Abstract
This article deals with the Mazandarani dialect spoken in Ziarat, a village near Gorgan in Golestan Province, Iran. This dialect is spoken by the Galesh cow herders in this area and is to be regarded as a variant of Mazandarani, which is spoken in Mazandaran Province and neighbouring regions south of the Caspian Sea in Iran.

I give a brief description of the past and non-past verb forms in the Ziarat dialect and show the formation of the present/future, past, and past imperfect indicative verbs in this dialect. I conclude that the formation of the non-past indicative is influenced by Persian, whereas the past indicative and past imperfect indicative follow the Mazandarani structure. However, when the past imperfect has a derivational preverb, it uses a Persian structure with a Mazandarani stem. All personal endings, except the 3SG past ending, are copied from Persian.

On the whole, this hybrid dialect can basically be described as a dialect of Mazandarani, but it is affected by Standard Persian, Gorgani Persian and Khorasani Persian depending on the geographic situation.

Keywords: Mazandarani, Galesh, Ziarat dialect, Sari dialect, Persian, language contact, verb forms

1. Introduction

Ziarat is a village situated about 20 kilometres south of the town of Gorgan in Golestan Province, Iran. Golestan Province was called Estarabad and Gorgan in the past, and covers an area of 2,000,000 hectares east of Mazandaran and west of Khorasan. It has a population of approximately 1,650,000 (Sāzmān-e modiriat va barnāmerizī 1386). The presence of forests and good pastures enables the people living in this area to have an economy based on cattle breeding and agriculture.

The combination of ethnic groups that make up the population in Golestan is very interesting. The population includes the following groups: Fars, Turkmen, Sistani, Baluch, Kurd, Kazak (Sāzmān-e modiriat va barnāmerizī 1386). This situation creates a multi-ethnic population and thus provides an excellent opportunity for studying language contact and contact-induced linguistic phenomena.

The text corpus from Ziarat comes from a joint project on the Mazandarani spoken by the Galesh of Ziarat carried out by Carina Jahani, Uppsala University, Hossein Barani, Gorgan University of Agriculture, and myself. The study was funded by the Hans Rausing Endangered Languages project. After an initial journey to estab-
lish local contacts, carried out by Carina Jahani and Guiti Shokri in November 2006, we documented the language, ceremonies, lifestyle, and customs of the Galesh in Ziarat during four subsequent field journeys; in October–November 2008, April–May 2009, January–February 2010, and May–June 2011. The field journeys were carried out by Guiti Shokri and Hosein Barani, and the transcription and translation of the interviews was carried out by Guiti Shokri and Carina Jahani. Previous ethnological and linguistic research on the Galesh has been carried out by Purkarim (1357) Borjian and Borjian (2008) among others.

In 1385 A.H. (2006/07 A.D.), just before our first field journey, about 2,000 people lived in Ziarat village. The people who live in Ziarat and work as cattle breeders are called Galesh. In Mazandaran, Gorgan, and Ziarat, Galesh is the term for someone who breeds cows. This word is used in Gilan as well, but there it refers to people who breed both cows and sheep. There is thus a difference in the usage of the term Galesh between Gilan and Mazandaran (Ranjbar and Rādmard 1382: 14).

Because of its dry and cool weather, Ziarat is also a popular place for villas and summer houses. Nowadays, due to its proximity to Gorgan, Ziarat is growing and the village is going through a rapid modernization, which in the near future could cause the loss of all its rural and cultural characteristics, including its dialect. We chose this area for our work for the above reasons and also because of the people and their specialized work, which is on the verge of vanishing due to modernization and changing lifestyle and methods of production.

In this article, I focus on the structure of the verb in the dialect of Ziarat. First, I will present some examples of past and the non-past verb forms in the Mazandarani dialect of Sari, then I will give examples from the dialect of Ziarat.

2. Presentation of the data
2.1. Non-past indicative
In the Mazandarani of Sari, the non-past indicative is formed by the non-past stem + non-past personal endings (see also Shokri 1374: 107–110; Yoshie 1996: 33–34).

4 The outcome of this study is deposited at: http://elar.soas.ac.uk/deposit/jahani2010galesh
5 http://ziaratvillage.blogfa.com
6 The personal endings shown in the tables below are the most common endings in each dialect. There are variants, but since the focus of this article is not on variants but on the structure of the verb forms, only the most common ending for each person has been included in each table. Other variants are found in the examples.
7 In the discussions of Mazandarani grammar, there has so far been no discussion of whether there is an augment element of the present stem with -en- (assimilated to -em- before m with secondary dissimilation of nn → nb) before the personal endings. Yoshie (1996: 33) describes the longer endings as “variation of the general personal ending” with stress on the first syllable of the personal ending. In view of the fact that -en-/em- takes stress, they may be re-analysed as belonging to the stem, in the same way that the -en- is analysed in Zazaki (see Paul 1998: 75–80). This discussion is, however, beyond the scope of the present article, and I follow the analysis of Mazandarani adopted so far for stems and endings (Shokri 1369: 217–231; Yoshie 1996: 27–34; Borjian and Borjian 2007: 205).
Table 1. Non-past indicative in Mazandarani, dialect of Sari, for *baruten* ‘to sell’

In Ex. (1), the verb *xorne* ‘he eats’ follows the pattern outlined in Table 1. Note that the ending here is -ne rather than -ene (see also footnote 6).

(1) \begin{align*}
& \text{PRON.1SG.GEN} \quad \text{father} \quad \text{REFL food=ACC} \quad \text{REFL eat.PRS-3SG} \\
& \text{me} \quad \text{piyer} \quad \text{še} \quad \text{yezā=re} \quad \text{še} \quad \text{xor-ne} \\
\end{align*}

My father eats his food himself. [Sari]

In the dialect of Ziarat, on the other hand, the non-past indicative is mainly formed by the verb prefix *me-* + non-past stem + personal endings,\(^8\) or, occasionally, like the form found in Sari, without the verb prefix. Note also that the personal endings are copied from spoken Persian.\(^9\)

Table 2. Non-past indicative in Mazandarani, dialect of Ziarat, for *baruten* ‘to sell’

In Ex. (2) the form *mepejen* ‘they cook’ comes with the non-past stem of Mazandarani but with a Persian non-past indicative prefix and personal endings copied from Persian (cf. Persian *mipazan*).

(2) \begin{align*}
\text{now rice how PREF-cook.PRS-3PL} \\
\text{alān berenj čejur me-pej-en} \\
\end{align*}

How do they cook rice now? [Ziarat]

In Ex. (3) we have a non-past indicative verb, *nembue* ‘it doesn’t become’ with a Persian structure and a Mazandarani stem. The forms *davui* ‘you should be’ and *danibuin* ‘(if) they are not’ are subjunctive forms and are not treated in this paper. The last verb *nemekārim* ‘we don’t plant’ is a non-past indicative form with the Persian structure and stem described below. Note also the two pronunciation variants *šuppā* and *šupā* ‘night watchman’.

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8 Note that there is no difference between the non-past and past endings in the dialect of Ziarat. The dialect of Sari makes such a distinction.

9 The personal endings are -am, -i, -e, -im, -in, -an in spoken Persian.
Also in (4), the verbs *megiren* ‘they get’ and *mezenen* ‘they hit’ are modelled on the Persian structure.

The only occurrence of a non-past indicative of the Sari Mazandarani type, i.e. lacking the prefix *m(e)-*, in the whole of the data (comprising about three hours of speech) is the verb *guim* ‘we say’ in Ex. (5). Even here, the verb ending is copied from Persian.

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**2.2. Simple past indicative**

The structure of the simple past indicative in the Sari dialect of Mazandarani comprises a prefix\(^{10}\) + past stem + past personal endings (see also Shokri 1995: 112–113; Yoshie 1996: 34–35).\(^{11}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Verb form</th>
<th>Prefix</th>
<th>Past stem</th>
<th>Past personal ending</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1SG</td>
<td>baruteme</td>
<td>ba-</td>
<td>rut</td>
<td>-eme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2SG</td>
<td>baruti</td>
<td>ba-</td>
<td>rut</td>
<td>-i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3SG</td>
<td>barute</td>
<td>ba-</td>
<td>rut</td>
<td>-e</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1PL</td>
<td>barutemi</td>
<td>ba-</td>
<td>rut</td>
<td>-emi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2PL</td>
<td>baruteni</td>
<td>ba-</td>
<td>rut</td>
<td>-eni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3PL</td>
<td>barutene</td>
<td>ba-</td>
<td>rut</td>
<td>-ene</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3.** Simple past indicative in Mazandarani, dialect of Sari, for *baruten* ‘to sell’

\(^{10}\) This prefix is only found in the positive form, in the negative form it is replaced by the negative prefix *na-*. If the verb has a derivational preverb, there is no prefix in the simple past.

\(^{11}\) The marking in the past system of Mazandarani works in quite the opposite way as in Persian, and several other Western Iranian languages (for Balochi, see Nourzaei and Jahani, this volume). The simple past form and past participle are marked, i.e. take an additional prefix, while the imperfective is unmarked.
The verb *baxrime* ‘I bought’ in Ex. (6) follows the structure outlined in Table 3. Note that the ending is *-me* rather than *-eme* in this example (see also footnote 6).

(6)  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>men</th>
<th>in</th>
<th>ketāb=re</th>
<th>diruz</th>
<th>ba-xri-me</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PRON.1SG</td>
<td>DEM.PROX</td>
<td>book =ACC</td>
<td>yesterday</td>
<td>PREF-buy.PST-1SG</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I bought this book yesterday. [Sari]

In the dialect of Ziarat, the same pattern as in the dialect of Sari is found in the simple past indicative, but, again, the endings are copied from spoken Persian, except the ending of 3SG, which is *-Ø* in Persian. Here the dialect of Ziarat retains the Mazandarani ending *-e*.12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Verb form</th>
<th>Prefix</th>
<th>Past stem</th>
<th>Past personal endings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1SG</td>
<td>barutem</td>
<td>ba-</td>
<td>rut</td>
<td>-e</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2SG</td>
<td>baruti</td>
<td>ba-</td>
<td>rut</td>
<td>-i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3SG</td>
<td>barute</td>
<td>ba-</td>
<td>rut</td>
<td>-e</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1PL</td>
<td>barutim</td>
<td>ba-</td>
<td>rut</td>
<td>-im</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2PL</td>
<td>barutin</td>
<td>ba-</td>
<td>rut</td>
<td>-in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3PL</td>
<td>baruten</td>
<td>ba-</td>
<td>rut</td>
<td>-en</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Simple past indicative in Mazandarani, dialect of Ziarat, for *baruten* ‘to sell’

In Ex. (7) we have three simple past verbs with a Mazandarani structure, but with the personal endings copied from Persian (*baruten* ‘they sold’, *narutim* ‘we didn’t sell, *baxerien* ‘they bought’).

(7)  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ande</th>
<th>mardem</th>
<th>zamin</th>
<th>ba-rut-en</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>so.many</td>
<td>people</td>
<td>land</td>
<td>PREF-sell.PST-3PL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>emā</td>
<td>na-rut-im</td>
<td>hečči</td>
<td>hanu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRON.1PL</td>
<td>NEG-sell.PST-1PL</td>
<td>nothing</td>
<td>even</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bazi</td>
<td>az</td>
<td>pesar-ā=m</td>
<td>ba-xeri-en</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>some</td>
<td>from</td>
<td>son-PL=PC.1SG</td>
<td>PREF-buy.PST-3PL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

So many people sold land, but we did not sell. Anyway! Some of my sons actually bought (the share of those who wanted to sell). [Ziarat]

In Ex. (8), there is one simple past verb, with a Mazandarani structure (*bāgutem* ‘I said’). Note the variant *bā-* of the prefix found in this example.

(8)  

| ham=un | avval | vače=re | bā-gut-em | dige |
| EMPH=DEM.DIST | first | child=ACC | PREF-tell.PST-1SG | other |

I told (you) about the first child, you know. [Ziarat]

2.3. Past imperfect indicative

The structure of the past imperfect indicative in the Sari dialect of Mazandarani comprises a past stem + past personal endings (see also Shokri 1995: 113–115; Yoshie 1996: 35–36).

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12 All the other persons have the same ending in the non-past and past in spoken Persian, see footnote 9.
In Ex. (9), the verb form *bāzi kārdemī* ‘we played’ follows the structure outlined in Table 5.

(9)  
emā vače bi-mi xale bāzi kārd-emī  
we child be.PST-1PL very playing do.PST-1PL  
(When) we were children, we played very much. [Sari]

The past imperfect indicative in the dialect of Ziarat is formed on the same pattern, but, again, with endings modelled on Persian except for the 3SG ending (see above).

Ex. (10) is taken from a text about wedding customs, and the past imperfect verb *zien* ‘they played’ denotes a habit in the past. It follows the Sari pattern, but takes an ending modelled on Persian.

(10)  
are unvax sāz zi-en  
yes then instrument play.PST-3PL  
Yes, then they played instruments. [Ziarat]

I found three derivational preverbs in the data that are retained in the past imperfect formation in the dialect of Ziarat, namely *de-*, *(h)e-* and *va-*. Here, the past imperfect indicative is formed by the addition of the prefix -m(e)- (which here turns into an infix) following the derivational preverb (cf. the Persian prefix *mi-*). This formation is not found in the dialect of Sari.13

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13 According to my analysis of the data, *ba-* with its variants *(bo-, bā-, be-, bey-, bi-)* is an inflectional prefix; and *da-* with its variants *(de-, dā-, day-)*, *ha-* with its variants *(hā-, he-, e-, ā-)*, *va-* with its variant *(var-)* are derivational preverbs. The prefix does not change the meaning of the verb, whereas the preverb does. However I also believe that *ba-* used to be a derivational preverb, but that it later was re-analysed as a prefix. In the Sari dialect, *ha-* has also lost its role as a derivational preverb and can be regarded as a prefix, but in the Ziarat dialect, there are places where *ha-* adds the meaning ‘on top of’. The preverb *da-* adds the meaning ‘inside, in’, and *va-* ‘up, upwards’ (Shokri 1380).
I use Ex. (11) to compare the two verbs demešten ‘they put’ and yārden ‘they brought’, both of which are in the past imperfect but have different structures. The first one has a derivational preverb + the prefix (here infix) -m- (the Persian imperfect marker) a Mazandarani stem and the Persian personal endings, while the second one is a past imperfect verb with a Sari structure but with Persian personal endings.

(11) *ham amšu de-m-ešt-en dele majme yard-en*
just tonight PREV-PREF-put.PST-3PL inside dish bring.PST-3PL
On that very night, they put it (i.e. the gift for the bride’s parents) in a dish and brought it. [Ziarat]

In Ex. (12) the verb hemeštim ‘we put’ follows the same pattern as demešten ‘they put’. This verb can take either preverb, he- or de-, but with a change in meaning: he- denotes putting something onto something, while de- denotes putting something into something.

(12) *zirbayal am ke zirbayali he-m-ešt-im*
armpit also EMPH armpit.patch PREV-PREF-put.PST-1PL
Under the arm, well, we put a patch there. [Ziarat]

There is also an additional formation of the past imperfect indicative in the dialect of Ziarat, namely the addition of the prefix m(e)- to the form shown in Table 6. This form must be regarded as a copy of the Persian past imperfect indicative (e.g. mikardam). This formation is found alongside the form without the prefix m(e)-.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb form</th>
<th>Prefix</th>
<th>Past stem</th>
<th>Personal ending</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1SG</td>
<td>meštem</td>
<td>mešt</td>
<td>-em</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2SG</td>
<td>mešti</td>
<td>mešt</td>
<td>-i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3SG</td>
<td>mešte</td>
<td>mešt</td>
<td>-e</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1PL</td>
<td>meštim</td>
<td>mešt</td>
<td>-im</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2PL</td>
<td>meštin</td>
<td>mešt</td>
<td>-in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3PL</td>
<td>mešten</td>
<td>mešt</td>
<td>-en</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8. Past imperfect indicative in Mazandarani, dialect of Ziarat, for mešten ‘to smear’

In Ex. (13) we have several verbs. The form kand-im ‘we dug’, which is a past imperfect form with a Mazandarani structure but a Persian personal ending, is found twice. This verb follows the pattern outlined in Table 6. Then we have meštim ‘we put’ with the prefix m- copied from Persian, a Mazandarani stem, and the Persian personal endings.\(^\text{14}\) The third verb is memeštim ‘we smeared’, again with the

\(^{14}\) In other texts, the form eštim is also found.
Persian prefix and endings, and a Mazandarani stem. These two verbs follow the pattern outlined in Table 8. The verb *naxize* ‘it should not fall’ is in the subjunctive mood, and is thus outside the scope of this article.

Table 9 below is a summary of the structures for the non-past indicative, simple past indicative, and past imperfect indicative in the two Mazandarani dialects of Sari and Ziarat. One of the most important characteristics of the non-past indicative verb forms in the dialect of Ziarat is that it is a hybrid construction which combines Persian indicative prefixes and personal endings with a Mazandarani stem. In the simple past, the dialect of Ziarat follows a Mazandarani structure, apart from the personal endings, which are Persian. The exception is the 3SG ending, where the dialect of Ziarat has the Mazandarani ending. In the past imperfect, a Mazandarani structure is normally used, but when the verb takes a derivational preverb examples have shown that the Persian prefix is added between the preverb and the stem. There are also examples of a structure with the Persian *me-* prefix without a derivational preverb. In all the verb forms found in the Ziarat dialect, the stem is Mazandarani and the personal endings (except in the past tense, 3SG) are copied from Persian. I therefore divide the past imperfect in Mazandarani of Ziarat into three structures in Table 9.

### Table 9. Summary of verb prefixes and suffixes in Mazandarani of Sari and Ziarat

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb form (all indicative mood)</th>
<th>Maz. preverb/ prefix</th>
<th>Prefix <em>m(e)</em>-</th>
<th>Pe. personal endings</th>
<th>Maz. personal endings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-past, Sari</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-past, Ziarat</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple past, Sari</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple past, Ziarat</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past imperfect, Sari</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past imperfect, Ziarat (1)</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past imperfect, Ziarat (2)</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past imperfect, Ziarat (3)</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

15 The form *=de* is a variant of *=re*, which is here used after *n*, where also the variant *=dre* is found.
16 See footnote 15.
17 Here “it” refers to a construction with a couple of big stones, on which the pot was placed. It was important that these stones were even, and therefore they were covered with small stones mixed with clay.
The general conclusion is that the dialect of Ziarat belongs to the Mazandarani language, but is affected by spoken Standard Persian, Gorgani Persian and/or Khorasan Persian depending on migration patterns, contact with the town of Gorgan, etc. A comparison with the dialect of Galesh herdsmen in Kherimesar, in Kordkheyl district, near Sari in Mazandaran, as documented by Borjian and Borjian (2008), shows that the verb system in the dialect of the Galesh of Ziarat is more influenced by Persian than that of the Galesh of Kherimesar. In the dialect described by Borjian and Borjian (2008), the verb forms are mostly identical to those found in the Sari dialect.

It is clear that the use of a Persian-modelled present indicative verb form is not a recent phenomenon which should be attributed to schooling and modern media, since it is found in the speech even of the elderly in the village. The same is true also of the Persian-modelled past imperfect of the 3rd type in Table 9. These forms, which are identical to the form in Persian, are most likely attributable to long and intense contact between Mazandarani and Persian all the way from the Caspian Sea region to Khorasan. This is also in accordance with what Persian sources report about the old lost Gorgani language described by Kiā (1330), which shares many features of structure and vocabulary with Mazandarani.

On the basis of previous research, Bisang (2006: 91–92) finds that the first markers copied from one language into another are discourse markers, and that markers operating on clause-level syntax are also more liable to copying than markers operating on phrase level. The marker copied here (the aspectual/modal marker mi-), as well as the personal endings, are operating on verb phrase level and are not the most likely markers to be copied according to these typological constraints. This supports the assumption that there has been intense contact between Persian and Mazandarani in and around Gorgan.18

We also note that acquisition of the Persian verb prefix has occurred in the places where the Sari dialect of Mazandarani has no prefix. The prefix is fully grammaticalized in the non-past, but it is also found in the past imperfect. In both these instances, the Sari dialect has no prefix. Where the Sari dialect already has a prefix, i.e. in the simple past, this prefix has been retained. In fact, Persian has no alternative prefix to offer, since the Persian simple past is unmarked. It is also interesting to note that the Persian endings have been acquired wherever Persian has an ending, but that the Mazandarani ending has been retained where there is no ending in Persian, namely in the 3SG past tense.

18 Further studies are needed to determine to what degree markers on higher levels are copied from Persian into the Ziarat dialects.
Abbreviations

- separates a morpheme
= separates a clitic
1 first person
2 second person
3 third person
ACC accusative
CL classifier
CLM clause linkage marker
DEM demonstrative
DIST distal
EMPH empathic particle
EZ ezāfe
Maz. Mazandarani
NEG negative
PC pronominal clitic (enclitic pronoun)
Pe. Persian
PL plural
PREF prefix
PREV derivational preverb
PRON pronoun
PROX proximal
PRS present/future (i.e. non-past)
PST past
REFL reflexive pronoun
SG singular

References


Sāzmān-e modiriat va barnāmerizī (1386 [2007/08]). Golestān.


