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TAT, AN ENDANGERED LANGUAGE OF AZERBAIJAN, AND ITS SPEAKERS A HISTORICAL AND SOCIOLINGUISTIC OVERVIEW

AZERBAYCAN'IN TEHLİKEDEKİ BİR DİLİ TATÇA VE KONUŞURLARI TARİHSEL VE TOPLUMDİLBİLİMSEL BİR BAKIŞ

Abstract: This article offers a brief insight into the history of Tat, an Iranian language spoken mainly in Azerbaijan, and the sociolinguistic profile of its speakers, with emphasis on phenomena such as language identity and language shift. Despite the absence of reliable figures regarding the number of Tat speakers, field inquiries show that fluency in Tat decreases with each generation, a worrying trend considering that many Tat varieties still await their description and documentation.

Keywords: Tat, Juhuri, Mountain Jews, Azerbaijan, sociolinguistics, language shift, minority languages

Öz: Bu makale, ağırlıklı olarak Azerbaycan'da konuşulan bir İrani dil olan Tatçanın tarihine ve konuşanlarının toplumdilbilimsel profiline, dil kimliği ve dil kayması gibi olgulara vurgu yaparak kısa bir bakış açısı sunmaktadır. Tatça konuşurlarının sayısına ilişkin güvenilir rakamlar olmamasına rağmen, saha araştırmaları, toplumda Tatçayı akıcı bir şekilde konuşabilenlerin sayısının her kuşakta azaldığını gösteriyor. Bu, Tatçanın pek çok varyantının hâlâ tanımlanmadığı ve belgelenmediği düşünüldüğünde endişe verici bir eğilimdir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Tat, Cuhuri, Dağ Yahudileri, Azerbaycan, toplum dil bilim, dil kayması, azınlık dilleri

1. Introduction

The multilingual mosaic of Azerbaijan is made up of language varieties mostly belonging to four families: Turkic, Indo-European, East Caucasian (also known as Nakh-Dagestani) and South Caucasian (also known as Kartvelian). The Indo-European family is represented in Azerbaijan mainly by its Iranian branch and more specifically by the following four languages: Talyshi, spoken in the very south of the country; Tat, spoken all around the Greater Caucasus mountain ridge; Kurmanji, historically spoken in East Zangezur (most of them displaced in 1991–1994, during the First Karabakh War) and to a lesser extent in Naxçıvan; and finally, the little-known Alazan Persian, spoken in the north, close to the Georgia–Azerbaijan border. Another language

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belonging to this branch is mentioned in academic publications as Kilit, eponymous with a village located in Naxçıvan, where it was spoken before becoming extinct by the mid-twentieth century.

The present article provides a historical and sociolinguistic overview of Tat, an Iranian language spoken in small pockets scattered across northeastern Azerbaijan and currently classified by the UNESCO Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger as "severely endangered". There are two main varieties of Tat: Judaeo-Tat (known otherwise as Jewish Tat or Juhuri), a smaller variety spoken and written by a Mizrahi Jewish community indigenous to the East Caucasus and known as Mountain Jews; and Muslim Tat, a larger and mostly oral variety spoken predominantly by people who identify as Muslims. Muslim Tat also includes two small sub-varieties, both now either extinct or moribund, spoken by a group of people who have historically considered themselves Armenian Orthodox Christians, all of whom left Azerbaijan in 1989, in the wake of the First Karabakh War.

The article relies on previous research addressing the history of Tat and its current situation as well as the author's own field inquiries conducted in 2013–2019.

View of Əhən, a Tat-speaking village in the District of İsmayıllı, Azerbaijan (Photo by Murad Suleymanov), © CC BY-NC-ND 4.0

2. Spread of Tat

Although Tat is genetically related to Persian, much more so than Talyshi, which is spoken on both sides of the Azerbaijan–Iran border, some academic works tend to overestimate this proximity, often going as far as describing Tat as a "variety of Persian" or a "dialect of Persian" (Minorsky 1936: 757, Windfuhr 1979: 4, Windfuhr & Perry 2009: 417). This claim is effectively challenged by the significant grammatical differences and mutual unintelligibility between the

two languages, as well as the so far unestablished genetic continuity between any known earlier form of Persian and Tat.

Even though Tat features isoglosses which point to the Iranian Plateau as the likely place of origin of its distant ancestor and even though the first recorded traces of permanent Iranian-speaking population around the Greater Caucasus date back to the fifth and sixth centuries when Sassanid kings Kavad I and his son Khosrow I (Anushirwān) brought groups of people from Persia and settled them along its mountainous paths (Minorskij 1963: 32–33), it is unknown whether or not the language of those settlers was directly related to modern Tat.

It is noteworthy that despite similar names, Tat does not form a dialect continuum with "Tāti" or "Southern Tat", which is a dialect cluster spoken in northwestern Iran (previously also including the aforementioned Kilit language spoken in Azerbaijan). Genetically, these dialects stand farther away from both Tat and Persian and form a dialect continuum with Talyshi (Stilo 2016: 193).

In Azerbaijan, Tat speakers presently inhabit predominantly rural settlements, located in valleys along the slopes of the Greater Caucasus, all the way south to the Abşeron Peninsula, in a linguistically rich area where Indo-European languages meet East Caucasian and Turkic languages. These settlements[2] are located in the following districts: Quba, Şabran, Siyəzən, Xızı, Şamaxı, Ağsu, İsmayıllı, Oğuz, as well as in the Greater Baku area, in particular, in the towns of Balaxanı and Suraxanı.[3]

Outside of Azerbaijan, Tat is traditionally spoken in the Republic of Dagestan (Russia), where its speakers are presently found in Derbent and in a few surrounding villages, and in Georgia, in the village of Gombori, by descendants of a small community of early-twentieth century migrants from Azerbaijan. Starting in the second half of the twentieth century, due to emigration (affecting mostly Mountain Jews), Tat speakers have been present in Israel, in Russia outside of the Caucasus, in Central Europe, and in North America.

The number of speakers of Tat in Azerbaijan cannot be guessed even approximately. The 2019 Azerbaijani census, which is the latest census whose results have been published,[4] reports 27,657 "ethnic Tats" living in Azerbaijan (Statistika Komitəsi 2022: 9). However, this figure can barely claim to represent the number of Tat language speakers, and that for a variety of reasons, including that (1) not everyone who speaks Tat regards him- or herself as belonging to the "Tat ethnicity"; (2) not everyone identifying as a Tat is necessarily a proficient speaker of the Tat language; (3) not every speaker of Tat refers to the language in question as "Tat"; (4) the perception of linguistic and especially ethnic identities is rather fluid among the traditionally Muslim peoples of the South Caucasus, which sometimes affects the way they identify themselves to out-group members (Volkova 1969: 61–65).

[2] The English terms used for types of settlements in this article have been adapted from the official languages ofthe respective countries as follows: Azeri *şəhər* / Russian *gorod* 'city'; Azeri *qəsəbə* 'town'; Azeri *kənd* /Russian *selo* / Georgian *sopeli* 'village'.

[3] For the list of Tat-speaking settlements of Azerbaijan, see Miller 1929, Grjunberg 1963: 5–6, Clifton et al. 2005: 10–12 and Suleymanov 2020: 48–49. Note that in some settlements mentioned in the former two sources, no speakers of Tat are currently found.

[4] I thank Dr. Jala Garibova (Azerbaijan University of Languages) for helping me access these data.

3. The Term "Tat"

A variety of terms are used by Tat speakers to refer to their language, with *tati* being the most common one among Muslim Tat speakers. It is derived from the term *tat*, a name applied by mediaeval Turkic tribes of the Islamic realm to their sedentary neighbours, most of whom happened to be Iranian-speaking (see Žuze 1930, Minorsky 1936: 756–757, Ljuškevič 1971, Alikberov 2003: 50, Hacıyev 2009: 368–376, Golden 2016: 104–106, among others). It appears that in the South Caucasus, even as late as in the nineteenth century, this term was still far from being linguistically conditioned, since in Şirvan, *tat* is said to have been applied to any sedentary group engaged in arable farming, including Turkic groups which had abandoned transhumance (Abelov 1887: 21). The European, mostly language-based notion of "ethnicity", common also in Russia (which conquered the South Caucasus in the early nineteenth century), remained largely alien to the Muslims of the South Caucasus and Central Asia who, before the introduction of Soviet anti-religious policies, would identify simply as Muslims. This convergence may also account for the confusion whereby different Russian statistical sources of the time (which evidently relied on contemporary European "standards" of defining ethnicity) described the same community as either "Tat" or "Tatar" (term used by the Russian imperial administration to refer to Turkic speakers of the Caucasus). Today, Muslim Tat speakers tend to identify as Azeris and consider Azeri their second mother-tongue (Gardanov et al. 1961: 15, Oranskij 1979: 38, Grjunberg & Davydova 1982: 231), viewing *tat* rather as an additional sub-ethnic, regional or sociocultural identification. The present-day Azeri identity is possibly seen in such cases as the extension of the old Muslim identity, bolstered by the absence of significant cultural and socioeconomic differences between Muslim Tat speakers and Azeri speakers on the one hand (Grjunberg 1963: 7) and the vague distinction between ethnicity and nationality in the context of a post-Soviet (nation-)state on the other hand (Suleymanov 2020: 24).

The term *tati* is used to refer to the Tat language by Muslim Tat speakers hailing from the Districts of Quba and Şabran and to a smaller extent from the Districts of Siyəzən and Xızı, where speakers tend to extend their regional demonym *dağlı* (← Azeri *dağlı* 'mountaineer') onto their mother-tongue. The term *tati* is also used widely in the Districts of Şamaxı, Ağsu and İsmayıllı, with the exception of the town of Lahıc, where the speakers use the term *löüži* or *löyiži* (lit. 'of Lahıc') to refer to their language and generally distance themselves unequivocally from the term *tati*. In the Greater Baku area, indigenous Tat speakers prefer to call their language *parsi* (cognate of 'Persian'), a term unknown to Tat speakers elsewhere.

Judaeo-Tat speakers refer to their language as *ǰuhuri*, a derivative of the self-applied name *ǰuhur* (Tat for 'Jew'). Tat speakers who identify as Armenians traditionally referred to their language as *farsi* (Tat for 'Persian') or *tati*.

Although scientific works mentioning the Tat language and its speakers were published already in the Tsarist period, their authors for the most part refrained from claiming the existence of any genetic relationship between Tat-speaking Muslims, Jews and Christians. In the Soviet era, the linguistic proximity between Tat-speaking groups of various confessions prompted the government to start working towards engineering an ethnic identity that would unite all of these groups under a single suprareligious "ethnic Tat" umbrella (Nazarova 2020: 65). If successful, this policy could have fulfilled a number of objectives, whose likely common purpose was to reduce ultimately the influence of religion on ethnic identity. Scientific works published in the

post-World War II period manifest such attempts by making references to "Muslim Tats", "Jewish Tats" (or, more precisely "Tats of the Judaic faith") and "Gregorian[5]/Armenian Tats" (Grjunberg 1963: 3, Əhmədov 1964: 88, Hacıyev 1971: 32, Grjunberg & Davydova 1982, Bunijatov 1986: 72–73). The policy, however, ended up having little to no effect on the identity of the target communities (Členov 2000: 179), proving to be generally unsuccessful in a region where religion could not be so easily overpowered by language as an identity marker.[6] However, it did gain some ground in scientific literature and opened up a discussion aimed at offering answers regarding the historical circumstances behind the multiconfessional nature of the "Tat ethnic group", often with very little scientific evidence or research at hand (Viktorin 2008, Akopjan 2006: 190–191).

Oral narratives of Mountain Jews and of Tat-speaking Armenian Orthodox Christians do not contain references to a previous ethnic unity with each other and/or with Tat-speaking Muslims (Shalem 2018: 318, Akopjan 2006: 208–209). Mountain Jewish narratives, for instance, trace the origin of this community to one of the "ten lost tribes of Israel" (Shalem 2018: 325) and reflect stories of Jewish migrations in several waves, mainly from Persia (Kupoveckij 2010).

While it is quite possible that Jewish or Armenian Orthodox proselytism took place in the region in pre-Islamic times, it is difficult to posit the existence of a "Tat ethnic group" during that period and to suppose that any sort of cross-confessional ethnic and/or linguistic unity would have been maintained for over a millennium. Furthermore, assuming a genetic relationship between those potential early converts (from either Zoroastrianism or any local religion), of whom virtually nothing is known, and the modern Tat-speaking communities would be highly speculative.

The possibility of modern Christian and Jewish speakers of Tat descending from (presumably Muslim) Tat-speaking converts of the mediaeval or pre-modern era is even less convincing insomuch as following the Arab conquest of the East Caucasus in the eighth century, neither Christian nor Jewish religious institutions were powerful enough to provoke a large group of people to abandon the prestigious religion of the majority (Islam) in favour of the religion of a tolerated but nevertheless marginal minority. Between the mass Islamisation of the population in the Early Middle Ages and the Russian conquest of this region in 1813, the East Caucasus remained under direct Muslim rule. Thus, conversion of a Muslim community into Christianity or Judaism would be unimaginable given that apostasy was a punishable crime in this then Sharia law-ruled realm.

In contrast, the hypothesis of the phenomenon of Tat-speaking Jews and Christians being a case of language replacement offers a much more fathomable scenario, specifically in a region where, as mentioned earlier, religion was a much stronger identity marker than language (and thus less prone to being abandoned). Replacement in favour of Tat is not surprising considering its past spread, both documented (Miller 1929) and evident from the toponymy of the East Caucasus, specifically the Upper Şirvan region, dotted with placenames with very clear Iranian etymologies

[5] "Gregorian" is an obsolete Russian term used to refer to members of the Armenian Apostolic Church.

[6] Although resented by many Mountain Jews, the Tat identity would sometimes be a convenient escape to avoid persecutions resulting from the endemic anti-Semitism of the Soviet administration (Shalem 2018: 325).

(Bəndəliyev 2009: 138). In addition, loanwords from Tat (whose Tat character is obvious enough so as not to mistake them for Persian loanwords) exist in many languages of the region, including Kryz, Lezgian and even the geographically distant Udi (Suleymanov 2020: 32), which points to the local population's erstwhile bilingualism in Tat, indicative of the prestige Tat once enjoyed in the region.

This hypothesis also holds from a linguistic perspective for the historical Christian community. One of the Tat varieties spoken by self-identifying Armenians shows traces of Armenian substrate influence, notably the three-way voice-and-aspiration distinction of plosives, including in words of non-Armenian origin (Ġalt'axč'yan 1970: 28–29). This distinction is not observed in any Tat variety but does occur in Eastern Armenian. At the same time, the Tat varieties historically spoken by Christians are not dramatically different from the ones spoken by the neighbouring Muslim population from the point of view of their structure, which suggests a relatively recent case of Armenian-to-Tat language shift.

4. Tat Dialects

Tat is characterised by heavy dialectal variation, which has even led some scholars to characterise its dialects as separate languages (Authier 2016: 3179). This variation may in fact challenge the very idea of Tat dialects all stemming from a single source as opposed to, for instance, being the result of somewhat distantly related Iranian language varieties brought together in an areal convergence. In view of the existing historical accounts (Bakıxanov 1951 [1841]: 29–30), local toponymy and language contact phenomena, it is hardly doubtful that Tat dialects were once spoken in a continuum and over a much larger area than today, until gradual language shift confined them to remote mountainous areas where each of them continued to develop in isolation.

A clearcut dialect distinction runs along the religious divide: dialects spoken by Mountain Jews are relatively uniform and mutually intelligible, and can be safely isolated from Muslim Tat dialects by a set of distinct features. Meanwhile, Muslim Tat dialects are much more numerous and display far more phonological, lexical and grammatical dissimilarities, heavily affecting mutual intelligibility. These dissimilarities cannot be explained convincingly by the speakers' affiliation with more specific religious subdivisions, such as the Sunni Muslim vs. Shia Muslim dialectal split suggested by Grjunberg (1963: 7–8). Indeed, many cases show an opposite trend: in the District of İsmayıllı, for example, "Sunni" dialects resemble "Shia" dialects much closer than other "Sunni" dialects spoken in the same area (Suleymanov 2020: 28). The occasional Sunni–Shia dialectal split may thus simply reflect different periods and patterns of internal migration, especially given that in Azerbaijan, Sunnis and Shias historically have not been as segregated as in other parts of the Islamic realm and practised intermarriage already in the nineteenth century (Volkova 1984: 250). Likewise, the dialects spoken previously by the two communities identifying as Armenians were not uniform: the dialect of Mədrəsə, District of Şamaxı, constituted a separate branch within Muslim Tat, while the dialect of Kilvar, District of Şabran (previously District of Dəvəçi), could be grouped under a single branch with those spoken by non-Armenian-identifying Muslim Tat speakers in the same area, hence the impossibility of marking out a separate "Armeno-Tat" or Christian Tat (sub-)variety.

The Judaeo-Tat dialects can be roughly classified as Northern (spoken in northern and central Dagestan and elsewhere in the North Caucasus), Central (spoken in and around Derbent,

Dagestan, and in Quba, Azerbaijan) and Southern (spoken in Oğuz and, historically, in the District of İsmayıllı). The Muslim Tat dialects branch out into Northern (spoken mainly in the Districts of Quba, Şabran and Siyəzən, with some outliers in the Districts of İsmayıllı and Şamaxı, as well as around Derbent, Dagestan), Xızı (spoken in the homonynous district in Azerbaijan), Abşeron (spoken in the towns of Balaxanı and Suraxanı near Baku), Mədrəsə (historically spoken in the District of Şamaxı), and Şirvan (spoken in the Districts of İsmayıllı and Şamaxı, with outliers in the District of Ağsu and in Gombori, Georgia).

Because of the high level of grammatical variation, Tat dialects have been described and documented individually. Major works describing Tat as spoken in Azerbaijan include Miller (1907) for the Lahıc sub-dialect (Şirvan dialect), Grjunberg (1963) for the Northern dialect (varieties spoken in around Qonaqkənd, District of Quba, as well as in the Districts of Siyəzən and partially Şabran), Ġalt'axč'yan (1970) for the Mədrəsə dialect, Hacıyev (2009) for the Qonaqkənd sub-dialect of the Northern dialect), Mammadova (2018) for the Suraxanı sub-dialect of the Abşeron dialect, and Suleymanov (2020) for the Şirvan dialect. Soltanov & Soltanov (2013), a concise Tat–Azeri–Tat dictionary, is based on the Ərüsküş–Dağ Quşçu sub-dialect of the Northern dialect. All the abovementioned works include texts (translated and sometimes glossed) and/or elicited examples. In addition, multidialectal texts have been published by Miller (1945) and Sokolova (1953).

A few authors from Azerbaijan have published poetry and fiction in the Tat language using the Azeri alphabet (see Suleymanov 2020: 39).

5. Tat as a Minority Language

The most important contact language for Tat is Azeri, or Azerbaijani, the official language of Azerbaijan and once an important lingua franca of the Caucasus, Northern Iran and Eastern Anatolia. The profound centuries-long influence of Azeri has touched every aspect of Tat, from phonology to syntax (Grjunberg 1963: 7).

Since the 1920s, Judaeo-Tat has had a written literary tradition based on the dialect of Derbent spoken in Dagestan (Zand 1985 and 1986, Shalem 2018: 345–349). Literary and musical activity in Judaeo-Tat flourished throughout the twentieth century, including in Azerbaijan, and efforts are currently made to maintain it in the diaspora. In the early Soviet era, Judaeo-Tat was even the language of instruction in some schools, all of which, however, were converted into schools with Russian or Azeri as the language of instruction by the 1950s.

In contrast, Muslim Tat has remained largely unwritten and non-standardised, with meagre and uncoordinated attempts to publish literary works in it starting in the 1990s. It has never been taught in schools except limited attempts to teach it in primary grades as an optional subject in some rural schools in Azerbaijan in the mid-1990s.

Azerbaijan signed the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages in 1992 but has not ratified it, which is why Tat does not possess a recognised status as a minority and/or regional language.

6. Language Shift among Tat Speakers

Bilingualism and multilingualism are typical of all Tat speakers living in Azerbaijan. The policy of mandatory secondary education in Azeri or Russian maintained throughout the Soviet era

effectively put an end to the phenomenon of Tat monolingualism, still encountered in rural areas in the 1920s (Miller 1929: 6, 8). Those who have completed their studies in Russian (Clifton et al. 2005: 47) or have lived a large part of their lives in predominantly Russian-speaking Soviet-era Baku are trilingual to various degrees. In rural areas, Russian is sometimes spoken as a third language by men who have fulfilled their military service in the Soviet army or by those who have spent a portion of their lives in another ex-Soviet state (Suleymanov 2020: 34).

The process of language replacement among Muslim Tat speakers, which in Azerbaijan has almost always occurred in favour of Azeri, is a trend mentioned in all accounts of the sociolinguistic situation of Tat. The speakers' view of their own language as inferior and therefore to be restricted to home use has been cited as the primary reason for the shift (Eichwald 1834: 394, Lopatinskij 1894: 30, Miller 1929: 5, Sokolova 1953: 123). It is thus unsurprising that being today a low-prestige language, Tat is almost never spoken in mixed families (Grjunberg 1963: 7, Clifton et al. 2005: 19). Children born to Muslim Tat-speaking parents are nowadays rarely encouraged to learn Tat and only acquire it if it is actively used in the family. Even if acquired, though, Muslim Tat is hardly ever used by children to communicate with each other. In many communities, individuals born in the 1960s and 1970s are likely the last proficient speakers due to belonging to the youngest generation of people to have grown up around exclusively or predominantly Tat-speaking grandparents.

Another factor leading to language shift is rapid urbanisation. Due to limited economic prospects in the remote villages where Tat is currently spoken, entire families often relocate to large towns and cities like Baku, Sumqayıt and their suburbs, where the children are immersed in a fully Azeri-speaking environment and thus have fewer options for acquiring or practising Tat. Dozens of Tat-speaking villages, especially in the Districts of Xızı and İsmayıllı, which were populated as recently as 25 years ago, are presently empty or home to no more than five families. Conversely, in the two formerly majority-Tat-speaking towns of the Greater Baku area – Balaxanı and Suraxanı – Tat has turned into a minority language not only as a result of language shift but also due to a continuous flow of migrants from non-Tat-speaking areas of Azerbaijan looking to settle in the immediate vicinity of the economically promising capital city and increasing its monolingual Azeri population.

The decline in the use of Judaeo-Tat is mainly due to the emigration of its speakers to Israel, Russia and the West throughout the 1990s, a common trend among Soviet Jews. Currently, in addition to Baku, Mountain Jews are found in Qırmızı Qəsəbə (Krasnaya Sloboda), the Jewish quarter of Quba, where they form the majority. The once vibrant Jewish communities of Oğuz (formerly Vartaşen) and Göyçay have now dwindled to a few dozen people, while the communities in Upper Şirvan (Mücü and Mücü-Həftəran in the District of İsmayıllı and the city of Şamaxı) have practically disappeared. Among the Mountain Jews presently residing in Azerbaijan, Judaeo-Tat seems to be rather well preserved as a language of communication between all age groups in Quba (Clifton et al. 2005: 19). In Oğuz and Göyçay, many Jewish children and some adults are mainly Azeri-speaking and rarely fluent in Tat. Among the few Jews originally from Upper Şirvan who reside and were interviewed in Baku, those who left their birthplace at a young age and as well as children born in Baku to fluent speakers cannot communicate in Tat (Suleymanov 2020: 36). Throughout the twentieth century, Russian was becoming an increasingly important language for the Mountain Jews, especially those living in Baku: it went from being a marginal second language in the nineteenth century to being the

declared first language of as much as a quarter of Soviet Mountain Jewry already in 1970 (Shalem 2018: 326, 329–330). As with Muslim Tat, the decline in the native command of Judaeo-Tat is said to be partly caused by the speakers' negative attitudes towards their language (Shalem ibid.).

Tat-speaking Armenians were shifting away from Tat throughout the first half of the twentieth century, owing to frequent intermarriage with Armenian speakers as well as secondary education being available in Armenian (in Mədrəsə) and in Azeri (in Kilvar). By the time they left Azerbaijan in 1989, Tat had gone out of active use in these communities (Akopjan 2006: 200–208).

7. Conclusion

While Tat undoubtedly has a larger number of speakers than some minority languages of Azerbaijan, such as Budugh and Kryz, the fact of most of them being over 35 years old paints a bleak future for its survival beyond the twenty-first century. Tat has been described and documented since the 1840s but given the substantial dialectal fragmentation, the existing works and corpora, however comprehensive and abundant, cannot possibly capture the richness and originality of the whole of Tat varieties. The task needs to be tackled on a dialect-by-dialect basis, starting with the most vulnerable dialects. A thoroughly conceived research project could bring to light interesting phenomena of language contact in an Iranian minority language surrounded by East Caucasian and Turkic, as well as offer some leads in the further study of contact-induced phenomena in Azeri and its regional varieties.

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