Why borrow verbs when you can borrow participles?: Turkic participles in the Iranian languages

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URL: http://hdl.handle.net/10097/35862
Why borrow verbs when you can borrow participles?

Turkic participles in the Iranian languages

Geographically and genealogically divergent Iranian languages such as Tajik, Talysh, Kurdish, Zaza, Tati, and Sariqul all have verbs in the form of:

**Turkic participle in -miš + Iranian light verb**

Talysh

*taňširmaniš karde*

meet.ptpl do.inf

‘to meet’

Kurdish

*ermaš kirin*

reach.ptpl do.inf

‘to reach’

Tajik (northern)

*tašummiš kardan*

understand.ptpl do.inf

‘to understand’

Sariqul

*bošlamiš tšeig*

start.ptpl do.inf

‘to start’

Kurdish (Kurmanji)

*basaš kirmiš*

reach.ptpl do.inf

‘to start’

Tati & Zaza also have '-miš+light verb's

- Orkhon Turkic (8 C) had gerunds/participles in -miš.
- The productivity of -miš was in decline in Chaghatay (14 C~).
- Tajik northern dialects have a number of verbs in the form of '-miš kardan'.
- Sariqul also has verbs with -miš.
- -miš is not productive in Modern Uzbek and Modern Uyghur.

Was -miš borrowed into Iranian from Turkic many centuries ago?

The existence of -miš in the Iranian languages can be ascribed to borrowing. However, it is not clear why Iranian languages of wide geographical and genealogical divergence utilize the same strategy for borrowing Turkic verbs. This is particularly puzzling because, at least in some of the Iranian languages from which the examples above are taken, there exist other seemingly 'simpler' strategies (e.g. 'verb stem+light verb' in Bukharan Tajik o’yla kardan ‘to think’ < Uzbek o’yla- ‘think’) for borrowing Turkic verbs. This may hint at a cognitive and/or syntactic reason for participle-borrowing (e.g. 'verb stems are less readily identifiable than participles').