A new dictionary of Oriental words in Italian sources, and the chronology of Turkish izafets

Abstract: Wolfgang Schweickard, a well-known expert in historical Romance linguistics, launched a series Orientalia in 2023. Three fascicles were published between March and August 2023. This author has tried to examine incorrect izafet constructions (such as At Meydan ‘a historical square in Constantinople’, lit. ‘horse square, hippodrome’ instead of the original At Meydanı) excerpted from Italian sources and published in the Orientalia in order to find out how old the phenomenon is and how it came into being. Answers to the two questions are given in the final section.

Keywords: Turkish; izafet; transcription sources; etymological lexicography; nominal syntax

1. Introduction

Wolfgang Schweickard has authored a new compendium (2023), which holds great importance for four distinct philologies: Italian, Turkish, Arabic and Persian. The compendium is entitled Orientalia and it was launched in 2023 as an addendum to the Lessico Etimologico Italiano; it is published in fascicles (three between March and August 2023). As the author puts it at the beginning of the Preface:
The Orientalia have the purpose of gathering and commenting the words of Oriental origin which have made their way into Italian historical sources. The chronological range of its documentation covers the period from the beginnings to around 1900. The Oriental languages taken into consideration are Arabic, Turkish and Persian. (Schweickard 2023 1: V)

Each Oriental word is meticulously adduced and dated, so that one finds here, among others, colloquial forms with precise historical data. Schweickard even goes a step further, he also adduces Balkan reflexes of Turkish words. All this creates an exceptionally rich mosaic of Oriental words scattered across Italian texts in various centuries.

2. Izafets and the goal of this study

I have made many notes while browsing through the three fascicles of the Orientalia. They concern various problems, mostly phonological ones. However, I decided to show the importance of the Orientalia by presenting attestations of a morphological phenomenon that I had first observed about forty years ago in Istanbul. Outside a restaurant, I saw a menu board that said bamya çorba ‘gumbo, okra soup’. I was shocked – why not bamya çorbasi? My Turkish friends told me the owner of the restaurant must have been a simple man, and, maybe, wanted to make the information easier for tourists to understand. The final part of this explanation showed clearly to me that my friends could not find a good answer themselves and simply tried to produce one that seemed logical. I could not find a better explanation and eventually resigned myself to the fact that this is just how it is sometimes said.

A short terminological excursus: Turkish has three izafets (= nominal compounds). I will distinguish them by numbering:

Izafet 1: nom. + nom. (taş köprü ‘stone bridge’)
Izafet 2: nom. + nom. + poss. suffix 3.p. (at başı ‘horse head’)
Izafet 3: gen + nom. + poss. suffix 3.p. (atın başı ‘head of a horse’)

As can be seen, the phrase bamya çorba represents Izafet 1 where I expected Izafet 2. I consulted Turkish grammar books but none could really explain why one izafet should be replaced with another in this phrase. Some authors
say the phenomenon originated from a trend to speak briefly as well as from the influence of foreign European patterns,\(^1\) others think this is a rather new tendency in Turkish.\(^2\) The European origin can readily be connected with the novelty of the trend. We can, thus, speak of two factors: (a) a trend to speak briefly; (b) a new European influence.

Explanation (a) is not very convincing because one cannot guess why exactly Izafet 2 should be shortened when apparently no other syntactic structure was perceived as being too long. Explanation (b) seems more realistic, even though nobody has ever attempted to show which European language has influenced the Turkish Izafet 2, when, why and how. An additional question is whether the tendency is really new.

This last question is in fact easy to answer: it is not. Wolfgang Schweickard’s dictionary adduces attestations of Izafet 2 constructions without the possessive suffix from 1537 on. This is valid at least for the first three fascicles. The situation may change with each subsequent one.

Establishing the chronology of the phenomenon has been the first task of this study. The other one is to see whether anything can be said about the origin of the phenomenon.

3. The material

Let us look at the material first. It is divided in two sections here: compounds with and without the possessive suffix \(+ (s)i\). For words recorded multiple times, only one attestation per half a century is included in the list below. Schweickard’s abbreviation “c” for ‘circa’ is ignored in our list. The entries are structured as follows: the date of attestation — the original notation in the Italian source — in square brackets: the modern Turkish literary form that can be found in modern dictionaries (e.g., Turkish \(pazar\), even though the Italian notation has \(b\)- because \(pazar\) is the modern reflex rather than a reading

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\(^1\) “Bu düşüş kısmen birleşik adı kısa söyleme eğiliminden kısmen de Batı dillerindeki ad tamlashası kalbının dilimizi etkilemiş olmasından ileri gelmiştir” (Korkmaz 2009: 140).

\(^2\) “Kadı Köyü, Top Kapısı, şiş kebabı gibi belirtilisiz isim tamlaması kuruluşundaki bazı isimler bugün iyi eklerini düşürerek Kadıköy, Topkapı, şişkebap şeklinde kalıplaşmıştır.” (Karahan 2010: 45).
of the Italian notation) — location in the *Orientalia*, for instance, 1:184 = fascicle 1, column 184. The material is as follows:

**Compounds with the possessiv suffix +(s)i**

1487 jhacrigibasi [!] [= çakırcı başı ‘chief falconer’] 3:515
jhixinighibasi [!] [= çanlıcığır başı ‘chief food taster’] 3:532

1501 bostazi [!] bassa [= bostancı başı ‘commander of the Imperial guards’] 3:461

1503 biluchbassi [= böyük başı ‘captain of the janissaries’] 3:453
giebezi bassi [= cebeci başı ‘commander of the armorers’] 3:542
cesnegibassi [= çanlıcığır başı ‘chief food taster’] 3:532
zaus bassi [= çavuş başı ‘chief of the sergeants’] 3:538

1519 acsamnamazi [= aksam namazi ‘the first evening prayer’] 1:65
agamiler agası [= acemiler ağası ‘rank of eunuchs serving in the Sultan’s harem’] 1:26

1524 bachar [!] suressi [= Bakara Suressi ‘the surah of the Heifer’] 2:308
ciamarzibassi [= çamaşır başı ‘keeper of the linen; head of the washerwomen and laundrymen’] 3:520
cieribassi [= çeri başı ‘commander of troops’] 3:559

1537 arabagibassi [= arabacı başı ‘head of the coach drivers’] 1:181
zachirgibassi [= çakırcı başı ‘chief falconer’] 3:515

1545 bocli bassi [= boklu başı ‘head of the cesspool cleaners’] 3:451

1550 azapagasi [= azap ağası ‘head of the auxiliary troops’] 2:268

1551 chiusbassi [= çavuş başı ‘chief of the sergeants’] 3:538

1553 buluc-basci [= böyük başı ‘captain of the janissaries’] 3:453

1596 bustangibassi [= bostancı başı ‘commander of the Imperial guards’] 3:463

1608 berberi [!] bassi [= berber başı ‘chief barber’] 2:405
bustangibassi [= bostancı başı ‘commander of the Imperial guards’] 3:463

casnagir bassi [= çanlıcığır başı ‘chief food taster’] 3:532

1618 gebegi-basci [= cebeci başı ‘commander of the armorers’] 3:542

1649 ciaus-basci [= çavuş başı ‘chief of the sergeants’] 3:538

1665 allaibeghi [= alay beyi/beği ‘commander of the gendarmes’] 1:78
anahtaroglanı [= anahtar oğlanı ‘assistant of the anahtar ağası’] 1:164
berberbassi [= berber başı ‘chief barber’] 2:405
buluk bassi [= bölük başı ‘captain of the janissaries’] 3:453
1699 giara-basaci [= cerrah başı ‘chief surgeon’] 3:561
1670 bustangi bassi [= bostancı başı ‘commander of the Imperial guards’] 3:463
dgebedgi-bassi [= cebeci başı ‘commander of the armorers’] 3:542
tscenedgir [!] bassi [= çasnigir başı ‘chief food taster’] 3:533
vret [!]ş bazari [= avret pazarı ‘female slave market’] 2:254
1671 alai ciaussi [= alay çavuşu ‘sergeant at arms’] 1:79
chioadar aga chioadar agassi [= çuhadar ağası ‘valet’] 3:583-584
1675 chiaus bassi [= çavuş başı ‘chief of the sergeants’] 3:538
1680 axian namasi [= akşam namazı ‘the first evening prayer’] 1:65
1682 anakdar agasi [= anahtar ağası ‘a steward of the Sultan’s palace’, lit. ‘the agha of the keys’] 1:163
mimbaci [!, = bin başı ‘major; naval commander; squadron-leader’] 3:436
1683 alai chiaussi [= alay çavuşu ‘sergeant at arms’] 1:79
1684 giebigiler kiaiassi [= cebeciler kâhyası ‘commander of the armorers’] 3:544
1688 allai chiaussi [= alay çavuşu ‘sergeant at arms’] 1:79
anectar agassi [= anahtar ağası ‘a steward of the Sultan’s palace’, lit. ‘the agha of the keys’] 1:163
zashaigi [!] bassi [= çakırçı başı ‘chief falconer’] 3:516
1699 chiamaci[!]-basci [= çamaşır başı ‘keeper of the linen; head of the washerwomen and laundrymen’] 3:520
1703 chiaus bassi [= çavuş başı ‘chief of the sergeants’] 3:538
1720 bostanjig bassij [= bostancı başı ‘commander of the Imperial guards’] 3:463
1732 at-naali [= at nahl ‘horseshoe’] 2:244
azapagasi [= azap ağası ‘head of the auxiliary troops’] 2:268
boluki[!]-bасcy [= böülüк başı ‘captain of the janissaries’] 3:453
1746 gebezi bassi [= cebeci başı ‘commander of the armorers’] 3:542
1757 bimbasci [= bin başı ‘major; naval commander; squadron-leader’] 3:436
1769 ajak-diwani [= ayak divanı ‘assembly in the presence of the Sultan for the discussion of urgent matters’] 2:255
1778 Akhor-Capussi [= Ahır Kapısı ‘a city gate at Constantinople’, lit. ‘stable gate’] 1:54
alai-ciausci [= alay çavuşu ‘sergeant at arms’] 1:79
Bakce-Capussi [= Bahçe Kapısı ‘a city gate in Constantinople’, lit. ‘garden gate’] 2:300
Baluk-Hane-Capussi [= Balikhane Kapısı ‘a city gate in Constantinople’, lit. ‘fish mart gate’] 2:318
1782 zabei [!] bassi [= cebeci başı ‘commander of the armorers’] 3:542
1786 bostangibasci [= bostancı başı ‘commander of the Imperial guards’] 3:463
chiamacibassi [!] [= çamaşır başı ‘keeper of the linen; head of the washerwomen and laundrymen’] 3:520
geirachimbasci [= cerrah başı ‘chief surgeon’] 3:561
1787 chiaus paschy [= çavuş başı ‘chief of the sergeants’] 3:538
1823 djerrah-baschi [= cerrah başı ‘chief surgeon’] 3:561
1825 binbachi [= bin başı ‘major; naval commander; squadron-leader’] 3:436
1828 atmagi [!] basci [= atmacacı başı ‘head of the falconers’] 2:241
ciakirgibasci [= çakırcı başı ‘chief falconer’] 3:516
ciamascirbasci [= çamaşır başı ‘keeper of the linen; head of the washerwomen and laundrymen’] 3:521
1829 bostandgi-bassi [= bostancı başı ‘commander of the Imperial guards’] 3:463
1830 alaibegi [= alay beyi/beği ‘commander of the gendarmes’] 1:78
ciausbasci [= çavuş başı ‘chief of the sergeants’] 3:538
1831 At-Meidanj [= At Meydani ‘a historical square in Constantinople’, lit. ‘horse square, hippodrome’] 2:243
Bahge-Capusu [= Bahçe Kapısı ‘a city gate in Constantinople’, lit. ‘garden gate’] 2:300
1853 arabadjii-bachi [= arabacı başı ‘head of the coach drivers’] 1:182
Et [!]-Meidane [= At Meydani ‘a historical square in Constantinople’, lit. ‘horse square, hippodrome’] 2:243
djebedji-bachi [= cebeci başı ‘commander of the armorers’] 3:542
Compounds without the possessiv suffix +(s)i

1537 baratemin [= berat emini ‘officer responsible for delivering the ordinances of the Sultan’] 2:403
1545 athpazar [= at pazarı ‘horse market’] 2:244
bithpazar [= bit pazarı ‘flea market’] 3:442
1549 asap aga [= azap ağası ‘head of the auxiliary troops’] 2:268
1553 alaibei [= alay beyi/beği ‘commander of the gendarmes’] 1:78
1565 alaybey [= alay beyi/beği ‘commander of the gendarmes’] 1:78
1587 At Maidan [= At Meydanı ‘a historical square in Constantinople’, lit. ‘horse square, hippodrome’] 2:242
1590 aiaz [|] divan [= ayak divanı ‘assembly in the presence of the Sultan for the discussion of urgent matters’] 2:255
1608 scodradar [|] aga [= çuhadar ağası ‘valet’] 3:583
1635 At Meidan [= At Meydanı ‘a historical square in Constantinople’, lit. ‘horse square, hippodrome’] 2:242
1665 Atmaidam [= At Meydanı ‘a historical square in Constantinople’, lit. ‘horse square, hippodrome’] 2:242
1671 chioadar aga [= çuhadar ağası ‘valet’] 3:583-584
1672 baluc bazar [= balık pazarı ‘fish market’] 2:318
1679 ansham [|] namaz [= akşam namazı ‘the first evening prayer’] 1:65
1684 alaibeg [= alay beyi/beği ‘commander of the gendarmes’] 1:78
1688 atpazzar [= at pazarı ‘horse market’] 2:244
1689 chiamachir agà [= çamaşır ağası ‘keeper of the linen; head of the washerwomen and laundrymen’] 3:520
1720 Bachxecapı [= Bahçe Kapısı ‘a city gate in Constantinople’, lit. ‘garden gate’] 2:300
chioadar-agá [= çuhadar ağası ‘valet’] 3:583
1724 alai chiaus [= alay çavuşu ‘sergeant at arms’] 1:79
Baczè Capì [= Bahçe Kapısı ‘a city gate in Constantinople’, lit. ‘garden gate’] 2:300
1732 alay-begh [= alay beyi/beği ‘commander of the gendarmes’] 1:78
1778 At-Meydan [= At Meydamı ‘a historical square in Constantinople’, lit. ‘horse square, hippodrome’] 2:242
1786  ayac divan [≡ ayak divani ‘assembly in the presence of the Sultan for the discussion of urgent matters’] 2:255
1823 anathar-agà [≡ anahtar ağası ‘a steward of the Sultan’s palace, lit. the agha of the keys’] 1:163
1828 anachtaroghlan [≡ anahtar oğlanı ‘assistant of the anahtar ağası’] 1:164
1829 anatitar [!] aga [≡ anahtar ağası ‘assistant of the anahtar ağası’] 1:163
1831 ciucadar-aga [≡ çuhadar ağası ‘valet’] 3:583
1836 aiak divan [≡ ayak divani ‘assembly in the presence of the Sultan for the discussion of urgent matters’] 2:255
1842 bit-bazar [≡ bit pazarı ‘flea market’] 3:442
1877 balik-bazar [≡ balık pazarı ‘fish market’] 2:318

Even though the exact number of examples in both sections is not of great importance before all the fascicles of the Orientalia are published, some remarks can be made immediately:

1) There are 75 compounds with the possessive suffix but only 31 without it. This proportion points to a clear dominance of the correct prefixed variants. On the other hand, thirty examples, which amounts to one-third of the material available to me today, show that the phenomenon was not entirely new in those days.

2) Semantically, our words can be arranged in several groups, the largest two being official titles and military ranks as well as names of places such as bazaars, squares, gates etc.

3) It comes as no surprise that official titles and military ranks are mostly attested in their correct literary form (62 correct examples vs. 7 records without the possessive suffix). However, it is somewhat surprising that the names of bazaars, squares and gates are attested twelve times without the suffix and only seven times with the suffix. I believe this might be connected with the prestige of certain names (see “Conclusion 2” below).

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3 Especially that a few, albeit not very many words are uncertain, e.g. 1565 alaybey may be read as both alay bey and alay beyi.
(4) A special case are compounds with \textit{baş} (< baş ‘head’ + poss.suff. +\textit{s}i ‘his, her, its’) as the second element. This is the only type of nominal compounds that was never used without the possessive suffix. In my opinion, this fact might have resulted from a secondary association of \textit{baş} with the noun \textit{paşa} ‘pasha’, the more so as the Turkish stressed -\textit{i} is pronounced by some Turks lower and can be perceived as -\textit{a} by foreigners.

(5) Another peculiarity in this material is that some words are first attested in their incorrect form and only later in the correct one. For instance, the historical square \textit{At Meydanı}, lit. ‘Horse Square’, that is ‘Hippodrome’ in Istanbul is first attested in 1587 as \textit{At Maidan}, then (to cite but a few examples) 1635 \textit{At-Meidan}, 1652 \textit{Katmeidan} [], 1656 \textit{Atmeidan}, 1665 \textit{Atmaidam} [], 1670 \textit{Atmeydam} [], 1778 \textit{At-Meidan}, 1786 \textit{Atmeydam} [], 1817 \textit{Admeïdan}, and then suddenly in 1831 \textit{At-meidan} [with -\textit{j} for a high vowel – M.S.] and in 1853 \textit{Et[]-Maidane} [with -\textit{e} for Turkish -\textit{ı} – M.S.] (Schweickard 2023: 2:242-243).

4. Final conclusions

Conclusion 1: Since the earliest known attestation dates back to 1537 the dropping of the possessive suffix from Izafet 2 probably began \textit{before the 16th century}.

Conclusion 2: The presence or absence of the possessive suffix in Izafet 2 constructions depends on Turkish informants rather than on Italian authors. The fact that official ranks and titles occur more often than not in their correct form while names of bazaars and other places do not should probably be linked to the prestige of the former. Presumably, the majority of Turkish informants paid relatively greater attention to the correct pronunciation of official titles. In other words, dropping the possessive suffix in Izafet 2 must have originated from the lower social spheres. Their alleged trend to speak briefly does not appear to be a realistic explanation as it has no parallels in other Turkish syntactic constructions. But a tendency to carelessly pronounce often used and well-known words such as names of bazaars, etc. was probably crucial in the process. This conjecture means that \textit{frequency}
(and, thus, carelessness in pronunciation) of these names rather than a trend to speak briefly was at the root of this phenomenon.

References


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