

‘Mas’alatun or Mas’alatun? That Is the Question! The Implications of Traditional Persian Metrics for Classical Arabic Stress

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Abstract

Word stress in Classical Arabic (CIAr) is usually reconstructed through cross-dialectal and diachronic analyses of a number of varieties of Arabic and other Semitic languages. However, this paper introduces a new source of data on CIAr stress—namely, the traditional recitation of metra in metrical sequences by Persian prosodists. It shows that the reconstructed pattern of CIAr stress is also observed in such traditional recitation. This stress pattern has nothing to do with Persian phonological or metrical rules, and it should rather be considered an artificial performance practice whose purpose was to imitate the original pronunciation of the metra in Arabic metrics. In view of the oral nature of this practice, I suggest that it has persisted in Persian over a long period (maybe over centuries), and it can therefore be a reliable source of data on CIAr word stress. I also provide some supporting evidence for my hypothesis from medieval Persian texts. On the basis of this new source, I propose that in words with a final heavy syllable preceded by two or more light syllables, the antepenultimate stress pattern was common in many varieties of early Islamic Arabic, including CIAr, and that it was perhaps even more prestigious than the initial stress pattern. This hypothesis may allow us to trace the antepenultimate stress in this syllable structure back to the Proto-Arabic stage.

Introduction

Classical Arabic (henceforth CIAr) is a collection of linguistic variations described by early Arab grammarians and used in the Quranic reading traditions as well as in pre-Islamic poetry and many early manuscripts in the Islamic period.¹ From a linguistic perspective, the defining feature of CIAr is its full preservation of a declensional ending system similar to that of Proto-Arabic, along with nunation.² Its other phonological, morphological, and syntactic characteristics, however, comprise a diverse amalgamation of linguistic variations drawn from multiple different sources and varieties. Consequently, CIAr cannot be considered

1. M. van Putten, *Quranic Arabic: From Its Hijazi Origins to Its Classical Reading Traditions* (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 15–47, 227–30; A. Tabibzadeh, review of *Quranic Arabic*, by M. van Putten, *Der Islam* 100, no. 2 (2023): 570–73, at 571.

2. See A. Al-Jallad with R. Vollandt, *Damascus Psalm Fragment* (Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 2020), 69–77; van Putten, *Quranic Arabic*, 18.

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a unitary and homogeneous variety.³ As a phonological feature, CIAr word stress cannot be directly inferred from the abovementioned corpora, as written documents preserve no evidence of word stress and early grammarians say nothing about this feature in the varieties they describe. Hence, modern scholars have reconstructed the CIAr stress pattern through methods such as analysis of stress patterns in various modern dialects and the nondialectal pronunciation of Modern Standard Arabic as well as diachronic comparisons with other Semitic languages.⁴ However, since these reconstructed patterns are mostly derived from fairly late data, the degree to which they accurately represent older varieties is questionable. Moreover, as already noted, CIAr is an amalgamation of multiple linguistic variations, so it is probable that more than one stress pattern was often accepted in CIAr, even though many patterns were ruled out in later normative forms of CIAr.

In this paper, I introduce traditional Persian metrics as a new source of data on CIAr stress. I show that the conventional reconstructed CIAr stress pattern is also observed in the traditional recitation of *ajzā*⁷ (plural of *juz*⁷, lit. portion = metron) in Persian, when posited in a metrical sequence.⁵ In the first section I discuss the reconstructed CIAr stress pattern, and in the second section I introduce word stress in Persian. The third section is devoted to an analysis of word stress in the traditional recitation of *ajzā*⁷ in Persian and its comparison with the CIAr and Persian stress patterns. I conclude that the traditional *ajzā*⁷ recitation displays the same stress pattern as CIAr does. This stress pattern cannot be explained by Persian phonological and metrical rules and has nothing to do with Persian stress. In the fourth section of the paper, I argue that the unusual stress pattern observed in the traditional recitation of the metra should be considered an artificial performance practice that has been preserved in Persian for centuries, and that its purpose is to imitate the original pronunciation of the *ajzā*⁷ in Arabic metrics. Finally, the fifth section demonstrates that this traditional recitation practice may solve some problems in the reconstructed stress pattern of CIAr (as well as Proto-Arabic⁶), especially in the case of words with a final heavy

3. Marijn van Putten has shown this by examining the early grammarians’ works and Quranic recitation traditions (*Quranic Arabic*, 15–47, 227–30). Of course, centuries-long processes of standardization gave rise to normative varieties of CIAr that endorsed just a subset of CIAr linguistic variations and deemed others nonstandard; see, for example, the homogeneous linguistic systems of textbook CIAr as well as Modern Standard Arabic, which developed in the last stages of the standardization process. See *ibid.*, 227–31.

4. R. Kager, “Stress,” in *Encyclopedia of Arabic Language and Linguistics*, ed. K. Versteegh, 4:344–53 (Leiden: Brill, 2006–11), 349–50; J. Watson, “Word Stress in Arabic,” in *The Blackwell Companion to Phonology*, ed. M. van Oostendorp, C. J. Ewen, and K. Rice, 5:1–29 (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 13–14.

5. See A. Tabibzadeh, “An Idiosyncratic Pattern of Word-Stress in the Persian Prosody Tradition” [in Persian], *Iranian Journal of Comparative Linguistic Research* 14, no. 27 (2024): 183–91, 186–88. The Persian prosodic system uses the same word paradigm system as traditional Arabic prosody does to represent metra in metrical sequences, relying on mnemonic words such as مستفعّلن *mostaf’elon*, مفعولات *maf’ulāto*, مفتعلن *mofta’elon*, and so on. This method of representing metra was introduced by Khalīl b. Aḥmad al-Farāhīdī or al-Farhūdī (ca. 100–170/718–87). See G. Weil, “‘Arūḍ,” in *El²*, 1/667–77 (Leiden: Brill, 1968), 669; L. Elwell-Sutton, *The Persian Metrics* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 10–13; F. Thiesen, *A Manual of Classical Persian Prosody* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1982), 119–21.

6. See A. Al-Jallad, “Was It *Sūrat al-Baqārah*? Evidence for Antepenultimate Stress in the Quranic Consonantal Text and Its Relevance for صلوه Type Nouns,” *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 167, no.

syllable preceded by two or more light syllables. In this case, scholars have reconstructed the stress pattern in two different ways, with initial or antepenultimate stress. However, the Persian recitation tradition features only the antepenultimate stress, which may have been the most prestigious stress pattern in CIAr for some time. In the very least, this finding indicates that it was a permissible and common stress CIAr pattern, even if it coexisted with the initial stress pattern.

The Reconstructed Pattern of CIAr Word Stress

Since CIAr has no native speakers today, its stress pattern has been reconstructed on the basis of various sources, including evidence from modern dialects and diachronic analyses and comparisons of other Arabic varieties and other Semitic languages.⁷ Modern scholars generally believe that CIAr had phonologically predictable word stress, which was quantity-sensitive and unbounded. They reconstruct the CIAr stress pattern in a relatively consistent way. Here, for example, is Janet Watson's reconstruction:⁸

- a. Stress a pre-pausal superheavy (CVVC, CVVGG or CVCC) syllable: [*ki'tāb*] 'book', [*mādd*] 'stretching (MASC SG)', [*ša'ribt*] 'I/you (MASC SG) drank'.
- b. Otherwise, stress the rightmost non-final heavy (CVV, CVC or CVVG) syllable (up to the antepenult): [*da'rasnā*] 'we learnt', [*šā'būnun*] 'soap (NOM)', [*maktabah*] 'library', [*māddun*] 'stretching (NOM)', [*maktabatun*] 'library' (non-pause) (or [*mak'tabatun*]).
- c. Otherwise, stress the leftmost CV syllable (or antepenult): [*kataba*] 'he wrote', [*katabatuhū*] 'his scribes' (or [*kata'batuhū*]).

There is debate among scholars about the reconstruction of the syllabic patterns b and c (i.e., when a final heavy syllable is preceded by two or more light syllables). Some scholars claim that such words feature an initial stress,⁹ whereas others argue for an antepenultimate stress.¹⁰ Watson, as seen above, accepts both possibilities. The disagreement may reflect the influence of modern dialects' stress patterns. If this is true, only one of the two patterns should be considered the original CIAr pattern; the other pattern would be derived from a non-CIAr source. However, it is also possible that CIAr already featured an optional stress pattern alongside the primary one in medieval times, as a result of the influence of other, non-CIAr varieties of Arabic; again, it should be remembered that CIAr was a heterogeneous collection of linguistic characteristics originating in multiple early Arabic varieties,¹¹ and it would thus not be surprising to find traces of other varieties in the stress patterns of

1 (2017): 85–89, at 86; M. van Putten, "The Development of the Triphthongs in Quranic and Classical Arabic," *Arabian Epigraphic Notes* 3 (2017): 47–74, esp. 64–71.

7. Kager, "Stress," 349; Watson, "Word Stress in Arabic," 13–14.

8. Watson, "Word Stress in Arabic," 13–14.

9. Kager, "Stress," 349.

10. See, for example, K. Versteegh, *The Arabic Language*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 88. For other sources, see Kager, "Stress," 350.

11. Van Putten, *Quranic Arabic*, 15–46.

ClAr. For a more precise reconstruction, then, premodern evidence would be helpful. The following sections show that the stress patterns observed in the traditional recitation of metra in Persian may provide us with such premodern evidence.

Word Stress in Persian

Modern Iranian Persian word stress is phonologically predictable. It is quantity-insensitive and bounded, and it is applied on the final syllable, as in *de’rakht* ‘tree’, *khā’ne* ‘house’, and *bīmāres’tān* ‘hospital’.¹² There is no direct evidence of word stress in Early New Persian (i.e., the Persian spoken between the Islamic conquests of Persia and the premodern period), but the word stress patterns of earlier stages of the language—Middle Persian and Old Persian—as well as Modern Persian indicate that Early New Persian probably featured a quantity-insensitive and bounded final stress just like Modern New Persian does. It is commonly accepted that Middle Persian word stress was quantity-sensitive, bounded, and final.¹³ Many Middle Persian words with heavy final syllables became shortened in New Persian, but they have retained their final stress in Modern New Persian; for example, *nā’mag* ‘letter, book’ (Middle Persian) > *nā’ma* (Early New Persian) > *nā’me* (Modern New Persian). This indicates that Early New Persian likely had a quantity-insensitive and bounded final stress as well.

The Traditional Recitation of the Metra in Persian

In the previous section, I showed Modern Iranian Persian has final word stress and that this is likely true of Early New Persian, too. There is, however, a particular context in Persian that exhibits idiosyncratic nonfinal stress patterns: the metra formulae as traditionally recited by Persian prosodists. Persian prosody traditionally uses the same word formulae as traditional Arabic prosody does to represent the metra, including *مستفعلن mostaf’elon*,¹⁴ *فاعلاتن fā’elāton*, and *مفعولات maf’ulāto*, along with a few nonce words with similar shapes, e.g. *فاعليياتن fā’elīyāton*.¹⁵ The unusual stress patterns of the metron names in traditional

12. M. Eslami, *Phonology: Analyzing the Intonation System of Persian* [in Persian] (Tehran: Samt, 2005), 79–84; M. Bijankhan: “Phonology,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Persian Linguistics*, ed. A. Sedighi and P. Shabani-Jadidi, 111–41 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 133.

13. M. Maggi and P. Orsatti, “From Old to New Persian,” in Sedighi and Shabani-Jadidi, *Oxford Handbook of Persian Linguistics*, 7–51, at 20. The most important evidence for this reconstruction is the apocope of the Old Persian final declensional endings in Middle Persian. It is generally believed that these endings were omitted because they were preceded by the stressed word-final syllable.

14. Note that the Arabic ‘ayn is realized as a glottal stop in Persian. The vowels in the metron names are transcribed in accordance with their form in modern Iranian Persian. There is no quantity distinction in the modern Iranian Persian vowel system, but in Persian metrics, the vowels *ā*, *ū*, and *ī* are considered long and *a*, *e*, and *o* are considered short (here, *ā* and *a* stand for the low back and low front vowels, respectively).

15. Modern scholars, most notably A. Nadjafi, have invented other word formulae, including *مستفاعلن mostafā’elon* and *مفاعيلتن mafā’īlaton*; see A. Ghahramani Moghbel, “Pentasyllabic Feet in Arabic and Persian Prosody and Their Function in Persian Prosody” [in Persian], *Persian Language and Iranian Dialects* 5, no. 1 (2020): 45–65, at 52; O. Tabibzadeh, *Persian Quantitative Meter: An Analysis Based on Rhythmical Scansion and Prosodic Phonology* [in Persian] (Tehran: Ketāb-e Bahār and Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies, 2023), 64–71; idem, “Correspondence Rules and Classification of Persian Quantitative Poetic Meter,” in *Springer*

recitation cannot be explained by Persian phonological rules. Most notably the name of a metron in Persian takes the normal final stress when it is used as a single word in a sentence, as in *rokn-e mostaf²e'lon yek rokn-e sobā'i-st*¹⁶ 'the metron *mostaf²elon* is a septuple one [i.e., it consists of seven letters]'. However, when recited within a metrical sequence the metron name has a different stress. For example, a metrical sequence consisting of four *mostaf²elon* metra would be traditionally recited as *mos'taf²elon mos'taf²elon mos'taf²elon mos'taf²elon* (i.e., with an antepenultimate stress in each metron). It is interesting that nearly all metra take a nonfinal stress in traditional recitation.

To test this observation, I asked Iranian specialists in Persian linguistics, Persian metrics, and classical Persian literature to recite various metrical sequences written on a piece of paper.¹⁷ As expected, all the specialists employed the same stress patterns—mostly nonfinal—in their recitations, but they also consistently applied a final stress to the metra names when using them as single words in sentences as opposed to reciting them in metrical sequences. The metrical sequences recited by the specialists along with their stress patterns are as follows:¹⁸

1. <i>māfā'ilon</i>	<i>māfā'ilon</i>	<i>māfā'ilon</i>	<i>māfā'ilon</i>
2. <i>māfā'ilon</i>	<i>māfā'ilon</i>	<i>fā'ilon</i>	
3. <i>fā'e'lāton</i>	<i>fā'e'lāton</i>	<i>fā'e'lāton</i>	' <i>fā'elon</i>
4. <i>fā'e'lāton</i>	<i>fā'e'lāton</i>	' <i>fā'elon</i>	
5. <i>mā'fā'elon</i>	<i>fā'e'lāton</i>	<i>mā'fā'elon</i>	' <i>fā'elon</i>
6. <i>mā'fā'elon</i>	<i>fā'e'lāton</i>	<i>mā'fā'elon</i>	<i>fā'e'lāt</i>
7. <i>māf'ūlo</i>	<i>fā'e'lāto</i>	<i>māfā'ilo</i>	' <i>fā'elon</i>
8. <i>māf'ūlo</i>	<i>fā'e'lāton</i>	<i>māf'ūlo</i>	<i>fā'e'lāton</i>
9. <i>māf'ūlo</i>	<i>māfā'ilon</i>	<i>māf'ūlo</i>	<i>māfā'ilon</i>
10. <i>mof'ta'elon</i>	<i>mof'ta'elon</i>	<i>mof'ta'elon</i>	<i>mof'ta'elon</i>
11. <i>mof'ta'elon</i>	<i>mā'fā'elon</i>	<i>mof'ta'elon</i>	<i>mā'fā'elon</i>
12. <i>mof'ta'elon</i>	<i>fā'e'lāto</i>	<i>mof'ta'elon</i>	' <i>fā'</i>
13. <i>mof'ta'elon</i>	<i>mof'ta'elon</i>	' <i>fā'elon</i>	
14. <i>fā'e'lāton</i>	<i>fā'e'lāton</i>	<i>fā'e'lāton</i>	' <i>fā'elon</i>
15. <i>māf'ūlo</i>	<i>māfā'ilo</i>	<i>māfā'ilo</i>	' <i>fā'al</i>

Handbook on Phonetics and Phonology of Iranian Languages, ed. R. Falahati (Berlin: Springer, in press).

16. رکن مستفعلن یک رکن سباعی است.

17. My deep thanks to Professors Mohammad Afshin-Vafai, Milad Azimi, Aliasghar Ghahramani-Moghbel, Behrooz Mahmoudi-Bakhtiyari, Mostafa Mousavi-Rad, Mehdi Olyaei-Moghadam, Ahmad-Reza Qaemmaqami, Mohammad Rasekh-Mahand, Aladdin Tabatabaei, and Omid Tabibzadeh for participating in this exercise.

18. In Persian metrics, each line of a piece of poetry consists of two half-lines that are of equal metrical value (in contrast to Arabic metrics, where the half-lines of a line can be unequal). Therefore, I represent each sequence in this list with the length of a half-line rather than a complete line. It should be noted that with the exception of meters 22 and 23, the meters named in the list are the most popular meters in Persian poetry; see Elwell-Sutton, *Persian Metrics*, 87; A. Nadjafi, *The Persian Metrics: A Textbook* [in Persian], ed. O. Tabibzadeh (Tehran: Niloufar, 2016), 127–47. The exceptional meters (22 and 23) are included in the list because they are relevant to our discussion of their special syllabification pattern below.

16. <i>maf’ūlo</i>	<i>mafā’ilo</i>	<i>mafā’ilo</i>	<i>fa’ūlon</i>
17. <i>maf’ūlo</i>	<i>ma’fā’elon</i>	<i>mafā’ilo</i>	‘ <i>fa’al</i>
18. <i>mota’fā’elon</i>	<i>mota’fā’elon</i>	<i>mota’fā’elon</i>	<i>mota’fā’elon</i>
19. <i>mofā’alaton</i>	<i>mofā’alaton</i>	<i>mofā’alaton</i>	<i>mofā’alaton</i>
20. <i>fa’ūlon</i>	<i>fa’ūlon</i>	<i>fa’ūlon</i>	<i>fa’ūlon</i>
21. <i>fa’ūlon</i>	<i>fa’ūlon</i>	<i>fa’ūlon</i>	‘ <i>fa’al</i>
22. <i>fa’elaton</i>	<i>fa’elaton</i>	<i>fa’elaton</i>	<i>fa’elaton</i>
23. <i>mota’fa’elon</i>	<i>mota’fa’elon</i>	<i>mota’fa’elon</i>	<i>mota’fa’elon</i>

An examination of the stress patterns in this list reveals that the position of the stress in traditional recitation of the metra does not follow Persian phonological or metrical rules.¹⁹ Instead, it depends on the quantity and order of the syllables; in other words, it behaves in a quantity-sensitive manner, like it does in the CIAr word stress system. Indeed, the stress patterns in traditional recitation and CIAr are identical (compare the Persian *metra fa’ūlon*, *mota’fā’elon*, *maf’ūlo*, *fa’elāton*, etc., with the CIAr *fa’ūlon*, *mota’fā’ilun*, *maf’ūlu*, *fa’elāton*, etc.)—with three exceptions. As already noted, scholars have proposed reconstructing CIAr words with the syllable structures *mufta’ilun*, *fa’ilatun*, and *mutafa’ilun* with either an initial or an antepenultimate stress. But in the Persian prosodists’ recitation, these patterns consistently feature only an antepenultimate stress, as shown in the list above (patterns 10–13, 22, and 23). The complete correspondence in stress patterns between CIAr and the traditional recitation of the metra in Persian beyond these exceptions cannot be due to mere chance, and it leaves no doubt that the two systems share the same word stress patterns.

When and How Did the Traditional Recitation Crystallize?

It is noteworthy that Persian prosodists and specialists use the CIAr stress pattern in their recitation of the metra apparently unconsciously.²⁰ The fact that they do so was first noticed by Omid Tabibzadeh, who pointed out the unusual stress pattern without further elaboration.²¹ But how did Persian prosody come to borrow this stress pattern from CIAr? To answer this question, it is important to keep in mind that Iranian prosodists learn the traditional recitation of the metra not from any written source but by listening to their teachers and memorizing the stress patterns they apply to the metra. The teachers, in turn, received this recitation tradition by hearing it from their own teachers. Therefore, we are dealing here with a long-standing, purely oral tradition. This tradition reflects an artificial performance practice whose original goal was to imitate how the metron names were pronounced by early Arabic-speaking prosodists. But how far back can we trace this imitative practice? It is not exactly known when the traditional Persian prosody theory was

19. See A. Tabibzadeh, “Idiosyncratic Pattern,” 186, 189–90.

20. Interestingly, even those who are not familiar with the Arabic language use the CIAr stress pattern in their recitation of the metra.

21. O. Tabibzadeh, “The Comparison of Word Stress in Persian and Arabic” [in Persian], *Language and Linguistics* (in press).

established, but the evidence from early reports as well as early Persian poetry²² suggests that it existed as early as the eleventh century CE distinct from Arabic prosodic theory. Thus, although complete certainty is impossible, it is likely that the practice of reciting the metra with CIAr word stress patterns was a feature of Persian prosody from its very beginning in the eleventh century. Consequently, we can use the stress pattern observed in this traditional practice today to produce a more accurate reconstruction of CIAr word stress, as I propose to do in the next section. It should be noted that with the exception of a few varieties of Persian used in southern Iran near Arabic-speaking populations, Persian varieties had little if any contact with non-CIAr varieties of spoken Arabic after the fall of the Abbasids.²³ Therefore, the stress patterns of Persian prosodists' recitation may be an even more reliable source for reconstructing CIAr word stress than native Arabic speakers' nondialectal pronunciations of Standard Arabic are.

'Mas'alatun or Mas'alatun?

As noted earlier, words containing a nonstressed heavy final syllable preceded by two or more light syllables constitute a point of debate in the reconstruction of CIAr word stress. Whereas modern scholars have proposed either an initial or an antepenultimate stress for such words, the Persian recitation of the metra offers only one option for this pattern, an antepenultimate stress, as observed in the metrical sequences 10–13, 22, and 23 above (i.e., the sequences containing the metra *mof'ta'elon*, *fa'elaton*, and *mota'fa'elon*).

From this evidence, we can infer that CIAr did not originally have an initial stress in the syllable pattern under discussion, and its use by native Arabic speakers in their nondialectal pronunciation of Standard Arabic reflects the influence of later non-CIAr dialects.²⁴ However, it must again be remembered that CIAr as defined in the introduction to this paper is but an amalgamation of features from multiple Arabic vernaculars. In other words, dialectal influence is an intrinsic part of CIAr, and we cannot assume that the initial stress pattern was never used in these syllable structures in CIAr varieties. In my view, then, the most likely scenario is that CIAr accommodated (at least) two possible stress patterns in such cases, initial and antepenultimate, but that Persian prosodists chose to endorse only the antepenultimate stress for some reason; perhaps it was more prestigious or more common than the initial stress.²⁵ It is noteworthy that Quranic Arabic (i.e., the language of

22. For example, Nāser Khosrow in the eleventh century used the same termini and scansion as the later Persian prosodists did in his poems; see Nāser Khosrow, *The Dīvān of Nāser Khosrow* [in Persian], ed. M. Minovi and M. Mohaghegh (Tehran: Tehran University Press, 1978), 1:487.

23. See A. Tabibzadeh, "The Arabic of the Islamic Conquests vs. Classical Arabic in Early Persian Texts: Arabic Loanwords in the Early Persian Texts with Non-Classical Arabic Origin" [in Persian], *Iranian Journal of Comparative Linguistic Research* 11, no. 22 (2022): 95–160, at 98–99; idem, "Perso-Arabica Arabic Loanwords in Early Persian Texts: Different Origins, Different Norms," *Arabica* (in press).

24. For examples of dialectal influence on the pronunciation of CIAr, see T. Mitchell, "Prominence and Syllabication in Arabic," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 23, no. 2 (1960): 369–89; B. Hayes, *Metrical Stress Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 130–32.

25. This conclusion accords with Watson's reconstruction of CIAr stress, which considers both initial and antepenultimate stress patterns possible (Watson, "Word Stress in Arabic," 13–14).

the Quranic consonantal text) also has an antepenultimate stress in words of the *fa‘ilatun* and *mutafa‘ilun* types, and the same may be true of *mufta‘ilun* words.²⁶ The most important implication of the traditional Persian tradition of reciting the metra, in my opinion, is that the antepenultimate stress was common in words of the types discussed here in varieties of early Islamic Arabic, and this evidence may help us reconstruct this stress pattern in the stage of Proto-Arabic as well.²⁷

Conclusion

In this paper, I have sought to show that Persian prosodists traditionally apply the word stress patterns characteristic of CIAr when reciting metron names in a metrical sequence, even though they pronounce the names with the normal Persian stress on the final syllable when using them in regular sentences. I have argued that the traditional recitation reflects an artificial practice aimed at imitating the original pronunciation of the metra in Arabic. This practice is part of a purely oral tradition of Persian prosody, which seems to have persisted over many centuries. Accordingly, the tradition may constitute an appropriate source for the reconstruction of CIAr word stress patterns. Modern scholars have posited two probable stress patterns in their reconstruction of CIAr words in which two or more light syllables precede a heavy final one. However, the stress pattern observed in the traditional recitation of the metra in Persian appears to indicate that the antepenultimate stress was common in such cases in CIAr and other early Islamic Arabic varieties, and it was perhaps even more prestigious than the initial stress pattern was.

26. See Al-Jallad, “Was It *Sūrat al-Baqārah?*,” 86; van Putten, “Development of the Triphthongs,” 64–71. Although my hypothesis may seem speculative, it may be supported by some evidence from medieval Persian texts suggesting that CIAr word stress in Arabic loanwords seems to be correlated with vowel lengthening in Early New Persian, as in ملاطفه *mulāṭafa* ‘short letter’ from the CIAr ملطفة *mulāṭṭafa*, مجاهز *mujāhiz* ‘equipping’ from CIAr مجهز *mujahhiz*, etc. See A. Sadeghi, “Gemination in Persian” [in Persian], *Lexicography* 5–6 (2013): 3–43, at 36; A. Tabibzadeh, “Perso-Arabica.” A notable piece of evidence is the variable spelling of the loanword ‘question’ as مسأله and مسأله in an eleventh- or twelfth-century manuscript of a Persian translation of the Quran; see A. Rajayi Bokharayi, *A Bridge between the Syllabic and Quantitative Persian Poetry in the first Islamic Centuries* [in Persian] (Tehran: Iranian Cultural Foundation, 1974), 110, 132, 138, 153, 159, 169; see also A. Tabibzadeh, “Arabic of the Islamic Conquests,” 120; idem, “Perso-Arabica.” Since the scribe of the text placed the diacritical marks in their expected places (i.e., either above or under the letter), these variable spellings should logically indicate the pronunciations *masala* and *masāla*, respectively. If the vowel lengthening in *masāla* also reflects the practice of adapting CIAr word stress to Persian vowel lengthening, the spellings show the scribe struggling to render the CIAr pronunciation with an antepenultimate stress.

27. Ahmad Al-Jallad (*Damascus Psalm Fragment*, 63–67) has argued that until the late Umayyad period, some Arabic varieties of Hijazi origin were used in Muslim societies as high registers, and these Hijazi varieties were probably descendants of Quranic Arabic. Phillip Stokes grouped these varieties along with other prestigious medieval non-CIAr varieties into the category “para-Classical Arabic”; see P. Stokes, “In the Middle of What? A Fresh Analysis of the Language Attested in the Judaeo-Arabic Commentary on *Pirqe ‘Āvōṭ* (the Sayings of the Fathers), Middle Arabic and Implications for the Study of Arabic Linguistic History,” *Journal of Semitic Studies* 66, no. 2 (2021): 379–411, at 405; see also idem, “Key to the Kingdom: Variations as a Key to Understanding the Arabic Gospel Manuscripts,” *Al-‘Uṣūr al-Wuṣṭā* 31 (2023): 1–44, at 38–41. One wonders whether the antepenultimate stress pattern in CIAr might have been a para-CIAr influence on CIAr that was gradually replaced by the initial stress pattern in some later normative CIAr varieties (I owe this point to an anonymous reviewer for the journal). On para-CIAr borrowings in Persian, see A. Tabibzadeh, “Perso-Arabica.”

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