The Word of *Nīhaštan* in Bakhtiari Dialect: Aorist Structure

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Chain-linked Iranian dialects preserve Old Iranian traits, echoing Indo-Iranian and Indo-European roots. Bakhtiari, a southwestern Neo-Iranian variant, descends from Middle Western Iranian and Old Persian, inheriting their linguistic characteristics. These vernaculars, especially Bakhtiari, show case ancestral features in grammar, vocabulary, and phoneme. Dialects, more than standard tongues, reveal their true lineage. To grasp their essence, one must delve into their linguistic structure, where authenticity and heritage intertwine. Ancient Iran's literary heritage suffered greatly from repeated invasions. The Muslim-Arab conquest dealt a devastating blow, nearly extinguishing Persian and obliterating countless texts. Only a handful survived, usually religious works. This upheaval forced many Persian words into dimness, replaced by the conquerors' tongues.

The Bakhtiaris are a nomadic group from the Zagros Mountains known for their seasonal migration between mountainous regions and pastures. This region has oak trees and snowy peaks, which can be seen for several months. According to Minorsky, the New Lurish dialects are closely related to Persian, but the shared language does not necessarily imply a shared heritage. Therefore, it is incorrect to view Lurs as cousins of Persians. It is worth mentioning that the two groups have distinct linguistic and cultural differences. For example, Lurish dialects have unique linguistic features and cultural practices that set them apart from Persian. It is not probable to establish a balance between Lurs and Persians in terms of their physical characteristics. He continues that anyone can only draw conclusions based on the general effects and signs found in the prominent Achaemenid inscriptions. Bakhtiari is a southwestern dialect of Lurish spoken by over one million people in the Zagros Mountains of Iran and other areas. The Lurish dialect, which includes sub-branches such as *Kohgiluyeh*, *Boyerahmadi*, *Bakhtiari*, and *Lorestāni*, falls under the category of southwest Iranian dialects, as classified based on Old Iranian languages.

Verbs in the Old languages grew from roots with added affixes. The aorist stem, a key Indo-European verb-former, thrived in Greek and Indo-Iranian. "*Aorist*," from the Greek "*horistos*" (definite) with "*a*" (not), denotes indefinite action. It marks an occurrence without detailing its conclusion, duration, or recurrence. It refers to the occurrence of an action without specifying its end, continuation, or repetition. The Indo-European aorist stem symbolizes the ideal mood of the verb, with endings like those of the non-thematic present. These endings may have originated from the indicative present and aorist of pre-Indo-European. In the dual, particles do not connect to endings, and those in the aorist are secondary.

1- The aorist root is made without suffixes and by adding secondary endings to the simple root in the active singular and the weak root in other cases. This type of structure

is frequent in Indo-Iranian languages but few in Greek and Armenian. The aorist root has the same structure as the imperfect. In Indo-European languages, the augment is created by placing (h₁e) before both the root and the reduplicated stem, with the latter being stressed. This augment can be found in the stems of the indicative, imperfect, and aorist tenses. An example of this morphology is *asthāt < -steh$_2$-t (h$_1$e)* = he stood, and *a-dhā-t <*h$_1$e-d^{h}eh$_1$* = placed in Sanskrit. The root that creates the aorist root can pass on the characteristics of the present stem.

2- The sigmatic aorist is formed by adding *s* to the verbal root. In the indicative present, this root is long, but in other cases, it is simple. In some Indo-European languages, such as Indo-Iranian, Italic, and Old Church Slavonic, roots with *e* are long. However, in Greek, a long root has never been found (for example, *a-vākš< e-wēgh-s* = they won). Similarly, in Latin, we have *dīxī*, and in Avesta, *dāiš < *h$_1$e-deik̂-s*. The middle aorist, on the other hand, has a simple root in Indo-Iranian and Greek languages.

3- The thematic aorist is another type that shares the same morphology as the thematic non-perfect/imperfect. It was always used with weak roots, such as **a-vidat*, which comes from *h1e-wid-e*.

The structure of the aorist stem, just like imperfect, is used with augment and secondary endings in Avesta. The augment in Avesta, which goes back to the Indo-European era, is a tense-forming adverbial particle, and its usage is uncommon. However, the aorist augment in Avesta is generally unclear, and the forms without augment are often imperative and subjunctive with secondary endings, but it should be known that the basic structure of the aorist is different from that of the imperfect. Because the imperfect is based on the present tense, while the aorist has an independent structure.

There are two morphologies for the aorist: those with and those without s. In the first type, s turns into ŋh after a, ā, å and into š after other vowels:

1- The structure of stems with s is divided into four types: s(h) aorist (naš, darš, mąstā); so (ha) aorist (mazdåŋhodūm); is (iš) aorist (zāviši); and hiš aorist (dāhiš). Geiger mentions that there is often a vowel before the sign s that has changed into i in Greek and e in Old Indian, which goes back to Indo-European ə. Hoffmann states that according to the phonetic evolution, s becomes h, ŋh, and š, which has a long root in the active indicative, injunctive, and a simple root in other cases.

2- Without s too, it consists of three groups: o (aorist) (bvat, sīšōit, xšnəvīša), root aorist (mantā, sraotā), and reduplicate root (vaočā). Apart from this, the aorist has a passive structure, which i attaches the strong root in the third person singular (srāvi, vāči). This passive aorist stem is found in the Old Avesta in the singular person and does not exist in the Young Avesta.

Kāštan (Implant, Till)
     PIE   OIr   MP   NP
* k^{w}elH-s-to > *kāršta > kišt > kār/kāšt
Dāštan (Have, Possess)
  *d^{h}erH-s-to > *dāršta > dāšt > dār/dāšt
Gumāštan (Appoint)

*viH- (s)merH-s-to > *vīmārš-ta > gumārd > gumār/gumāšt
Guδāštan (Put, Lay)
*viH-terh₂-s-to > * vīδāršta > wiδārd > guδār/guδāšt
Nowadays, a phrase that is very popular among the Bakhtiaris and invites the audience to pay attention to the speaker is '*to be nīh/yar*' = you look, you pay attention. The verb *nihaštan/nīh/yar* in the Bakhtiari dialect shows a different inflection in the present and past tenses:

Present Stem	
Singular	Plural
1. nīh/yarōm	1. nīh/yarīm
2. nīh/yarī	2. nīh/yarīn
3. nīh/yare	3. nīh/yarēn
Past Stem	
Singular	Plural
1. nīh/yaštōm	1. nīh/yaštīm
2. nīh/yaštī	2. nīh/haštīn
3. nīh/yašt	3. nīh/yaštēn

In Indo-European, each word is composed of a root, often with an affix and ending. Structure a word from a root is called derivation, while the process of different grammatical forms of a word is called inflection. Thus, a word in Indo-European has three parts: root, affix, and ending. The root is the principal unit of the word, and its meaning is based on it. Every root ends with one or two consonants at the beginning and end of the word (C)CeC(C). According to Thomas V. Gamkrelidze, the main structure of all Indo-European roots, verbal and nominal roots, had a consonant-vowel-consonant (*CVC) or (*CeC) structure. In this case, C is used for a consonant, and e or V for the original vowel. This structure and pattern could be changed by adding consonants before or at the end of consonant clusters. In most cases, a resonant phoneme (R) was placed next to the vowel, resulting in the root formation of *CReC-, *CeRC-, and *CReRC-. Of course, both *i* and *u* could be used as resonant after the original vowel (e). What should be considered in Indo-European, unlike Semitic (two, three, four, and five consonants), the roots are monosyllabic.

According to the above pattern, based on the morphology of *nihištan* in the present and past tense, it is considered the simple root *har* to mean to pay attention and to watch. This root comes with the prefix *nī* means to keep and be careful. It goes back to the Indo-European *ser₂*, which means to keep, and it is also used in the Greek and Slavic Church texts. Namely, its structure consists of the prefix *ni* and the root *har*, the aorist sigmatic *s*, and the Old infinitive *tanaiy*. According to the *Ruki* rule, the phoneme *s* after *r* has turned into š; there is a rule called *Ruki* in the Balto-Slavic and Indo-Iranian branch, which Indo-European *s after *r, *u, *k, *i (and in Indo-Iranian *r, *w, *kw, *y after *k) changes into *š. On this basis, like the words mentioned above, the infinitive *nī-har-š-tan* in Bakhtiari is omitted *r* in the past tense (*nīhašt*) and *š* in the present (*nīh/yar*).

*niH-ser-s-to > *nīharšta > *nīhašt > nīyar/nihašt
  PIE   OP   MP   BKT