

The Distribution and Role of the Verb Clitic =a/a= in Different Balochi Dialects

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Abstract

This study investigates the distribution and role of the verb clitic =a/a= in a variety of Balochi dialects. We summarize earlier findings, argue for the interpretation of this morpheme as a clitic, and present new data for four Balochi dialects spoken in Iran. In these four dialects, the verb clitic is variously consistently proclitic (one dialect), restricted proclitic (two dialects), and restricted enclitic (one dialect). We also find that there is a stronger tendency for enclitic attachment of the verb clitic =a/a= the further eastwards a certain Balochi dialect is spoken.

The basic semantic component of the verb clitic =a/a= is one of imperfectivity, and it is used with the non-past indicative and the past imperfective indicative verb forms. It can be linked to the homophonous verb clitic found in several other Western Iranian languages.

Keywords: Balochi, Iranian Balochi dialects, Iranian languages, verb clitic, imperfectivity, enclitic, proclitic

1. Introduction¹

One important feature of different Balochi dialects is the distribution and function of the element =a/a=, which until now has been described in various terms, e.g. as a prefix (Pierce 1875: 9; Elfenbein 1982: 86–89), suffix (Buddruss 1977: 11), affix (Buddruss 1988: 62), verbal element (Baranzehi 2003: 92; Bashir 2008: 56; Jahani and Korn 2009: 661), enclitic particle (Axenov 2006: 166) and clitic (Barjasteh-Delforooz 2010: 79). The aim of the present study is to discuss the status and semantic function of this element in a number of Balochi dialects, including four dialects spoken in Iran for which we present hitherto unpublished data. These four dialects are spoken in Fars Province around Shiraz (known as Koroshi) [BKIr], in Hormozgan Province close to Minab [BMIr], in Jashk [BJIr], and in Habd [BHIr]. A possible diachronic development of the element more globally in Balochi will also be discussed in view of its occurrence in other Iranian languages as well.

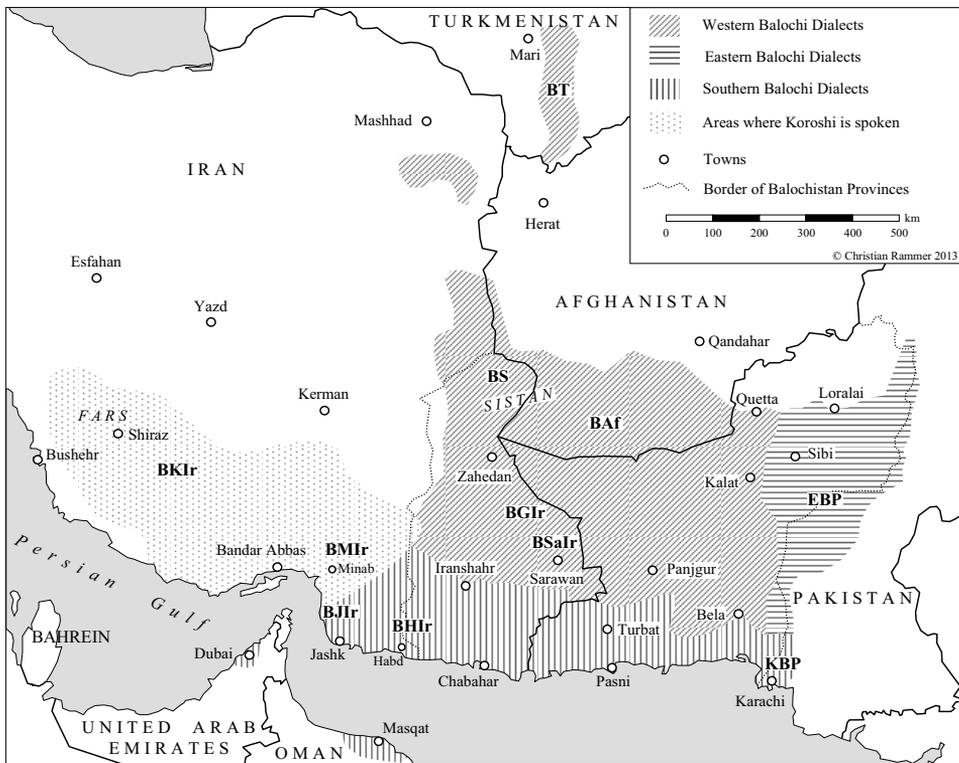
The descriptions of BKIr, BMIr, BJIr, and BHIr are based on data gathered by Maryam Nourzaei and transcribed by Maryam Nourzaei and Carina Jahani. The corpus consists of recorded folktales, life stories, and procedural texts told by male and female linguistic consultants between approximately 40 and 60 years of age with different social backgrounds.

The fieldwork for BKIr was carried out in 2009 and for BMIr, BJIr, and BHIr in

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2011. For BKIr we have six texts: four folktales, one procedural text, and one life story – amounting to a total of about 70 minutes of recordings. There are three linguistic consultants for BKIr, two men and one woman. For BMIr we have four texts: two procedural texts, one text about local traditions, and one life story – amounting altogether to about 10 minutes of recordings. Here we have two female linguistic consultants. The data for BJIr consist of three texts: one folktale and two life stories – amounting to about 25 minutes. Three linguistic consultants, two men and one woman, contributed with these texts. For BHir there are five texts: one life story, one procedural text, one text about old traditions, and two folktales – amounting to about 25 minutes, and told by three linguistic consultants, one man and two women.

First, we summarize findings about the verbal element =a/a= in previous studies with a concluding discussion of the cliticization versus affixation of this verbal element in different Balochi dialects and a comparison with the Persian verb prefix *mi-*. Then we present the distribution and function of =a/a= in BKIr, BMIr, BJIr, and BHir. The article concludes with a discussion of possible areal distribution of proclitic and enclitic cliticization of the verbal element in different Balochi dialects.



Map 1. Distribution of Balochi dialects

2. Previous descriptions of the verbal element =*a/a*=

In one of the earliest descriptions of Southern Balochi (based on the dialect spoken east of Gwadar, Pakistan), Pierce (1875: 9–10) testifies to the presence of what he calls an *a*- prefix, noting that “[w]hen preceded by a word ending in a short vowel, the aorist usually loses its *a*”. Elfenbein (1982: 86–89) discusses this so called *a*- prefix at length in connection with the fact that it is also found in Brahui. He concludes that “[t]here is no doubt that the *a*- prefix in Balochi is Iranian: it occurs in many other languages of the family as well (in most Central languages as well as in Kurdish, where its presence is very plain)” (Elfenbein 1982: 89),² something which also Buddruss (1988: 62) agrees with in his description of Afghani Balochi [BAf]. Buddruss, however, finds that it should not be regarded as a prefix, but as added to the word preceding the verb. He calls it a suffix (Buddruss 1977: 11) or an affix (Buddruss 1988: 62) but symbolizes it as =*a*, which is the way clitics are normally represented. Elfenbein (1982: 87), however, “cannot agree with Buddruss that ‘prefix *a*-’ should be re-interpreted as ‘suffix *a*-’ on the previous word”.

In their description of the Balochi dialect spoken in Noshke, Pakistan, Barker and Mengal (1969: 1: 149) state that often when the substantive element of a complex predicate ends with a consonant (and especially when it ends with two consonants), a brief *ə*-sound is heard between it and the verb. They hold that this *ə*-sound “is optional and has no discernible meaning.” Elfenbein (1990: 2: IX), on the other hand, is of the opinion that in what he calls Rakhshani, a conglomerate of dialects of Western Balochi including the dialect of Noshke, the *a*- prefix, as he calls it, “has definite durative value” but in all other dialects has no semantic function (Elfenbein 1990: 2: X–XVIII).

In a number of recent studies of various Balochi dialects, following Buddruss (1977, 1988) the verbal element =*a/a*= has been treated as attached to the word preceding the verb rather than to the verb itself. Baranzehi (2003) describes this verbal element in Balochi of Sarawan, Iran [BSaIr], Axenov (2006) in Turkmenistan Balochi [BT], and Bashir (2008) in Eastern Balochi (spoken in Pakistan) [EBP], and Barjasteh Delforooz (2010) also mentions its presence in Sistani Balochi [BS].³

Axenov (2006: 166) uses the term “enclitic particle” and Barjasteh Delforooz (2010: 80) the term “clitic” for this morpheme. Baranzehi (2003: 89) argues for it being prosodically attached to the word preceding the verb rather than to the verb itself, and Bashir (2008: 56–57) also attaches it to the word preceding the verb; so it is clear that they also regard it as a clitic, or, more specifically an enclitic, even if they do not employ this term. It attaches to nouns, adjectives, pronouns, adverbs, numerals, prepositions (functioning as preverbs), and past participles directly preceding the finite verb.⁴ They also note that the clitic never occurs in clause initial position and that there are also other restrictions on where it can occur.

In BT, the clitic can only appear after a noun, pronoun, adjective or adverb (see

² McCarus (2009: 608) describes *a*- in Kurdish as an imperfective aspect prefix rather than as a clitic. Lecoq (1989: 315, 316, 319) also mentions a verb prefix *a*- in several other Iranian dialects, such as Vafsi, Khonsāri, Farizandi, and Bādruđi, to mention a few. Gershevitch (1985: 225) likewise reports the presence of a present-future “particle *a*-” in Bashkardi.

³ Since Barjasteh Delforooz’s work is on discourse features rather than on morphosyntax, he does not describe the =*a* clitic in detail.

Axenov 2006: 272–292). Also in BS, there are restrictions on when it can occur (see Barjasteh Delforooz 2010: 286–391). It is not found in connection with the verb *dāštin* ‘to have’, after the clitic =*ē* indicating indefiniteness, after the suffix *-rā* added to the indefiniteness marker =*ē* to mark a direct object, after the word *am/um* ‘also, even, and’, and, due to its enclitic status, at the beginning of a sentence or a clause. Neither Ahangar (2007) nor Baranzehi (2003) mentions any restrictions regarding its use, but since it is described as an enclitic, it is likely that similar restrictions are found in BGlr and BSaIr as in BT and BS. In Karachi Balochi, Pakistan [KBP] described by Farrell (1990 and 2003) there is no mention of the verbal element.

The semantics of the clitic are unanimously described as marking imperfective aspect. In the past system, the clitic expresses imperfective aspect, whereas in the non-past⁵ system, it has no obvious aspectual meaning but simply marks indicative mood, regardless of aspectual distinctions.

In the dialects described above in which the verb element =a/a= exists, it thus appears as an enclitic and is absent if there is no preceding word to attach to, or if the preceding word cannot host it (because, for example, it is prosodically too weak, such as the complementizer *ke*). It denotes indicative mood in the non-past tense, whereas it marks imperfective aspect in the past tense (see also Jahani and Korn 2009: 661–662). It is thus parallel in use to the Persian verb prefix *mi-*. The imperfective aspectual marking of the clitic =a/a= must be regarded as its primary semantic component.

The origin of the Modern Persian verb prefix *mi-* is easy to trace in view of the long literary tradition of New Persian. It was an adverb, *hamē(v)* ‘also’ in Middle Persian, which gradually became more and more closely attached to the verb to denote imperfective aspect both in the non-past and past tense. In Early New Persian it is found as *hamē-* or *mē-*, which normally attaches before the verb stem, i.e. *(ha)mēkonam* ‘I keep doing’, but in poetry also often as a free adverb *hamē* after the verb, i.e. *(ha)mēkonam* or *konam hamē*, and only gradually did it develop into an obligatory prefix in the present indicative and past imperfective in Persian.

The origin of the Balochi =a/a= may likewise be an adverb that gradually became more and more closely attached to the verb, but it seems that prosodically =a/a= has remained a clitic rather than developing into a prefix, at least in the dialects of Western Balochi for which we have a considerable corpus (e.g. BAf, BT, BS). As an enclitic, there are also constraints to where the element can occur. The most natural constraint is, of course, clause initial position, but there are also other restrictions on where the clitic occurs, as we have seen above. This creates a certain instability, which may lead to even further reductions and finally a total dropping of the verb element, if it was ever present, as we see in, e.g., Karachi Balochi.

⁴ An affix is a bound morpheme that functions on the word level both syntactically and phonologically and attaches to one specific category of words, e.g. only to nouns or only to verbs. A clitic, on the other hand, functions above the word level syntactically and can attach to words belonging to various syntactic categories, as is the case with the morpheme under discussion. For characteristics of clitics and a contrastive comparison between clitics and affixes, see also: <http://www.sil.org/linguistics/GlossaryOfLinguisticTerms/WhatIsACliticGrammar.htm>

⁵ The term “non-past tense” is here used for the present-future tense, even if the descriptions referred to use the latter term, or the term “present tense”.

However, our new data will reveal that there are also Balochi dialects further to the west in which =a/a= is more firmly attached to the verb and thus neither sensitive to clause initial position nor to the presence of another preceding word that could act as a host for the element. In these dialects, it would indeed be possible to describe the element as a prefix. However, in conformity with other Balochi dialects where it is an enclitic, even in dialects where it attaches to the verb we continue to describe it as a proclitic rather than a prefix. We will also see that it is only in one of the dialects described below that the clitic is never omitted in the non-past indicative and the past imperfective. The =a/a= is thus also somewhat unstable in two of the dialects where the verbal element occurs as a proclitic.

Furthermore, the clitic =a/a= could in the dialects described below be interpreted as placed on the pre-verbal element and act like an enclitic whenever possible and only as a proclitic when there is no pre-verbal element to attach it to, like in other Balochi dialects described previously.⁶ However, since it is prosodically very difficult to determine whether it attaches to the verb or the element preceding the verb, in dialects containing cases where the only possible interpretation is proclitic, this interpretation is applied in all instances. This applies to three of the dialects described below. If, on the other hand, the clitic does not appear in contexts where it must be described as a proclitic, i.e. does not occur in clause initial position or after a clear pause, it is here described as an enclitic. This happens in one dialect. In all dialects the clitic is always unstressed.

3. The clitic =a/a= in Koroshi Balochi, and Balochi of Minab, Jashk, and Habd (Iran)

As in the dialects described above, the clitic indicates indicative mood in the non-past tense and imperfective aspect in the past tense in the four dialects to be described below. It is also interesting to note that in BJIr, probably under the influence of Persian, the clitic has also acquired irrealis modality in the past tense.⁷

3.1. *Koroshi Balochi, Iran [BKIr]*

In BKIr, the clitic must at least in some instances be described as a proclitic a=, because it occurs in positions where it cannot be described as an enclitic (since there is no host to which it could attach). For this reason we classify the clitic as proclitic in all its occurrences. There are no clear instances where it cannot be proclitic and there are no restrictions on its use with indicative verbs in the non-past tense and on verb forms with imperfective aspect in the past tense indicative. It has the allomorph ar=, which occurs in almost all cases when the verb stem begins with r-.⁸ It is also worth noting that there is a free variant ā= as well, which is

⁶ This analysis was adopted in Jahani and Nourzaei (2011).

⁷ Irrealis modality expressed by the verb clitic is also observed in Nourzaei's unpublished data from Southern Balochi (Iran).

⁸ In fact, the presence of an allomorph indicates that the clitic is becoming more closely attached to the verb and that it therefore may be on the verge of acquiring the status of a prefix. See also fn. 10.

frequently used with a number of verbs beginning in *k-* (both original and as a marker of imperfectivity, see Axenov 2006: 166–167) and with a few other verbs as well.

In example (1), the clitic occurs twice in a clause initial position (*ar=rant*⁹ ‘they go’, *a=natwānt* ‘it cannot’), where it can only be a proclitic, and twice in ambiguous cases which can be either enclitic or proclitic (*a=žanant* ‘they arrive’, *sost a=kant* ‘it gets tired’). In the first of the ambiguous cases, it occurs after a conjunction, where it would not be found in dialects where =a is only an enclitic. We also see the allomorph *ar=* in *ar=rant* ‘they go’.

- (1) *ar=r-ant* *tā* *a=žan-ant* *ye* *sarābālāī-yā*
 VCL=go.PR-3PL until VCL=arrive.PR-3PL one hill-OBL

kar-ok *sost* *a=kan-t*
 donkey-DIM weak VCL=do.PR-3SG

*a=na-twān-t*¹⁰ *bār-ā* *be-bā*
 VCL=NEG-can.PR-3SG load-OBJ SUBJ-carry.PR.3SG

They go until they arrive at a hill. The donkey gets tired; it cannot carry the load.

Example (2) provides three tokens of clause initial *a=* (*a=šī* ‘it says’, *a=kafey* ‘you will fall’, *a=merey* ‘you will die’), and one ambiguous instance where dialects with enclitic =a would also have had the clitic (*a=keyt* ‘it comes’).

- (2) *dobāra* *korrāg* *a=keyt* *jolo=ē*
 again foal V.CL=come.PR.3SG in.front.of=PC.3SG

a=š-ī *rū=ye* *ğālī-yā* *na-nen-ey* *ā*
 V.CL=say.PR-3SG on=EZ carpet-OBL NEG-SUBJ.sit.PR-2SG EMPH

čēr=ey *čāh=en*
 under=PC.3SG well=COP.PR.3SG

a=kaf-ey *mā* *čāh-ā* *a=mer-ey*
 V.CL=fall.PR-2SG in well-OBL V.CL=die.PR-2SG

Again the foal comes before him [and] says: Don’t sit on the carpet; beneath it is a well; you will fall into the well [and] die.

Examples (3) and (4) show the free variation between *a=* and *ā=* on the verb form *a=kāyant/ā=kāyant* ‘they come’.

- (3) *ā=kāy-ant* *had=e* *īš-ī*
 V.CL=come.PR-3.PL to=IZ DEM.PROX-OBL

They come to him...

⁹ In the verb forms quoted above the examples, only the clitic is indicated as a separate morpheme. For a detailed morpheme analysis of the verb forms, please refer to the glossing in the examples.

¹⁰ Note that, unlike the Persian prefix *mi-*, the =a/a= clitic in Balochi precedes the negation. This suggests a rather late grammaticalization and is an argument for regarding the element as a clitic. Note, however, the counterargument presented in fn. 8.

- (4) *ya rō* *šāh=o* *īš-ān* *a=kāy-ant* *tafrī-yā*
 one day king=and DEM.PROX-PL V.CL=come.PR-3.PL leisure-OBL
mā ē *bāg-ā*
 in DEM.PROX garden-OBL

One day the king and his men come to this garden for leisure.

Example (5) demonstrates *a=ā=* as a marker of imperfective aspect in the past tense indicative. The sentence tells about something that habitually took place in the past. In none of the verbs here (*ēreš ā=koda* ‘they put down’ (twice), *a=zortadeš* ‘they took’) is there any indication whether the clitic is enclitic or proclitic. In view of (6), though, it is interpreted as proclitic also in the past tense. Though outside the scope of the present study, it may be interesting to note the ergative construction with the agent clitic in this and other examples of transitive verbs in the past tense. Furthermore, the COP.PT.3SG frequently loses its final *-d* when there is no enclitic pronoun or personal ending attached to it.

- (5) *ya nāh=o* *nagan=ē* *ēr=eš* *ā=kod=a*
 one date=and bread=IND down=PC.3PL VCL=do.PT=COP.PT.3SG
ya māst=o *nagan=ē* *ēr=eš* *ā=kod=a*
 one yoghurt=and bread=IND down=PC.3PL VCL=do.PT=COP.PT.3SG
ya māst=o *xormā=e* *a=zort=ad=eš*
 one yoghurt=and date=IND VCL=take.PT=COP.PT.3SG=PC.3PL

They used to put some bread and dates down [in their bag] they used to put some yoghurt and bread down [in their bag]. They used to take some yoghurt and dates.

In example (6), there are two clear examples of a proclitic, namely the second occurrence of *a=čedadeš* ‘they sheared’, which is a clause initial verb, and *a=restaden* ‘we spun’, where there is a clear pause after the previous word (*towsānān* ‘in the summer’). In view of this, the clitic is regarded as a proclitic not only in the non-past, but also in the past tense. In the first occurrence of *a=čedadeš* both enclitic and proclitic interpretations are possible, but in view of the two instances of unambiguous proclitic use, a proclitic interpretation is chosen in all instances.

- (6) *bozz-ey* *mūd-ā* *a=čed=ad=eš*
 goat-GEN hair-OBJ VCL=shear.PT=COP.PT.3SG=PC.3PL
a=čed=ad=eš *towsān-ān*
 VCL=shear.PT=COP.PT.3SG=PC.3PL summer-PL
a=rest=ad=en
 VCL=shear.PT=COP.PT.3SG=PC.3PL

They sheared the goat’s hair; they sheared [it] in the summer; we spun [it].

3.2. *Balochi of Minab, Iran [BMiR]*

In BMiR the verb clitic *a=* (also here with the allomorph *ar=*) is not as stable as in BKiR. It is occasionally absent when the verb is in clause initial position or when it is only preceded by a conjunction in the clause. There are, however, instances where it is clearly proclitic, for which reason it is here analysed as a proclitic in all instances.

Example (7) provides two examples of proclitic use of *a=*, where the verb occurs in clause initial position (*a=rēč-en* ‘we pour’, *a=dranjene* ‘we hang it up’) and two examples of ambiguous (proclitic or enclitic) use (*a=dōč-en* ‘we sew’ (twice)). All the non-past indicative verbs in this example are marked with the clitic.

- (7) *ya čī=ye pārče-i a=dōč-en kisa*
 one thing=IZ cloth-ADJZ VCL=sew.PR-1PL bag
pārče-i a=dōč-en
 cloth-ADJZ VCL=sew.PR-1PL
a=rēč-en be āhī lāfā
 VCL=pour.PR-1PL to DEM.DIST.GEN inside
a=dranj-en=e da āf=eš b-reč-ī
 VCL=hang.PR-1PL=PC.3SG until water=PC.3PL SUBJ-pour.PR-3SG

We sew something of cloth, a bag; we sew [it] of cloth [and] pour [it, i.e. boiled whey which has turned into lumps] into it. We hang it up [i.e. the bag] until the (lit. its) water [of the boiled whey] dries up (lit. pours out).

Example (8) contains three verbs in the non-past indicative, two of which are not marked with the clitic. One of them, *mān-ī* ‘she stays’, occurs immediately after a conjunction, and the other one, *kāren-ī* ‘we bring her’, occurs in clause initial position. In neither of these cases would there be any clitic in, e.g., BT (Axenov 2006: 169–170). The third verb, *dāwat-ī a=kanen* ‘we invite her’, takes the clitic. Here, of course, enclitic interpretation is possible, but in view of (7), also here the clitic is interpreted as a proclitic.

- (8) *se rōz ke mān-ī ōdānā*
 three day CLM stay.PR-3SG there
bād deya¹¹ dāwat=ī a=kan-en
 then again invitation=PC.3SG VCL=do.PR-1PL
k-ār-en=ī ba lūg-ā
 IMPk-bring.PR-1PL=PC.3SG to house-OBL

When she (i.e. the new bride) has stayed there (i.e. at her parents’ place) for three days, then we invite her, you know, and bring her home (i.e. to the parents-in-law’s place where she will remain).

In example (9), the clitic is found as a marker of imperfectivity in the past tense indicative on the verbs *ar=raptaden* ‘we went’, *a=čedadēn* ‘we picked’, and *hošken a=koda* ‘we dried’. In the two first examples, only proclitic interpretation is possible, whereas with the third verb enclitic interpretation would be possible. In view of

¹¹ This word functions here as a discourse marker rather than an adverb meaning ‘again’. It corresponds to ‘you know’ in the free translation.

the two unambiguous proclitic examples, the third clitic is also regarded as a proclitic. The sentence tells about repeated (habitual) actions in the past. Here we also find the allomorph *ar=* before a verb stem beginning in *r-*. It may also be interesting to note that the person ending in the 1PL is homophonous with the 1PL enclitic pronoun (agent clitic) in this dialect.

- (9) *ar=rapt=ad-en* *a=čed=ad=en*
 VCL=go.PT=COP.PT-1PL VCL=pick.PT=COP.PT.3SG=PC.1PL
hošk=en *a=kod=a*
 dry=PC.1PL VCL=do.PT=COP.PT.3SG
 We went; we picked [herbs] and dried [them].

3.3. *Balochi of Jashk, Iran [BJIr]*

In BJIr, the verb clitic is found in instances where it can only be interpreted as a proclitic, and is therefore treated as a proclitic in this dialect, but it is even less stable here than in BMIr. It is sometimes found after a pause and after the conjunction *ke*, where it is normally absent in, e.g., BT (Axenov 2006: 169–170),¹² but it is also frequently missing after a pause and *ke*. After the personal pronoun *man* ‘I’ and in connection with the verb *bayag* ‘to be, to become’, it is sometimes missing, as well as after the OBL marker *-ā*.¹³ No allomorphs are found in BJIr.

In example (10), there are four verbs in the non-past indicative, three of which are marked with the clitic (*baranda a=bīd* ‘he wins’, *a=gī* ‘he gets, he buys’, *a=zīrī* ‘he takes’). In all these instances, enclitic interpretation is possible, but in view of example (12), where the clitic is unambiguously proclitic, the latter interpretation is selected for all occurrences of the clitic in BJIr. The verb *borrīd* ‘he cuts’, which follows directly after an OBL suffix *-ā*, is not marked with the clitic, as is also the case in BT (see Axenov 2006: 168).

- (10) *dāxe* *kōštī-yā* *malek.mahmad* *baranda*
 in wrestling-OBL PN winner
a=b-īd=o *ya* *mēš=e* *a=g-ī*
 VCL=become.PR-3SG=and one sheep=IND VCL=get.PR-3SG
ā *sarī* *mēš-ay* *sar-ā* *borr-īd=o*
 DEM.DIST quickly sheep-GEN head-OBL cut.PR-3SG=and
a *tamam=e* *āhī-ay* *ǰōn-a* *faǰa*
 from all=IZ DEM.DIST.OBL-GEN corpse-OBL only
lāf=ay *a=zīr-ī*
 stomach=PC.3SG VCL=take.PR-3SG

In the wrestling, Malek Mahmud wins. He takes a sheep. He quickly cuts off the head of the sheep [and] from the whole slaughtered sheep (lit. corpse) [he] takes only its stomach.

¹² Axenov’s (2006: 169) remark that “the aspectual particle *-a* is never used before the conjunction of general subordination *ki*” is a *lapsus calami*. It should read: the aspectual particle *-a* is never used after the conjunction of general subordination *ki*.

¹³ In BT, the clitic is only missing after the OBL (in BT classified as OBJ) marker *-ā*, not in connection with the verb ‘to be, to become’ or after the personal pronoun ‘I’.

In example (11), the clitic is absent on the sentence initial verb *gušī* ‘he says’, as in BT (Axenov 2006: 170), whereas in (12), the clitic is present on the verb *a=ra* ‘he goes’, where it is impossible to consider it enclitic, since there is a considerable pause after the word *hamedān* ‘right here’. This shows a certain instability in the use of the clitic, but at the same time it is clear that it functions as a proclitic in BJIr.

- (11) *guš-ī* *yā* *hazrat*¹⁴=*e* *musā*
say.PR-3SG VOC presence=IZ PN
He says: “Your Holiness Moses...”

- (12) *ya...* *do* *nafar* *ye* *nafar*
one... two person one person
a *mošomay* *molk-ā* *ham=edān*
from PRON.1PL.INCL¹⁵ land-OBL EMPH=here
a=ra-Ø *be* *emārāt*
VCL=go.PR-3SG to PN

One... two persons, one person from our region (i.e. from the local area), right here, goes to the Emirates.

In example (13), the clitic occurs on the verb *a=gozarī* ‘it passes’ after the conjunction *ke*, whereas in (14) it is missing on the verb *lōṭ-ēn* ‘we want’ after the same conjunction, like in, e.g., BT (Axenov 2006: 169) and BS (see Barjasteh Delforooz 2010: 287, 299 etc.). This, again, shows that there is a certain instability in the use of the clitic in BJIr.

- (13) *čan* *rōč* *ke* *a=gozar-ī*
some day CLM VCL=pass.PR-3SG
After some days... (lit. when some days pass)

- (14) *čīz=e* *ke* *lōṭ-ēn* *be* *mardom=e*
thing=IND CLM want.PR-1PL to person=IND
yā *brād* *yā* *gohār=e-ā* ???¹⁶
or brother or sister=IND-OBL ???

Something that we want (possibly: to be given) to someone, a brother or a sister...

Example (15) shows that the clitic is absent on the verb *nazānon* ‘I don’t know’ after *man* ‘I’, at least in this example, which is the only example of this environment in the data from BJIr. This is contrary to BT (see Axenov 2006: 49, 127 etc.) and BS

¹⁴ The word *hazrat* is an honorific title used in Islam to refer to, e.g., prophets, among whom Moses is counted.

¹⁵ The reason why the narrator uses a 1PL INCL pronoun is that he is telling the story to his uncle, who comes from the same region as himself, rather than to the researcher, who also was present during the recording.

¹⁶ It is impossible to discern this word, but that has no bearing on the discussion.

(see Barjasteh Delforooz 2010: 287, 292 etc.), where the clitic is actually present after *man* ‘I’. The negation may, of course, be a crucial factor for the absence of the clitic.¹⁷

- (15) *man* *gušt-a=Ø* *man* *na-zān-on*
 PRON.1SG say.PT-PP=COP.PR.3SG PRON.1SG NEG-know.PR-1SG
 I said: “I don’t know.”

Example (16) provides an example where the clitic is absent in connection with the verb *bayag* ‘to be, to become’. This is, again, an environment where it occurs in, e.g. BS (see Barjasteh Delforooz 2010: 377 etc.).

- (16) *malek.mahmad* *ham* *xošhāl* *b-īd*
 PN also happy become.PR-3SG
 As for Malek Mahmud, he becomes happy.

In example (17), two instances are found of the clitic as a marker of imperfective aspect in the past tense (*a=šoda* ‘he went’, *darse a=wānta* ‘he studied’). It would, of course, be possible to interpret the clitic as an enclitic in both these instances, but in view of the unambiguous proclitic in (12), the clitic is interpreted as a proclitic here as well.

- (17) *malek.mahmad* *hameša* *ba* *maktab* *a=šod=a=o*
 PN always to school VCL=go.PT=COP.PT.3SG=and
dars=e *a=wānt=a*
 lesson=PC.3SG VCL=read.PT=COP.PT.3SG
 Malek Mahmud always went to school and studied.

Example (18) shows that the clitic is also used to denote irrealis modality in the past tense (*a=bo*, *a=dā*). This phenomenon occurs in Persian as well, where the *mi*-marked past form (e.g. *mikard*) is used both for imperfective aspect and irrealis and for counterfactual modality, and it is therefore not unlikely that this semantic extension is copied from Persian.¹⁸

- (18) *aga* *čūpān* *a=bo* *ā* *fad-ī*
 if shepherd VCL=win.PT.3SG DEM.DIST REFL-GEN
xanjar-ā *ba* *āhī* *a=dā*
 dagger-OBL to DEM.DIST.OBL VCL=give.PT.3SG

If the shepherd won, then he (i.e. Malek Mahmud) would give his dagger to him (i.e. to the shepherd).

¹⁷ Note, however the presence of both the clitic and the negation in example (1). See also fn. 23, where the verb form ‘I don’t know’ is discussed.

¹⁸ The Persian sentence *agar bačče zende mimānd hame xošhāl mišodand* can be interpreted in two ways depending on the context, either as irrealis modality ‘if the child stayed alive, everybody would be happy (sometimes the child stayed alive, sometimes he/she died)’, or as counterfactual modality ‘if the child had stayed alive, everybody would have been happy (but he/she died)’.

3.4. *Balochi of Habd, Iran [BHlr]*

In BHlr the verb clitic =a can be interpreted as an enclitic in all instances found in the corpus. This interpretation is adopted here.¹⁹ It is not found after a pause, nor does it occur after the clitic =o ‘and’, the OBL suffix -ā, or the CLM *ke*. The data for BHlr displays no allomorphs for the clitic.

In example (19), there are two verbs with the clitic, *jedā=a kanēn* ‘we separate’ and *āf=a dahene* ‘we give them (lit. it) water’, and one verb in clause initial position, where the clitic is missing, *rahēn* ‘we go’.²⁰ As already stated, the clitic is interpreted as an enclitic in BHlr, since there are no occurrences that are clearly proclitic.

- (19) *šanek-ān-a* *jedā=a* *kan-ēn*
 goat-PL.OBL-OBJ separate=VCL do.PR-1PL
rah-ēn *āf=a* *dah-en=e*
 go.PR-1PL water=VCL give.PR-1PL=PC.3SG

We separate the goats. We go and give them (lit. it)²¹ water.

Just like in (19), in (20) we find the verb *rahēn* ‘we go’ in clause initial position (twice) without the clitic. In the same way, there is no clitic in connection with the verb *bandene* ‘we tie them (lit. it)’, which occurs after the enclitic conjunction =o ‘and’. The same is true in BS (see Barjasteh Delforooz 2010: 314), and probably in BT as well, although Axenov does not mention this case.

- (20) *rah-ēn* *banjāh=o* *band-en=e*
 go.PR-1PL stable=and tie.PR-1PL=PC.3SG
rah-ēn *kāsag-ā* *zīr-ēn* *šōd-en=ī*
 go.PR-1PL bowl-OBL take.PR-1PL wash.PR-1PL=PC.3SG

We go to the stable and tie them (lit. it). We go [and] take a bowl [and] wash them.

Example (21) provides an example of absence of the clitic on the verb *bī* ‘it becomes’ after the conjunction *ke*, like in BT (Axenov 2006: 169) and BS (see Barjasteh Delforooz 2010: 287, 299 etc.) and sometimes also in BJlr (see (14)). The other two verbs, *rahen* ‘we go’ and *kanen* ‘we do’ occur in clause initial position and also lack the clitic.

- (21) *sard* *ke* *b-ī* *rah-en*
 cold CLM become-PR.3SG go.PR-1PL
kan-en *ma* *hīzak-ā*
 do.PR-1PL in goat.skin-OBL

When it gets cold, we go and put it (i.e. the yoghurt) in the goat skin.

¹⁹ There is, however, nothing (e.g. a pause after the clitic) that prohibits interpreting it as a proclitic. However, in view of the enclitic interpretation in previous studies (see, e.g., Buddruss 1988, Axenov 2006, Barjasteh Delforooz 2010), this interpretation is also adopted for BHlr.

²⁰ In the examples from this dialect, the vowel in the 1PL personal ending is sometimes *e*, sometimes *ē*.

²¹ The coreferent of the plural noun *šanekāna* ‘the animals’ is here a 3SG form of the PC. Animals and things often treated as grammatically singular when they are viewed collectively.

In examples (22) and (23), we see that the clitic is missing after the OBL/OBJ marker *-ā/-rā* in connection with the verbs *pačan* ‘they bake’ and *naylan* ‘they don’t allow’, as is the case in BT (see Axenov 2006:168) and sometimes also in BJIr (see Ex. 10).

- (22) *nagan-ā* *kapsul-ān-ī* *sarā* *pač-an*
 bread-OBL gas.bottle-PL.OBL-GEN on²² cook.PR-3PL
 They bake the bread on a tin-plate [with a flame underneath] burning by means of gas.

- (23) *mā-rā* *nay-l-an* *ke* *mā*
 PRON.1PL.EXCL-OBJ NEG-allow.PR-3PL CLM PRON.1PL.EXCL
wat-ī *boz-ān* *āp* *day-en*
 self-GEN goat-PL.OBL water SUBJ.give.PR-1PL
 They don’t allow us to water our goats.

In example (24), the use of the verb clitic to denote imperfective aspect in the past tense indicative is demonstrated with the verbs *=a pakkān* ‘they baked’ and *=a wārtān* ‘they ate’. The text from which (24) is taken is about old traditions and habits rather than single events in the past.

- (24) *komāč=a* *pakk-an* *komāč=a* *wārt-an*
 a kind of bread=VCL bake.PT-3PL a kind of bread=VCL eat.PT-3PL
 They baked *komāč* (a kind of bread baked on heated sand), they ate *komāč*.

4. Summary

Dialect	Proclitic	Allomorphs	Status
BAf	–	–	not consistently present
BGIr	–	–	not consistently present
BHIr	–	–	not consistently present
BJIr	+	–	not consistently present
BKIr	+	+	consistently present ²³
BMIr	+	+	not consistently present
BSaIr	–	–	not consistently present
BS	–	–	not consistently present
BT	–	–	not consistently present
EBP	–	–	not consistently present
KBP	∅	∅	absent

Table 1. Features of the *=a/a=* clitic in eleven Balochi dialects

²² The postposition *sarā* was originally the noun *sar* ‘head’ in the OBL case.

²³ During the finalization of this article, we actually came across one verb in the present indicative which occasionally has no clitic. The verb form we have found in two recently transcribed texts is *nazānān* ‘I don’t know’ (after a pause). In both texts there are also negative present indicative forms after a pause with the verbal clitic, and in one of the texts the very form *a=nazānān* is encountered. It thus seems that the use of the verb clitic with the verb ‘to know’ is somewhat unstable, at least when this verb is negated.

Table 1 shows that there is a considerable strengthening of the clitic the further westwards a certain dialect is spoken. BKIr, spoken in Western Iran, exhibits such a strong status for the clitic that it could in fact be re-analysed as a prefix. It is consistently present as a proclitic in the verb forms where it is expected and it also exhibits allomorphs. A slightly weaker status is found in BMIr, also spoken west of Balochistan proper (in Hormozgan Province), and the same status, although without displaying any allomorphs, is found in BJIr (spoken further to the east in Hormozgan Province). In the mainstream dialects, the clitic is not consistently present, and only in instances where it is possible to regard it as an enclitic (i.e. never if there is no word that can host it preceding the verb) and there are no reports of allomorphs. In all the dialects where the clitic is found, it always precedes the negation. The south-easternmost dialect, KBP, exhibits no clitic.

5. Conclusions

The verb clitic in Balochi has in recent studies been described as an enclitic =a. In this study, the verb clitic in Balochi is found to be a proclitic occurring in clause initial position. This holds for three of the four Iranian Balochi dialects for which new data are presented here, namely BKIr, BMIr, and BJIr. In these dialects the clitic is thus symbolized as a=, whereas in the dialect where it only occurs as an enclitic, BHlr, it is symbolized as =a.

There are several factors that lead us to believe that the verb clitic =a/a= is not a recent innovation in Balochi. The strongest argument is the fact that the same morpheme, a-, is found, and described as a verb prefix, in several other Western Iranian languages in addition to Balochi, both North-Western (e.g. Kurdish) and South-Western (e.g. Bashkardi). Another argument is that it is widespread throughout the Balochi speaking region and found in all the three main dialect groups, although more strongly in Western Balochi than in Southern and Eastern Balochi.²⁴ A third argument is that there is no strong candidate for where it should have been copied from. None of the languages of wider communication and/or national languages that Balochi is under the influence of has a verb clitic =a/a= denoting imperfective aspect.

The origin of the clitic is, however, not clear. It is not unlikely that it, like the Persian *mi-*, originates from an adverb which gradually became more and more closely attached to the verb. It is interesting to note that the westernmost dialects BKIr, BMIr and BJIr, spoken in Fars and Hormozgan Provinces, can attach the clitic as a proclitic, whereas in dialects spoken farther to the east, it only occurs as an enclitic. In KBP, the dialect spoken in the very south-east of the Balochi speaking area, the clitic is totally absent. There thus seems to be a stronger preference for proclitic at-

²⁴ For the main dialect division of Balochi into Western, Eastern and Southern dialects, see Jahani and Korn (2009: 636–638). The clitic has been attested in descriptions of several Western Balochi dialects as well as in Eastern Balochi. For Southern Balochi, it has not been attested in KBP, but it is present in several Southern Balochi variants spoken in Iran. The dialects described here must, e.g., be classified as variants of Southern Balochi. It is also found as an enclitic in the Lashari dialect described by Yusefian (1383) (see sample text, p. 186).

tachment the further westwards the dialects are spoken. Enclitic attachment is the preference further eastwards. Enclitic attachment also imposes limitations on when the clitic can be present, resulting in weaker grammaticalization and potential loss (if it ever was present). In BKIr, spoken farthest to the west, there is full grammaticalization of the clitic as a proclitic, possibly reinforced by contact with Persian.²⁵

The semantic function of the verb clitic =a/a= in Balochi to denote durativity and imperfective aspect is found in a much wider variety of Balochi dialects than what could be ascertained when Elfenbein (1990: 2: IX–XVIII) wrote that this clitic only carries a semantic meaning in some Western Balochi dialects. In the past tense, this aspectual meaning is realized as an imperfective indicative verb form, which stands in contrast to the past perfective indicative form, while in the non-past tense, where durativity is an inherent aspect of verb forms including the present moment, the form with the clitic has instead come to denote indicative mood. There are also examples in the corpus where the form marked with the clitic in the past tense has an irrealis modal meaning. This must be seen as an extension of its semantic field, probably copied from Persian.

List of abbreviations and symbols

-	indicates a morpheme break
=	separates off a clitic
()	explanations in the English translation
[]	additions in the English translation
1	first person
2	second person
3	third person
ADJZ	adjectivizer
BAf	Afghani Balochi
BHr	Balochi of Habd, Iran
BGr	Balochi of Granchin, Iran
BJr	Balochi of Jashk, Iran
BKIr	Koroshi Balochi, Iran
BMr	Balochi of Minab, Iran
BSaIr	Balochi of Sarawan, Iran
BS	Sistani Balochi
BT	Turkmenistan Balochi
CLM	clause linkage marker
COP	copula
DEM	demonstrative
DIST	distal
EBP	Eastern Balochi, spoken in Pakistan
EXCL	exclusive
GEN	genitive
IMP _k	imperfective prefix <i>k</i>
INCL	inclusive

²⁵ Special thanks to Geoffrey Haig whose suggestions resulted in this paragraph. Haig (private communication 17 Dec. 2012) also finds that the Kurdish corresponding morpheme “is clearly attached to the verb itself, but nevertheless retains certain clitic tendencies.”

IND	indefinite (specific) form of a noun
IZ	izāfa
KBP	Karachi Balochi, spoken in Pakistan
NEG	negation
OBL	oblique
OBJ	object
PC	pronominal clitic (enclitic pronoun)
PL	plural
PN	proper noun
PP	past participle
PR	present
PRON	personal pronoun
PROX	proximal
PT	past
REFL	reflexive pronoun
SG	singular
SUBJ	subjunctive
VCL	verb clitic
VOC	vocative particle

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