Chahar Mahal va Bakhtiari Province in the *Atlas of the Languages of Iran*

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There have been a number of important efforts to map out the languages of Iran (see bibliography), but until now no language atlas, or even a comprehensive and detailed country-level language map, has been produced. This can be attributed to a variety of factors including the complexity of the language situation, issues of logistics and project design, contrasting perspectives on language identity and distribution, limited dissemination of project results and limited cooperation among scholars working toward this common goal (Anonby, Sabethemmatabadi & Hayes 2016).

One of the recent projects which aims to fill this gap in the literature is the *Atlas of the Languages of Iran* (http://iranatlas.net/). This Atlas is a production of GCRC (Geomatics and Cartographic Research Centre) at Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada and an international network of partners. As outlined in earlier work (Anonby 2015), the Atlas has been designed with the following key features:

- use of the open-source, open-access Nunaliit Atlas Framework (http://nunaliit.org/);
- developed by an international team of volunteer scholars and students;
- brings together existing publications and new data;
- capable of remote contributions and moderation of input by Atlas editors;
- includes each of Iran's some 60,000 cities and villages;
- references sources for all data, whether published work, collaborator field notes or user contributions; and
- allows for comparison of language identification maps with language data maps.

The present paper details our activities for the languages of Iran's Chahar Mahal va Bakhtiari (C&B) Province, on the mountainous western edge of Iran's central plateau, as a case study for the Atlas as a whole. Since this is the second province where work has begun (following on Hormozgan and treated at the same time as Kordestan), our research methodology is becoming streamlined, and going forward we will use C&B as a template for other regions.

Here, we provide an account of the process of building language maps for this province from the outset to the present, and sketch out the direction of ongoing endeavours. We discuss the following components of the work:
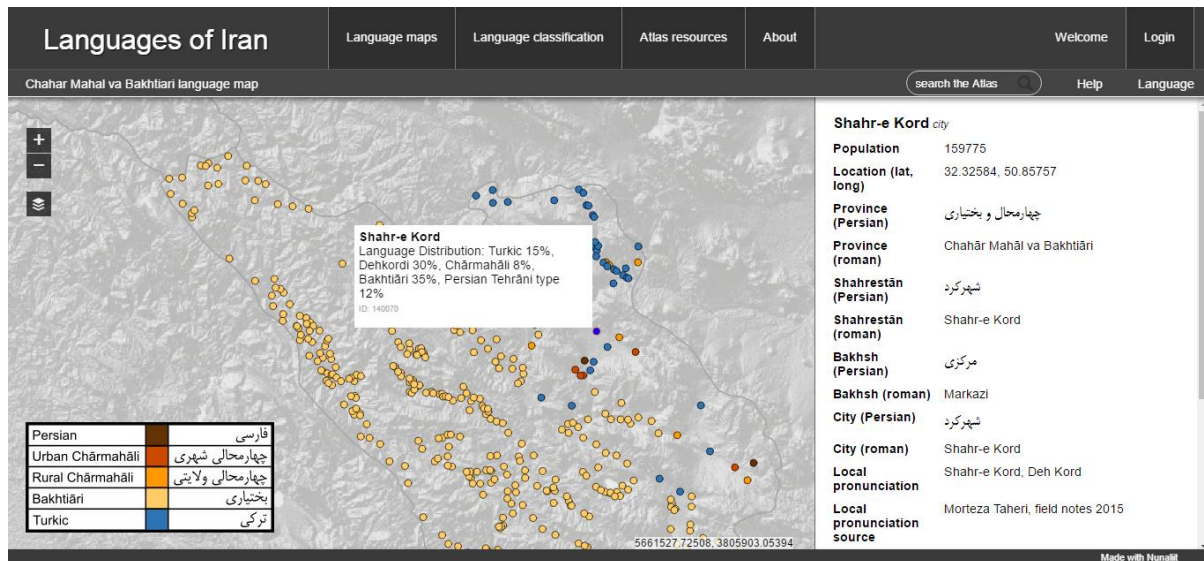
- the research team for C&B Province: designers, programmers, field linguists, map builders, and editors
- building a bibliography of existing literature and maps
- our choice of the Nunaliit Atlas Framework and its contribution to the Atlas
- construction of background maps for the Atlas
- sources and incorporation of demographic and geographic data
- establishing dialect lists (Bakhtiari, Charmahali, Turkic and Persian dialects), language distribution percentages by settlement, and local pronunciations of place names
- language data collection methodology: selection of research sites; questionnaires
- user input and modification of locally-relevant data
- incorporation of sound and video documentation
- cartographic representations of language data

This current work on C&B Province is helping to build a progressively more complete picture of language in the region: the dominance and diversity of Bakhtiari, including a first investigation of an idiosyncratic Bakhtiari dialect in the high mountains of the north-west; the distribution of Turkic varieties across the north-eastern quarter of the province, and contact-

induced changes in lexicon, phonology and grammar as a result of interactions with neighbouring Iranic varieties; the existence of two distinct Charmahali dialect groups, urban – with affinities to the old urban Persian dialects of Esfahan Province – and rural; and the decline of the urban Charmahali dialects in particular as speakers of other languages immigrate into the cities, and younger speakers adopt Tehrani-type Persian as a mother tongue.

The online, open-access Atlas forum allows for wide-ranging collaboration among scholars and contributions from speakers of the languages in C&B Province. The eventual and ultimate goal of our research is to enable production of a comprehensive, detailed and reliable Atlas of the distribution of languages and linguistic structures for all of Iran.

Sample view of northern Chahar Mahal va Bakhtiari Province in the Atlas

Source: http://iranatlas.net/index.html?module=module.language-distribution.chahar_mahal_va_bakhtiari

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