 1937.

³⁰ DUCHESNE-GUILLEMIN 1937, p. 192.

³¹ BARTHOLOMAE 1904, p. 1737.

³² KORN/OLSEN 2012, p. 213.

³³ STEINGASS 1892, p. 530.

³⁴ KORN/OLSEN 2012, p. 213.

³⁵ STEINGASS 1892, p. 341.

³⁶ STEINGASS 1892, p. 593.

³⁷ STEINGASS 1892, p. 1073.

³⁸ STEINGASS 1892, p. 1078.

³⁹ PASHTOON 2009, p. 636.

⁴⁰ CHEUNG 2010, p. 119.

might have thus been added to enforce the semantic feature of “kind” with *gōnīg/gōnag and disambiguate the latter from gōn “colour.”

3.1.2 Use as a suffix

Examples with *-gune* used as a suffix can be found in words such as *ābguna* “liquid,”⁴¹ *za‘frānguna* “of the colour or qualities of saffron; a native of the city of Za‘fran,”⁴² which confirms that the suffix *-gune* is not novel in Persian. Its rather free use allows one to consider it not a pseudo-compound limited to a few constructions but a suffix. It is found in Dari as well as in Tajik⁴³, contrary to *-tōr* found exclusively in Iranian Persian (see Section 3.2). Below are two examples of the use of the suffix in Tajik (7a) and Dari (7b):

Tajik, MED, *khonavoda.com*, 2018

- (7a) *ba_xotir=i in=ki mard=i*
 for the sake of=EZ DEM1=CONJ man=EZ
nopuxta va kūdak-guna ast.
 immature and child-APRX COP:3

“Because he is an immature and **childish** man.”

Dari, OR

- (7b) *felāni šaxs=e šādi-guna=st.*
 this_person individual=EZ monkey-APRX=COP:3

“He is a **monkey-like** (= foolish) person.”

Consulted speakers of Iranian Persian report the suffix *-gune* to be less common and not as productive in colloquial Persian as its counterpart *-tōr* but nevertheless used freely in discourse (8).

Colloquial Persian, MES

- (8) *man goft-am goftār=e naṣīhat-gune=ye man*
 I say.PST-1SG saying=EZ advise-APRX=EZ I
nārāḥat=et kard-e.
 bother=PC:2SG do.PST-PRF:3SG

“I thought my patronising (lit. **advice-like**) speech had bothered you.”

In the following example (9), the form *pedargune* is an adjective denoting a state of displaying some characteristics of a father, which could be rendered as “fatherly”:

⁴¹ HAYYIM 1933, p. 5.

⁴² STEINGASS 1892, p. 617.

⁴³ Both descended from Early New Persian (WINDFUHR/PERRY 2009, p. 416).

Colloquial Persian, MES

- (9) *man delsuzi=m kāmēlan pedar-gune bud.*
 I sympathy=POSS:1SG totally father-APRX be.PST:3SG

“My sympathy was completely **fatherly**.”

The suffix can be used in more formal contexts as in (10a, b) containing the adjectives *dāstāngune* and *šēʿrgune* that could be translated as “story-like (somewhat like a story)” and “poem-like”:

Standard Persian, WEB

- (10a) *nevešte=yi dāstān-gune be-nevis-id.*
 writing=IDV story-APRX IMP-write.PRS-2PL

“Write a **story-type** composition.”

- (10b) *romān=e Āvāz-Zāde šēʿr-gune ast.*
 roman=EZ PN poem-APRX COP:3

“The roman of Avaz Zade is in a **poetic style**.”

Although *-gune* is not very common, even a limited web search reveals several occurrences of constructions with the suffix *-gune*, e. g. *soʿālgune* “question-like,” *fantezigune* “fantasy-like,” *erotikgune* “erotic-style” or *royāgune* “dream-like.”

The suffix *-gune* serves as an adjectivizer as it changes the category of a noun into an adjective. Semantically, it assigns the word a meaning of approximation, i. e. “having the features of X.”

Table 3: Change from noun to adjective

noun	→	adjective
<i>naṣiḥat</i> “advice”	→	<i>naṣiḥatgune</i> “advice-like”
<i>pedar</i> “father”	→	<i>pedargune</i> “father-like”
<i>dāstān</i> “story”	→	<i>dāstāngune</i> “story-type”
<i>šēʿr</i> “poem”	→	<i>šēʿrgune</i> “poem-like”

3.1.3 Regional parallels

An interesting parallel phenomenon exists in Dargwa, a branch of East Caucasian (Nakh-Dagestani) languages, spoken in Dagestan (southern Russia), much to the north of the linguistic area of Persian. Dargwa has the formative *ḡuna* referred to as “similative” (уподобительное) by ABDULLAEV.⁴⁴ The most common function of *ḡuna* is marking resemblance. Note that it can

⁴⁴ ABDULLAEV 1971, pp. 180–186.

be attached to nouns, adjectives and pronouns (ABDULLAEV also mentions participles).⁴⁵

Sanzhi Dargwa (FORKER 2020, p. 128)

- (11) *beži-la xunul di-la pikri*
 DEM.PROX.OBL-GEN woman I.OBL-GEN thought
hass-ib-le xwe=ğuna wahi-ce ca-r.
 take-PST-CNV dog=APRX bad-ATTR COP-F

“His wife, in my opinion, is bad like a dog.”

Tsugni Dargwa (elicited)

- (12a) *amxa=ğuna qqabaq.*
 donkey=APRX pumpkin

“a very big (lit. donkey-looking) pumpkin”

Tsugni Dargwa (elicited)

- (12b) *nik'wa-ce=ğuna guta hass-ib-le kayg-ib ili-ge.*
 low-ATTR=APRX chair take-PST-CNV sit-PST DEM:MED.OBL-SUB

“He took the low-looking chair and sat on it.”

Both in the literature⁴⁶ and during elicitation, Dargwa adjectives derived via *ğuna* carry mostly an idiomatic sense. To avoid analysing examples that can qualify as fixed expressions, we shall consider examples of *ğuna* used with pronouns.⁴⁷

Tsugni Dargwa (elicited)

- (12c) *u=ğuna adam*
 you=APRX person

“a person like you”

ABDULLAEV⁴⁸, who offers an analysis of the syntactic behaviour of *ğuna*, argues against the common analysis of this formative as a case suffix, noting its ability to be attached to words already marked in case, and refers to it as a “particle” (частица):

Tsugni Dargwa (elicited)

- (13) *e-la=ğuna žuz*
 you.OBL-GEN=SIM book

“a book like yours”

⁴⁵ Glosses and notation may have been adapted for examples cited from published sources.

⁴⁶ E.g. GASANOVA 2015.

⁴⁷ For the sake of simplicity and comparison with Persian and Azeri, we shall use examples elicited from a native speaker.

⁴⁸ ABDULLAEV 1971, pp. 180–186.

According to ABDULLAEV, an interesting feature of *ğuna*, which renders it different from, for instance, *cad*, another Dargwa approximative morpheme, is its ability to agree in number with the head noun by accepting a nominal plural suffix:

Tsugni Dargwa (elicited)

- (14) *nuxxa=ğuna-te adim-te*
 we=APRX-PL person.OBL-PL
 “people like us”

In addition, when attached to a case-marked word, *ğuna* can itself, in turn, accept case marking:

Tsugni Dargwa (elicited)

- (15a) *e-la=ğuna-la rang*
 you.OBL-GEN=APRX-GEN colour
 “the colour similar (to the colour) of the one that is yours”

- (15b) (While talking about a hypothetical donkey that would be comparable to one’s own donkey which, according to its owner, fails at set tasks:)

di-la=ğuna-li daqal řäči řä-d-irq’-u.
 I.OBL-GEN=APRX-ERG much work NEG-N:PL-do:IPFV-3:EVT

“One like mine will not get much work done.”

Such a low level of grammaticalisation is a strong indication of *ğuna* having been once a noun, vestiges of which are still perceivable in its syntactic behaviour.

Indeed, it should be noted that *ğuna* today is not used as a noun in any known Dargwa variety. Additionally, according to GILLES AUTHIER⁴⁹, its etymology is not transparent from the point of view of East Caucasian languages and it may be an Iranian borrowing. Beside their striking similarity in form, the two elements—Persian *gune* and Dargwa *ğuna*—also show quite similar paths of grammaticalisation, which may at first glance make the hypothesis of a Persian borrowing into Dargwa appealing.

While Persian was hardly spoken in the Caucasus natively (outside, perhaps, some administrative elites), an early penetration of an Iranian language related to Persian and arguably the ancestor of modern Tat (which is still spoken in some villages in southern Dagestan) into the Dagestani heartland is evident from the numerous loanwords found across the indigenous languages of the area but absent in the local Turkic languages, which have since the Middle Ages served as a bridge between Iranian and East Caucasian. On the other hand, the absence of a cognate of Persian *gune* in any known

⁴⁹ Personal communication, 2020.

Tat variety as well as the noticeable phonological difference of Persian stop *g* vs. Dargwa fricative *ǧ* and the non-use of *ǧuna* as a noun in any Dargwa variety (which might indicate an old age of the borrowing) may be a sign of an early borrowing from an Eastern Iranian language like Ossetic. Note that an initial fricative is attested in Ossetic *γun* (alongside *qwyn*) “fur,” as well as in other Eastern Iranian languages, cf. Pashto *γuna* “(skin) colour,” Shughni *γūnj* “hair.”⁵⁰ Dargwa and Ossetic have not been in close contact in the past centuries but the spread of Iranian languages (including the ancestor of Ossetic) in the Pontic–Caspian Steppe up until the Late Middle Ages was wide enough to suppose contact with East Caucasian.⁵¹

Therefore, rather than believing the grammaticalisation of Dargwa *ǧuna* to be related to the grammaticalisation of Persian *gune*, we suggest a parallel development of two nouns stemming from the same Old Iranian origin in languages that have not been in contact for centuries.

3.1.4 Summary

Even though the Persian suffix *-gune* still seems to be productive, at least in Iranian Persian, with recent derivations such as *erotikgune* “erotic-style,” it is much less frequent in approximative contexts than its counterpart *-tōr*. Its productivity and competition with *-tōr* is nevertheless noteworthy considering its age, as attested by its existence in the other varieties of Persian, namely Dari and Tajik. Some words derived with *-gaona* in Avestan as well as the forms containing *-gōnag* in Middle Persian can be an indication of an older development of its approximative function.

3.2 *-tōr*

Contrary to the suffix *-gune*, which occurs in both standard and colloquial Persian, the suffix *-tōr* is found exclusively in colloquial Persian. Given the very recent emergence of this suffix and its absence in the linguistic literature, we submitted all the sentences that we had found involving *-tōr* to native speakers and asked them to confirm their interpretation.

⁵⁰ RASTORGUEVA/ÉDEL'MAN 2007, p. 242.

⁵¹ As an example of Eastern Iranian–Dargwa contact, the loss of the word-initial *h* in the word *azir* “thousand” used in all Dargwa varieties implies a connection to (now archaic) Ossetic *ærzæ* rather than to Persian *hazār* (OLEG BELYAEV, personal communication, 2021).

3.2.1 Origin and use of the substantive

The colloquial Persian form *ṭōr* (Standard Persian *ṭour*), with a long vowel resulting from monophthongisation of the Standard Persian diphthong *ou*⁵², is commonly found in the compounds *če-ṭōr* “how” and *in-ṭōr*, *un-ṭōr* “such,” literally “a such sort/kind,” which may also be prefixed with the empathic *ham-*. The word *ṭour* is translated as “going round, wheeling about, skimming in circles; mode, manner; condition, state; action; quantity, measure; limit, boundary, whatever separates two objects, partition; time, turn; [*ṭaur u ḥarakat*, Action and motion;]” for the purposes of Classical Persian.⁵³ It comes from Arabic *ṭawr* “phase, time, stage” (example 16), from the Semitic root *ṭ-w-r*,⁵⁴ cognate with Hebrew *tur* “row, line.”⁵⁵

Classical Arabic, Qur’an (71:14), quoted by LANE 1863, p. 1890

- (16) *wa qad ḥalaqa-kum aṭwār-an.*
and MOD create.PFV:3SG:M-2PL.M PL.SORT-ACC:INDF

“And He hath created you of diverse **sorts and conditions.**”

In standard and colloquial Persian, *ṭour/ṭōr* is used as an independent word to express way, manner or state of being (17, 18). As is the case for *gune*, *ṭour/ṭōr* is the head of a noun phrase and requires the *ezafe* to be connected to its constituents:

Standard Persian, WEB

- (17) *yek ṭour=e digar rošd mi-kon-and.*
one sort=EZ other grow IPFV-do.PRS-3PL

“They grow in a different way.”

Colloquial Persian, WEB

- (18) *vaqt=i mi-nevis-i,*
time=IDV IPFV-write.PRS-2SG
ye ṭōr=e xās na-nevis
one sort=EZ special NEG-write.PRS.IMP.2SG
baḡiye dust dāšt-e baš-an.
other friend have.PST-PRF be.SBJV.PRS-3PL

“When you write, don’t write in any special way, so that the others like (it).”

⁵² Other instances of monophthongisation include *fōt* “death,” *rōšan* “clear,” *nō* “new,” etc. (*fout*, *roušan*, *nou* in Classical and Standard Persian, respectively).

⁵³ STEINGASS 1892, p. 821.

⁵⁴ LANE 1863, p. 1890.

⁵⁵ KLEIN 1987, p. 241.

3.2.2 Use of the suffix

Although *tour* also exists in Dari (*taur*) and Tajik (*tavr*), it is not used in these varieties as a suffix according to our findings. By contrast, the suffix *-tōr* is highly productive and freely used by speakers of the variety of Persian spoken in Iran. According to the speakers, the use of *tōr* as a suffix is a recent phenomenon; they date it to the “two or three years” preceding our study, i. e. to 2017–2018.

3.2.2.1 Adjectival use

The suffix *-tōr* may be hosted by various parts of speech, namely nouns, adjectives and adverbs, to create adjectives:

- noun *lāti* “street” → adjective *lātiṭōr* “street-type”
- adjective *biḥāl* “sad” → adjective *biḥālṭōr* “kind of sad”
- adverb *dustāne* “friendly” → adjective *dustāneṭōr* “somewhat friendly”

Colloquial Persian, OR

- (19) *–qazā čī dār-i?* *–qazā=ye šomāli-tōr=e.*
 food what have.PRS-2SG food=EZ northern-APRX=COP:3

“—What food do you have?—It is a **northern-like** dish (i. e. resembling food from Northern Iran).”

Note that in (19), the suffix changes the semantics of *šomāli* “northern” and not that of the whole nominal phrase, hence *qazā=ye šomāli-tōr* should be understood as “a [northern]-like dish” not as “a kind of [northern dish].”

- (20) *xub=e Rezā vali ye xorde biḥāl-tōr=e.*
 good=COP:3 PN but one little sad-APRX=COP:3

“Reza is well but he is a bit **sad-looking**.”

The suffix can derive nouns, for instance *lāti* “street” → *lātiṭōr* “street-type” (21a) and *šarbat* “syrup” → *šarbaṭṭōr* “sort of syrup” (21b):

Colloquial Persian, OR

- (21a) *barā ādam-ā=yi be kār*
 for man-PL=IDV to work
mi-bar-an ke ye zarre adabiyāt=e
 IPFV-carry:PRS-3PL that one little literature=EZ
lāti-tōr dāšt-e bāš-an.
 street-APRX have.PST-PRF:3SG SBJV.be.PRS-3PL

“It is used for people who have a sort of **street-type** culture.”

- (21b) *ye dāru dār-e šabi šarbat-ṭōr=e.*
 one medicine have.PRS-3SG similar syrup-APRX=COP:3

“He has a medicine which is like a **sort of syrup** (= sort of liquid).”

As for example (22) below, note that the suffix can also be used with a proper noun, in which case the semantics of the construction connotes behavioural similarity:

Colloquial Persian, MES

- (22) *vorud=et Moḥammad-ṭōr bud ā!*
 entrance=PC:2SG PN-APRX be.PST:3SG ITJ

“Your entrance **reminded (me) of Mohammad**

(i. e. is exactly the way Mohammad would enter the room)!”

A word bearing the suffix *-ṭōr* may be the base for further suffixation, for instance with the adjectivizer *-i*.⁵⁶ Phonologically, the accent is carried by the last syllable of the word, i. e. *xafanṭōrī* and *kārdašyānṭōrī*, which confirms the final *i* to be a suffix and not the individuation clitic marker *=i*.

Colloquial Persian, MES

- (23a) *ḥālā, har čiz=e xafan-ṭōr-i=am*
 now every thing=EZ cool-APRX-ADJVZ=also
bud, eškāl na-dār-e.
 be.PST3SG problem NEG-have.PRS-3SG

“It would be alright if it were **kind of a cool** thing.”

Colloquial Persian, MED, *Sasy*—“Doctor” (00:44”)

- (23b) *hame tu deli-ā hame xafan-ā, kārdašyān-ṭōr-i badan-ā.*
 all in crazy-PL all cool-PL PN-APRX-ADJVZ body-PL

“All the lovely ones, all the cool ones, all those with **Kardashian-type** (sexy) bodies.”

The adjectives derived with *-ṭōr* can modify the non-verbal element of a complex predicate (24):

Colloquial Persian, WEB

- (24a) *felāni bā=hāš dustāne-ṭōr barxord kard.*
 that_person with=PC:3SG friendly-APRX treatment do.PST:3SG

“That person treated him/her **in a somewhat friendly way**.”

⁵⁶ The adjectivizer *-i* is used to indicate a relation with the word it is suffixed to (LAZARD 2006, p. 257).

Colloquial Persian, WEB

- (24b) *man čeqadr divāne-ṭōr raftār mi-kon-am!*
 I how.much crazy-APRX behaviour IPFV-do.PRS-1SG

“How **rather crazy** I used to behave!”

3.2.2.2 Adverbial use

The adjectives formed with *-ṭōr* may occur beside verbs to modify them and may thus be used as adverbs:

Colloquial Persian, WEB

- (25a) *mehrabun-ṭōr be=heš mi-goft “ferešte kučulu”*
 kind-APRX to=PC:3 IPFV-say.PST:3 angel little

“S/he would **rather kindly** call him/her ‘little angel.’”

- (25b) *javāb=e un=i ke inṭuri goft=ro*
 answer=EZ DEM2=IDV SUB this.way say.PST:3=FOC
xeyli jeddi va ‘ašabāni-ṭōr dād-am.
 very serious and angry-APRX give.PST-1SG

“I replied very seriously and **somewhat angrily** to the person who spoke that way.”

Colloquial Persian, WEB

- (25c) *haminṭōri divāne-ṭōr rekāb mi-zad-am*
 this.way crazy-APRX pedalling IPFV-hit.PST.1SG

“I kept pedalling **somewhat crazily**.”

The adverbs can themselves be modified by other adverbs (26):

- (26) *Hušang xeyli xaste-ṭōr*
 PN very tired-APRX
nešast-e bud ru sandali.
 sit.PST-PTPC be.PST:3SG on chair

“Hushang was sitting **very tiredly-like** in a chair.”

This adverbial use of the suffix *-ṭōr* may suggest that the suffix is in competition with the suffix *-āne*, which serves to create adjectives used as adverbs as well, e.g. *ruz* “day” → *ruz+āne* “daily.”⁵⁷ However, speakers seem to interpret the semantics of the adverbs with *-āne* and adverbs with *-ṭōr* slightly differently:

Colloquial Persian, OR

- (27a) *to qazā=ro vahši-ṭōr xord-i.*
 you meal=FOC savage-APRX eat.PST-2SG

“You ate your meal **somewhat savagely**.”

⁵⁷ LAZARD 2006, p. 261.

Constructed example

(27b) *to qazā=ro vaḥši-āne xord-i.*
 you meal=FOC savage-APRX eat.PST-2SG

“You ate your meal **savagely**.”

Example (27b) is a constructed example presented to a group of speakers⁵⁸ beside (27a). The interviewed speakers qualify *vaḥši-āne* as meaning “savagely” and *vaḥši+ṭōr* as “*somewhat savagely*.” This constitutes merely a preliminary observation and deserves further investigation. For the moment, it seems that despite its adverbial use, one cannot consider the suffix *-ṭōr* a competitor of *-āne* because the suffixes differ semantically; the main function of *-ṭōr* is approximative while the function of *-āne* is “referring to non-human nominals from adjectives that usually refer to humans”⁵⁹ and it may be used to form manner or sentential adverbs.

3.2.2.3 Verbal constructions

Finally, contrary to the suffix *-gune*, the suffix *-ṭōr* may be found in verbal constructions which include *kardan* “to make.” For instance:

Colloquial Persian, MES

(28a) *in=am xub=e vali ye*
 DEM1=also good=COP:3 but one
kam moṣbat-ṭōr=eš kard-i.
 little positive-APRX=PC3SG do.PST-2SG

“This is also good but **you gave it a kind of positive meaning**.”

Here the verb *kardan* “to do” conveys a meaning of transformation. Thus, the construction is as follows: N-APRX(=PC) + v, meaning “to turn something into X”:

Colloquial Persian, WEB, context: during a discussion about recipes

(28b) *man irāni-ṭōr=eš kard-am va*
 I Iranian-APRX=PC:3SG do.PST-1SG and
az peste estefāde kard-am.
 of pistachio use do.PST-1SG

“I made it **in an Iranian kind of way** and used pistachios.”

(28c) *xāst-am ye zarre hayeḡān be-d-am*
 want.PST-1SG one particle excitement SUBJV-give.PST-1SG

⁵⁸ Six persons; five females (23, 31, 33, 35 and 38 years old) and one male (25 years old).

⁵⁹ PERRY 2007, p. 1012.

be=beš, mosābeqe-ṭōr=eš kard-am.
 to=PC:3SG competition-APRX=PC:3SG do.PST-1SG

“I wanted to add a little excitement to it,
 (thus) **I turned it into a kind of competition.**”

(28d) *dāynāmik-ṭōr=eš kard-am*
 dynamic-APRX=PC:3SG do.PST-1SG
ke rāḥat-tar be-š-e.
 SUB comfortable-COMP SBJV-become.PRS-3SG

“I made it **somewhat dynamic** so that it gets easier.”

Colloquial Persian, OR

(28e) *vali meš=e hamiše ke xeyli*
 but like=EZ always SUB very
xāš bud-e va kār-ā=ye xāš
 special be.PST-PRF:3SG and word-PL=EZ special
anjām dād-e surprāyz-ṭōr=eš kard.
 application give.PST-PRF3SG surprise-APRX=PC:3SG do.PST:3SG

“But him/her being a very unique person as always and doing unique things,
 s/he **turned it into a kind of surprise.**”

The object, the pronominal third-person clitic =(e)š, follows the predicative adjective suffixed by -ṭōr. Our data include examples of such clitics only in the third person singular, as illustrated in the examples (28), and not in other persons.

Note that the examined constructions are combinations of the fully lexical verb *kardan* and its object complements and not complex predicates. The latter would imply that in some cases, the verbal element acts only as a verbaliser, for instance *fout kardan* [death+do] “to die”; in other cases, the meaning of the construction emerges from the semantics of the verbal and non-verbal element as a whole, for instance *zang zadan* [ring+hit] “to call (phone), to ring.”⁶⁰ Thus, constructions involving a non-verbal element suffixed with -ṭōr are not possible (29a):

(29a) **man=o komak-ṭōr kard.*
 I=FOC help-APRX do.PST:3SG

Intended meaning: “S/he **helped me in some way.**”

Instead, such semantics would be conveyed through a syntactic construction:

(29b) *ye jur-ā=yi komak=am kard-e.*
 one kind-PL=IDV help=PC:1SG do.PST-PRF:3SG

“S/he helped me **in some way.**”

⁶⁰ See BUTT 2010 and SAMVELIAN 2012 for further discussion on complex predicates.

3.2.3 Summary

Our research revealed the following words containing *-tōr*. List (A) shows forms that may be used as adjectives or as adverbs and List (B) shows forms that are only used as adjectives in our data. List (C) shows forms collected from speakers outside of a specific context.

(A) Adjectival and adverbial uses

- *‘asabuniṭōr* “somewhat angrily”
- *merhabuniṭōr* “somewhat kindly”
- *molāyemṭōr* “somewhat tenderly”
- *vahšīṭōr* “somewhat savagely”
- *xasteṭōr* “somewhat tiredly”

(B) Adjectives

- *ābiṭōr* “blueish”
- *‘āmyāneṭōr* “colloquial-like”
- *āsuniṭōr* “rather easy”
- *biḥāltōr* “kind of sad”
- *divāneṭōr* “somewhat crazy”
- *dustāneṭōr* “somewhat friendly”
- *esterāḥaṭṭōr* “resting-mode”
- *ḥeyvuniṭōr* “animal-like”
- *honariṭōr* “artsy”
- *lātiṭōr* “street-like”
- *majlesiṭōr* “somewhat formal”
- *mamnu‘olkārtōr* “censored-like”
- *qermezṭōr* “reddish”
- *yehoyiṭōr* “rather spontaneous”
- *šarbaṭṭōr* “syrup-like”
- *pašimuniṭōr* “regretful”

(C) Unspecified

- *marizṭōr* “sickish”
- *čālaštōr* “challenge-like”
- *māmānṭōr* “mother-like”
- *xāle-zanaktōr* “gossip-like”
- *fānteziṭōr* “fantasy-like”
- *mašengṭōr* “kind of crazy”
- *xengṭōr* “rather stupid”
- *oskolṭōr* “rather stupid”
- *aḥmaqtōr* “rather stupid”
- *kiriṭōr* “kind of disgusting”
- *jingulṭōr* “rather showy”
- *bixiālṭōr* “rather carefree”
- *‘ašabiṭōr* “kind of nervous”

4 Azeri suffixes

4.1 *-təhər*

Azeri *təhər* is commonly defined as “способ (образ действий, приём, метод для осуществления),” “form (course of action, manner, method of action).”⁶¹ The word has undergone a process of grammaticalisation, parallel to its Persian equivalent *tōr* (see Section 3.2), and developed into the suffix *-təhər* expressing type and manner. The suffixation of *təhər* is most probably older

⁶¹ ТАҒИҮЕВ 2006, pp. 460–461.

than that of its Persian counterpart since KAZIMOV⁶² acknowledged it already a decade ago, when Persian *-tōr* was not yet attested.

According to KAZIMOV, *-təhər* “is used to express the degree of reduction of adjectives” (“sintaktik üsulla sifətin azaltma dərəcəsinə ifadə etmək üçün (...) istifadə edilir”) when it is “added to adjectives” (“sifətlərə əlavə edilməsi ilə”). ƏSGƏR⁶³ describes *-təhər* as “nisbətən məhsuldar (...) şəkilçi,” “a relatively productive (...) suffix,” noting that depending on the author, Azeri textbooks prescribe spelling it either separate from or as one word with the head noun.

4.1.1 Origin

The word *təhər* goes back to Arabic *ṭawr* and was most likely borrowed through Persian since Azeri and Arabic have not been in active contact. The *-h-* could be explained by the treatment of the diphthong /au/. Diphthongs are not typical of Azeri and, in the case of frequently used lexemes, are reanalysed as a sequence of two vowels, with a hiatic consonant added in between, e.g. Azeri *qohum* “relative, family member” ← Arabic *qawm* “people, nation, kindred.” In dialectal Azeri, *h* often occurs as a hiatic consonant, e.g. standard Azeri *saat* “hour” vs. dialectal Azeri *sahat* (from Arabic *sāʿa*), standard Azeri *camaat* “people, community” vs. dialectal Azeri *cama-hat* (Arabic *ḡamāʿa*), standard Azeri *müəllim* “teacher,” vs. dialectal Azeri *məhəllim* (Arabic *muʿallim*).⁶⁴

4.1.2 Free use of the substantive

According to KAZIMOV⁶⁵, the use of *təhər* as an independent lexeme is gradually decreasing. As a noun, Azeri *təhər* is used in the same way as its Persian counterpart *tōr*, for instance:

WEB

- (30) *bəzən başqa bir təhər tap-ır-am.*
 sometime other one sort find-PRS-1SG

“Sometimes, I find another way.”

⁶² KAZIMOV 2010, pp. 120–121.

⁶³ ƏSGƏR 2015, p. 61.

⁶⁴ See MƏMMƏDLİ 2019, p. 79. A similar phenomenon can be observed in Tat (where Arabic *ṭawr* undergoes the same treatment as in Azeri) with words in which the weakening of an intervocalic labial consonant in inherited words leads to hiatus in the form of *h*, e.g. *juhob* “answer” (cf. Persian *javāb*), *zuhun* “tongue, language” (cf. Persian *zabān*), see AUTHIER 2012, p. 34.

⁶⁵ KAZIMOV 2010, pp. 120–121.

When combined with demonstratives, *təhər* forms compounds that have come into use as intensified demonstratives:

WEB

- (31a) *bu_təhər qəşəng qız*
 DEM1_sort beautiful girl
 “such a beautiful girl”

- (31b) *o_təhər adam*
 DEM2_sort person
 “such a person”

In colloquial and dialectal Azeri, *nətər* “how” (← *nə* “what” + *təhər*) is sometimes the only interrogative word to refer to an adverb of manner (vs. *necə* or *nə cür* in standard Azeri):

WEB

- (32) *nətər gəl-di-n Bilgəh-dən?*
 how come-PST-2SG PN-ABL
 “**How** did you come from Bilgəh?”

4.1.3 Use of the suffix

Modern Azeri grammars and textbooks describe *-təhər* as a noun-derived suffix forming what Azeri textbooks refer to as “degree of mitigation of the adjective” (“sifətin azaltma dərəcəsi”⁶⁶). However, our data will show that the suffix has also acquired so far undescribed connotations which may qualify the resulting forms as approximative.

Traditional prescriptive grammars associate the suffix *-təhər* exclusively with adjectives:

LIT

- (33) *bura-dan göy-təhər bir maşın keç-di.*
 here-ABL blue-APRX one car pass-PST:3
 “A **blueish** car passed by here.”

In less formal varieties, the suffix is also attached to nouns, though these formations are much less frequent:

WEB

- (34) *qayğısız və uşaq-təhər şəxsiyyət-ə malik-dir.*
 carefree and child-APRX personality-DAT owning-COP:3
 “He has a carefree and **child-like** personality.”

⁶⁶ KAZIMOV 2010, p. 120.

Both adjectives and nouns suffixed with *-təhər* can also be used adverbially:

WEB

- (35a) *qoca danişığ-ı-nda qoca-təhər söylə.*
 old speaking-POSS:3-LOC old-APRX say.IMP:2SG

“When [imitating] an elderly person’s talk, say it in an **elderly-type of way**.”

- (35b) *Fərid soyuq-təhər görüş-dü.*
 PN cold-APRX meet-PST:3

“Fərid greeted [him] **somewhat stiffly** (lit. coldly).”

- (35c) *kişi-təhər geyin-ib qadın qal-maq*
 man-APRX dress-GER woman remain-INF

“dressing in a **manly way** but remaining a woman”

The word *təhər* has been borrowed as a noun directly and indirectly into many languages of the region, including (as *tabar*) the East Caucasian languages Lezgian, Tabasaran, Aghul and Lak, in some of which it has additionally acquired the meaning “state, condition.” RAMAZANOV also provides the meaning “degree, measure” in Aghul.⁶⁷ However, it does not seem like the word has developed into a morpheme in the same way as in Azeri in any of these languages.

TARLANOV⁶⁸ proposes a common origin for *tabar* and the Aghul dubitative postposition *tteheri* “methinks,” which would imply grammaticalisation akin to that of the above-mentioned approximatives. However, RAMAZANOV⁶⁹ disagrees with this—linking Aghul *tteheri* to Arabic *taḥarrī* ‘investigation.’

4.1.4 Summary

Many examples of adjectives derived via *-təhər* are listed in Azeri reference dictionaries. Indeed, *-təhər* seems much more robust than the inherited suffixes denoting a mitigated quality, i. e. *-(I)mtİl*, *-(I)mtrAQ*, *-(Im)sov*, etc.

List (A) presents words used as adjectives or as adverbs, while List (B) contains words that are only used as adjectives. List (C) shows an item collected from the speaker outside of a specific context.

⁶⁷ RAMAZANOV 2010, p. 523. GILLES AUTHIER (personal communication) suggests an etymological link between *tabar* and the Aghul terminative-comparative suffix *-dehen/-tteben*, e. g. *xalpus-tteben haf* (lit. watermelon-*dehen* big) “as big as a watermelon.” It is interesting that for terminative semantics, *-dehen/-tteben* appears to be synonymous with the Aghul suffix *-gunal/-gunas*, likely related to the Dargwa morpheme described in Section 3.1.3.

⁶⁸ TARLANOV 1994, p. 149.

⁶⁹ RAMAZANOV 2014 p. 253.

(A) Adjectival and adverbial uses

- | | |
|-----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| – <i>alçaqtəhər</i> “somewhat low” | – <i>böyüktəhər</i> “somewhat big” |
| – <i>asantəhər</i> “somewhat easy” | – <i>soyuqtəhər</i> “somewhat cold” |
| – <i>ağırtəhər</i> “somewhat heavy” | – <i>şirintəhər</i> “somewhat sweet” |
| – <i>bahatəhər</i> “somewhat expensive” | – <i>uzuntəhər</i> “somewhat long” |

(B) Adjectives

- | | |
|-------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| – <i>abitəhər</i> “blueish” | – <i>dəyirmitəhər</i> “roundish” |
| – <i>acitəhər</i> “somewhat bitter” | – <i>gentəhər</i> “somewhat wide” |
| – <i>açıqtəhər</i> “somewhat light”
(colour) | – <i>kartəhər</i> “somewhat deaf” |
| – <i>ağtəhər</i> “whitish” | – <i>kiçiktəhər</i> “somewhat small” |
| – <i>boştəhər</i> “somewhat lax” | – <i>qurutəhər</i> “somewhat dry” |
| – <i>çərintəhər</i> “somewhat difficult” | – <i>yaşiltəhər</i> “greenish” |
| – <i>dartəhər</i> “somewhat narrow” | – <i>yüngültəhər</i> “somewhat light”
(weight) |

(C) Unspecified

- *aztəhər* “somewhat little”

4.2 *-fason*

4.2.1 Origin and free use of the substantive

The word *fason* is defined by ORUCOV⁷⁰ as “*ülgü, biçim, model (paltarda, ayaqqabıda və s.-də)*,” i. e. “pattern, cut, model (in clothes, shoes, etc.).” It is a borrowing from French *façon* “way, manner,”⁷¹ via Russian *fason* “style.”⁷²

In standard Azeri, the noun *fason* is used for the style of dress:

ORUCOV 2006, p. 174

- (36) *köhnə fason-da paltar*
old style-LOC clothes
“old-fashioned clothes”

In colloquial Azeri, this use has triggered a slight generalisation of *fason*, extending it to the semantics of “type, kind,” but used much less frequently than *təhər*:

⁷⁰ ORUCOV 2006, p. 174.

⁷¹ It should be noted that the French noun *façon* originally meant “way of shaping” (related to the verb *façonner* “to shape”), inherited from Latin *factionem*, accusative of *factio* “be able to, way to do” from *facio* “to do” (BLOCH/VON WARTBURG 2002, p. 250). French *façon* was also grammaticalised into the meaning “way, manner,” e.g. *Il parle de façon décontractée*, “he speaks in a casual manner.”

⁷² See HARPER 1994, p. 531.

WEB

- (37a) *bu_fason absurd fikir-lər*
 DEM1_style absurd thought-PL
 “such absurd thoughts”

- (37b) *o_fason söz*
 DEM2_style word
 “such a word, a word like that”

4.2.2 Use of the suffix

The noun *fason* has recently grammaticalised in colloquial Azeri into a suffix which yields a meaning leaning to “kind, type”—hence closer to the meaning of the French noun *façon*⁷³—that has, like the two above examples, developed independently from Russian.

In the same way as the approximative use of *-təhər*, the suffix *-fason* is attached to both adjectives and nouns:

WEB

- (38a) *üz quruluş-u bir az yumru-fason ol-malıdır.*
 face structure-POSS:3 one few round-APRX be-NEC-COP:3
 “Her facial structure should be slightly **roundish**.”

- (38b) *paxıl-am, qısqan-acağ-am,*
 envious-COP:1SG be_jealous-PROSP:1SG
bir az oğlan-fason qız-am.
 one few boy-APRX girl-COP:1SG
 “I’m envious, I’ll be jealous; I’m a bit of a **boyish** girl.”

- (38c) *bir az da oğlan-fason-am.*
 one few ADD boy-APRX-COP:1SG
 “I’m also slightly **boyish**.”

Parallel to *-təhər*, the suffix *-fason* also shows adverbial uses:

WEB

- (39a) *bütün gün-ü lüt-fason gəz-ir*
 whole day-ACC nude-APRX walk-PRS:3
 “She walks around **kind of naked** all day long.”

- (39b) *uşaq-fason oxu-yur.*
 child-APRX read-PRS:3
 “She sings **kind of like a child**.”

⁷³ See footnote 71.

4.2.3 Summary

The grammaticalisation of *fason* is undoubtedly fairly recent, as the loanword could not have entered Azeri earlier than the second half of the nineteenth century and very possibly did so only in the early Soviet era. Unlike *-təbər*, the suffix *-fason* does not feature in formal grammars or dictionaries; it belongs exclusively to the colloquial language.

The case of *-fason* is remarkable. A loanword meaning “cut (of a garment),” which can hardly be considered a unit of every-day vocabulary, has gone through a grammaticalisation path without influence from the donor language and within a relatively short period of time. In addition to its exceptional nature is its seeming productivity as well as its Romance-through-Slavic origin: a rare case in the derivational morpheme inventory of Azeri.

Words containing the suffix *-fason* encountered throughout the analyses of online corpora include but are not limited to:

(A) Adjectival uses

- | | |
|----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| – <i>çətinfason</i> “kind of difficult” | – <i>yaxşıfason</i> “kind of good” |
| – <i>qızfason</i> “effeminate, girl-looking” | – <i>yumşaqfason</i> “kind of soft” |
| – <i>oğlanfason</i> “masculine, boy-looking” | – <i>köynəkfason</i> “looking like a shirt” |
| – <i>yumrufason</i> “kind of round” | – <i>qalınfason</i> “kind of thick” |
| | – <i>gözəlfason</i> “kind of pretty” |

(B) Adjectival and adverbial uses

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| – <i>lütfason</i> “kind of naked” | – <i>uşaqfason</i> “kind of like a child” |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|

5 Discussion

One important point to look out for when describing grammaticalisation is making a distinction between free and bound forms and to provide evidence in support of an element having grammaticalised into a bound form. Of course, no test is universally applicable, nor are all the results equally compelling.

With derivational suffixes grammaticalised out of nouns, a prosodic test is a possible means to ascertain the distinction. According to CREISSELS⁷⁴, if a sentence is interrupted by pauses, the pauses normally coincide with boundaries between free forms. Both in Azeri and in Persian, only free forms can constitute independent stressed units, and if a bound form carries the stress, the latter characterises the entire unit and not just the bound form in question. The prosody of the approximative constructions described in this paper confirms the status of Persian *-gune* and *-tör* and Azeri *-təbər* and *-fason* as bound morphemes.

⁷⁴ CREISSELS 2006, p. 30.

Persian nominal and adjectival forms carry stress on the last syllable.⁷⁵ For instance, the abstract suffix *-i* is stressed when it is attached to a noun, e.g. *mard-i* “manhood, manliness” (← *márd* “man”), unlike the individuation marker *=i*, which is an unstressed clitic particle: *márd=i* “a man.” Compounds carry primary stress on the last component and secondary stress on the first component, e.g. *ātēš-parást* “fire-worshiper.”⁷⁶ Words suffixed with *-gune* and *-tōr* have stress on the last syllable, e.g. *ostād* “teacher” → *ostādguné* “teacher-like”; *fantezí* “fantasy” → *fanteziguné* “fantasy-like”; *bihál* “sad” → *bihālṭór* “sad-looking,” *lāti* “street” → *lātiṭór* “street-like.” Derivation out of a secondary base reflects the same phenomenon, e.g. *honar-i* “artistic” (← *honár* “art”) → *honari-tōr* “artistic-like, artsy.” Therefore, there is reasonable evidence to view *-gune* or *-tōr* as suffixes.

In the case of Azeri, one might argue that the non-susceptibility of *-təbər* and *-fason* to vowel harmony, a key morphological principle of most Turkic languages, is an argument against treating them as bound morphemes. However, Azeri possesses several productive suffixes, either borrowed ones or recently grammaticalised noun-turned-morphemes, which do not abide by vowel harmony, e.g. similative *-vari* (← Persian *vār* “having, possessing, endowed with”) in *üzükvari* “ring-shaped” (← *üzük* “ring”), *vintvari* “spiral” (lit. “screw-shaped” ← *vint* “screw,” a Russian loanword).

6 Conclusion

Speakers use approximative suffixes to express a subjective appreciation of the world. The common function of these suffixes is that they allow speakers to describe entities sharing qualities with the element being compared using a metaphorical connection, and that they are used to create new adjectives expressing the semantics “of the type, of the kind, in the manner.”

Aside from the suffix *-gune*, which can be found in both standard and colloquial Persian, this study offers a description of new suffixes occurring in the colloquial varieties of Iranian Persian and Azeri which have gone through independent and parallel developments. The Persian suffixes *-gune* and *-tōr* and the Azeri suffixes *-təbər* and *-fason* can attach to both attributive modifiers and heads. Adjectives formed using these suffixes can also be used adverbially to express type or manner (adverbial use of adjectives without additional morphology is a very common phenomenon in the languages of the area⁷⁴). The Persian suffix *-gune* notably has no adverbial use.

The diachronic, morphological and semantic features can be summarised in the following table:

⁷⁵ LAZARD 2006, pp. 28–31.

⁷⁶ LAZARD 2006, p. 30.

Table 3: Summary of information relating to the studied suffixes

suffix	language	dating	derivation	meaning
<i>-gune</i>	Iranian Persian, Tajik, Dari	Early New Persian ⁷⁸	n./adj. → adj.	type
<i>-tōr</i>	Iranian Persian	since 2017/2018	n./adj. → adj.	type, manner
<i>-təbər</i>	Azeri	20 th century or earlier	n./adj. → adj.	type, manner
<i>-fason</i>	Azeri	20 th century	n./adj. → adj.	type, manner

While the Persian suffix *-gune* is rather old, but today relatively low in productivity, the other above-mentioned suffixes are recent innovations and are exceptionally productive.

The suffix *-tōr* is used very freely and has adverbial uses as well. One may at first sight see *-tōr* as being in competition with the adverbial suffix *-āne* but this is not the case since their semantics is not similar.

In her article dealing with the semantic variation of the Russian adjective-deriving “attenuative-diminutive” suffix *-ovat-* (whose functions are similar to that of the Persian and Azeri suffixes mentioned in this article), BOTTINEAU⁷⁹ discusses “altérité appréciative” and “altérité notionnelle” reflected in the derived adjectives. The former is typical of primary qualitative adjectives and expresses deviation of a value with regard to an “ideal” state of reference. The latter is typical of denominal adjectives and is characterised by likening a certain value to that of a real object. Further corpus study may help answer the question of whether or not such a generalisation can be made for Persian and Azeri, though at first sight, there indeed seem to be some close parallels.

The study of colloquial varieties may offer the possibility to observe hitherto undescribed but notable phenomena of grammaticalisation. An important direction to pursue would be evaluating the productivity of suffixes generally considered non-productive. An inquiry into other languages spoken in the region may be helpful in drawing parallels, seeking mutual influence and understanding better the typology of approximative constructions.

Abbreviations (glosses)

1	first person	ABL	ablative	ADJVZ	adjectivizer
2	second person	ACC	accusative	AOR	aorist
3	third person	ADD	additive	APRX	approximative

⁷⁷ For instance, in Persian, see WINDFUHR/PERRY 2009, p. 444.

⁷⁸ Perhaps even older, see Section 3.1.1 for notes on **gauna-*.

⁷⁹ BOTTINEAU 2012.

ATTR	attributive	INDF	indefinite	PN	proper noun
CNV	converb	INF	infinitive	POSS	possessive
CONJ	conjunction	IPFV	imperfective	PROSP	prospective
COP	copula	ITJ	interjection	PRF	perfect
DAT	dative	LOC	locative	PROX	proximal
DEM	demonstrative	M	masculine	PRS	present
ERG	ergative	MED	medial	PST	past
EVT	eventual	MOD	mode	PSV	passive
EZ	ezafe	N	non-human	PTCP	participle
F	feminine	NEC	necessitative	SIM	similative
FOC	focus marker	NEG	negation	SUB	subordinator
GEN	genitive	OBL	oblique base	SBJV	subjunctive
GER	gerundive	PC	particle	SG	singular
IDV	individuation	PFV	perfective		
IMP	imperative	PL	plural		

Abbreviations (corpus)

LIT	literature	MES	messenger	WEB	internet
MED	media	OR	oral		

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