The Kurdish Imperfective: Diachronic, Typological, and Pan-Iranian Perspectives

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Introduction

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Questions and answers

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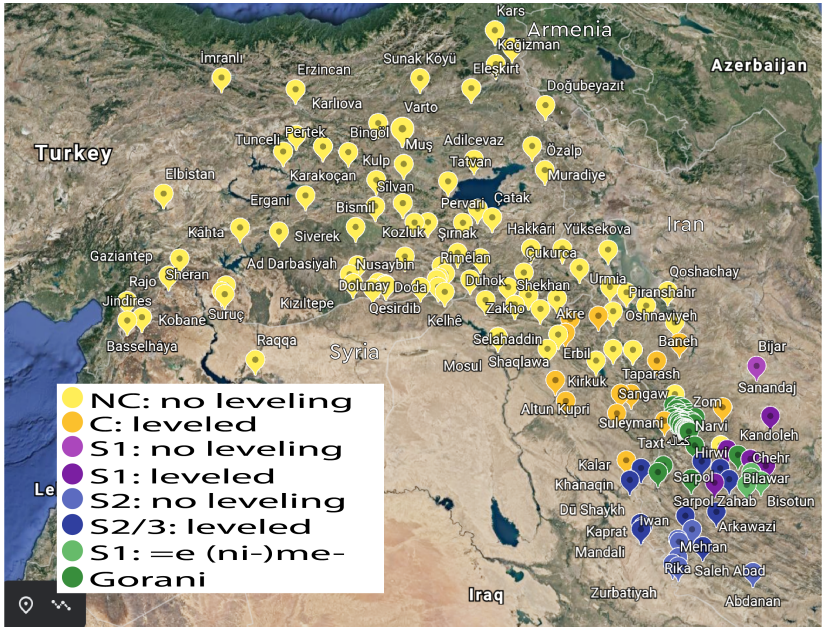
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- Are the Kurdish facts plausible explanations of what is observed in other Iranian languages?
  - The locative origin is common enough to be independent innovation.
  - This is plausible but cannot tell us anything about subgrouping. (Not discussed here)

Kurdish varieties (114)

Legend:
- NC: no leveling
- C: leveled
- S1: no leveling
- S1: leveled
- S2: no leveling
- S2/3: leveled
- S1: =e (ni-)me-
- Gorani

The Origin of Kurdish Imperfective Affixes: setting the stage

- In Northern, central and Southern Kurdish there are at least two common imperfective prefixes *e-* and *de-*.

"While all dialects from Bin., Piž. northwards have a modal prefix *da-*, or *t-* < *di-*, Sul. and War. have *a-*. This must be taken as a separate entity, and not as a form of *da-*, since initial *d* is not lost completely in any dialects. Moreover, the two prefixes appear together in Rdz., Sur. where *d* is quite stable, but *a-* may be a later borrowing."

(Mackenzie, 1961, 223)

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  prefixes: *d-*, *t-*, *de-*, *e-*; suffixes: =*a*, -*ya*, *ẅa*, and negative
  imperfective markers *na-*, *ned-*, *nee-*, *neye-*, *nye*, *nê-*, *nî-*, *ney-*,
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- If /d/ were retained word-initially, forms like *yaye* (Mackenzie, 1961, 3) 'give[.PST] to' and *yêm* 'I come' should not exist.
- There are no varieties where /d/ is truly "stable."

Zagros /d/

"As a widespread regional feature, termed the "Zagros d" (Windfuhr), postvocalic *d* is softened to glide-like *-i-*, or *-w-*, and contracts with adjacent high vowels: *a-da-m* ∼ *a-ia-m* 'I give'; *nadir* ∼ *nair* 'Nadir' (masc. proper name); *bad* ∼ *bai* 'bad'; *xwa* ∼ *xuwa* 'God' [< *xuda]."

(McCarus, 2009, 597)

- d → $C_{[+CNT]}$ / $C_{[+CNT]}$__:
  - *diɬɬar* < *diɬdar* 'lover'
- d → d (elsewhere):
  - *dest* 'hand'
  - *kird* 'do.PST'

(Mackenzie, 1961, 3)

1. d $\rightarrow$ y, w, $\emptyset$ / V__ (shared all Kurdish varieties)
2. d $\rightarrow$ $\emptyset$ / C$_{[+CNT]}$__ (not shared by all Kurdish varieties)
3. Paradigm leveling: allomorphy due to Zagros /d/ occurring as a sandhi phenomenon across word or morpheme boundaries is eliminated. (irregular like all types of analogy)

The Origin of Kurdish Imperfective Affixes: imperfective systems

Data from Matras et al. (2016) and Fattah (2000) (10/114).

	PRS		PST				
	AFF	NEG	AFF		NEG		
N	di-	na-	di-		nedi-		Kobanê
N	ti-	na-	ti-		na-		Beroj
C	de-	na-	de-		nede-		Mehabad
C	e-	na-	e-		ne[ʔ]e-		Slêmanî
S	di-	nî-	di-	(-ya)	nî-	(-ya)	Bicar
S	e-	na-	e-	(-ya)	na-	(-ya)	Qorwe
S	Ø-	nye-	e-		nee-		Xaneqîn
S	Ø-	nye-	Ø-	-ya	nye-	-ya	Kirmaşan
S	Ø-	nye-	di-		nye-		Mihran
S	Ø-	nye-	Ø-	(-ya)	nye-	(-ya)	Serpol

- *ne-di*, *ne-de*, and *ne-ʔe* are not predicted by rules of Zagros /d/.

- There are varieties (e.g., Serpol) with no imperfective in the affirmative but a negative imperfective.

- There are many negative markers: *na-* and *neye-* < *ne-de-; *nî-* < *ni-d(i)-; nê- and ney- < *ne-d(i)-; and *nye-* < *ni-de.

The Origin of Kurdish Imperfective Affixes: a new etymon

- One common way a periphrastic progressive is created.
  - A locative is recruited for the act-in-progress reading.

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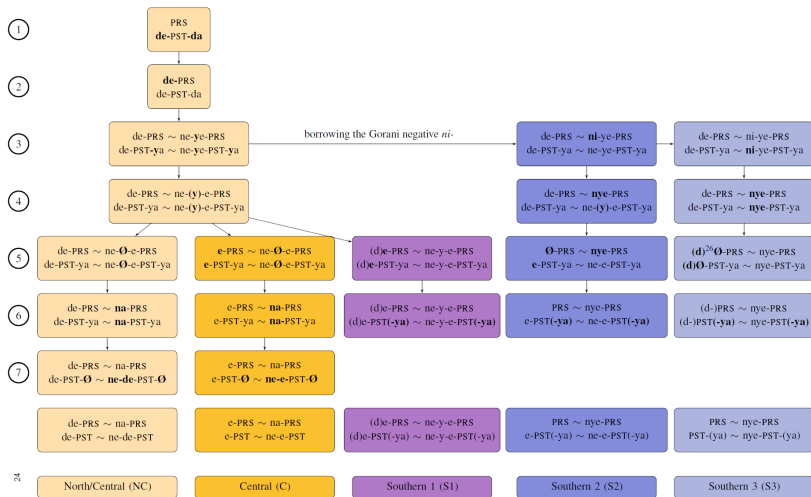
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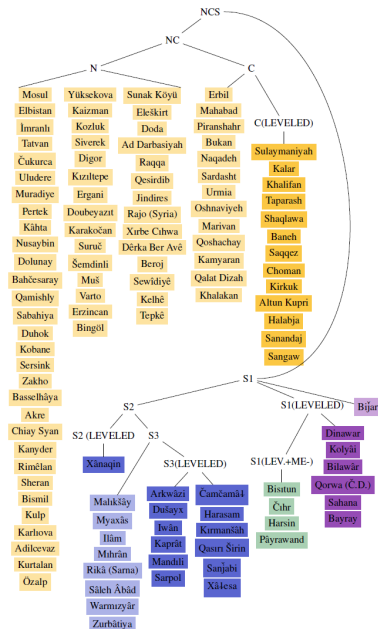
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  - *de-* appears as *e-* in some varieties, and is conspicuously missing from others (replaced by *le*): *le Kurdistan=a*
  - The locative *le* and *e* varieties correspond to the imperfective *e-* varieties.

The Origin of Kurdish Imperfective Affixes: addressing unpredicted, zero-marked, and diverse forms
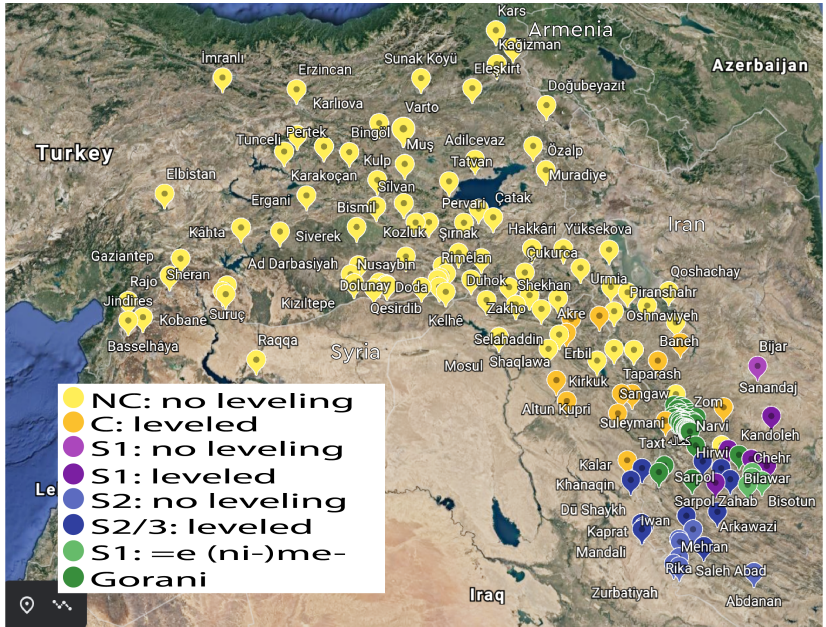
Development of imperfectives

The Origin of Kurdish Imperfective Affixes: summary

Summary I

- All Kurdish imperfective markers share a single etymon, the locative circumposition
  - This goes against Mackenzie (1961)'s assertion that *de-* and *e-* are unrelated.
- This proposal does not require new assumptions:
  - There are no Kurdish varieties without Zagros *d*, cf. Kurmancî: *çûn* 'go' (Farsi: *šodan* 'become'), *bûn* 'be' (Farsi: *budan* 'id.'), *ba* 'wind' (Farsi: *bād* 'id.').
  - Sound Change and leveling are both required independently to explain forms like Suleymanî *yaye* 'gave to' (< dayê; in analogy to *neyaye* < *nedayê).

- Paweyane: *ni-me-* $\sim$ S2 & S3: *nye-* *ni-de is another sign of Gorani contact.

"There is no avoiding the conclusion that Southern dialects of Kurdish have overlaid a Gorani substratum, while the Northern dialects have to a much greater extent preserved their purity."

(MacKenzie, 1961, 86)

Some Implications for Diachronic Typology

Implications I

- The locative is already a well-established source of recruitment for progressives. So common it can be seen at various stages of the progressive to imperfective cycle throughout Iranian.

    - Emergent progressive: Suleymanî Kurdish

        (1) *le nan-kird-in-a-m*
             in bread-make-INF-in-COP.1SG
             'I am (in the midst of) making bread.'

    - Categorical progressive: Rashti (Gilaki)

        (2) *gift-ə́n=dər-əm*
             take-INF=LOC.BE-1SG
             'I am taking.' (Noorlander & Stilo, 2015, 442)

Implications II

      – Generalized progressive (= Zero-prog): Leriki (Talyshi)

      (3)   *gæt-é-dæ=m*
               take-INF-LOC=COP.1SG
               'I take' (Noorlander & Stilo, 2015, 442)

- The North-Central/Southern split is significant because the Southern varieties lost ergative-absolutive alignment.
  - In the languages where there is an emergent progressive from a locative, the construction is formed by the combination of a nonfinite verb, a locative adposition, and the copula.

Implications III

– In the words of Creissels (2008), "The construction with
a clausal complement is a raising construction in which S
in the construction of the intransitive verb [] represents
the S/A argument of the auxiliated verb. With transitive
verbs, this results in coding characteristics different from
those of the same argument in non-periphrastic
constructions"

(4)   nan =im   kird
       bread =1SG.A make.PST
       'I made bread.'

(5)   le nan-kirdín=a   bû-m
       in bread-make.INF=IN COP.PST-1SG.S
       'I was making bread.'

– In Northern and Central Kurdish varieties, the
imperfective was renewed (i.e. recreated) from the
past-tense (ergative) stem and the imperfective prefix
(step 7):

(6)   min   pirtûkek   di-xwend
      1SG.ERG book-INDF.ABS IPFV-read.PST.3SG
      N: 'I was reading a book.'

(7)   nan   =im   e-kird
      bread =1SG.A IPFV-make.PST
      C: 'I used to made bread.'

– However, in Southern Kurdish, that step did not take place preserving the (nominative-accusative) imperfective stem with or without *-ya*.

(8) nan   kird-ya-m
     bread do.PST-IPFV-1SG.A
     S: 'I was making bread.' (Sanǰabi)

– The formerly tense based split-ergative pattern was then displaced by a fully nominative-accusative pattern in these varieties.

- This can be counted as more evidence that the typologically common change, the ergative-absolutive to nominative-accusative shift, has a formal explanation.
- Furthermore, its commonness is likely due to the fact that one of its conditioning factors is a stage on a semantically motivated cline, i.e., the progressive to imperfective shift.

Zor supastan ekem!

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