

The Historical Study of Some Morphological Elements of Sistani Dialect

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Abstract

Continuous changes taking place in languages have been due to the dynamic nature of language that occurs progressively and slowly over time. In this regard, local languages and dialects change less than the standard languages. Sistani dialect is also among the dialects that has its own specific phonetic, phonological, syntactic and morphological elements and characteristics making it different from the Standard (Modern) Persian. This article while describing some morphological features of Sistani dialect in comparison to Old, Middle, Dari Persian and Avesta Language also is going to show which historical elements and features of this dialect are still being used and have been inherited from which era. The linguistic data has been collected via library and also field methods, through interviewing with old Sistani men above 60 years old and recording their free speech. Then the extracted morphological elements from Sistani dialect were compared to those of Old, Middle, and Dari Persian as well as Avesta Language. The results show that in this dialect, there are some prefixes such as /be-/ , /mē-/ , /na-/ , /ma-/ and suffixes /-ak(a)/, non-past verb inflectional suffixes, demonstrative pronouns, /i/ and /o/, personal pronouns /to/ /o/ /mâ/ /šmâ/ and /ošo/, reflexive pronouns /xod/ and /xâ/, lack of bound personal and also the existence of the initial consonant clusters such as dr ʿst ʿfr which have originated from Old, Middle, and Dari Persian as well as Avesta language.

Keywords: Sistani Dialect, Old Persian, Middle Persian, Dari Persian, Morphological elements

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1. Introduction

Continuous changes occurring in languages are due to the dynamic nature of language. Such alternations occur progressively and slowly over the time. In this regard, local dialects and languages change less than standard languages. Awareness of existing linguistic elements in any dialect and presenting a complete description of them makes clear the root of the Persian dialects and their relation to modern Persian and also contributes to disambiguation of ambiguous points in previous Iranian languages as well as the diachronic changes occurred in them.

Sistani dialect has its own specific characteristics in different areas such as phonology, morphology and grammar which has made it different from standard Persian. Sistani is regarded as a dialect of New Persian, which is classified within the Southwestern group of Iranian languages. It takes its name from the historically important Sistan region that straddles southeastern Iran and southwestern Afghanistan: one portion of Sistan makes up the northern part of the Iranian province of Sistan and Baluchestan and the other portion is a part of the Nimruz Province in Afghanistan. This dialect is also spoken in the Sarakhs, Torkamanestan. In other parts of Iran, Sistani speakers also live in some part of Iranian Baluchestan, Mazandaran, Golestan and Khorasan Razavi Provinces.

This article, while describing some grammatical and morphological elements of Sistani dialect, along with comparing them with Old, Middle and Dari Persian as well as Avesta, is going to show which historical grammatical and morphological elements are still used in this dialect and the language variety that they inherited from.

2. Methodology

To this end, the free speech of 20 of the above sixty-year-old uneducated or less educated male speakers in Sistan were provided. Then a questionnaire was prepared. The questions were designed for finding the tense of verbs, personal and demonstrative pronouns, consonant clusters and the names in Sistani dialect. Finally, the data were extracted, described and then analyzed.

3. Discussion and Results

The research findings show that Sistani dialect has some similar elements and features to those of Old, Middle and Dari Persian as well as Avesta. Correspondingly, there are some prefixes such as /be-/, /mē-/, /na-/, /ma-/, some suffixes like /-ak(a)/ and verbal endings; independent personal pronouns, reflexive pronouns, demonstrative pronouns; the lack of dependent personal pronouns and the existence of initial consonant clusters, all of which have somehow origin in Old, Middle and Dari Persian as well as Avesta.

In this respect, the prefix /be-/ is used with the past tense verbs which is manifested as [b-], [ba-], [be-], [bo-], [bi-], [p-], or [ø-]. The prefix /mē-/ is used with the simple non-past and non-past progressive with different realization: [mē-], [m-], [me-], and [mi-]. The prefix /na-/ is used for all verbs with both indicative, subjunctive and imperative moods in Sistani dialect. This prefix is realized as [n-], [na-], or [ne-]. The prefix /ma-/ is used with prohibitive verbs. All the above mentioned elements originate from Old, Middle and Dari Persian.

In Nouns, the occurrence of the suffix /-ak(a)/ which originates from old Persian -ak(a) functions as diminutive and/or affection, gerund and definite markers. Moreover, the similarity between the personal and possessive pronouns and those of Old Persian, Middle Persian as well as Avesta are illustrated. The personal pronouns in Sistani dialect: [me], [to], [o], [mâ], [šmâ], [ošo], have been derived from Old, Middle Persian as well as Avesta's possessive pronouns: man, tu, oy or ho, ahmākəm, yūšmakəm and ðyšān. On the other hand, Sistani dialect does not make use of dependent possessive pronouns. Indeed, the personal and possessive pronouns are identical in this dialect. As to initial consonant clusters, Sistani dialect has preserved the initial consonant clusters in roots to give some examples: [drāxt] "tree", [spɛst] "Alfalfa", [psār] "boy, son", [kmār] "waist", inherited from Old and Middle Persian. However, in Dari Persian, initial consonant clusters do not exist. It seems the standard Persian follows Dari Persian Language in this respect.

4. Conclusions

The description of some grammatical and morphological elements and features of Sistani Dialect shows that this dialect acts differently from standard Persian in some grammatical and morphological elements. These elements originate from Old, Middle, Dari Persian as well as Avesta which include some prefixes such as /be-/ , /mē-/ , /na-/ , /ma-/; some suffixes comprising /-ak(a)/ and personal or verb endings; independent personal pronouns; reflexive pronouns; demonstrative pronouns; the lack of dependent personal pronouns; the existence of initial consonant cluster originating from Old, Middle and Dari as well as Avesta. In addition, the findings indicate that the language changes occur throughout the time and the dialects preserve the original structures of the old languages more than the standard languages.