Issues of microvariation:
Crossdialectal differences in modal marking

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I. Besides noteworthy instances of inherited verbal inflexion such as the optative in *-ā-* in Balochi and Judaeo-Tat, marking of TAM categories in New Western Iranian is mostly achieved by way of particles / verbal prefixes. Of central importance is the prefix *bi- / be-*, which is grammaticalised in New Persian as a marker of the subjunctive and the imperative. These forms differ from the indicative in that the latter is marked with *mī-*, but the inflexion is essentially identical.

A prefix *bi-* is also employed in many other Ir. languages, though to very different degrees. Building on the works by Jügel (2013a, 2013b), who studies the distribution of the particle / prefix "*BE*" in Ir. languages – its macro-variation, as it were –, this presentation looks at some instances of "micro-variation". We will discuss how the (non-)uses of TAM prefixes are subject to important differences among varieties of some Ir. minority languages, viz. Balochi, Bashkardi and Caucasian Tat. We will argue that this micro-variation may be due to external influence which has manifested itself in different ways on individual dialects.

II. Grammaticalised verbal prefixes (and auxiliaries) are clearly an innovation in Iranian, compensating for the loss of (or replacing) inherited verbal morphology indicating TAM categories by way of suffixes and endings. In Middle Persian and Parthian, the use of the (unprefixed) indicative present in future and modal nuances is well established. The addition of a particle *hēb* yields an imperative. At the same time, the inherited subjunctive can also be used in future function.

Most varieties of Tat have zero preverbation to mark modality, the only exceptions common to all dialects being the verbs meaning 'to go', 'to come' and 'to bring', where the preverb *bə-* adds a nuance of 'out of' that historically existed in Persian (cf. Lenepveu-Hotz 2014:210). One variety where modal marking stands out is Muslim Tat of the Upper Şirvan region, where the preverb in question, in addition to the three verbs above, can attach to several telic verbs: 'to cut', 'to obtain', 'to squeeze', 'to fit' (intr.), 'to beat', 'to sit', 'to fall asleep', 'to fall', 'to pass (intr.)', 'to put'.

Similarly, the morpheme *be- / bi-* in Bashkardi and Balochi is applied to the historically zero-marked imperatives and subjunctives. However, this marking is subject to dialectal variation, and *bi-* seems to have become used more systematically only during the 20th century. Recalling the Middle Persian system, marking with *bi-* is most systematic for the imperative. The early grammars of Balochi do not note a subjunctive present as a separate category (thus Mockler 1877:53 for Coastal Balochi and Grierson 1921:354-356 for Balochi in general); for Eastern Balochi (spoken in comparatively remote areas of Pakistan), Dames (1881:25f.) states that the present has "indefinite", present, future and subjunctive values, and is also found with *bi-*, without making a categorical distinction between forms with and without *bi-*. Still today, Eastern Balochi employs *bi-* much less systematically than other dialects, and *bi-* is particularly rarely used in conditional sentences (Bashir 2008:75-77). This agrees with the observation by Mockler (1877:60f.) that the subjunctive past without *bi-* (past stem + *-ēn-*) is used for the irrealis (1) while *bi-*PST*-ēn-* has modal values.

(1) Eastern Balochi   *āhīā*   *kār*   *kuθ-ę̄*
                        DEM.OBL   work   do.PST-SBJ2
                        'If he had worked' (Bashir 2008:76, adapted)

III. In all three languages, a preverb *bə- / be-* also marks (systematically or sporadically) non-

modal categories, notably the imperfective in Tat (Grjunberg 1963:68–69), and the progressive in Southern Bashkardi (Skjærvø 1989:846–848) (2).

(2) Southern Bashkardi *be-kerd-'en=īn*
                        IPFV-do.PST-INF=COP1SG
                        'I am doing.' (Skjærvø 1989:846–848)

IV. A closer look can further indicate that the homomorphy of the preverbs is coincidental. In Upper Şirvan Tat, while some of the verbs that take the prefix in the subjunctive have the same form of the prefix as in the progressive, others show an assimilation (only) in the former, which is all the more remarkable as the prefix is stressed (marked by ′ in (3)-(4)).

(3) Upper Şirvan Tat (a) *bä-kišt-'an=um*   (b) *'bi-kiš=um*
                           IPFV-kill.PST-INF=1SG   SBJV-kill.PRS=1SG
                           'I kill / am killing'   '(that) I kill'

(4) Upper Şirvan Tat (a) *ba-burr-'an=um*   (b) *'bu-bur=um*
                           IPFV-cut.PST-INF=1SG   SBJV-cut.PRS=1SG
                           'I cut / am cutting'   '(that) I cut'

The imperative/subjunctive prefix in Tat is probably an influence of past contact with the continuum of Talyshi and related Northwestern Iranian languages, spoken nowadays between the Jalilabad District of Azerbaijan and the Markazi Province of Iran, which themselves must have acquired them due to contact with Persian. The progressive prefix, on the other hand, is likely to be the result of a grammaticalisation of the preposition *bä* (variants *ba, bə*) 'to', also used in for marking objects. In the progressive, the construction ceased to be perceived as an inessive prepositional group and acquired regular verbal negation, preceding the prefix (5a) while the negation still is on the copula in Bashkardi (5b). The seeming identity with the subjunctive prefix could then be due to Persian influence, where *be-* is the only comparable element.

(5) (a) Upper   *na-bi-xost-an=um*   (b) Southern   *be-vuot*   *ne=hen*
         Şirvan Tat NEG-IPFV-want.PST-INF=1SG   Bashkardi   PROG-come.PST   NEG=COP3PL
                     'I don't want (that).'   'They don't come.'

We argue that the influence of Persian has had a multiple effect on the TAM system of other Ir. languages. First insofar as prefixes have been borrowed,[1] second insofar as the use of preexisting prefixes has been adjusted to fit the usage of Persian prefixes, and thirdly insofar as different prefixes have coalesced into one under the influence of Persian (such as *be-, ba-* etc. yielding the one *be-* in Bashkardi and other languages). Dialectal variations such as seen in Tat thus carry valuable diachronic information.

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[1] Thus e.g. Geiger (1901:243) for *bi-* in Balochi.

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