

MAREK STACHOWSKI

Uniwersytet Jagielloński w Krakowie  
Instytut Filologii Słowiańskiej

ORCID: 0000-0002-0667-8862

## **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 Meydani*) 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* ‘gombo, okra soup’. I was shocked – why not *bamya çorbası*? 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,<sup>1</sup> others think this is a rather new tendency in Turkish.<sup>2</sup> 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

<sup>1</sup> "Bu düşünüş kısmen birleşik adı kısa söyleme eğiliminden kısmen de Batı dillerindeki ad tamlaması kalıbının dilimizi etkilemiş olmasından ileri gelmiştir" (Korkmaz 2009: 140).

<sup>2</sup> "*Kadı Köyü, Top Kapısı, şiş kebabi* gibi belirtisiz isim tamlaması kuruluşundaki bazı isimler bugün iyelik eklerini düşürerek *Kadıköy, Topkapı, şişkebab* şeklinde kalıplaşmıştır." (Karahana 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  
           jhixinighirbasi [!] [= *çaşnigir başı* ‘chief food taster’] 3:532
- 1501     bostazi [!] bassa [= *bostancı başı* ‘commander of the Imperial guards’] 3:461
- 1503     biluchbassi [= *bölük başı* ‘captain of the janissaries’] 3:453  
           giebezi bassi [= *cebeci başı* ‘commander of the armorers’] 3:542  
           cesnegirbassi [= *çaşnigir başı* ‘chief food taster’] 3:532  
           zaus bassi [= *çavuş başı* ‘chief of the sergeants’] 3:538
- 1519     acsamnamazi [= *aşam namazı* ‘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 Suresi* ‘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     chiausbassi [= *çavuş başı* ‘chief of the sergeants’] 3:538
- 1553     buluc-basci [= *bölük 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 [= *çaşnigir 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 [= *çaşnigir 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 [= *çakırcı 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 bostangij bassij [= *bostancı başı* ‘commander of the Imperial guards’] 3:463
- 1732 at-naali [= *at nalı* ‘horseshoe’] 2:244
- azapagasi [= *azap ağası* ‘head of the auxiliary troops’] 2:268
- boluki[!]-bascy [= *bölük 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 [= *Balıkhane Kapısı* ‘a city gate in Constantinople’, lit. ‘fish market gate’] 2:318
- 1782 zabezi [!] 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 bostandji-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 Meydanı* ‘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 arabadji-bachi [= *arabacı başı* ‘head of the coach drivers’] 1:182  
 Et [!]-Meidane [= *At Meydanı* ‘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 alaipei [= *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 alaipeg [= *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 Bachxecapy [= *Bahçe Kapısı* ‘a city gate in Constantinople’, lit. ‘garden gate’] 2:300  
chioadar-aga [= *çuhadar ağası* ‘valet’] 3:583
- 1724 alai chiaus [= *alay çavuşu* ‘sergeant at arms’] 1:79  
Baczè Capi [= *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 Meydanı* ‘a historical square in Constantinople’, lit. ‘horse square, hippodrome’] 2:242

- 1786 ayac divan [= *ayak divanı* ‘assembly in the presence of the Sultan for the discussion of urgent matters’] 2:255
- 1823 anathar-aga [= *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 divanı* ‘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,<sup>3</sup> 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 suffixed 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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<sup>3</sup> 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 *başı* (< *baş* ‘head’ + poss.suff. +*(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 *başı* with the noun *paşa* ‘pasha’, the more so as the Turkish stressed *-ı* is pronounced by some Turks lower and can be perceived as *-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 *At Meydanı*, lit. ‘Horse Square’, that is ‘Hippodrome’ in Istanbul is first attested in 1587 as *At Maidan*, then (to cite but a few examples) 1635 *At-Meidan*, 1652 *Katmejdän* [!], 1656 *Atmeidän*, 1665 *Atmaidam* [!], 1670 *Atmeydam* [!], 1778 *At-Meidan*, 1786 *Atmeydam* [!], 1817 *Admeïdan*, and then suddenly in 1831 *At-meïdanj* [with *-j* for a high vowel – M.S.] and in 1853 *Et*[!]-*Maidane* [with *-e* for Turkish *-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 *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 *frequency*

(and, thus, carelessness in pronunciation) of these names rather than a trend to speak briefly was at the root of this phenomenon.

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