

THE TABAROID DIALECTS OF THE CENTRAL ALBORZ:
LANGUAGE CONVERGENCE BETWEEN
TABARI AND PERSIAN

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Persian surrounds much of the Tabari (or Māzandarāni) speaking area, that is, the province of Māzandarān south of the Caspian Sea. The transition zones between the two languages lay in the valleys and foothills of the Alborz range, which separates Māzandarān from the Iranian Plateau. Within this zone we find a range of hybrid dialects that are divided into two distinct groups: Persian dialects influenced by Tabari and vice versa. This study aims at the latter group, which we call Tabaroid, i.e., Tabari varieties carrying various amounts of Persian mix. The linguistic data come from some twenty villages in the south-central Alborz, separated from Tehran by a mountain ridge. The main objective here is to establish the dialectal and areal position of the Tabaroid varieties by closely examining their diachrony, phonology, and above all morphosyntax.

Key words: Iranian languages, Caspian dialects, Māzandarāni, Jājrud, diachronics, typology, areal distribution, language convergence.

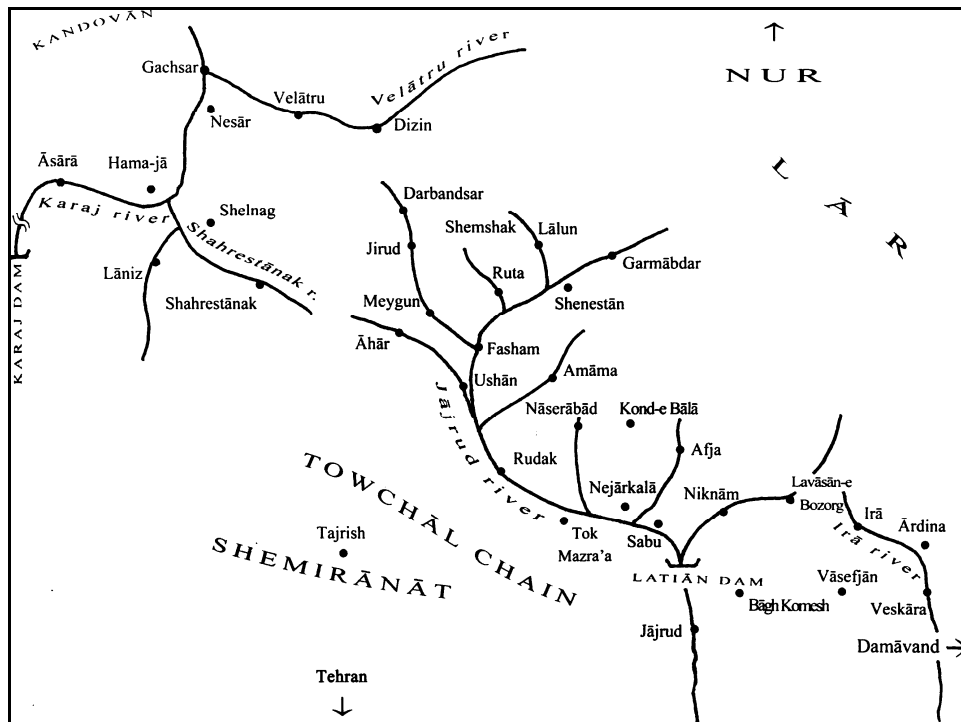
Along the Caspian littoral and the northern slopes of the Alborz mountain range, the Caspian language family forms a continuum of dialects that extend some 500 kilometres along the latitude. This chain of dialects, called *geləki* by their six to seven million speakers, can be broken down areally into three language groups: Gilaki in the west, Tabari in the east, and, in the middle, the transitional Central Caspian, embracing the districts of Tonekābon and Kalārdasht in Māzandarān province. Tabari (or Māzandarāni) predominates throughout the province of Māzandarān, in and around the nuclei cities of Sāri, Shāhi, Bābol, and Āmol, whose speech forms Tabari proper. Most Tabari speakers, however, dwell in a series of close-knit villages spread across the Caspian lowlands as well as in the mountain valleys of the Alborz range. Dialectal continuum varies in two geographical directions: east–west (valley variation) and north–south (lowland vs. highland). Almost every settlement has its own subdialect, and even neighbouring villages may exhibit substantial phonological difference. Lexicon, however, is fairly uniform throughout the province.

The transitional zone between Tabari and its surrounding Persian has long been a murky area in Iranian dialectology. A recent study by this author (Borjian 2013a) has shed light on the language relationships in the south-central Alborz, located between Māzandarān and Tehran. A thorough analysis based on 48 isoglosses from 35 localities spread out throughout the region revealed two distinct contiguous linguistic spaces. (1) The dialects spoken in the lower Jājrud, Shemirān, and Damāvand are characteristically Persian with a rich Tabari imprint in the verb phrase. (2) Those spoken in the upper reaches of the Jājrud and Karaj river valleys show a solid Tabari character in phonology, lexis, and verb morphology, but a strong Persian blend in the noun phrase. Accordingly, these dialects were designated as “Tabaroid”. The numerical results of that study are summarised in Table 1. The percentage points indicate the affinity of each of the fifteen dialects to Tabari proper. The lexical, morphological, and phonological categories are listed in individual columns and their average is shown in the right column. As seen in the table, Velātru’i distinguishes itself by showing full agreement in all categories with Tabari proper; hence, it is not “Tabaroid” but a Tabari variety in spite of its geographical location.

Table 1. Tabari isogloss agreements (percent)¹

Location (valley)	Village	Isogloss Categories			Average
		Lexical	Morphological	Phonological	
Velātru	Velātru	100	100	100	100
Jājrud	Darbandsar	71	90	93	85
	Shenestān	79	89	86	84
	Lālun	71	80	93	82
	Meygun	64	80	87	77
	Garmābdar	71	80	67	73
	Jirud	71	60	73	68
	Amāma	50	89	47	62
Shahrestānak	Lāniz	57	89	73	73
	Shahrestānak	64	75	80	73
	Shelnag	43	89	73	68
	Hamajā	50	56	80	62
	Āsārā	29	56	60	48
Irā	Irā	79	80	67	75
	Veskāra	71	75	67	71

¹ Source: Borjian (2013a).



Map 1. The Jājrud and Karaj river valleys, north of Tehran
(Courtesy of the author)

The present paper follows up the above-mentioned study. Once we have classified a group of dialects as “Tabaroid” based on a selected number of isoglosses, we then need to define them on grammatical terms, as in exactly which morphological and syntactic categories they diverge from Tabari proper in favour of Persian. In this paper, I have added three more settlements for which linguistic data became available. The following is a list of villages included, roughly arranged corresponding with their latitude from north to south. These valleys are often collectively referred to as Qasrān (see Map 1).

- (1) The Velātru valley: Velātru,² Dizin
- (2) The upper tributaries of the Jājrud river: Lālun, Ābnik, Garmābdar, Shenestān, Shemshak, Darbandsar, Jirud, Meygun, Amāma
- (3) The Shahrestānak valley: Shahrestānak, Shelnag, Lāniz, Hamajā
- (4) The Irā valley: Irā, Veskāra

The linguistic materials for the dialects are rather fragmentary. The examples from the Jājrud and Karaj river valleys are selected from the volume compiled by

² Velātru’i examples are kept to a minimum; it is studied in details in Borjjan (2012a).

Giti Deyhim (2005), who lists several random sentences of everyday speech for each of the dozens of dialects spoken in the region. I have included all relevant data that are both sound and verifiable in terms of their provenance. The data on the dialect of Dizin is from a short text (Kalbāsi 2009, pp. 353–354). Velātru'i materials are from Lambton (1938).

Diachronics

The Caspian provenance of the dialects within the Northwest (NW) branch of Iranian languages is evident in the following characteristic sound changes, which also illustrate intense Perside (SW) intrusions.

D1. From the oldest Iranian stratum, the words that exhibit the NW-SW differentiation are just a few: *zumâ* 'son-in-law' (NW *z* < proto-Iranian **ž* < proto-Indo-European *ǵ*); *esbi* (Irā *esvi*) 'white' (NW *sp* < proto-Iranian **šw* < proto-Indo-European **kw*); *esyō/assiyū/issiov* 'water-mill' (SW *s* < Old Iranian **θr*).

Most dialects have *gosand* 'sheep' (cf. Pers *gōspand* < Old Iranian **gavspandārmad*- 'holy cattle'); it is possible that the word carries the SW form *sandārmad* (cf. Armenian *Sandaramet*) with the development proto-Iranian **šw* > SW *s*.

D2. Within the Middle West Iranian split, the NW association is far from solid:

Old Iranian **-č-* (from proto-Indo-European **k^(w)*) > NW *j*: *paj-* 'cook', *jir* 'under', *jur* 'above', *tij* 'shrp', and probably *kija* 'girl' and *saja* 'broom', but SW *ruz* 'day'.

Retention of Old Iranian **j* (from proto-Indo-European **g^(h)*) has no example; we rather find SW *zanâ* 'woman' (< **jani-* + fem. **-ā?*), *zan-* : *zu-* 'hit'.

Old Iranian **dw* > SW *d*: (*a*)*di* 'again, also'.

Old Iranian **y-* > SW *j*: *ju*, *jōu* 'barly', *jâ* 'place' (cf. Pth. *wyāg*, Mid. Pers *gyāg*).

Within the New Iranian stage, major non-Persian characteristics are:

D3. Retention of Middle West Iranian **w-*, as in *valg* 'leaf', *vara/vare* 'lamb', *vârun*, *vâreš* 'rain', *varf* 'snow', *veni/vini* 'nose', *verg* 'wolf', *vešna* 'hungry' (but many counterexamples are found in various dialects).

D4. Reduction of consonantal clusters, typical of NW Iranian dialects, is predominant:

**-xr-* > *r/l*: *tal* 'bitter'

**-fr-* is not reduced but is metathesised in *varf* 'snow' (< *Old Iranian **wafra-*)

**fr-* > *r* in *res-* 'send', *rut-* 'sell' (< Old Iranian **fra-waxta-*); > *h* in the preverb *hâ-/he-* (< **frâ-*, **fra-*)

**xt* > *t*: *pat-* 'cook', *rut-* 'sell', Shp *detar* 'daughter' (but Dar, Mey *raxd* 'clothing', Lnz *saxdi* 'difficulty' belong to a different stock)

*ft > t: *kat-* ‘fall’, Āhā *miratan* ‘they would go’ (but *mefd* ‘free of charge’, etc.). This example suggests a late development because the stem *raft-* is obviously a loanword from Persian.

D5. The plosives are voiced in consonantal clusters, a characteristic of all Qasrān dialects:

št > šd: Mey, Amā *dašd* ‘plain’, Āhā *pošd* ‘back’, Hmj *gušd* ‘meat’, Mey, Shr *dāšd-* ‘have’

st > sd: Jir *šasd* ‘sixty’, Hmj *pusd* ‘skin’, Mey *basd-* ‘tie’, Lln *rusdā’i* ‘villager’

st > ss: Lln, Dar *ass-* ‘be’, Dar *muness-* ‘remain’, Lln *xāss-* ‘want’, *peressā* ‘he stood up’ (but all dialects *bist* ‘twenty’)

sp > sb: Lnz, Mey, Lln, Amā, Shr, Hmj, Lnz, Shl *esbi*, Jir *esbid* (but Irā *esvi*) ‘white’ (but in most dialects *gosand* ‘sheep’; see also D1)

šk > šg: Mey *xošg* ‘dry’, *ešgen* ‘brake’, Lnz, Dar *mošgel* ‘difficult’

Note also: kt > gd in Shn *degder* ‘doctor’, bt > pt in Dar *eptedāyi* ‘primary (school)’.

D6. *hw/xw- is reduced to x, e.g. *xāxər* ‘sister’, *xo/xu/xōu* ‘sleep’, and the reflexive *xo-*. However, we find the stems (past : present) *fes-* : *fet-* ‘sleep’ in all Tabaroid dialects of Qasrān. It is comparable with Velātru’i *fēs-* : *fēt-*, Kandelusi, *fes-* : *fet-*, Yushi *fes-* : *xet-* (but most other Tabari dialects *xəs-* : *xət-*); Karingāni *fes-* : *het-*, New Pers *xufs-/xusp-* : *xuft-* ‘sleep’; Kandelusi *da-fiss-* ‘soak’ (see Borjān 2012a, D6).

D7. Original postvocalic stops *t *p *k (> Mid. West Iranian d b g) are lost. (1) Medial and final dental: *barār* ‘brother’, *mār* ‘mother’, *pi(a)r* ‘father’, *rāhxona* ‘river’ *mā* ‘female’, *šu-* ‘go’, *xo-* ‘self’. (2) Old labials are absorbed into the preceding vowel, which is rounded as a result (*āp > u): *u/ōu* ‘water’ (also in *esyō/assiyu/issiov* ‘watermill’), *xo/xu/xōu* ‘sleep’, *šu/šo/šōu* ‘night’ (< *xšap-), *ofdōu* ‘sun’, *to/tu/tōu* ‘bend’, *tu* ‘fever’, *kuk* ‘partridge’, *kahu* ‘blue’, *to(v)esdun* ‘summer’ (< *tap-), *gu/go/gōu* ‘cow’ (< Old Iranian *gāv-). (3) Medial palatal is lost in *deru* ‘lie’, *šāl* ‘jackal’, *dia(r)/deya* ‘other’.

D8. Āhā *xāzenda* ‘solicitation in marriage’ has parallels in various Tabari dialects: *xāzendi* ‘id.’, *xāzekār* ‘solicitor’; Old Tabari *x^wāz-* ‘want’, *kēn-x^wāz* ‘one who seeks revenge’ (Borjān 2009, p. 100); Old Gorgāni *x^wāz-/x^wāšt-* ‘want’ (Borjān 2008).

1. Phonology

1.1. The consonants show little variation from those of Persian. The vowel inventory has the additional umlauted *ü* and *ö* with sporadic occurrence; these are allophonic however. The existence of a lax central vowel, typical of the Caspian languages, can be inferred from inconsistent documentations, especially of the terminal vowel; for instance, Shr *emuna/e* ‘they would come’ is likely to be *emunə*.

The following phonological processes are observed in the verb phrase.

1.2. The third singular person ending II (see Table 4, below) drops optionally after the stems ending in a vowel: Shl *biâmu^a* ‘he came’, Lln *bimu^a* ‘it came’, but *ba-di-a* ‘it saw’, cf. *na-šurd-a* ‘she didn’t wash’; Dar *(h)e-dâ^a* ‘he gave’, cf. *ba-rit-a* ‘he poored’.

1.3. The terminal *e/a* in personal endings is coalesced with the clitic conjunctive *o/u*: Shr *serx âkerdenu* (← *âkerdene_u*) ‘they would fry [it] and...’.

1.4. When the stem ends in a vowel, the initial *i* of the ending changes to *y*: Grm *bi-e-yn* [bijejn] ‘come ye!’ *ne-ye-yn* [nejejn] (neg.) (cf. *na-kon-in* ‘do not!’).

1.5. The epenthesis *e* is inserted after consonants, but not after *r* or *y*:³ Dar *ey-nena* ‘they come’, Mey *šur-nena* ‘they wash’, Lnz, Grm *dâr-mi* ‘we have’, Grm *âr-ma* ‘I bring’, *xor-na* ‘it eats’, *kâr-mi* ‘we sow’.

1.6. When the stem ends in *n*, a dissimilation process occurs to distinguish between the plural and singular endings: Grm, Mey, Lnz *kondena* (← *kon-* + *-nena*) ‘they do’, Grm *kondeni* ‘you do’. But note Lnz *da-ven-nan* ‘they bake’ (from the stem *venn-* or *vend-* ‘tie, coagulate’).

1.7. Initial *g* is lost in some stems when preceded by a verbal prefix: Mey *ba-yr-im* ‘that we sieze’, Lln *ba-yt-ena* ‘they seized’, Lln *h-it-emi* ‘we picked up’, Shl *ha-yt-a* ‘he would buy’ (cf. Mey *gitema* ‘I would take’); Grm *b-u-i* ‘that you say’ (cf. Grm *goni* ‘you say’, *gone* ‘he says’).

1.8. Initial consonant of the stem sometimes duplicates when preceded by a verbal prefix: Mey *ba-kkoten-im* ‘that we pound’, Grm *na-ttu-mi* ‘we cannot’.

1.9. Hiatus-bridge *-r-* appears between the verbal prefix and the stem in certain verbs: Lln *pe-r-essâ* ‘he stood up’, Grm *pe-r-es-na* ‘they stand up’, *hâ-r-š-am* ‘that I see’.

2. Noun Morphology and Syntax

2.1. Number. Parallel to the Persian *-(h)â*, plurals in *-un* sporadically appear for both the animate and inanimate: Dar *mehmunun* ‘guests’, Lnz *kuhun* ‘mountains’, Amā *bozun-i šâx* ‘goats’ horn’, *boz-i šâxun* ‘goat horns’. The forms for ‘men’ and ‘women’ show inter-dialectal divide among the dialects with two distinct plural markers *-un* and *-âkun*: (i) Lnz, Amā, Āhā *mardun* ‘men’, *zanun* ‘women’; (ii) the northernmost dialects: Dar, Jir, Mey, Lln, Shn, Shl, Hmj, Āsā *mardâkun/mardâkon/mardakun* ‘men’,

³ This rule possibly extends, as it does in some Tabari varieties, to the stems ending in *l*, no example of which was found in the limited available data.

zanâkun/zanâkon/zenâkun ‘women’. Note concoction in Grm, Shr *mardun* ‘men’, *zanakun/zanâkun* ‘women’).⁴

2.1.1. Reduplication is another means of making plurals: Lln *kuč-kuča* ‘alleys’, Shr *mard-mard* ‘men’, *kuč-kučak* ‘small pieces’, *yâl-yâl*, ‘children’. Note also Dar *yemyâ-lak*, Shr *yemyâl* ‘children’ (cf. Lnz *yemyâl* ‘family’).

2.2. Modifiers. While the Tabari adjectival and genitival construction is the norm, many speakers have adopted the Persian *ezāfa*.⁵ In the Tabari forms the oblique marker *-e* is suffixed to the head noun in possessives, adjectives, and objects of postpositions. Examples:

Dar *dir-e jā* ‘far place’, *Hasan-i mâr* ‘Hasan’s mother’, *yemyâlak-i raxd* ‘children’s clothes’, *kadxedâ-yi ârus* ‘the headman’s daughter-in-law’, *piar-t-i harf-e guš âkon* ‘listen to your father’s words’

Mey *in râhxona-i sang-a vese bairim* ‘we had to take this river stone’

Amâ *tamum-e in bozun-i šâx-e veyne čarb konin* ‘you must grease all these goats’ horn’, *boz-i šâxun-a hama-re alu badin* ‘burn all the goat horns’

Shl *sâb arussi-i xune-i dam* ‘by the house of the master of the wedding’

Shr *dim-š-e merqûne-i zardi demâlniâna* ‘they spread egg yolk on it’, *tutak-a yâlyâl-i das dâna* ‘they would hand the *tutak* to the children’, *bozorgtarun-i didan* ‘to visit elders’

2.3. Pronouns. Two parallel constructions occur: (1) the three main classes of Caspian personal pronoun (subject, object, possessive) are attested in most dialects; (2) Persian-type enclitic pronouns are used with equal frequency.

2.3.1. Personal pronouns are basically Tabari, with the following inflected forms:

1st sg.: Mey, Shl *men* ‘I’, Dar *mane* ‘me’, *meni* ‘my’, Irâ, Vsk *meše* ‘mine’

2nd sg.: Āsâ, Shr, Irâ, Vsk *te*, Dar *teni* ‘your’, Irâ, Vsk *teše* ‘yours’

3rd sg.: Dar, Mey *vi* ‘he’, Grm *vire* ‘him’, Vsk *une* ‘his’

1st pl.: Dar *emâ*, Lln, Lnz, Grm, Shn *amâ*, Mey *âmâ*, Hmj *mâ* ‘we’, Dar, Lnz *ameni* ‘our’, Grm *amener* ‘for us’

2nd pl.: Grm *šemi* ‘your’

3rd pl.: Lnz *unâhâ* ‘they’, Dar *vešuni*, Irâ *vene* ‘their’

⁴ In Kalârdashti the plural ending *-âkôn* is apparently limited to *zenâkon* ‘women’ and *mer-dâkon* (pl. of *mardî*) ‘men’; otherwise the plural markers are *-ôn* for the animate nouns (*mardomon* ‘people’) and, more frequently, *-(e)šôn* (*rikâšon* ‘boys’, *ayozešon* ‘walnuts’).

⁵ Examples: Lln *taraf-e Hâšemâbâd* ‘toward H.’, *amâ teft-e rusdâ’i assemi* ‘we are rural children’; Shn *boz-e kuhi* ‘wild goat’; Dar *parvande-ye emâ* ‘our file’, Hmj *čarm-e pused-eš-o migi-tan* ‘they would get the leather of its skin’.

Examples: Dar *meni mošgelât* ‘my problems’, Shl *meni arussi* ‘my wedding’, Lnz *ameni zenâ* ‘our wife (i.e. my wife)’, Grm *šemi kuča-i sar* ‘at your alley’, Dar *kenišena* ‘whose is it?’

2.3.2. Enclitics are similar to those in Persian, except the occasional pronunciation of the fricatives as affricates in the third person singular and plural, leading to the set: *-m, -t, -š/-č, -mun, -tun, -šun/-čun*.⁶ Examples:

Shn *bâ jigar-eš* ‘with its liver’, *nar-č-i demâl gerdema*⁷ ‘I am looking for a male [goat]’

Jir *sâl-č-a* (Pers *sâl-aš-râ*) ‘his age’, *ektešâfât-č-e* (Pers *ektešâfât-aš-râ*) ‘his discoveries’

Lln *az tars-emân* ‘out of our fear’

Grm *barâ-ye ruz-e mabâdâ-mun* ‘for the day of our destitution (for the sake of precaution)’

Dar *piar-t-i harf* ‘your father’s words’

Shr *dîm-š-e* ‘of his face’

Shl *pesar-č-er* ‘for his son’

Lnz *berâr-m-i pali dara* ‘he is with my brother’,⁸ *komak-eš konim* ‘that we help her’, Lnz *baresami-š* ‘we sent him to...’, *dela-šun* ‘in them’, *yemyâl-čun-e baverdena Karaj* ‘they took their family to Karaj’, *yek-i detâ-šun xoččun inje zendegi kondena, zan o yâl-čun unja* ‘a couple of them are living here by themselves, and their wives and children there’

Hmj *čarm-e pUSD-eš-o migitan* ‘they would get the leather of its skin’

2.4. Reflexives. Tabari invariable pronoun *še* ‘self’ is absent in Qasrân. Instead, the reflexive is built on the stem *xo-*, suffixed by the enclitics: Grm *xommun* ‘ourselves’, Lnz *xoččun* (← *xod-šun*) ‘themselves’.

2.5. Deixis. The dialects generally have *in* ‘this’, *un* ‘that’, but Irâ *im* ‘this’, Shn *inâ-hân* ‘these’. The form *ine/une* is employed as the subject.⁹ Lnz *ine mošgel_a* ‘this is difficult’; Shl *ine arussi nave* ‘this was not a [proper] wedding’, *une ge biamu* ‘the one who came’.

2.6. Adpositions. The region exhibits a mixed nature in adpositions: the use of postpositions, an outstanding characteristic of Caspian, drops as one travels south along the Jâjrud valley or west in the Shahrestânak valley. Ablative is expressed by the Persian preposition *az-*, rather than Tabari postposition *-jâ/-jâ* in all dialects. Table 2 shows the adpositions that occur in our material.

⁶ Dizini, spoken in Velâtru valley, has no enclitic pronouns, and therefore like Velâtru’i leans toward Tabari proper more than the dialects of Jâjrud valley.

⁷ Possibly equivalent to Pers *donbâl-e nar-aš migardam*.

⁸ Notice the Persian enclitic pronoun co-occurring with Tabari postposition!

⁹ Cf. *ina* in Shemirâni; see Borjian (2012b, 2.3.3).

Table 2. Adpositions

Dialect	Postpositions	Prepositions
Lln	<i>dela</i> in, <i>dim</i> on	<i>az</i> from
Grm	<i>er</i> for, <i>sar</i> at/on	<i>az</i> from, <i>barâ-ye</i>
Ābn	<i>dela</i> in	<i>az</i> from
Shn	<i>demâl</i> following	<i>bâ</i> with
Amā	<i>dela</i> in, <i>sar</i> at/on	
Mey	<i>dele</i> , <i>sar</i> at/on, <i>ben</i> under, <i>dim</i> on, <i>lenge</i> by	<i>az</i> from, <i>bâ</i> with, <i>tu</i> in
Shr	<i>dela</i> in, <i>pali</i> near	
Lnz	<i>dele</i> in, <i>pali</i> near	<i>be</i> to, <i>bâ</i> with
Shl	<i>er</i> for, <i>dam</i> at	
Dar	<i>er</i> for	<i>az</i> from, <i>bâ</i> with
Hmj		<i>az</i> from
Jir		<i>az</i> from, <i>be</i> to
Āhā		<i>az</i> from, <i>pošd-e</i> behind
Irā		<i>az</i> from, <i>be</i> to, <i>bâ</i> with

Examples of postpositions: Grm *šemi kuča-i sar* ‘at the head of your lane’, Mey *in raxd-i sar bakkotenim* ‘we pound [it] on the clothes’, Diz *hamme-ye mostun am zamini-i sar bašenessa* ‘all of the yogurts spilled on the ground’, Shl *sâb-arussi-i xune-i dam* ‘by the house of the master of the wedding’, Lln *jir kata jub-i u-i dela* ‘it fell down into the water of the ditch’, *dočarxa-ra bazume âber-i dim* ‘I ran the bicycle onto the pedestrian’s face’, Mey *korsin-i lenge hâkešim* ‘that we spread [it] by the korsî’.

2.6.1. The postposition *-er* ‘for’ is characteristic to the area:

Diz *zano men-er vača urna* ‘the wife will bring me children’

Dar *mehmunun-er nâhâr pajna* ‘she will cook for the guests’

Shl *burin hime-y-er¹⁰ felun jâ* ‘for firewood go to such and such place’

Shl *Maš Asqar veyne pesar-č-er arussi bakone* ‘M. A. wants to arrange wedding for his son’

Shl *bâbâ-m vese men-er arussi bakone* ‘my father wanted to arrange wedding for me’

Grm *amener če be-dard xorna?* ‘what is its use for us?’

Grm *čečer* ‘for what’ (cf. Pers *čiči-râ, či-râ, čerâ*)

Dar *dir-e še:r (?) našu!* ‘don’t go too far away!’

¹⁰ *-y-* is epenthesis. Cf. accusative *hima-re*.

This postposition is found in no other Iranian language known to this author. However, there are comparable postpositions in the dialects surrounding Māzandarān: Tabari dialect of Parvar (probably Shahmirzadi, north of Semnān) *me-r vačče* ‘my child’, *vačče-r gune* ‘she tells the child’ (Kalbāsi 2009, p. 180); Shahmirzādi *me-vra* ‘for me’ (idem, p. 532); Gorgāni Persian of Taqīābād: *man-ere bas bud* ‘it was enough for me’ (idem, p. 224). Otherwise, ‘for’ is expressed in most Tabari dialects by *-ves(s)e/-es(s)e*. Some Tabari varieties have an alternate form ending in *r* (Sāravi *-vesser*, Elāshti *-vāser*), comparable to the postposition *-er* that we saw above for the Tabaroid dialects of Qasrān. Note also Kandelusi *-re* ‘for’; Kalārdashti (*v*)*āseré* ‘for’, *mār-e āsere* ‘for the mother’; Tonekāboni *mérərə*, *térərə*, *vérərə*, *ámər(ə)rə*, *šémerərə*, *ušānerrə* ‘for me, etc.’.

3. Verb Morphology and Syntax

3.1. Stems. A regular past stem is formed by suffixing *-i* to the present stem, e.g. Lln *xer- : xeri-* ‘eat’. This marker is employed in all causative present stems, formed systematically by adding *-(e)n-* to the intransitive present stem: Mey *koten-* ‘pound’, Shr *māln-* ‘rub’.

Tabari has some verbs that employ more than a binary set of stems typical of West Iranian languages, and the Tabaroid dialects of this study exhibit this feature at least for the verb ‘go’, which is conjugated based on four stems: *šu-*, *ši-*, *bur-*, *burd-*. Table 3 below compares the occurrence of this verb in the dialects of Rudbār-e Qasrān against those of Espivard district in central-eastern Māzandarān, whose examples are listed in the second person singular.

Table 3. Conjugation of ‘go’

		Espivard	Qasrān
Imperative	aff.	<i>bur!</i>	Shl <i>bur-in</i> ‘go ye!’
	neg.	<i>nášu!</i>	Dar <i>na-šu</i> ‘go not!’
Subjunctive	aff.	<i>búr-i</i>	Lln <i>bur-am</i> , Lnz <i>bur-im</i> , Shr <i>bur-an</i> ‘that I, we, they go’
	neg.	<i>ná-šu-i</i>	
Present	aff.	<i>šú-ni</i>	Grm <i>šu-ma</i> , <i>šu-ni</i> , <i>šu-nena</i> ‘I, you, they go’
Preterit	aff.	<i>búrd-i</i>	Lln <i>burd-ema</i> , Shn <i>burd-emi</i> ‘I, we went’
	neg.	<i>ná-ši-i</i>	
Imperfect	aff.	<i>ši-i</i>	Lln <i>ši-mi</i> , Šmš <i>šina</i> , Irā <i>ši-ne</i> , Shr <i>šine/šiena</i> ‘we, they would go’

3.2. Preverbs are as frequent as they are in Tabari:

- ha/(h)â: Dar (*h*)e-dâ ‘he gave’, Lln *h-it-emi* ‘we picked up’, Shl *ha-yt-a* ‘he would buy’, Mey *hâ-keši-m* ‘that we spread on’, *gaht â-kord-ema* ‘I reared’, Jir *hâ-kord-emi* ‘we did’, Ābn *kuj âkenan* ‘that they migrate’
- da-: Irâ *da-ken-an* ‘that they put into’, Shr *šir da-kord-ene* ‘they poured the milk in’, *de-mâlniâna* ‘they would spread’, Lnz *da-ven-nan* ‘they bake’
- dar-: Shl *dar-engu-na* ‘they would toss [coins into a container]’, Shr *šekl-e âdem der-geyrd-ene* ‘they would shape [the bread] in human form’, Lln *dar-ši-mi* ‘we would run away’

3.2.1. Preverbs have two functions. (1) Lexically, they may expand or specify the stem, as in Lln *šimi* ‘we would go’ ≠ *dar-šimi* ‘we would run away’¹¹; Jir *hâ-kordemi* ‘we did’ ≠ Shr *da-kordene* ‘they poured into’. (2) Morphologically, preverbs replace the non-durative modal prefix *ba-/be-* (3.3.1). These two functions may contradict in the imperfect, which is distinguished from the preterit only by deletion of the modal prefix. Subsequently, two strategies are employed: (a) When the preverb is semantically irrelevant, it drops in the imperfect; for instance, for the verb ‘have’, which shares stem with no other verb, we have Mey *ø-dâ-ma* ‘I would give’ (cf. Dar *he-dâ* ‘he gave’). (b) When meaning is at stake, the preverb stays on the verb at the expense of a merge between the imperfect and preterit: Shl *ha-yt-a* ‘he would buy’ (which also means ‘he bought’), Shl *dar-engu-na* ‘they would toss’. For stability of the preverbs in compound verbs, see 3.3.1.2.

3.3. Prefixes

3.3.1. The modal prefix *ba-/be-* (or a preverb) marks the subjunctive (e.g. Mey *b-ešgen-im* ‘that we brake’), the imperative (Shl *bi-ör-in* ‘bring ye!’), and the preterit (Lln *ba-di-ne* ‘they saw’). Duration is inferred when the modal prefix is lacking: (present indicative) Dar *paj-na* ‘she cooks’; (imperfect) Mey *basd-ema* ‘I would tie’. The modal prefix is the only means to distinguish between the preterit and the imperfect: Dar *di-a* ‘he used to see’ ≠ Lln *ba-di-a* ‘he saw’. See also 3.2.1.

3.3.1.1. The verbs ‘have’ and ‘want’ take no modal prefix in the preterit: Mey *dâšd-ema* ‘I had’, Lln *xâsse-ma* ‘I wanted’. These forms can also be understood as imperfects.

3.3.1.2. In compound verbs, the modal prefix/preverb may remain or drop: Ābn *kuj âkenan* ‘that they migrate’, Mey *gaht â-kord-ema* ‘I reared’; Dar *guš â-kon* ‘listen!’ Shr *serx â-kerdenü* ‘they would fry and...’, *diden ø-kordena* ‘they would visit’, *kuč-kučak xâr ø-kordene* ‘they would make it in little pieces’; Lln *banâ kerd-a* ‘he began

¹¹ Used as preterit in the text, an obvious mistake.

to', *vel kerd-ena* 'they let go'; Shl *jam korda* 'he gathered' (cf. the imperfect *xabar kordene* 'they would inform').

3.3.2. The negative marker *na-* precludes the modal prefix *ba-*, e.g. Dar *na-muness-a* 'it didn't remain', *ne-hešt-a* 'it didn't allow'; as a result, the distinction between the preterit and imperfect disappears (see 3.6.2 for examples).

3.4. Personal Endings. The common pattern appears to be three sets of personal ending, as shown in Table 4. Set I is used for the indicative present, II for the preterit and the imperfect and for the present of the substantive verbs, and III for the subjunctive present.

Table 4. Personal Endings

	I	II	III
Sg. 1	-(e)ma	-(e)ma	-am
2	-ni	-i	-i
3	-ne	-e/-a	-e
Pl. 1	-(e)mi	-(e)mi	-im
2	-(e)neni	-(e)ni	-in
3	-(e)neni	-(e)na	-an

3.5. Tenses. The materials at hand yield five simple and two periphrastic structures, as shown below. As in Tabari proper, the present perfect merges with the preterit.

Pres. indic.	=		pres. stem	+	ending I
Pres. subj.	=	prev./be-	+ pres. stem	+	ending III
Imperative	=	prev./be-	+ pres. stem	+	zero (sg.), -in (pl.)
Preterit	=	prev./be-	+ past stem	+	ending II
Imperfect	=		past stem	+	ending II
Pluperfect	=	prev./be-	+ past part.	+	past copula
Past subj.	=	prev./be-	+ past part.	+	subj. copula

3.6. Be and Become. The following stems/preverbs occur:

	be	be in	become
present	(ass)-	dar-	bu, vu-
subjunctive	bavu-	davu-	âvu-?
past	be(y)-	da(y)-, dav-	bay-, bav-

3.6.1. There are two verbs ‘be’: the substantive and the locative (with the preverb *da(r)-*). Both verbs employ Set II endings for all tenses; the third singular ending has different forms. These verbs function as the auxiliary in the periphrastic and progressive tenses (see 3.7). Examples:

	Substantive	Locative
Pres.	Dar <i>Hasan rikâ-ye xub-i_a/assa</i> ‘Hasan is a good boy’, Lln <i>ass-emi</i> ‘we are’, Lnz <i>bâ-ham_ena</i> ‘they are together’	Lnz <i>dar-e</i> ‘is in’, <i>dar-ena</i> ‘they are in’, Ābn <i>dar setam darena</i> ‘they are in hardship’
Subj.	Lnz <i>ba-vu</i> (Pers <i>bâšad</i>) ‘that it be’, <i>na-vu-an</i> (Pers <i>nabâšand</i>) ‘that they are not’ ¹²	Mey <i>âfdâb da-vu</i> (Pers <i>dar âftâb bâšad</i>) ‘that it be in the sun’
Past	Jir <i>bey-ma</i> ‘I was’, Lln, Dar <i>bey-mi</i> , Shn <i>be-mi</i> ‘we were’, Šmš, Shn <i>bey-na</i> ‘they were’, Lln, Jir <i>be</i> ‘it was’, Shn <i>bâmarefat be</i> ‘he was descent’, Shr <i>bo</i> ‘it was’, Mey <i>gâhre bey-a</i> ‘there was the cradle’	Dar <i>day-mi</i> ‘we were in’, Shn <i>dav-e</i> ‘there was in’, Mey <i>dav-e tâ šu</i> ‘he was there till night’, <i>tâ fardâi sob... dav-eya</i> ‘he was there until morning’

The following forms remain unrecognised: Dar *age vârun bie* (Pers *bâšad*) ‘if there is rain’, Šmš *xeyli saxd beya* ‘it was very difficult’, Shn *bebo* ‘it was/they were?’ *beboa* ‘it was/became?’ The last two forms are compatible with the subjunctive *bavu-* but do not occur in the subjunctive mood in the texts.

3.6.2. The copula and locative verbs appear to merge in the negative: Lln *nay-ma* ‘I wasn’t’, Irā *na-ve* ‘was not’, Shl *ine arussi na-ve* ‘this was no wedding’, Shr *mive na-ve* ‘there was no fruit’, Mey *boxâri na-ve* ‘there was no heater’.

3.6.3. ‘Become’ employs the base *bu-* : *bav-*, the preverb *â-* (sometimes), and regular ending. Examples are limited to:

Present	Dar <i>xub bu-na</i> ‘it gets well’, Grm <i>nârahât bu-na</i> ‘he gets annoyed’, <i>na-vu-neni</i> ‘you don’t become’
Subj.	Mey <i>xošg â-vu(-e)</i> ‘that it get dry’
Past	Lln <i>suâr bay-mi</i> ‘we got on’, <i>rahâ bay-mi</i> ‘we lost control’, Shn <i>sir bav-emi</i> ‘we got satisfied’, Shl <i>jam bey-na</i> ‘they would gather’, <i>pul kam jam be</i> ‘little amount of money used to be saved’

3.7. Perfective and Progressive Tenses

3.7.1. The pluperfect forms by the past participle (see 3.9) of the main verb succeeded by the past tense of ‘be’ (3.6): Dar *âkord be* ‘he had done’.

¹² See also 3.7.2.

3.7.2. The past subjunctive occurs in the following examples:

Shl *bâs men burd bâm un pul-e hâdâ bâm* ‘I needed to go and pay that money’
 Shl *har qâter-i jelu biâm^u bâ* ‘whichever mule took the lead’
 Grm *zamin-e xodâ hâdâ bâ* ‘God has given this earth’; also *zamin xodâ dâda bâ*
 ‘id.’.

In Tabari proper, the subjunctive past is made by the past participle plus the subjunctive of the verb ‘be’. If the examples above actually belong to this same category, the subjunctive base of ‘be’ should be *bâ-* in Shelnag and Garmâbdari. This stem is not found in Tabari proper (cf. Lnz *bavu-*, in 3.6.1), but it does exist in Central Caspian: Râmsari *šâyad bogut(ə) bâm* ‘I may have said’; Tonekâboni *agar vere dai-beyti bi, itâ návone bâ* ‘if you had paid attention to her, this wouldn’t have happened’. More linguistic data from the Tabaroid dialects is therefore needed to clarify this point.

3.7.3. In Progressive tenses, the locative verb (3.6.1) is employed as auxiliary, either fully conjugated or invariably in the third person singular form for all persons. Examples: (present) Lnz *dare inja zendegi komi* ‘we are living here’; (past) Dar *dave xordema* ‘I was eating’, Diz *davema getema* ‘I was saying’.

3.8. Modals. The impersonal *veyne/vese* ‘must’ is succeeded by the imperative, subjunctive, or infinitive of the main verb: Amâ *veyne čarb konin* ‘you must grease [it]’; Lnz *amâ veyne burim* ‘we must go’; Grm *veyna četi âkerdan?* ‘what must one do?’ or ‘what should be done?’; Mey *yax-e vese bešgenim* ‘we should break the ice’; Shl *un qâter-a vese kalle âden* ‘they out to give the mule a sugar cone’.

3.8.1. *veyne/vese* is also used in the sense of ‘want’: Lnz *veyne nun davennan* ‘they want to bake bread’; Shl *veyne pesar-č-er arussi bakone* ‘he wants to set up wedding for his son’; *bâbâ-m vese mener arussi bakone, ...* ‘[when] my father wanted to arrange a wedding for me, ...’; *un-moqe arussi vese bakanan* ‘when they wanted to marry...’.

3.8.2. Another impersonal form, *bâs* (< *bâyest*; also current in colloquial Tehrani) is used in: Shl *bâs men burd-bâm* ‘I needed to go’.

3.9. Verbal Nouns

3.9.1. The past participle employed in the periphrastic forms is formed with the past stem and a modal prefix: *â-kord*, *burd*, *hâ-dâ*, *bi-âm^u* (see 3.7.1–2). The same structure holds when the past participle is used as an adjective: Shr *anâr yaxdun-čun-i dela qâm-kord dâšdena, yâ si qâm-bokord dâšdena* ‘in their icebox they had pomegranates hidden, or they held apples out of sight’.

3.9.2. The infinitive is formed by the past stem, the suffix *-an*, with or without a verbal prefix: Lln *kerdan*, Grm *âkerdan* ‘to do’, Shr *diden kordena* ‘they would visit’.

Abbreviations

Ābn	Ābniki	Lln	Lāluni
Āhā	Āhāri	Lnz	Lānizi
Amā	Amāma’i	Mey	Meyguni
Āsā	Āsāra’i	Pers	Persian
Diz	Dizini	Shl	Shelnagi
Dar	Darbandsari	Shn	Shenestāni
Grm	Garmābdari	Shr	Shahrestānaki
Hmj	Hamajā’i	Šmš	Shemshaki
Irā	Irā’i	Vsk	Veskāra’i
Jir	Jirudi		

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