

## The verb ‘to do’ in Upper Şirvan Tat: Towards the Genesis of a New Inflectional Paradigm through Suppletion

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Suppletion is a morphological process in which word-forms of the same lexeme have phonologically distinct stems, as in Russian *reb'on(o)k* ‘child’ vs. *det'-i* ‘children’ or French *je vais* ‘I go’ vs. *nous allons* ‘we go’ (Hippisley et al. 2004). This presentation aims at presenting the composition of the paradigm of the verb which means ‘to do’ in Tat, developed as a result of suppletion between the verbs *soxtan* ‘to make, to produce’ and *nohran* ‘to put, to place, to set’. All data consist of extracts from a corpus of spontaneous speech collected during fieldwork conducted by the author as well as from elicitations.

Caucasian Tat is a group of related SW Iranian dialects or even languages, closely related to Classical Persian and spoken mainly in the Republic of Azerbaijan. They are not to be confused with Tati, a cluster of NW Iranian languages spoken in Iranian Azerbaijan. Tat is divided into two main dialect groups with little to no mutual intelligibility: the written and relatively well-studied Judaeo-Tat (JT) and the non-written and understudied Muslim Tat (MT). For centuries, Tat has been in contact with Azeri and East Caucasian languages.

In all Tat varieties, the verb *kärdän* (cf. Persian *kardan*), which historically meant ‘to do’, possesses only the obscene sense of ‘to penetrate sexually’, and its use is heavily restricted (Authier 2012: 27).<sup>1</sup> Instead, JT and most MT dialects use the verb *saxtän* or *soxtan* (cf. Persian *sāxtan*) whose original sense was ‘to make, to produce’. This verb conveys meaning of ‘to do’, including in complex predicates. MT of Xızı has adapted the verb *narän* with the original meaning of ‘to put, to place, to set’ (cf. Persian *nehādan*, of the Proto-IE root *\*dheh<sub>1</sub>* which has also given the Latin *facio* and the English *do*) for the same purpose.

In MT of the region of Upper Şirvan, the verb *soxtan* ‘to do’ complements its paradigm with that of the verb *nohran* ‘to put’ (cognate of the above-mentioned *narän*) for some modal categories, namely the negative subjunctive (1), the prohibitive (2) and the eventual (3). Moreover, the historical ‘present stem’ of *nohran* in Upper Şirvan MT, *n-*, is only used today in the sense ‘do’:

- (1) *na-dun-ustum*      *çi*      *soz-um,*      *çi*      *nä-n-um*  
NEG-know-PST1      what      (SBJV)do-1      what      NEG-(SBJV)put-1  
‘I did not know what to do and what not to do.’
- (2) *šō*      *rišni=rä*      *färäqät*      *mä-n-ind*      (cf. *≠färäqät soz-ind*)  
night      light=OBL      quiet      PROH-put-2PL  
‘Do not turn off the light at night.’
- (3) *äyär*      *ü=rä*      *bär-und,*      *män*      *çi*      *mī-n-um?*  
if      s/he=OBL      (SBJV)carry\_away-3PL      I      what      EVT-put-1  
‘If they take him away, what will I do?’

The use of the stem *n-* in the subjunctive (1) and the imperative (2) is restricted to negative forms. For the eventual (3), both affirmative and negative forms with *n-* exist. Furthermore, all three contexts are compatible with the corresponding negative forms of *soxtan* (*na-soz-um*, *mä-soz-ind* and *mī-soz-um* respectively), accepted during elicitations, though less common in spontaneous speech.

<sup>1</sup> However, its derivatives (*däkärdän* ‘to pour’, *väkärdän* ‘to build’) are not regarded as taboo due to the fusion of the historical particles with the verbal stem, leading to them being interpreted as separate lexemes.

As for the verb *nohran* ‘to put’, the semantic domain of its ‘present stem’ has been overtaken by the semantically related non-defective verb *hištän* ‘to leave, to release’ (4–5). Meanwhile the ‘past stem’ paradigms for *nohran* and *hištän* remain distinct, and the two verbs are used interchangeably without any semantic difference (6), as their meanings for the sense of ‘to put’ have converged under the influence of Azeri (where both meanings are expressed by *qoy-*):

- (4) *mi-hil-i*      (\**mi-n-i*)      *mun-i*      *bä*      *kinor*  
 EVT-leave-2                      (SBJV)stay-3      LOC      edge  
 ‘You will put/leave it to stay on the side.’
- (5) *bi-hil*      (\**bi-n*)      *bä*      *zir*      *nolinčä*  
 IMP-put(2)                      LOC      bottom      cushion  
 ‘Put/leave it under the cushion.’
- (6) *kitob=ä*      *hiš-tum*      /      *noh-rum*      *bə*      *sär*      *ustol*  
 book=OBL      put-PST1                      put-PST1      LOC      head      table  
 ‘I left/put the book on the table.’

The presentation will thus describe the distribution of these three verbs and show how they have combined to form their inflectional paradigms. The desemantization of *nohran* (‘to put’ > ‘to do’) and the replacement of *soxtan* by *nohran* in some moods provide evidence for the reorganization of the inflectional paradigm of the verb meaning ‘to do’ by suppletion. This pattern follows the basic features that characterize suppletion cross-linguistically: frequent item, inherent inflection (i.e. not conditioned by syntactic relations between constituents, see Booij 1996) and relative coherence regarding the general morphological system of the language (Hippisley & et al. 2004). On the other hand, the main specificity is that in Upper Şirvan MT, the suppletion seems optional. The coexistence of two stems in some uses testifies to the process not having completed yet. While the use of *narän* ‘to put’ in the sense of ‘to do’ has been attested for Tat (e.g. in Xızı MT), the situation of Upper Şirvan MT is unique in that the current system constitutes a transitional step which provides precious clues for the reconstitution of this phenomenon in Tat in general.

## Abbreviations

EVT = eventual, IMP = imperative, LOC = locative, NEG = negation, OBL = oblique, PROH = prohibitive, PST = past, SBJV = subjunctive

## References

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