

## AORIST AND PRESENT TENSE IN WEST OGHUZ TURKIC

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The history of the morphological relationship between the aorist and the present tense in West Oghuz Turkic is rather complicated. Ottoman Turkish and Azeri of the 17th century represent a crucial stage in the development: there is considerable vacillation in the choice of the aorist vowel, and the present tense gradually emerges. As some transcriptional texts show, the development of neutral vowels played an important rôle in all of the morphological shifts involved. In this paper, we will endeavour to outline, very briefly, the development from the old common aorist system to the new, quite divergent aorist and present tense systems of Turkish and Azeri.

At the oldest stage of Turkic known to us, Ancient East Turkic (AET), verbal stems ending in vowels take {yWr} or {r} for the aorist theme, whereas consonant stems take {Ar}, {Wr} or {ir}.<sup>1</sup> The aorist vowel coincides with the vowel of the intraterminal gerund in {yW}, {A}, {W}, {i}. In the present paper, <A> shall symbolize the gerund suffix, and <AR> the aorist suffix, with all their respective allomorphs.<sup>2</sup>

In the Turkic dialects which have, to an essential degree, preserved and developed this original distribution, the low unrounded vowels [A] in both gerund and aorist suffixes have in general remained rather stable. Suffixes containing other vowels, however, show a great deal of instability throughout the linguistic history of Turkic.

In Old West Oghuz Turkic, as we observe it in Old Anatolian Turkish (OAT) texts, the classes of consonant stems seem to have been reduced to two. It is generally assumed that monosyllabic stems take -A(r), e.g., *gidä(r)*, whereas polysyllabics and a few monosyllabics take -U(r), e.g., *dolašu(r)*, *bilü(r)*. This is still a distribution very similar to the one found in AET (Erdal 1979, 119), where the {i(r)} class is, as a matter of fact, limited to a few verbs. As Brendemoen (1988) shows, the situation observed in modern Trabzon dialects is in many respects a direct continuation of the OAT situation.

In some cases, particularly after polysyllabics, OAT texts show an unrounded vowel instead of an expected rounded one.<sup>3</sup> This phenomenon - the alleged existence of "ulašduri" along with "ulašduru" etc. (Mundy 1954, 309) - has been interpreted as an instance of [U] developing into [I]. According to Adamović, the illabial aorist variants emerging from the delabialization were "-ir/-ir" (1985, 69). In our view, however, this is already a sign of the beginning phonetic neutralization at the so-called indifference stage (1979a, 70ff.), i.e., [U] > [ɪ].

The aorist forms found in our Azeri material dating back to the second part of the 17th century generally conform to the pattern mentioned. This material, which is far from homogenous, but comparatively consistent, contains transcriptional documents written down (and at least partly compiled) by a French nobleman, Balthazar de Lauzière.<sup>4</sup> Here, as expected, we find -r after vowel stems, e.g., *anglarem* 'I understand,' *dierem* 'I say,' *yorourem* 'I walk,' *tanurem* 'I know'; after polysyllabic consonant stems -ur, e.g., *bichururem* 'I cook,' *doldoururem* 'I fill.' As for monosyllabic consonant stems, the rule is {Ar}, i.e., -ar, e.g., *satar* 'sells,' *bakar* 'looks,' *kalkar* 'stands up,' *yatar* 'lies,' *yanar* 'burns,' *yagar* 'rains,' *donar* 'freezes,' *salar* 'throws,' and -er, e.g., *gueder* 'goes,' *guler* 'laughs,' *seuer* 'loves,' *icher* 'drinks,' *eider* 'does,' *gecher* 'passes,' *kucher* 'wanders,' *ducher* 'falls.'

<sup>1</sup>Capital letters mark archiphonemes, e.g., /A/ = /a, ä/. Within morphemic brackets of the { } type, they symbolize the corresponding morphophonemes. As for /W/ or {W}, our notation leaves the question of its characteristics regarding the distinction [±high] open.

<sup>2</sup>Angular brackets of the type < > are used here to mark interlingual units, comprising forms from different Turkic languages at various stages of development, on the basis of etymological identity.

<sup>3</sup>As for the aorist, see Doerfer 1985, 39f. According to Mundy, the gerund vowel was more instable; it became illabial and high at the end of the 15th century (1954, 303). According to Adamović, the aorist stem was subject to delabialization in Ottoman Turkish from the middle of the 15th century on: "Der neue Vokalismus wird von zahlreichen Quellen seit 1480 bezeugt" (1985, 69).

<sup>4</sup>See Johanson 1979a, 65f., 1985a, 1985b; the texts are being edited by the present author.

Outside the {r} and {Ar} classes, however, we find a different picture. To be sure, a number of verb stems (ending in l and r) adheres to the normal pattern, taking {Ur}, e.g., *alur* 'takes,' *guelur* 'comes,' *kalur* 'stays,' *boulur* 'finds,' *verur* 'gives,' *bilur* 'knows,' *olur* 'becomes,' etc. But there are also deviations which should, like the vacillation already encountered in OAT, be interpreted as cases of neutralization.

In the Middle Azeri transcriptional texts just mentioned, aorist -ur forms sometimes vary with -er forms. As in many other transcriptional texts, the Roman letter e, as used by de Lauzière, stands for different sounds, among them most probably [ə]. Some of the er forms occur in polysyllabic words where the aorist morpheme appears only in the third syllable or later, e.g., *sorouscherem* 'I ask.' With *kal-* 'to stay' we find -ur (v. supra) but also -er, i.e., *kaler*; with *vour-* 'to strike' *voururem* 'I will smite,' but also forms in -erciz and -eridiler; with *dour-* 'to stand' forms such as *dourer*, *dourercen*; with *sal-* 'to send, throw' *salurler* but also *saler*. With *qoy-* 'to put, let,' we regularly find -er: *koier* etc. (going back to an older [qoður]).

In all these cases we assume a centralization {Ur} > {Er}, i.e., phonetic shifts from [u, ü] to [ə], and consequently read [qalər] < [qalur], [ərišər] < [ərišür], [qoyər] < [qoyur], etc. The same phenomenon is often found in Ottoman transcriptional texts (by F. Argenti, P. Ferraguto, A. Du Ryer, Th. Vaughan and others), e.g., *seuenér* 'is glad,' *sulenér* 'it is said,' *biler* 'knows,' *ghielér*, *geler* or *gyusterer* 'shows.' The assumption of a delabialization to [ir] and [ür] does not explain these forms. On the other hand, the idea of aorist allomorphs containing neutral vowels fits into the more general framework outlined by the present writer which aims to describe the emergence of the West Oghuz Turkic labial vowel harmony in its modern form (Johanson 1979a; cf. 1979b, 1981, 1984, and 1986). This development-model has proved to be of broad validity; cf. the testimony of Boeschoten, who adopts it in his analysis of Ävliya Čäläbi's *Säyahatnamä*: "The same analysis can be applied to other transcriptional documents (Megiser, Vaughan) and also to the Seyahatname with its vocalisations. In all these texts the same phenomena can be observed" (1988, 96f.).<sup>5</sup> Cf. also Schaendlinger's comments 1987, 66.

Our interpretation is also partly supported by Adamović (1985), who does not, however, mention, let alone discuss it. In some cases Adamović supposes a variant "-ër," identical with an illabial-palatal variant ascribed to the Turks of Yugoslavia and the westernmost part of Bulgaria. The vowel "ë" is defined as short ("kurz") and vague ("unausgeprägt"; p. 322). It is said - on the basis of forms such as *geler*, testified by Argenti, Ferraguto and others - that this aorist type was current in Istanbul during the 16th and 17th centuries.<sup>6</sup>

This assumption only implies delabialization of the palatal vowel [ü] into "ë" and thus leaves the corresponding velar [u] without any connection to the problem. In fact, if we read *ghielér* 'comes' and similar forms with a "vague" vowel of the "ë" type, there is no reason not to do the same with such forms as *alér* 'takes' (Ferraguto). We see, in both cases, realizations of the {Er} type: [g<sup>h</sup>älər], [alər]. The shift proposed by Adamović would only have affected one single phoneme and left the rest of the system intact. In view of the development of labial harmony as we have sketched it, it is, however, highly probable that [u] was affected, too. (Cf. the similar interpretations in Doerfer 1985, 90ff.) We suppose a shift in the morphonological system, not in an individual phoneme.<sup>7</sup>

Note that the centralization discussed should also be distinguished from the cases of class shift of individual verbs. In dialects preserving the morphological distinction between an {A} and a non-{A} aorist suffix class, verbs generally stick to their class. Sometimes, however, they shift it. Some Turkic verbs, e.g., *tur-* 'to stand (up), etc.' and *yat-* 'to lie (down)' show vacillations: *turur* ~ *turar*, *yatur* ~ *yatar*. Thus, *yat-*, which takes a low vowel in Modern Standard Turkish (MST), takes a high vowel in OAT and in

<sup>5</sup>For the indifferent vowel often written e in transcriptional documents, Boeschoten uses the symbol [ê].

<sup>6</sup>Adamović cites dialects of Urfa and Diyarbekir where the morpheme allegedly reads "-ir/-ër"; he quotes recorded forms such as "ölir," "göür" (1985, 70).

<sup>7</sup>Vgl. Johanson 1979a, 104, where Harsány *billercen* 'if you know' and similar forms are discussed. Hazai 1973 explains it phonetically, whereas we recognize herein the neutral vowel of the indifference stage, i.e., the point of departure for the morphonological development to {X}.

several modern Anatolian dialects. On the other hand, *gör-* 'to see' takes a high vowel in MST but sometimes a low vowel in OAT (Mundy 1954, 301) and in modern Anatolian dialects (for Van, see Caferoğlu 1951, 27; for Trabzon, see Brendemoen 1988; for analogous non-Turkish forms of the type *körär* see Erdal 1986 and Doerfer 1980). When in our transcriptional texts, the latter verb, the stem of which is written *gur-*, shows aorist forms such as *gurer* (but also, e.g., *gurarcen*), the aorist suffix should obviously be read [är].

This matter will not be treated further here. For the class shift of monosyllabic stems such as *doğ-* 'to be born,' *gir-* 'to enter' and *yat-* 'to lie (down)' see, however, Hazai 1973, 215, 222, 230 and Boeschoten 1988, 96. See also Nowka 1980, 125ff., where aorist suffix variants of Eastern Anatolia are described and several other cases of class shift are mentioned. Gilson, treating the unrounding of the aorist in Vaughan's grammar and commenting upon some aorist stems written with *er* (*atçtirer*, *ishider*, *virer*, *gyusterer*), considers the possibility that "There existed some hesitation regarding the quality of the suffixal vowel in these entries: / . . . / i.e., /-Ar/ instead of /-Ir/" (1987, 114f.). This is highly improbable; *er* in *atçtirer* cannot, for example, represent [är]. These examples are, in our view, clear cases of centralization.

The centralization phenomenon became, whenever it took place in the various dialects, the starting-point for different developments in Turkish and Azeri. In Turkish it marks the beginning of a tendency towards the modern fourfold harmony system, which manifests itself in the morphophoneme {X}, now written *i*, *ı*, *u*, *ü*. In Azeri, however, before the tendency towards {X} had grown strong, the shift [U] > [ɘ] paved the way for a total restructuring of the aorist system.

As is well known, the aorist class {A} has been generalized in Azeri (*bilär* 'will know,' *olar* 'will become,' etc.), a phenomenon which is connected with the emergence of the present tense in {Ir} (*bilür* 'knows,' *olur* 'becomes,' etc.). It is sometimes thought that the generalization took place as a result of the rise of a present tense form of the type *bilür*, which thus happened to coincide with the aorist.<sup>8</sup> This view does not seem to be correct. It is certainly true that the aorist unification was necessary to distinguish the aorist from the present tense (with its high suffixal vowels). But the process of differentiation must have started long before the modern type of present tense arose, so that an actual historical coincidence of an aorist [bilür] with a present tense [bilür] is highly improbable. The way to the aorist [bilär] seems to have gone via [bilör]. At the so-called indifference stage, the original labial vowel was subject to the attraction of the unequivocally low morphophonemes. In other words: for the restructuring of the Azeri aorist we assume (1) a shift from {U} to central vowels of the {ɘ} type and (2) a further lowering to {A}.

In a previous contribution, we commented upon the remarkable morphonological phenomenon to be observed in Azeri from the 17th century on: "der systematische Übergang der ehemaligen [W]-Aoristallomorphe in die {A}-Klasse im Zusammenhang mit der Entstehung eines neuen prägnanten Präsens" (1979a, 103). In our transcriptional texts, we already find signs of the lowering, e.g., with *sal-* 'to throw, send,' *salär* (along with *salürler* and *saler*), or with *dour-* 'to stand,' *dourarciz* (along with *dourer*, etc.).

As can be seen, the entire development [Wr] > [ɘr] > [Ar] is not primarily a phonetic phenomenon. In particular, the last step in the development is supported by a need for morphonological differentiation. When the allomorphical (non-functional) difference {A} : non-{A} eventually disappeared from the aorist theme, it could, instead, be used (functionally) for the gradually developing morphological distinction between aorist and present tense.

The West Oghuz Turkic present tense was, as is well known, originally formed from the intraterminal gerund <A> by means of the aorist of an auxiliary verb *yor-*, etc., henceforth symbolized by <YR>. In the eastern part of the area, <YR> manifested itself rather early as {yir}. Even in Kiptchak Turkic, which prefers the aorist of *tur-* as an auxiliary (<TR>), there are clear traces of {yir}, e.g., in Southern Russia and the Volga region.

<sup>8</sup>"Das durch die Phase IV zustande gekommene Präsens *gelir*, *alir*, *görür*, *olur* fiel mit dem Aorist morphologisch zusammen, und der Aorist *-ir/-ür/-ur/-ür* wurde in der Folge dieses Zusammenfalls vom Präsens aufgesogen. Der übrig gebliebene Aorist *-ar/-er* verallgemeinerte sich danach auf alle Verbalstammtypen" (Adamović 1986, 129).

In Turkish, labial variants of <YR> predominate, but some of its dialects (Balkan, Eastern Anatolia) show {yIr} even today. It is still unknown how widespread the type [yir] was in the Ottoman capital Istanbul. According to Admović, {yIr} emerged as a result of delabialization in the second half of the 17th century but had already disappeared by the beginning of the 18th century: "In der türkei türkischen Schriftsprache, die hauptsächlich in Konstantinopel gestaltet wurde, hielt sich das Präsens auf -yir/-yir bis zum Anfang des 18. Jahrhunderts. Sein Schwund um diese Zeit hängt mit der Veränderung der dialektischen Grundlage der Hauptstadt zusammen" (1986, 121f.). But {yIr} is certainly not typical of Istanbul. Adamović only quotes two acceptable sources to support his assumption, Greek-Turkish forms such as αλιγηλαρ 'they take,' κορκμαγηλαρ 'they do not fear,' αχαρη 'it is flowing' (Blau 1874) and Kömürğian's forms naklaşayer 'he illuminates,' açdırmayerler 'they do not have it opened,' etc. (as transcribed from Armenian script by Schütz 1971). Harsányi's forms csalißiür, uzadiür, tsaiürlar, araür, iatiürlar are certainly no examples of delabialization. Adamović himself considers them "etwas undeutlich, da dieser Autor den Vokal i mit ü widergibt" (1986, 121). However, Harsányi's ü no doubt represents the same sound as the one described in Meninski's rule which demands "-ijür," if the aorist ends in {Ur}, and "-ejür/-ajür," if it ends in {Ar} (1677, 73). On the other hand, Gilson, in her monograph on Vaughan's grammar, quotes the same form, namely *ghiriurler* 'are coming into,' under the misleading heading "Present Tense: /-iyor/" (1987, 115), although there is no trace of {(I)yor} in her text. Cf. Hazai's more cautious attitude in his edition of Harsányi's text: "Es bleibt aber die Frage offen, ob die Formen unseres Denkmals mit dem heutigen {(I)yor} organisch in Verbindung gebracht werden können" (1973, 406). Majda, in his edition of an Ottoman transcriptional text written in 1611, only quotes present tense forms with {U} (1985, 151).

The gerundial element <A> (often inadequately called "connective vowel," "Bindevokal," "bağlantı ünlüsü," etc.) has undergone various changes. The distinction between {A} and non-{A} began to disappear in OAT. Yet, as Brendemoen has shown, an archaic stage is preserved in some eastern Black Sea dialects, the "-A-/-u- region" (1988). The tendency towards delabialization was mentioned earlier. In the last phase of the OAT period, it is claimed, the illabial high vowel {I} could be attached to all verbal stems including the original {A} class members, particularly before auxiliary verbs (Mundy 1954). Here we already suppose a neutral vowel of the {E} type.

It has also been asserted that, in most Turkish dialects and MST, [y] exerts a raising effect on a vowel preceding it (Deny 1955, 59). The "Verschiebung zum i-, i-Pol" (Caferoğlu 1959, 245), widespread in Anatolian dialects (Deny 1921, 137), means that vowels tend to develop into [i] or [ɨ] before [y]. The tendency towards labial harmony,<sup>9</sup> in its turn, is thought to produce the additional variants [ü, u]. Consequently, the first vowel of {(I)yor} would first have become (1) high under the influence of [y] and then (2) subject to {X} variation according to the fourfold vowel harmony. In reality, even in today's colloquial forms of MST speech, centralized, reduced, lax vowels of the schwa type are pronounced in the position discussed (e.g., *bakıyor* 'looks' = [bakəyoɨ] or [bakyyoɨ] in IPA transcription),<sup>10</sup> although the orthography suggests - and certainly stimulates - a pronunciation of unreduced high vowels [i, ɨ]. It is still one of the characteristics of the MST, based on the dialect of Istanbul, that vowels preceding suffixes such as {(y)En} are centralized. By means of the official Turkish orthography, however, only the raising of [A] and the unrounding of [U] can be expressed: *bekliyen, yürüyen, okıyan*, etc.<sup>11</sup> Thus, in the case under discussion, we would, instead of [Vy] > [Iy], rather assume a development [Vy] > [Eɨy].

<sup>9</sup>There are claims that it had already begun to develop in the last phase of OAT; see, however, Johanson 1979a.

<sup>10</sup>In this use of IPA symbols, the "schwa" [ə] represents a mid central unrounded vowel, the "baby gamma" [ɣ] an upper-mid back unrounded vowel, and the "turned r" [ɹ] a voiced alveolar frictionless continuant.

<sup>11</sup>Norm: *bekleyen, yürüyen, okuyan*, etc. The artificial scheme of Turkish vowel harmony as reflected in the official orthography has strongly influenced linguistic analysis. Linguists are now beginning to realize that "phonetically, harmony appears to operate differently than has previously been assumed" (Rona 1986, 281). However, what is described as a "break-down" of harmony often turns out to be primary features in the historical perspective.

In Middle Azeri, the situation is similar to that of Turkish before the development of labial harmony. In the auxiliary verb construction <A> + <YR>, which was used to form the present tense, we reckon with a gerund vowel of the [ɛ] type. The combination resulted in phonetic forms such as [əyir], which were the point of departure for three different developments: harmonization of [əyir], loss of [ə], or contraction of [əyir].

In the Middle Azeri transcriptional texts mentioned above, some present tense forms already occur. Whereas the aorist form of *guel-* 'to come' is *guelur*, the present tense is written *gueleir*, e.g., *gurdi ardingia gueleir* 'vidit . . . sequentem.' Other present tense forms are *doureir* 'he is standing,' *saleir* 'he is throwing.' We read [gələyir], [saləyir], [durəyir].<sup>12</sup> This stage of development is partly preserved in the texts written by the missionary Michał Wieczorkowski<sup>13</sup> (Kowalski 1936), e.g., *alcir* 'he takes,' *dogheir* 'he is born,' *inaneir* 'he believes,' *otureir* 'he is sitting.' We read [aləyir] etc., considering this a parallel to the development discussed above rather than a shift [a] > [e] under the palatalizing effect of [y] (Adamović 1986, 121f.).

The forms mentioned are also explicitly stated in grammatical sketches of the Azeri variety in question. Raphaël du Mans' description of Persia<sup>14</sup> contains a short grammar (1684) of a contact vernacular called "lingua turcica agemica." Here - oddly enough under the heading "De futuro" - we encounter a "presentissimum" formed by adding a "y græcum" to the aorist form: e.g., "*kesserem sero, kesseyrem sero in presenti actualiter*" (fol.12). The texts written down by de Lauzière contain a similar sketch, also attributed to Raphaël, in which the aorist and the present tense are misunderstood as future forms, the former characterized as "immediate" and the latter as "un peu mieux specific en adioutant un cir comme *guelurem gueleirem* ie viens" (fol.2).

One of the possible further developments was, as stated above, harmonization of [əyir]. Wieczorkowski already gives such forms, e.g., *arzulairym* 'I wish,' *umairym* 'I hope,' *anghlairlar* 'they understand.' Note also forms such as *alayir* 'takes,' *durayir* 'is standing' in Crimean Oghuz-Kiptchak dialects (Radloff 1896). The second possibility was the loss of the first vowel, e.g., *duszunyirszen* 'you think' (Wieczorkowski). The third was the contraction [əyir] > [ir], which is found, e.g., in Erzurum, *alir*, etc. (Olçay 1966, 43ff.). This [ir] was then shortened and harmonized.

The last-mentioned processes of contraction, shortening and harmonizing took place at different paces in various parts of the extensive linguistic area where the "Azeri" type of present tense was used. Adamović 1986, 127ff. confirms that the contraction took place somewhat earlier in Azeri than in Eastern Anatolian dialects, at the latest during the 18th century, cf. forms from the beginning of the 19th century: *inanirem* 'I believe' (Klaproth 1814, 281). Unlike in Azeri, Eastern Anatolian forms have not yet been fully harmonized to {X}. On the other hand, even the element {Ir} of the modern Kumyk "aorist variants" with present reference (*ölür*, etc.) goes back to {yir} as testified by Klaproth at the beginning of the 19th century (1814, 284).

In our Azeri transcriptional materials of the late 17th century, a possible contracted form is only found with the verb *guel-* 'to come,' e.g., *guelirem* 'I am coming'; *youané hezereti heissani gurdi yenina guelir* 'John saw Jesus coming to him'; *herkim ardungia guelir karanlogda guirmez* 'he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness,' *kourt gurur guelir* 'videt lupum venientem,' etc. Whether this is really already a contraction of *gueleir* or an older aorist form (<< \**kāliyir* < \**kāli-yür*; see Johanson 1976, 139, Erdal 1979, 104ff. cf. Codex Cumanicus *keliyir* (f. 60<sup>r</sup> 11ff.) will not be discussed here. In any case, *gelir* is, on the surface, the most "progressive" of the present tense forms; cf. the quite similar situation in the above-mentioned Crimean texts published by Radloff 1896 (*alayir*, *göreyrir*, *durayir*, etc., but *gelir*).

Consequently, there is no reason to believe that the development of contraction, shortening and harmonization had proceeded very far in the Azeri *koiné* (contact vernacular) of the 17th century. Unlike

<sup>12</sup>There are also isolated forms such as *istamierciz* 'you do not want' and *bakieouridi* 'was looking.'

<sup>13</sup>Wieczorkowski's material is heavily characterized by Turkic varieties spoken in Persia. Though Adamović remarks that "sein Türkisch aserbeidschanische Beimischungen aufweist und in geographischer und dialektaler Hinsicht bislang nicht eingeordnet werden konnte," he quotes Wieczorkowski's texts as a source for the language of Istanbul (1986, 122).

<sup>14</sup>British Museum, Sloane 2908.

Bodrogligeti (1968), we cannot recognize any clear present tense forms at all in the Italian-Persian-Turkic dictionary, compiled in Isfahan around the middle of the 17th century. Thus, we read °YĀRHM as [iĉārām] (not "iĉirām"), and consider both °LWRM "aĉuram" and SWRWRM "sūrūrām" to be normal aorist forms typical of the period in question.

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GERHARD DOERFER  
on his Seventieth Birthday  
by his Colleagues and Students

*Managing Editor*  
Carolyn I. Cross

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