

# Persian Pronunciation

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1. *Persian, Farsi* /fɑ:ɾsi, fɑ:ɾ'si/ (Indo-Iranian, IE), the *neutral* accent (shown in the figure above) has six vowels, three 'short' and three 'long', /i:, e, a, ɒ:, o, u:/, the two series having markedly different timbres: they are [i:, e, a, ɒ:, o, u:] in stressed syllables, but [i, ə, e, ə, o, u] in unstressed syllables (while, in completely unstressed syllables, in spontaneous speech, we can also have [i, ə, u]).

2. However, in our phonemic transcription, we will simply indicate /i, e, a, ɒ, o, u/, mostly because timbres are more important than length, which, in mediatic and regional accents, may be very reduced.

3. There are four 'short' diphthongs, /ei, ou/ [ei, əɪ; ou, əʊ], and /ai, oi/ [Ai, əi], in addition to two 'long' ones, /ui/ [u:i] and /ɒi/ [ɒ:i, əɪ] (but indicated as /ui, ɒi/; also with their unstressed variants). When followed by vowels, they are realized as vocoids with semiapproximants inserted between them, [VjV, VɔV], as shown. Initial vowels are /ɾV/, or colloquially /V/; in foreign words beginning with /sC/, we find [ɾəsC].

4. /VN<sup>#</sup>/ structures are [ṼN<sup>#</sup>], and we find [n≡C]. /VɾC/ sequences are realized as [ṼC], but /Vɾ<sup>#</sup>, VɾV, CɾV, Cɾ<sup>#</sup>/ colloquially lose /ɾ/, in spite of minimal pairs such as *man* /'man/ ['mã:n] 'I' and *man'* /'manɾ/ ['mã:nɾ] 'prohibition'; even /CC/ (which occur especially in words of Arabic origin) colloquially become /C/, instead of canonical [V<sup>#</sup>C:V].

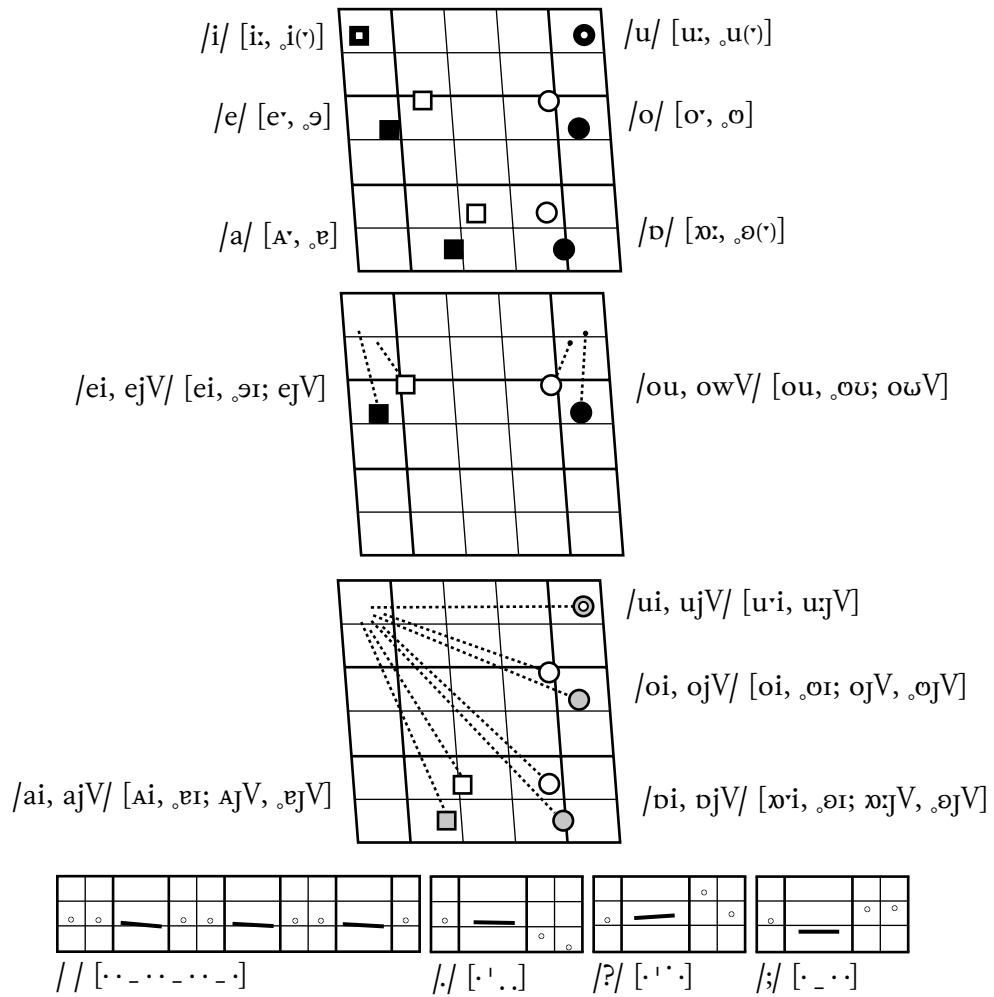
5. The phoneme /h/ occurs in all positions (even /hh/ [h:]); between vowels, it is [h]. All final voiced consonants partially devoice (including /r, l/ [r, z; l] but excepting /N/, which devoice completely between voiceless consonants and pauses).

6. Total voicing assimilation (between consonants with different phonation types) never occurs; /p, t, k, tʃ/ are always [ph, th, kh, tʃh], even when final; /q/ can either be always [q̤] and [#q̤, nq̤, qz, ɾ̤q̤, ɾ̤<sup>#</sup>] or [R] in contact with voiced phones; /k, g/ are [ch, j] before front vowels (including /a/ [A, ə]) or when final; /s, z; ʃ, ʒ; tʃ, dʒ/ are articulated with a lowered tip of the tongue. A couple of examples: *Tehrân, fârsi* [təh'rã:n, fɑ:r'si:].

7. The main *intonation* patterns are also shown. They should be accurately compared with those given in the succeeding figures for the other accents described.

8. The table of *consonants* shows several taxophones, either neutral, or traditional, or mediatic, although we are treating here mostly the vocalic and intonational characteristics.

fig 1. Persian *neutral* accent.



	bilabial	labiodental	dental	alveolar	prepalatal	postalveo-palatal protruded	palatal	prevelar	velar	velar rounded	preuvular	uvular	laryngeal
N	m	[m]	[n]	n	[ɲ]		[ɲ]	[ŋ]	[ŋ]		[ɳ]	[ɳ]	
K	p	b	t	d			[c]	[ɟ]	[k, g]	k	[q]	[q]	ʔ
KS							tʃ	dʒ					
X		f	v										
S			s	z			ʃ	ʒ					[ɸ]
J				[z]			j			[ɔ]		[ɣ]	[h] ɦ
R			r	[r]								[ʀ]	
ʀ												ʀ	ʀ
L			[l]	l	[ɭ]		[ʎ]						



fig 4. Persian *mediatic* accent.

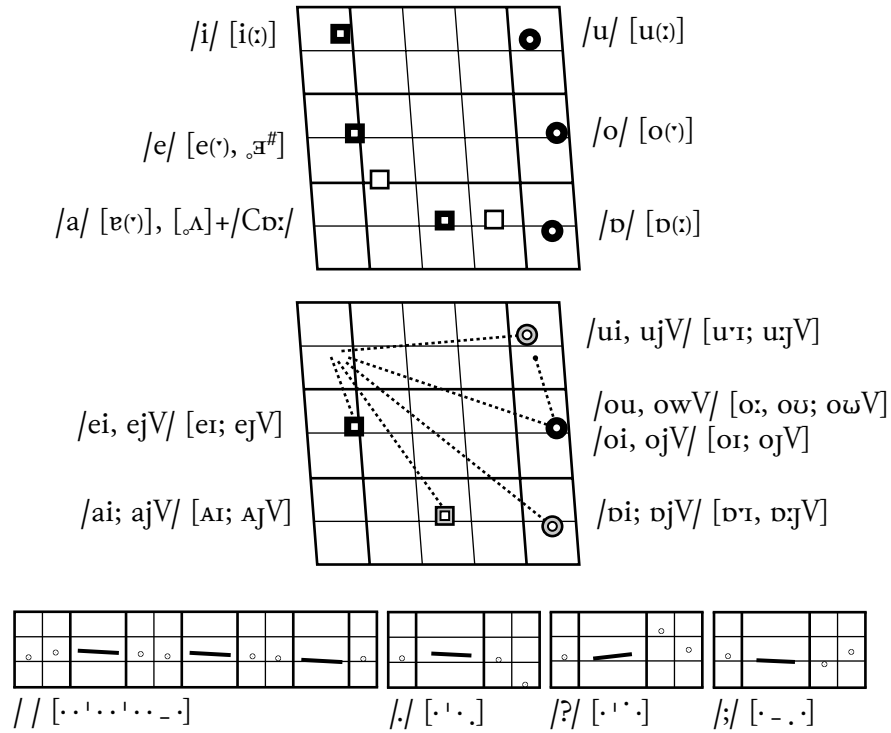


fig 5. Persian *northern* accent: Tehran city area (cf the maps given in fig 11-12).

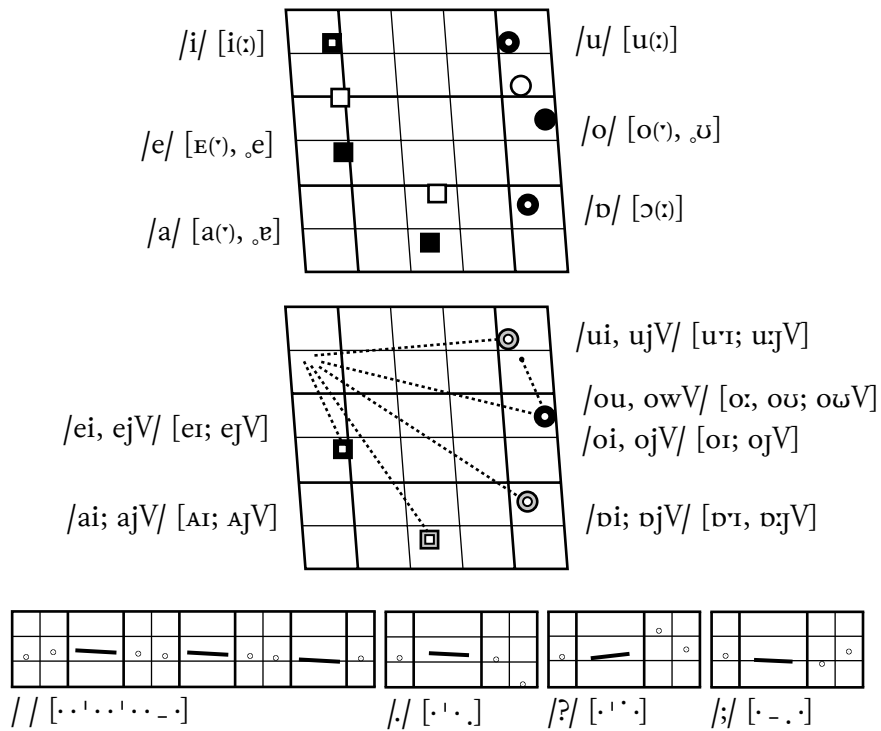








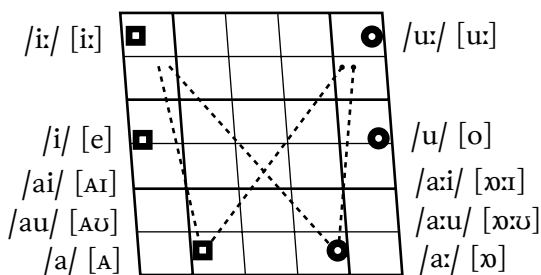
fig 12. Map of Persia showing the languages of neighboring nations.



Here are two diachronic preceding stages, which are important for the history of Persian (cf fig 13-14).

*Proto-Iranian* (1E) had three vowels, both short and long (the two series having very different timbres), and four diphthongs (their first elements corresponding to /a/ [A] or /a:/ [xɔ:]), as well as other less common combinations. As for the consonants, let us signal [r] and [n≡C].

fig 13.



m		n		
p b		t d		k g
		ts dz		
	f	θ s z	ʃ ʒ	x
			j	w h
		r-l		

