



Mukaddime

Linguistic Variation in Dimili (Zazaki): A Descriptive Study of the Modan Dialect¹

Pınar Yıldız

ORCID: 0000-0002-8175-0879 | E-Posta: pinar.yildiz@dicle.edu.tr

Assist. Prof., Dicle University, Sezai Karakoç Faculty of Literature, Department of Eastern Languages and Literatures, Department of Kurdish Language and Literature

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Abstract

Dimili (Zazaki), a Kurdish dialect spoken only within Turkey, exhibits significant dialect diversity due to geographical and historical factors. One of the less documented dialects is the Modan dialect, spoken in the Mutki/Modan district of Bitlis. This study provides a comprehensive description of the phonological and morphological characteristics of the Modan dialect based on fieldwork with native speakers. Beyond providing a documentary contribution to this previously unidentified dialect, the study aims to situate the Modan dialect within the Dimili dialect continuum. Comparative analysis of prominent phonological correspondences and morphological structures provides evidence that the Modan dialect may occupy a transitional position within the Dimili dialect. This study contributes to the documentation and classification of Dimili dialects, thereby providing a better understanding of microdiversity and internal differences within the Kurdish linguistic ecology. Moreover, it provides an empirical basis for future research in the field of Kurdish and Iranian dialectology and is an important contribution to the preservation of the dialect structure of Dimili.

Keywords: Modan Dimilis, Modan Dialect, Zaza Dialect Studies, Modan, Mutki.

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Dimili'de (Zazaki) Dilsel Varyasyonlar: Modan Ağzı Üzerine Betimleyici Bir İnceleme²

Pınar Yıldız

ORCID: [0000-0002-8175-0879](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8175-0879) | Email: pinar.yildiz@dicle.edu.tr

Dr. Öğr. Üyesi, Dicle Üniversitesi, Sezai Karakoç Edebiyat Fakültesi, Doğu Dilleri ve
Edebiyatları Bölümü, Kürt Dili ve Edebiyatı Anabilim Dalı

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Öz

Sadece Türkiye sınırları içerisinde konuşulan bir Kürtçe lehçesi olan Dimili (Zazaki), coğrafi ve tarihi faktörler nedeniyle önemli bir ağız çeşitliliği sergiler. Bu lehçenin, daha az belgelenmiş ağızlarından biri de Bitlis'in Mutki/Modan ilçesinde konuşulan Modan ağzıdır. Bu çalışma, yerli konuşuculardan yapılan saha araştırmalarına dayalı olarak Modan ağzının fonolojik ve morfolojik özelliklerinin kapsamlı bir tanımını sunmaktadır. Çalışma, daha önce tanımlanmamış bu ağız üzerine belgeleyici bir katkı sağlamanın ötesinde, Modan ağzını Dimili lehçe sürekliliği içerisinde konumlandırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Belirgin fonolojik karşılıkların ve morfolojik yapıların karşılaştırmalı analizi, Modan ağzının Dimili içinde geçişsel bir konuma sahip olabileceğine dair kanıtlar sunmaktadır. Bu çalışma, Dimili ağızlarının belgelenmesine ve sınıflandırılmasına katkıda bulunarak Kürt dil ekolojisi içerisindeki mikro-çeşitlilik ve içsel farklılıkların daha iyi anlaşılmasını sağlamaktadır. Ayrıca, Kürt ve İrani diyalektoloji alanındaki gelecekteki araştırmalar için ampirik bir temel sunmakta ve Dimili'nin lehçe yapısının korunmasına yönelik önemli bir katkı niteliği taşımaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Modan Dimilileri, Modan Ağzı Dimilicesi, Zazaca Ağız Çalışmaları, Mutki, Modan.

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Introduction

Dimilî³ (Zazaki), a Kurdish dialect spoken exclusively in Turkey, displays significant dialectal diversity shaped by geographical isolation, historical migrations, and contact with neighboring linguistic communities. Despite a growing body of research on Zazaki varieties, many regional dialects remain undocumented, particularly those located in peripheral and transitional zones (Keskin, 2018, pp. 230-231). One such under-described variety is the Modan dialect, spoken in the Mutki (Modan) district of Bitlis Province, Eastern Anatolia. Although this region, which is called *Modikî* (Bitlisi Ş. , 2018, p. 396; Bitlisi M. Ş., 2019, p. 418), *Mudiki* (Çelebi E., 2010, p. 179), *Modeki*, *Motikan* (Sykes and Bart., 1915, p. 569) in some historical sources, is officially called “Mutki” today, the indigenous people here call this region “Modan” and “Moda”. As is known “Kird”, “Kirmanc”, “Dimilî” and “Zaza” are the indigenous names for the dialect of Kurdish spoken just in Turkey (Malmisanj, 1996). The indigenous people of Modan (Mutki) call themselves and their language “dimlî” or “dilmî”.

Historical records indicate that the Mutki region has long been characterized by ethno-religious diversity, hosting Kurmanji-speaking and Dimili-speaking Şafî Kurds, Kurmanji-speaking Yezidis, Arabic-speaking Muslims, Armenian-speaking Gregorians, and Syriac-speaking Assyrians (Çağlayan, 2020, p. 178). This multilingual environment has inevitably influenced the phonological and lexical features of local Dimili speech. Moreover, the Dimilis of Modan historically inhabited a mountainous and rebellious area, geographically distant from major Dimili settlements, resulting in limited contact with other Dimili-speaking groups. This isolation fostered distinctive linguistic developments, leading to internal micro-variation even within the Modan dialect itself.

The Dimilis, residing in the Modan region, have had a tribal system since the past and their tribe is called the *Modan* Tribe. The tribe today has six sub-branches: *Kê/Keyeyê Mehmûdan* (*Mahmûd Family*), *Kê/Keyeyê Welo* (*Welo Family*), *Bûban*, *Keybûran*, *Zender* and *Ternan*. Scholars such as Sykes and Oskar Mann state that these Bubanians have their roots in the Babans who came from around Sulaymaniyah (Sykes and Bart 1915, p. 569; Mann, 1932, p. 8). The dialects of these sub-branches of the tribe are almost similar to each other. However, the dialects of the Zender (they have only 3 villages, *Hormiz*, *Tito* and *Qultik*), which are a sub-branch of the tribe, differ with the dialects of other sub-tribes. Throughout the study, differences between the Zender dialect and Modan dialect will be stated where relevant.

Although prior studies have classified Zazaki into Northern, Central, and Southern dialects (Paul, 1998; Keskin, 2008), the precise dialectal boundaries and transitional zones remain ambiguous. The Modan dialect, situated geographically between the Central and Southern regions, has never been systematically described or classified. Consequently, its linguistic position within the Dimili continuum is uncertain. The main problem this study addresses is determining whether Modan aligns with the Southern group, shares features with Central Dimili, or constitutes a transitional variety bridging the two. Understanding this placement will contribute to a more refined and empirically grounded Zazaki dialectology.

³ This dialect has names such as “Kirmancî, Kirdkî, Zazakî, Dimilî”. Since the Modan dialect, which serves as an example for this study, calls their language “Dimilî”, we deemed it appropriate to use the word “Dimilî” in this study. Because the name Zazakî is more commonly known, we have also used it occasionally.

To address this problem, the study aims to identify and analyze the phonological and morphological characteristics of the Modan dialect of Dimili, to examine the ways in which these features differ from or correspond to those of other documented Dimili varieties (Northern, Central, and Southern), and to determine whether the Modan dialect exhibits transitional or mixed linguistic features that suggest an intermediate position within the Zazaki dialect continuum.

This study is significant for both descriptive linguistics and dialectology. From a descriptive perspective, it provides the first systematic account of the Modan dialect—recording phonological inventories, morphological paradigms, and dialectal variations based on first-hand field data. From a theoretical perspective, it contributes to clarifying the internal classification of Dimili, offering empirical evidence for discussions on dialect boundaries, contact-induced change, and linguistic micro-variation.

Given the endangered status of Dimili, documenting and preserving local varieties is an urgent linguistic and cultural necessity (Fischer, 2020, p. 202; Chambers and Trudgill, 2004). The disappearance or deformation of unrecorded dialects such as Modan would represent the loss of valuable linguistic heritage.

This research adopts a descriptive and comparative dialectological approach within a synchronic linguistics framework. Data were collected through multiple periods of fieldwork conducted in the Mutki/Modan region, using participant observation, structured interviews, and audio recordings of native speakers representing different subtribes. The analysis follows the descriptive grammar method, detailing segmental phonology, morphophonemic alternations, and inflectional morphology. Comparative analysis is then applied to evaluate similarities and divergences between Modan and other Dimili varieties documented in previous studies.

The article is organized into two main sections following the introduction. The first section presents a detailed analysis of the phonological features of the Modan dialect, including its consonant and vowel inventories. This section concludes with a comparative discussion situating Modan phonology in relation to other Zazaki varieties, highlighting shared innovations and distinctive sound correspondences. The second section focuses on the morphological structure of the dialect, describing nominal, pronominal, and verbal morphology, as well as inflectional processes. At the end of this section, the morphological characteristics of Modan are compared with those of Northern, Central, and Southern Zazaki, emphasizing its transitional and unique features. In the conclusion provides a synthesizing conclusion, addressing the research questions posed in the introduction, evaluating the Modan dialect's position within the Dimili dialect continuum, and discussing the implications of these findings for future studies on Dimili dialectology and Iranian linguistics.

1. Phonology

In this section presents, an overview of the phonemic system of the Modan dialect.

1.1. Consonant Phonemes

Modan phoneme system consist of thirty-two consonants, presented in Table 1.

Table-1: Consonant Phonemes

PLACE MANNER	Bilabial	Labio-dental	Dental	Alveolar	Post-alveolar	Alveo-palatal	Velar	Uvular	Pharyngeal	Glottal
Plosive/ Stop	p b			t d			k g	q		
Affricate					tʃ dʒ					
Sibilant Fricative				s z	ʃ ʒ					
Non-Sibilant Fricative	ɸ β	f v	θ ð				x ɣ		ħ ʕ	h
Tap/Flap				r						
Trill				r						
Lateral				l	ɭ					
Nasal	m			n						
Liquid/Glide	w					j				

Minimal or near-minimal pairs for consonant phonemes:

/p/ <p>

/b/

/par/ <par> ‘last year’

/bar/ <bar> ‘burden’

/pin/ <pîn> ‘them’

/bin/ <bîn> ‘other’

/t/ <t>

/d/ <d>

/sert/ <sert> ‘harsh’

/serd/ <serd> ‘cold’

/to/ <to> ‘cream’

/do/ <do> ‘ayran’

/k/ <k>

/g/ <g>

/kena/ <kêna> ‘girl’

/gena/ <gêna> ‘taking’

/kam/ <kam> ‘who’

/gam/ <gam> ‘step’

/k/ <k>

/q/ <q>

/key/ <key> ‘when’

/qey/ <qey> ‘why’

/kalik/ <kalik> ‘grandfather’

/qalik/ <qalik> ‘crust’

/ʃ/ <ç>	/dʒ/ <c>
/ʃi/ <çi> ‘what’	/dʒi/ <ci> ‘him/her’
/ʃax/ <çax> ‘times’	/dʒax/ <cax> ‘a native herb’
/m/ <m>	/n/ <n>
/ðam/ <zam> ‘almond’	/ðan/ <zan> ‘tongue’
ðama/ <zama> ‘groom’	/ðana/ <zana> ‘knowledgeable’
/m/ <m>	/b/
/mɛla/ <mela> ‘imam’	/bɛla/ <bela> ‘trouble’
/mi/ <mi> ‘I’	/bi/ <bi> ‘with’
/f/ <f>	/v/ <v>
/kofi/ <kofi> ‘crest’	/kovi/ <kovî> ‘wild’
/kafir/ <kafir> ‘heretic’	/kavir/ <kavir> ‘yearling lamb’
/s/ <s>	/z/ <z>
/sqj/ <say> ‘apple’	/zaj/ <zay> ‘son’
/serd/ <serd> ‘cold’	/zerd/ <zerd> ‘yellow’
/ʃ/ <ş>	/ʒ/ <j>
/lɛʃ/ <leş> ‘body’	/laʒ/ <laj> ‘boy’
/vaʃ/ <vaş> ‘grass’	/vaʒ/ <vaj> ‘tell’
/h/	/h/
/hɛrɛ/ <herre> ‘soil’	/hɛr/ <her> ‘donkey’
/hɛʃ/ <heş> ‘bear’	/hɛʃ/ <hêş> ‘mind’
/t/	/t/
/sɛt/ <ser> ‘upon’	/sɛt/ <ser> ‘year’
/kor/ <kur> ‘penis’	/kor/ <kur> ‘ugly’
/t/	/l/
/ʃɛpɛt/ <çeper> ‘hedge’	/ʃɛpɛl/ <çepel> ‘dirty’
/t/	/l/
/vɛrg/ <verg> ‘wolf’	/vɛlg/ <velg> ‘greens’
/t/	/t/
/ran/ <ran> ‘oil’	/lan/ <lan> ‘lair’
/arindʒ/ <arinc> ‘mushroom’	/salindʒ/ <salinc> ‘plum’
/l/	/t/
/ʃɛlɛ/ <şele> ‘tack’	/ʃɛlɛ/ <şele> ‘robbery’

/w/

/wext/ <wext> ‘time’

/b/

/bext/ <bext> ‘fortune’

In the Modan dialect, there are [p^h, t^h, k^h, ç^h], which are aspirated allophones of the phonemes /p/, /t/, /k/, /ç/. The phoneme /t/ has allophones other than aspirated [t^h]. In the Modan dialect, there is a dental /θ/ sound, and the [ɬ] sound becomes dental when used with this sound: /φiθɬin/ <fistin> ‘put’, /εθɬer/ <ester> ‘mule’, /dεθɬ/ <dest> ‘hand’ /εθɬo/ <esto> ‘there is’, /zimiθɬan/ <zimistan> ‘winter’, /βεθɬori/ <vesturi> ‘father-in-law’, /βiθɬ/ <vist> ‘twenty’. The Modan dialect also has a pharyngealized [tʕ] allophone: tʕenur/ <tenûr> ‘tandoori’, /tʕemtiz/ <temtîz> ‘tomato’, /εθtʕari/ <estari> ‘star’, /bitʕim/ <bitim> ‘hackberry’, /tʕejr/ <teyr> ‘bird’, /tʕari/ <tarî> ‘dark’, /tʕezijε/ <tezîye> ‘condolence’. These dental and pharyngealized sounds are absent in the Zender dialect.

The most distinctive characteristic of Modan phonology is seen between the sounds /s/, /z/ and /θ/, /ð/. All the /s/ /z/ sounds in the Zender dialect are /θ/, /ð/ in all the rest of the Modan dialect; /θer/ <ser> ‘upon’, /θok/ <suk> ‘bazaar’, /dεθt/ <dest> ‘hand’, /θipi/ <sipî> ‘white’, /terθ/ <ters> ‘fear’, /dεθ/ <des> ‘ten’, /bið/ <biz> ‘goat’, /ði/ <zî> ‘also’, /ðiwa/ <ziwa> ‘dry’, /ðan/ <zan> ‘tongue’, /ðanqij/ <zanayîş> ‘knowledge’ /ðama/ <zama> ‘groom’. Therefore, these sounds are not phonemic in themselves, they are allophones.

Also, we did not detect /φ/ and /β/ sounds in the Zender dialect. Except for the Zender dialect, there are both /φ/, /β/ and /f/, /v/ sounds, but these sounds are not phonemic among themselves. /tiφε/ <tifê> ‘tandoori’, /φaθulej/ <fasûley> ‘beans’, /ðʕεφ/ <zeʕ> ‘much’, /βεβ/ <vêv> ‘bride’, /βεθɬorije/ <vesturiye> ‘mother-in-law’.

As some researchers have noticed, the /h/ sound is never found at the beginning of a words in the Sorani dialect of Kurdish (Öpengin, 2013, p. 42). In the Kurmanji dialect, it is found in a few words such as /lep/ (Muhammed, p. 34). In the Modan dialect, as seen from examples such as *lazim* ‘necessary’, *lan* ‘lair’, *lankerdiş* ‘drill’, *lanya* ‘pingle’, *lat/ tetik* ‘rock’, *la* ‘worsted’, *lep* ‘palm’, *leymin* ‘dirty’, *lawnayîş* ‘suckle’ this sound comes at the beginning of many words.

1.2. Vowel Phonemes

Modan phoneme system consist of eight vowels. Two sounds in the Modan dialect are not phonemic and are allophones, these allophones are shown in parentheses in Table 2. Stress is also phonemic in the Modan dialect. The vocals of the Modan dialect are shown in Table-2 below.

Table-2: Vowel Phonemes

	Front	Central	Back
Close	i (y)	ɨ	u
			ʊ
Close-mid	e		o
Open-mid	ɛ		
Open	(æ)		ɑ

Minimal or near-minimal pairs for consonant phonemes:

/i/ <î>

/pi/ <pî> ‘father’

/ini/ <înî> ‘fountain’

/i/ <î>

/θir/ <sîr> ‘garlic’

/e/ <ê>

/deθ/ <dês> ‘wall’

/ɛ/ <e>

/bɛr/ <ber> ‘door’

/ʃɛr/ <şer> ‘war’

/ɛ/ <e>

/gɛr/ <ger> ‘mange’

/pɛr/ <per> ‘leaf’

/i/ <î>

/θir/ <sir> ‘breeze’

/u/ <û>

/kur/ <kûr> ‘deep’

/ʊ/ <u>, /u/ <û>

/kor/ <kur> ‘ugly’

/dʊ/ <du> ‘smog’

/dor/ <dur>, /dur/ <dûr> ‘far’

/to/ <tu> ‘you’

/e/ <ê>

/pe/ <pê> ‘with’

/eni/ <êni> ‘friday’

/i/ <î>

/θir/ <sir> ‘breeze’

/ɛ/ <e>

/deθ/ <des> ‘ten’

/ɑ/ <a>

/bar/ <bar> ‘burden’

/ʃar/ <şar> ‘public’

/i/ <î>

/gir/ <gir> ‘big’

/pir/ <pir> ‘full’

/ʊ/ <u>

/θʊr/ <sur> ‘red’

/ʊ/ <u>

/kor/ <kur> ‘ugly’

/o/ <o>

/kor/ <kor> ‘blind’

/do/ <do> ‘ayran’

/dor/ <dor> ‘time’

/to/ <to> ‘cream’

The [y] <ü> allophone is not found in the Zender dialect. However, we encountered this sound in the following samples we collected from the village of Meydan, in the dialect of Modan:

/byba/ <Büba>	‘name of tribe’
/nydyjo/ <nüdüyo>	‘he didn’t see’
/fjynyjo/ <çünüyo>	‘there is no’
/kyli/ <küli>	‘wood’
/nedʒɛmdy/ <nêcemdü>	‘not frozen’
/nefjy/ <nêşüyü>	‘he didn’t go’
/dyr/ <dür>	‘far away’
/dy/ <dü>	‘fume’
/pynik/ <Pünik>	‘name of a village’

We detected the /æ/ allophone only in the Zender dialect. This sound is used before the /r/ sound and the semi-vocal sounds /w/ and /j/.

/gærmin/ <germin> ‘warm’	/særdin/ <serdin> ‘cold’
/dærg/ <derg> ‘long’	/zærd/ <zerd> ‘yellow’
/wærd/ <werd> ‘food’	/tærs/ <ters> ‘fear’
/tevær dɛ/ <têver de> ‘side by side’	/bærdi/ <berdi> ‘carry’
/kærdi/ <kerdi> ‘we did’	/mærdi/ <merdi> ‘died’
/vindærte/ <vindertê> ‘they stopped’	/wæjni/ <weyni> ‘eat’
/bɛ qærdi/ <be qerdî> ‘with dept’	/kæwo/ <kewo> ‘made’
/kæjni/ <keyni> ‘they were doing’	

Among the varieties of Dimili (north, central, south) there is diphthong only in the central variety (Bingöl/Çewlig and Palu/Pali). There is no diphthong as a characteristic feature in the Modan dialect. We detected diphthongs only in the words *guaz/guez*, “walnut”; *guk* “ox”; *guen/guan* “tragacanth”; *ruen* “oil” in the Modan dialect. The “ran” and “ron” variants of the word “ruen” are also present in this dialect.

In Dimili, two vowel sounds do not generally come together except diphthongs, so semi-vowel sounds (“y, w, h”) are inserted between them (Bingöl, 2020, p. 26; Kırcan, 2019, pp. 390-392). Ozkal adds “d” and “n” sounds to these sounds (Ozkal, 2019, pp. 32-33). The letters “y” and “w” are semi-vowel in the Modan dialect.

In Dimili, it is not considered appropriate to use two vowel sounds together, except diphthongs, so semi-vowels (“y, w, h”) are inserted between them.

Şima kura y? Ma Moda ra yî. (Meydan)

‘Where are you from? We are from Moda’

Eşîrat ma ra w. (Meydan)

‘He is from our tribe’

Ma zî dimlî wî. (Meydan)

‘We are also dimlî’

Namî ci degîş kerdîwî. (Meydan)

‘They changed its name’

In the Modan dialect, the “n” sound is also sometimes used as a semi-vowel sound.

Tî çend seran a?

‘How old are you?’

Her kes axa w, her kes axay xu no.

‘Everyone is an aga, everyone is their own aga’

Some researchers emphasize that the “n” sound that occurs in the pronouns *min* ‘I’, *man* ‘we’ and *şiman* ‘you’ may not be the semi-vowel sound, but the original of the pronoun (Bingöl, 2020, p. 26); This use of pronouns is also present in the Modan Dialect.

Ya birarzay min î ya warzay min î. (Meydan)

‘They are either my brother’s children or my sister’s’

Kalik man o. Zaza çî îst çînî heme, ê şima zî, ê şima zî kalik şiman o.

‘He is our grandfather. He is the grandfather of all Zazas and your grandfather too’

Mesela man o Mermend ma birey cêbînan ê.

‘The issue between us and Mermend village is that we are brothers’

Lanya şiman a nimî.

‘Your field in the thing’

1.3. Comparative Remarks on the Phonology of the Modan Dialect

When compared to other documented varieties of Dimili (Zazaki), the phonological system of the Modan dialect displays both shared innovations and unique developments that justify its characterization as a transitional form between the Central and Southern dialect zones.

The presence of dental fricatives /θ/ and /ð/ is among the most striking phonological features distinguishing Modan from other dialects, and they are systematic and productive in Modan, replacing the alveolar fricatives /s/ and /z/ in a wide range of lexical items. In contrast, the Zender dialect of the same region lacks these interdental fricatives entirely, retaining the alveolar series /s/, /z/, which aligns it more closely with the other Dimili dialects (Todd, 1985; Keskin, 2008; Selcan, 2011). This pattern suggests a micro-isogloss boundary within Modan itself, reflecting varying degrees of phonological conservatism and innovation.

Another noteworthy feature of the Modan dialect is the contrastive aspiration found in the plosives /p/, /t/, /k/, and /tʃ/, realized as [p^h], [t^h], [k^h], and [tʃ^h]. Although aspiration is not reported in Southern Dimili dialects, in some Central Dimili dialects and it is far less systematic there, whereas in Northern Dimili it appears to be phonologically

conditioned and phonetically salient (Keskin, 2008, p. 33; Selcan, 2011, p.264). The occurrence of pharyngealized allophones such as [tʰ] also points to a degree of articulatory complexity influenced perhaps by contact with neighboring Kurmanji varieties, where uvular and pharyngeal consonants are common.

The labiodental vs. bilabial fricative alternation (/ɸ, β/ ~ /f, v/) shows a similar transitional character. Both sets occur in Modan except in Zender, where only /f, v/ are found. This phonological feature of the Modan dialect distinguishes it clearly from other Dimili dialects.

The occurrence of the voiceless lateral fricative /ɬ/ in word-initial position is another distinctive trait. While absent or marginal in Central and Southern varieties, Modan shows robust usage of /ɬ/ in numerous lexical items (e.g., *lazim* ‘necessary’, *lankerdiş* ‘drill’). This feature further supports the dialect’s intermediate status between the conservative phonologies of Central Zazaki and the more innovated southern systems.

In the vocalic domain, Modan exhibits an eight-vowel system similar to that of the other Dimili dialects, but with notable regional allophonic variation. The high front rounded [y] allophone, for instance, occurs in Modan (particularly in Meydan village) but is absent in Zender and most southern dialects. Conversely, the low front [æ] allophone, attested before /r/, /w/, and /j/, is found only in Zender. These complementary distributions reveal internal vowel differentiation within the Modan dialect area.

Unlike Central Zazaki (Palu-Çewlig), Modan lacks productive diphthongs, aligning it more closely with Southern dialects such as Siwerek and Gerger. However, a few lexical exceptions (e.g., *guaz*, *guen*, *ruen*) preserve relic diphthongs, perhaps indicating historical retention rather than active phonological productivity.

Finally, Modan phonotactics conforms to the broader Dimili constraint that generally prohibits vowel adjacency. Like other dialects, it employs semi-vowels /y, w, n/ as hiatus breakers, a feature confirmed through field examples. The use of /n/ as a semi-vowel in pronouns (e.g., *min*, *man*, *şiman*) parallels findings from Bingöl (2020) and thus reinforces Modan’s structural continuity with the Dimili system at large.

In summary, the Modan dialect maintains the core phonological architecture of Dimili while incorporating innovative articulations (dental and pharyngealized consonants, contrastive aspiration) and localized allophony (e.g., [y], [æ]). These characteristics collectively suggest that Modan represents a transitional and internally diversified dialect, bridging the Central and Southern zones of Zazaki phonology.

2. Morphology

2.1. Nouns

In Dimili, nouns are inflected for case, number, gender, specificity and Ezafe (Todd, 2008, p. 33). Modan dialect also displays these characteristic features.

2.1.1. Gender

There is an effect of gender in Kurmanji and Dimili dialects of Kurdish. However, the effect of gender is not as much in Kurmanji as in Dimili. As Haig and Öpengin explained, gender is present in nouns and pronouns as masculine and feminine in Kurmanji (Haig and Öpengin, 2014). However, in Dimili, the area of influence of gender is much wider. Gender is reflected in many areas of the language, including nouns, adjectives, pronouns, verbs and copula (Kırkan, 2020, p. 149; Yonat, 2022). In some words that can be used for both genders, the suffix *-e* in the Modan dialect indicates the feminine form:

Kurmanji and Zazaki have grammatical gender. Nouns are either male or female. Gender of noun could agree with the other word classes. In Kurmanji, demonstrative determiners and demonstrative pronouns agree with the noun (or noun phrase) in term of the gender of the referant noun. But in Zazaki nouns agree with adjectives, pronouns, verbs and copula (Kırkan, 2020, 149; Yonat, 2021).

Although there is no fixed rule, in Dimili, words ending in /e/ in some dialects and /i/ in others are feminine. This feature is also clearly attested in the Modan dialect and Zender dialect. In the Modan, these words sometimes appear with /i/, while in other cases the vowel is completely dropped. In contrast, in the Zender dialect, this sound /e/ is retained and pronounced dominantly at the end of words.

Table-3: Gender marking in Modan and Zender dialects

Modan Dialect	Zender Dialect
gilî ‘throat’	gilîye
guşt ‘finger’	guşte
awî, aw ‘water’	awe
distar ‘mill’	distare
meşki ‘churn’	meşke
poç ‘tail’	poçike
qoq, qoqi ‘head’	qoqe
qul, quli ‘stone’	qule
suk ‘bazaar, district’	suke
sol ‘salt’	sole
tuy ‘mulberry’	tuye

kuy ‘pumkin’	kuye
aşim, aşmî ‘moon’	aşme
çolek ‘a traditional dish/meal from the Modan region’	çolege
serdere ‘testudo for door’	serderîye
vernî ‘in front’	vernîye
peynî ‘back’	peynîye
kankî ‘cheek’	kankîye
katû ‘cat’	katûye, katîye

In the Zender dialect, this *-e* sound is also used dominantly in kinship nouns with biological gender: *maye* ‘mother’, *waye* ‘sister’, *cenîye* ‘woman’, *dêmarîye* ‘stepmother’, *hewîye* ‘second wife’, *jintîye* ‘a woman’s husband’s brother’s wife’, *pîrêye* ‘crone/grandmother’.

In Kurmanji when a noun is at its bare form, there is not any phonological clue about its gender. On the other hand, as it said at previous paragraph, in Dimili some nouns have some phonological clues about the gender of the noun in bare form. For example, /e/ foneme is a clue for feminine nouns:

pismam ‘male cousin’	pismame ‘female cousin’
vesturî ‘father-in-law’	vesturîye ‘mother-in-law’
pîrîk ‘grandfather’	pîrike ‘grandmother’

What is different in this dialect is that even “pismam” consist of *pis* ‘son’ and *mam* ‘uncle’ and mean ‘son of uncle’, in this dialect this word used both for “son of uncle” (pismam) and “daughter of uncle” (pismame). The phonological clue /e/ is enough to give the femininity.

2.1.2. Number and Case

There are three basic cases in Dimili; the vocative case, the nominative case, and the oblique case (Malmîsanij, 2015, p. 81; Bingöl, 2020, p. 31). The same cases are also present in the Modan dialect.

Table-4: Case marking in Modan dialects

	masculine	feminine	plural
Direct	-Ø	-Ø	-î
Oblique	-î	-Ø	-an

In the Modan dialect, direct nouns become plural with morphem *-î*.

Ma çewres nîfusî bî. ‘We were a family of forty people’

Panc-şêş dewî îstî. ‘There are five or six villages’

Vergî ameyne kuleke ser. ‘Wolves would come over the window’

But sometimes in speech this *-î* tends to drop.

Axtîyar mendî, axtîyar ay verên şî, yaş mi d’ mendî. ‘The old people stayed, those old people also died and left, the old people my age stayed’

In the Modan dialect, the oblique plural suffix is *-an/-a*.

Ma dimlî mujlîyê werdiyan xu dir. ‘We speak Dimili to our children’

Examples for Oblique Masculine Case:

Şino be ba hedadî vano. ‘He goes to the blacksmith and says’

Ma awê xu keyne wa ser, nayne agirî ser. ‘We would add our water and put it on the fire’

In the Modan dialect, singular definite nouns are made indefinite with the morphem *-ê*.

Eşka hey fotografê nîşanê to bidê. ‘Now I can show you a photo’

Va, o zaman şo ver berê dêrî e fotrafê kirşa. ‘He said, Then go to the door of the church and let me take a photo’

In the Modan dialect, the word *tey* [*tayê*] ‘some’ comes before plural words, making them indefinite.

Tey kîyan de, mîyanê keyan de nî çînêbi. ‘In some houses, it wasn’t there also in some houses’

Ma xu rê tey guazê xu roşanimi. ‘Let’s gather some walnuts for ourselves.’

2.1.3. Noun Phrase and the Ezafe Morphemes

In Dimili, Ezafe is inflected with the number (singular, plural), gender (masculine, feminine) and case of nouns (Gündoğdu and Bulan, 2023, p. 3; Gündoğdu, S. and Arsalan K. and Andrew P, 2020). In the Modan dialect, these features also condition the form of Ezafe; for genitive masculine *-ê*, Zender dialect, and *-î*, Modan dialect; for genitive feminine *-a* and for plural *-ê*. The case has no effect on the genitive form. The same ezafe suffixes are used for the direct and oblique forms.

(1) a

ber-ê dêrî

the door-EZ.M church

‘the door of church’

b.

kewçik-a şekerî

spoon-EZ.F sugar

‘spoon of sugar’

c.

Bila	çim-ê	kor-an	akero.
Let	eye-EZ.PL	Blind.-OL.P	Open.Sub.

‘Let him the eyes of the blind’

As Todd (Todd, 2008, p. 43) also stated, the Ezafe suffixes in words ending with vowel are -y. We can see the same feature in the Modan dialect.

(2) a		b.	
Xelife-y	‘Ebasîya	qeze-y	Sêwereg
caliph-EZ.M	Abbasids	district-EZ.F	Siverek
‘caliph of the Abbasids’		‘Siverek district’	

c.

name-y	pîla
name-EZ.PL.	elders
‘names of elders’	

In the Modan dialect, if the Ezafe suffix -ê is used in genitive masculine structures, -ê is pronounced stressed as if it were a separate structure from the word. However, this emphatic usage is not available in the Zender dialect.

(3)a.		b.
Ber	ê	odî
the	door	room
EZ.M		
‘door of the room’		
	por	ê
	Hair	EZ.M
		girl
	‘girl’s hair’	

Except for the Zender dialect, genitive izafe suffixes tend to be dropped in the Modan dialect.

(4)a.		b.	
dest	kêna	biz	kêna
hand	girl	goat	girl
‘girl’s hand’		‘girl’s goat’	

c.

biz kêneya
goat girls
‘girls’ goat’

In the Modan Dialect, descriptive Ezafe is inflected with the number, gender and case of nouns.

	Direct	Oblique
Masculine	-o	-ê
Feminine	-a	-a
Plural	-î	-ê/ -î

(5) a.

lacek-o derg
boy- tall
EZ.M.DIR
‘tall boy’

b.

dew-a boşe
village- big
EZ.F.DIR
‘big village’

c.

lacek-î dergî
boy- tall
EZ.PL.DIR
‘tall boys’

hî zeman-ê derg
time- long
EZ.M.OBL
‘a long time’

e.

gay-î pîlî
ox- big
EZ.PL.OBL
‘big oxen’

f.

tas-ê pîlî
bowl- big
EZ.PL.OBL
‘big bowls’

2.2. Pronouns

This section presents personal pronouns, reflexive pronouns, demonstrative pronouns, reciprocal pronouns, interrogative pronouns, indefinite pronouns, and the

generic anaphoric pronouns in the Modan dialect. Differences between the Modan dialect and the Zender dialect are also noted where relevant.

2.2.1. Personal Pronouns

Personal pronouns in Dimili distinguish three persons (first, second and third person), two numbers (singular and plural), and two cases (direct and oblique) (Todd, 2008, p. 45). Personal pronouns in the Modan dialect differ, particularly in the third-person singular and plural forms and in case. Below, the characteristics of personal pronouns in the Modan and Zender dialects, along with their differences, are presented.

Table-5: Modan Dialect, Personal Pronouns

	1s	2s	3sm	3sf	1p	2p	3p
DIR	ez/e	ti	wu/haw u/hawi/ hawo	ya/hay a/heya	m a	şima	henî/hîna/hîn/yîn/ hayî/hayîna/hey/heyî/he yîna/ hî
OBL	mi	To/Ti /Tu	wu/haw u/ hawo	ya/hay a/heya	m a	şima	henî/hîna/hîn/yîn/hayî/h ayîna/ hey/heyî/heyîna/hî

As shown in the table above, in the Modan variant, the direct and oblique personal pronouns differ only in the 1st and 2nd person singular. In many Dimili dialects, this distinction is typically clear and systematic; however, it appears to be undergoing erosion in the Modan dialect.

Although the pronoun “ya” is generally used for the 3rd feminine person in the Modan dialect, it is also used for the 3rd masculine person in some instances, particularly in the examples from Meydan village:

Xal min o, yo sewîye pî mi di, **ya** w pî mi yo sewîye der î, eşit cêbînan ê.

‘He is my uncle, he is at my father’s level, he and my father are at the same level, they are equal to each other.’

Ez û **ded** xu ma pîya kewtî ber, **ya** şî Anqara, e şîye Îstambul. Bad hawu, **ya** z fetlîye ami Îstambul.

‘Me and my uncle went out together, he went to Ankara, I went to Istanbul. After that, he also returned to Istanbul.’

Şo tîye wu (m) dir bimijul wula **ya** (m) daha zano çiba.

‘Go there and talk to him, I swear he knows more.’

Ya (m) z vato wulay ma şî kêna Melay biwazî.

‘He said, I swear, let’s go and ask for he Imam’s daughter.’

Table-6: Zender Dialect

	1s	2s	3sm	3sf	1p	2p	3p
DIR	ez/e	ti	yo	ya	ma	şima	îne
OBL	mi (n)	to	yo, yê, ê, wu	ya	ma	şima	îne/hîne/hîn

As shown in the table above, in the Zender dialect, both the distinction between direct and oblique pronouns and the gender distinction in the third person singular are preserved.

In the Modan dialect there are also two invariable weak (but not enclitic) oblique forms, one which is “*pîne/pîni/pîn/pîna*”, while the other one is “*cînan, cîna, cîne, cîn*”:

Nan û aw nêdanê pîne. ‘They did not give them bread or water.’

Têkilîya ma zaf pîna dir zaf hanê çinêbî. ‘We had no relationship with them.’

Ma nirsey pîn. ‘We couldn’t reach them.’

Tero pîrik cînan o. ‘Tero is their grandfather.’

Cîne ra di hebî feletîyenê. ‘Two of them survive.’

Tapu cîn viraza pîn da. ‘I will prepare their title deeds and give them to them.’

Bedirxan and Lescot (2009) state that the possessive pronouns “*yê*”, “*ya*” and “*yên*” in Kurdish were used with the preposition “*di*”. They claim that this form is not in modern forms but is in old forms (Bedirxan and Lescot, 2009, pp. 87-90). This old form is also seen in some Zaza dialects. In Gingim (Varto) dialect, the relative pronouns are as follows: Ê (d)ê, Ê (d)aye, Ê (d)înan (Bingöl, 2020, p. 56). It is possible that the “*dînan*” form in the Gingim dialect turned into the “*cînan*” form in the Modan dialect. In fact, the sound change /d/ > /c/ is seen in the Modan dialect.

2.2.2. Reflexive Pronoun: In Dimili the reflexive pronoun exists with the forms “*xo/xwe*”. In the Modan dialect, this pronoun is “*xu*”.

Xu r amey perpitîyay, xu r amey kewtî tîye. ‘They have resisted, they came and settled here.’

Hey mi xu kerdo vîr pêw şîyo. ‘I forgot now, they are all gone.’

If this pronoun is used with *izafe* in the Modan dialect, it replaces the oblique group and is actually in the function of possessive pronouns:

Erd xu giş kerdî tutun. ‘They planted tobacco in all their fields.’

This pronoun can also be used with preposition groups in the Modan dialect:

Lê ma bi xu ma dimlî mijûlî. ‘But we speak Dimili ourselves.’

Ti mi bi xu r pêrsî. ‘If you ask me.’

Eşîret o zemanle bi xu bi xu kewtê tê. ‘They are a tribe, they fell out with each other over time.’

Motkî **ji xu** qet nivanî. Ha hey zî **ji xu** ma vanî Meydan. ‘They never say Motkî anyway. Now we say Meydan.’

2.2.3. Demonstrative Pronouns

In the Modan dialect, despite the lack of gender distinction in the direct form of the demonstrative pronouns, gender is still marked on the verb through the endings *-o* (masculine) and *-a* (feminine).

Table-7: Demonstrative Pronouns, Direct

Direct			
	masculine	feminine	plural
Proximal	hana, hena, hane, ana, ane, en, ya		hanî, henî, anî, enî
	Hana (m) yaz kero. ‘He is writing.’ Hana (f) yaz kera. ‘She is writing.’ Hana zey Şêx o. ‘This is the son of the sheikh.’		Hanî yaz kerê. ‘These are writing.’ Henî dimlî yê, henî Bûbî yê. ‘These are Dimli, these are Bubi.’ Anî zay herî yê. ‘These are the sons of donkeys.’ Enî way cêbanan ê. ‘They are each other’s sisters.’
Distal	hawo, hawu, aw	haya, eya	hayî, ayî, en
	Hawo yaz kero. ‘He is writing.’	Haya yaz kera. ‘She is writing.’	Hayî yaz kerê. ‘They are writing.’

Table-8: Demonstrative Pronouns, Oblique

Oblique			
	masculine	feminine	plural
Proximal	hana, hena, ana		hanî, henî, henîna, hanîna
	Hana yaz kew. ‘He wrote.’ Hana yaz keya. ‘She wrote.’		Hanî yaz kew. ‘They wrote.’ Henî zî Botan ra amewî. ‘These also came from Botan.’ Hanî ku mi vatî heme dilmî wî. ‘All of the tribes I mentioned are Dimli.’
Distal	hawo, hawî	haya	hayî, hayîna,
	Hawo yaz kew. ‘He wrote.’	Haya yaz kew. ‘She wrote.’	Hayî yaz kerdî. ‘They wrote.’

One of the distinctive features of demonstrative pronouns in Dimili is the presence of two forms: -direct and oblique. However, as shown in the tables above, the Modan dialect does not maintain this distinction, as the same forms are used in both direct and oblique case environment. Another important feature is that the loss of the masculine-feminine distinction in the proximal demonstratives.

2.2.4. Reciprocal Pronouns

In the Modan dialect, this pronoun appears in several variants, including *cêbanan*, *cêbana*, *cêbînan*, *cîbanan*, *cîbînan*, *cêbna*, *cêman*, *cêma* ‘each other’. We also came across the variant *têbana* in a few examples.

There is also the pronoun “*pê*” in the Modan dialect:

Ku çax werdî bî ma şîn pê het kay kerê. ‘When we were kids, we used to go to each other to play games.’

Heme balay pê ra. ‘They all looked at each other.’

Wexto k' ma risey pê ma mijûlî. 'We talked when we caught up with each other.'

There is also the pronoun "cêr" [cêra] in the Modan dialect:

Ma cêr durî. 'We are far from each other.'

Tê çibayê devok ma cêr ferqlî bîyo. 'Some features of our variety have become different from each other.'

Mijûlîyayîşê ma, mijûley ma cêr bîyo dur. 'Our conversations have drifted apart from each other.'

2.2.5. Interrogative Pronouns

The pronouns *kî* 'who' (used for direct and oblique, and for masculine, feminine, and plural referents) and *kam* 'who' are employed to refer to persons in questions. While "kam" generally shows no variation for gender or case in the Modan dialect, such distinctions are attested in some examples from the Zender dialect:

Kame bîye, a cenîye? 'Who was that women?'

Zabit zay kamî yo? 'Whose son is Zabit?'

Moreover, while the pronoun "kam" is generally used to refer persons in Dimili, in the Modan dialect, it is also used to refer non-human entities:

Çatalsogut kam o? 'Which is Çatalsoğut?'

Kam ci ra berenê? 'Which one of them are they taking away?'

Hawî vato pay mi kam o, hawî vato pay mi kam o? Heney dêw î. 'He said, 'Which is my foot? He said, 'Which is my foot?' They are crazy like that.'

In the Modan dialect, the pronouns *ku*, *kura/kur*, *kude/kud* 'where' function as interrogative pronouns referring to locations. Other interrogative pronouns include *çiba*, *çina*, *çi* 'what', *senîn*, *se* 'how', *qey*, *çira/çir* 'why'.

2.2.6. Indefinite Pronouns

Pronouns such as *kiçi/kiçi/kiçîna* 'anybody', *kî* 'who', *kes* 'somebody', *tu kes/kî kes* 'nobody', *her kes* 'everyone', *her kî* 'whomever', *her yo hebe* 'each of', *her çaba* 'everything', *heme/ hemîn/ hemiyîna* 'all of', *filankes/ bêvankes* 'whatsisname', *tey/tê/tî* 'some of', *pêw* 'all of', *zêde* 'much', *çiba/çaba* 'thing', *bîn/bînik* 'other', *mende* 'another' indefinite pronouns in the Modan dialect.

2.2.7. The Generic Anaphoric Pronouns

In Kurmanci, Dimili and Hewrami, sometimes prepositions combined with the 3rd person singular oblique pronoun, as in *jê*, *lê*, and *pê* in Kurmanji, and occurs a new form of pronouns. These pronouns also exist in the Modan dialect:

Ci: In the Modan dialect, the pronoun "ci" is gender neutral, numerically singular and oblique. However, in this dialect, this pronoun also has the forms "ca" for feminine and "cê" for masculine.

Xelîl Xeyalî dostê cê be mîyanê filan de bîyo. 'Xelil Xeyali had friend among non-Muslims.'

Name ca Zînê bî. 'Her name was Zine.'

Pê:

*Endor gunî mi ze 'f***pê** *ami tabî.* 'Of course, I felt sorry for him.'

Tey:

Vanî Iraq ra amey **tey** *dir.* 'They say they came with him from Iraq.'

Piro/Pero:

Belkî wud muzîk deyn **piro**. 'Maybe they would play music there.'

Milet ma da **pero** *heta ku ya berşû.* 'Our people fight them until they send them away.'

Pa:

Paşê poçik ci dana **pa**. 'Then, she gives him her tail.'

Tera / Pera:

Ma ardînme, mîr keyne o ma ran ardîn helnayni ma dayn **tera**. 'We would bring it, knead the dough, melt butter and spread it on it.'

Kirêc nî boy sipic-mîpicî dayne **pera** *ku sipicî zêde nêbene.* 'They would also apply lime to lice so that they would not multiply.'

2.3. Adjectives

In this section, demonstrative adjectives, interrogative adjectives, numbers, comparison in adjectives in the Modan dialect are presented.

2.3.1. Demonstrative Adjectives

Besides near and far deixis, deictic pronouns distinguish the two major cases: Direct and oblique, two genders: masculine and feminine, and two numbers: singular and plural (Todd, 2008, p. 44). Although the demonstrative adjectives in the Modan dialect share these basic characteristics of standard Dimili, there are some differences. The tables below show the demonstrative adjectives of the Modan dialect and explain these differences.

Table-9: Demonstrative Adjectives, Direct, Proximal

Proximal	Modan Dialect
	adjective + name
with masculine names	hana -Ø
	Hana lacek yaz kero. 'This boy is writing.'
with feminine names	hana -Ø
	Hana ceyne yaz kera. 'This woman is writing.'
with plural names	hanî -î
	Hanî mêrikî yaz kerê. 'These guys are writing.'
	Hanî ceynî yaz kerî. 'These women are writing.'

As shown in the table above, masculine and feminine adjectives do not differ in the direct case in the Modan dialect. However, gender is preserved in the verbal person suffixes (-a for feminine; -o for masculine).

Table-10: Demonstrative Adjectives, Direct, Distal

Distal	Modan Dialect
with masculine names	hawo/hawi/ aw -Ø
	Hawo lacek yaz kero. 'That boy is writing.'
with feminine names	haya -Ø
	Haya ceyne yaz kera. 'That woman is writing.'
with plural names	hayî/heyî/hey -î
	Hayî mêrikî yaz kerê. 'Those guys are writing.' Hayî ceynî yaz kerê. 'Those women are writing.'

As can be seen from the table above, in the Modan dialect there are still different adjectives for masculine and feminine in the distal direct case, unlike the proximal direct case.

Table-11: Demonstrative Adjectives, Oblique, Proximal

proximal	Modan Dialect
	adjectives + name
with masculine names	hana -Ø
	Hana genc yaz kerd. 'This young man wrote.' Hana lacek wando. 'This boy is educated.'
with feminine names	hana -Ø
	Hana ceniye yaz kerd. 'This woman read.' Hana kêna wando. 'This girl read.'
with plural names	Hanî / henî/ en
	Hanî mêrdey yaz kerdî. 'These guys wrote.' Hanî ceynî yaz kerdî. 'These women wrote.'

Table-12: Demonstrative Adjectives, Oblique, Distal

far	Modan Dialect
with masculine names	hawo, hawu, wu, aw -Ø, -î
	Hawo lacek yaz kerd. 'That boy wrote.' Hawo lacekî va. 'That boy told.' Wu ser deprem bi, ma şîb hec. 'There was an earthquake that year and we went on a pilgrimage.'
With feminine names	haya -Ø
	Şîy yî dewa mende, haya dewe nî... 'They went to a village, and that village...'
with plural names	hayî -î
	Hayî mêrikî yaz kerdî. 'Those guys wrote' Hayî ceynî yaz kerdî. 'Those women wrote.'

Although in Dimili the demonstrative adjectives are different in direct and oblique cases, in Modan dialect the same adjectives are used for both cases.

In the Modan dialect, the pronoun '*pîne*' is also used as a demonstrative adjective with the forms '*a pîne*' and '*ha pîne*'.

Kirişt û bala a pîne cayan, a pîne niman. 'He pulled over, and looked at these places, these things.'

Kî şo ha pîne cayan ra fetelîyo. ‘If people go and wander around those places.’

Bavê Naco, Xelîl Xeyalîyê Modanî, Xelîl Xeyalî yanî a pîne naman. ‘Bavê Naco, Xelîl Xeyalîyê Modanî, Xelîl Xeyalî, that is, with these names.’

2.3.2. Interrogative Adjectives

In the Modan dialect, adjectives like *çend/çende* ‘how much’, *çi* ‘what’, *çiqa* ‘how much’, *kam* ‘who’, *senîn* ‘what’ function as interrogative adjectives. While *kam* is generally used as a pronoun in other dialects, it is also used as an adjective in the Modan dialect.

Kam lacek hame? ‘Which boy came?’

Ê kam welatî bi ‘Ehmed?’ ‘Ahmet, which country was he from?’

2.3.3. Numbers

In the Modan dialect, numbers come before nouns in sentences.

Table-13: Cardinal Numbers

numbers from 1 to 10		numbers from 11 to 20		ten digit numbers	
1	yo	11	yiwandes, yowandes, yuwandes, uwandes	10	des
2	didi	12	diwêş, diwes, duwes dîyes, duyes	20	vîst
3	hîri, hîrê	13	hîrîyes, hîryes	30	hîris, hîrîs
4	çiher	14	çarêş, çares, çaras, çewrîyes, çariyes	40	çewres
5	panc	15	panciyes, pancîyêş, pancêş	50	pancas
6	şeş	16	şîyes, şesîyes	60	şêst, şêşt, şeşt
7	hawt	17	hewtiyes, hawtiyes	70	hewtay, hawtey, hewte
8	heşt	18	heştîyes	80	heştay, heştey, heşte
9	new	19	newîyes, newyes	90	neway, newey, newe
10	des	20	vîst	100	se

In the Modan dialect, the number ‘one’ is *yo*. However, when used with nouns, it generally appears as *hî* and *yî*.

Hî kalikê ma namêy ci Bazo bi. ‘One of our ancestors was named Bazo.’

yî merdûm ‘a man’

2.3.4. Comparison in Adjectives

In this section, the equality of adjectives, comparative and superlative features of adjectives in Modan dialect are presented.

2.3.4.1. Equality in adjectives

In Dimili, equality of adjectives is made with words like “hendê”, “sey” and “qasê” (Malmîsanij, 2015, p. 137). In the Modan dialect, under the influence of Kurmanji, the word “wek” is used.

*Wu zî **wek** to zano.* ‘He knows it just like you do.’

*Ez **wekê** to nêzana.* ‘I don’t know like you.’

2.3.4.2. Comparative

In Dimili, the comparative is made with the suffixes “tir” and “êr”. In the Modan dialect, the comparative is made with the suffixes “îr”, “îra” and “êrî”.

Ti mi delalîr zanê. ‘You know better than me.’

Ti mi zafîra zana. ‘You know more than me.’

Ti ca pîlîra ya. ‘You are bigger than her.’

*Dewa ma **hîna** weşêrî ya.* ‘Our village is more beautiful.’

2.3.4.3. Superlative

In Dimili, the word “tewr” is used for the superlative. In the Modan dialect, under the influence of Turkish, “en” is used.

En derg ti wî. ‘You are the tallest.’

En ze’f ti zana. ‘You know the most.’

2.4. Adverbs

Some important *temporal adverbs* include: *vizêr* ‘yesterday’, *perê* ‘the day before yesterday’, *perarê* ‘the third day before today’, *betirperarê* ‘the fourth day before today’, *ewro/oro* ‘today’, *sibêde/sêbde/sêbdi* ‘in the morning’, *hêvar de* ‘in the evening’, *hel êvarî* ‘eventide’, *hêvar/êvar* ‘evening’, *bişewe/bişew* ‘at night’, *emşo/imşo/mişo/mişû* ‘tonight’, *imser/miser* ‘this year’, *par* ‘last year’, *pêrar* ‘the year before last year’, *betir pêrarê* ‘the third year before this year’, *meşte* ‘tomorrow’ *bêrû/bêro* ‘the second day after today’, *bêterû* ‘the third day from today’, *binbêterû* ‘the fourth day from today’, *bintir bêterû* ‘fifth day from today’, *aminî* ‘in summer’, *payîzî* ‘in the autumn’, *wesarî* ‘in spring’, *zimistanî* ‘in the winter’, *hey* ‘now’.

Badê ci wextê amey derbasê Moda bîye...

‘Afterwards when they came and moved to Modan...’

Padê aw heval ci vano. ‘Then that friend says.’

Ewilî ma çî keyn wuşk **hey** zî ‘eynî yo.

‘Whatever we used to dry, it is the same now.’

Some important *local adverbs* include:

bêr keyî ‘outside’, *cûra* ‘there’, *hetîye/etîye/ewtîye/tîye* ‘here’, *pû* ‘there’, *tude/tûde* ‘there’, *tûra/tûre/tûri* ‘there’, *wucêr* ‘down, downward’, *wucor* ‘upwards’, *wude/wudi/wud/wêde* ‘there’.

2.5. Preposition

In Dimili, prepositions can be categorized according to their usage as prepositions, adpositions and compound (prepositions and adpositions together) prepositions (Kırkan, 2021, p. 207). Below we will show some characteristic prepositions of the Modan dialect:

Be: This preposition, which appears as ‘bi’ in the Modan dialect and as ‘be’ in the Zender dialect has a wide range of uses.

In the Zender dialect, the preposition ‘**be**’ is used not only with nouns but also with verbs. It commonly occurs with compound verbs that are formed with a noun:

Goştê ci keyne be hişk. ‘They would dry the meat.’

Dilmîya ma bena be derg. ‘Our Dimili language is longer.’

Zendiric de kude şîyo **be ca bîyo** namey xu daw pû **bîyo be zendiric**.

‘Wherever the Zender people went and settled, they gave their names to that place and became Zender people.’

The preposition “be” is also used with passive and causative verbs:

Wude şer virazîyeno, Albay Arif yeno be kuştiş. ‘War breaks out there and Colonel Arif is killed.’

Pî cey Emîr Şeref wextê ame be kuştiş. ‘When his father, Emir Şeref, was killed.’

Henû yeno be vatiş. ‘That’s how it’s said.’

Pî min nî, ma wurdî bîme, ma ard tîye, da be wendiş. ‘My father also brought us here when we were children and educated us.’

Evliya Çelebî vano; kîtebê ci honeyî **ame be dirnayîş**, honeyî **ame be vêşnayîş**. ‘Evliya Çelebi tells how his books were torn and burned.’

beqey/biqey ‘for’, *bê* ‘without’, *bon/bona/bûn* ‘for’, *hon/honde/hondarey/ondarey* ‘so much’, *heta* ‘until’, *hinde/hindebe* ‘so much’, *pê* ‘with’, *wek/wekî/sê* ‘like’ are some other prepositions in Modan dialect.

The preposition “da/de/di/d’/der/dir/id” which functions as the locative case marker in the Modan dialect appears. As “de...de” and “di...de” in the Zender dialect, as attested in some old mawlıds (Xasî; Xasî E., 2013).

Mîrê mi de incane de yo. ‘My dough is in the basin.’

De Modan de kî mendo? ‘Who stayed in Modan?’

In the Zender dialect, some prepositions are also used as compound prepositions:

Mi nî va de sere d’ çarsey-pansey tenekey ma guazî roşanenê. ‘And I said, every year we get four hundred or five hundred tins of walnuts.’

Yanî ma kura amey, çi ame be qoqa ma de. ‘So where did we come from and what happened to us?’

De kurmaca dir zewecîyay. ‘She married a Kurmanc.’

Kêna mi, be mi dir bê, e to rişûya. ‘Come with me, my daughter, and I will send you away.’

Ma be Cizîre ra amey. ‘We came from Cizire.’

Mîyanê Zender ra danê be Zîyare ro. ‘They hit the village of Ziyaret from within the village of Zender.’

Îne nî hetê Modan ra şîyê. ‘They also went from Modan direction.’

Hetê Motkî de esto. ‘It is on the Motki side.’

Xu peyê hêgay di deydi wa. ‘He had hidden himself behind the field.’

2.6. Conjunction

Some basic conjunctions in Modan dialect are listed: *acura/cûra* ‘therefore’, *çunkî/çimkî* ‘because’, *doranî* ‘sometimes’, *eger* ‘if’, *gere* ‘must’, *hema/hama* ‘but’, *lema* ‘therefore’, *lê* ‘but’, *û, o, w* ‘and’.

The conjunction used in the Modan dialect to mean ‘also’ is *zî*, which is *nî* in the Zender dialect.

Hana nî şîrîka min a. ‘This is my partner too.’

Dilmîya to nî mi rê giran yena. ‘Your Dimili is also hard for me.’

We have not come across this *nî* form in any Dimili or other Kurdish dialects so far. However, in written Persian, there is ‘nîz’ for the conjunction ‘hem’, which is ‘nîc’ in Pehlevi and ‘nîz’ in Pazendi (Mo’in and Shahidi, 1998, p. 22943). Malmîsanij also shows ‘nîc’ and ‘nîz’ in Pahlavi, and ‘nîz’ in Pazendi and Persian, with the same meaning (Malmîsanij, 2021, p. 34). These forms are retained as *nî* in the Zender dialect.

2.7. Verbs

In this section, we will not present the entire verbal morphology of the Modan dialect; instead, we will focus on a few fundamental and distinctive features such as the copula, the present tense, and person marking.

2.7.1. Copula

The copula suffixes in the Modan dialect are similar to those in standard Dimili. The forms in the first-person singular and plural in the Zender dialect are more archaic forms found in some other Dimili dialects.

Below is the present tense copula in Modan dialect.

Table-13: Present Tense Copula

Modan Dialect	Zender Dialect
Ez dewic a . ‘I am a villager.’ Ez dimlî ya . ‘I am Dimli.’	Ez dewic ane . ‘I am a villager.’ Ez dimlî yane . ‘I am Dimli.’
Ti (f.) dewic a . ‘You are a villager.’ Ti dimlî ya . ‘You are Dimli.’	Ti (f.) dewic a . ‘You are a villager.’ Ti dimlî ya . ‘You are Dimli.’
Ti (m.) dewic î . ‘You are a villager.’ Ti dimlî wî/yî . ‘You are Dimli.’	Ti (m.) dewic ê . ‘You are a villager.’ Ti dimlî yê . ‘You are Dimli.’
Hawu (m.) dewic o . ‘He is a villager.’ Hawu dimlî yo . ‘He is Dimli.’	Yo (m.) dewic o . ‘He is a villager.’ Yo dimlî yo . ‘He is Dimli.’
Haya (f.) dewic a . ‘She is a villager.’ Haya dimlî ya . ‘She is Dimli.’	Ya (f.) dewic a . ‘She is a villager.’ Ya dimlî ya . ‘She is Dimli.’
Ma dewic î . ‘We are villagers.’ Ma dimlî wî/yî . ‘We are Dimlis.’	Ma dewic îme . ‘We are villagers.’ Ma dimlî yîme . ‘We are Dimlis.’
Şima dewic î . ‘You are villagers.’ Şima dimlî wî/yî . ‘You are Dimlis.’	Şima dewic ê . ‘You are villagers.’ Şima dimlî yê . ‘You are Dimlis.’
Heyî dewic î . ‘They are villagers.’ Heyî dimlî wî/yî . ‘They are Dimlis.’	Îne dewic ê . ‘They are villagers.’ Îne dimlî yê . ‘They are Dimlis.’

As can be seen from the table above, gender is preserved in the third person singular copular suffix. However, we have observed that this difference has disappeared in some examples:

Şarê Licê yo. (for feminine) ‘She is from Lice.’

Kêna mal şer o. Şina kê şer. ‘A girl child is someone else’s property. She goes to someone else’s house [as a bride].’

Rober (m) dewic o. Sewda (f) zî dewic o. ‘Rober is a villager. Sewda is also a villager.’

Hawo (m) dewic o. ‘He is a villager.’

Hana kêna dewic o. ‘This girl is a villager.’

Hana cînîye dewic o. ‘This woman is a villager.’

Hana mêrde dewic o. ‘This man is a villager.’

Qiral zî duşunmîş beno vano wala hana [Zoro Axa] ze’f gunê wa. ‘The king thought about it and said, This [Zoro Aga] is very poor.’

As illustrated by the examples above, gender marking in third person singular copular suffixes appears to be eroding. Nonetheless, it cannot be said to have disappeared completely, a matter that requires further investigation. Notably, some speakers alternate between forms as shown in the following continuation of the previous example, where the same speaker has used the masculine copula:

[Zoro] gunê **wo**, mîlet xu r şîn ya xapno, hana kero pê. ‘[Zoro] is poor, people go and fool him.’

Zoro qet nêşuyo a wud nêxebtîyo lê maaş xu giroto. ‘Zoro never went to work there, but he did receive his salary.’

The negative form of the present tense copula: *nîya* is used for 1st singular, 2nd singular feminine and 3rd singular feminine, while *nîyo* is used for the third singular masculine. *nîyê* is used for the 2nd person singular masculine and plural.

Nevîya ci nîya. ‘She is not his granddaughter.’

Rayfo merdimê ma nîyo. ‘Rayfo is not our relative.’

Cayko ma vanê dewî nîyê. ‘The places we are talking about are not villages.’

2.7.2. Present Continuous Tense

In Dimili, the present tense conjugation of the verb is formed by adding *-n* morpheme to the present tense stem of the verb (Malmîsanij, 2015, pp. 215-216; Kırkan, 2021). In the Modan dialect, verbs in the present continuous tense do not always take the present tense suffix *-n*. That is, some verbs take the *-n* suffix and some do not.

Table-14: Present Continuous Tense Suffix

Verbs taking the <i>-n</i> suffix in the Present Continuous Tense	Verbs that do not take the <i>-n</i> suffix in the Present Continuous Tense
bereqîyeno ‘shine’	aso ‘appear’
cemedîyeno ‘freeze’	bermo ‘cry’
çurîlîyeno ‘brighten’	E kuşa. ‘I am killing.’
dirna / dirîyeno ‘tear’	cico / ciceno ‘be in pain’
helîyeno / helna ‘melt’	çero ‘be out at grass’
heredîyeno ‘be angry’	wero ‘eat’
kelejîyeno / kelejna ‘boil’	riso ci / E risa ci. ‘catch’
pehtîyeno ‘decay’	firo ‘fly’
şikîyeno / E şikna. ‘be broken’	hewo ‘laugh’
teyşîyeno ‘faint’	hesûdiyê / hesûdaney kero ‘be jealous of’
xebetîyeno ‘work’	lawo ‘bark’
zewecîyeno ‘marry’	lerzo ‘shake’
dano ‘give’	giro têra ‘walk about’
şeno ‘go’	mûso ‘learn’
kuweno ber ‘go out’	perso ‘ask’
rîyeno ‘get rid of’	remo ‘escape’
tirqîyeno, tirqna ‘explode’	tirqo ‘explode’
çîrok vana ‘tell a tale’	wuno tera ‘look’

saz dano pêro ‘play saz’	virazo ‘make/do’
zano / zaneno ‘know’	weremîyo ‘swell’
E şuyena. ‘I am washing.’	terso ‘fear’
Şiley yena. ‘It is raining’	Varan varo. ‘It is raining.’
Çarna têwa. ‘show round’	vazo, vazdano ‘run’
E zivirna. ‘I am spinning.’	veyşo ‘burn’
E firna. ‘I am flying.’	cir kero ‘amputate’
tehna ‘grind’	gîra ‘take/get’
tersêna ‘scare’	poca ‘cook’
Can ci veyşna. ‘hurt’	virit ra, virca ro ‘puke’
vistna ‘pluck’	waza ‘want’
Ez yî xapna. ‘trick’	vaza ra ‘awake / stand up’
şunîyena ‘hear’	Ez ara. ‘bring’
xelesna ‘recover’	Ez bera ‘take away’
Kendiş, E kena. ‘dig’	Ez kera/kerena ‘do/make’
rêyna: Ez hî rêyna ‘recover’	
E şinasna. ‘know’	
vîna ‘see’	
fîna ‘lower’	
E cuyena. ‘live’	
karna ‘plant’	

E remna.	‘miss’	
E tirawna	‘steal’	

In Dimili, verbs ending in *-re* typically, drop this morpheme in the imperative and in the present tense forms (Malmîsanij, 2015, p. 234). In the Karacadağ Dimili dialect, this *-re* as in is generally preserved; *arena* ‘I am bringing’, *gêrena* ‘I am travelling’, *werîyenê* ‘they are edible’, *bîyarê* ‘bring it’, *şorê* ‘go away’ (Yıldız, 2017, pp. 77-78).

In the Modan dialect, verbs with the root *-re* retain this morpheme when conjugated in the present tense. While these verbs generally do not take the *-n* suffix in the Modan dialect, they do appear with *-n* in the Zender dialect.

Aw areno, bereno, wereno. ‘He takes the water, brings it and drinks it.’ (Zender Dialect)

Ma hanê kerenê germ ma ron û bîber wa ci kerenê û ma werenê. ‘We heat it up, add oil and pepper, and eat it.’ (Zender Dialect)

Ez texmîn kera. ‘I am guessing.’ (Modan Dialect)

Yo heb e wera yo ti. ‘I’ll eat one, you eat one.’ (Modan Dialect)

In some Dimili speaking region, there is a present participle with regional variants. In the Modan dialect, his particle appears in the following forms.

Eza keye d’ ane. ‘I am at home.’

Ez ya kehe de. ‘I am at home.’

Ti (m) yî kehe di. ‘You are at home.’

Ti (f) ya kehe di. ‘Yo are at home.’

Pêw hê Îstambul di. ‘They are all in Istanbul.’

Ê mi va, Emîn ho Meyda di, e zî ha yo ca başxi. ‘I said, Emin is in the Meydan and I am somewhere else.’

2.7.3. Person Marking

In the Modan dialect, gender distinctions in second and third singular person marking are often unclear. In other words, masculine and feminine markers occasionally disappear, rendering gender less transparent. However, it would be inaccurate to claim that this feature has disappeared completely. The list below is based on the oral materials collected from different regions. Though this phenomenon requires a thorough and comprehensive study.

Table-15: Person Marking

	1s	2sm	2sf	3sm	3sf	1p	2p	3p
COP	a/ane	î/ê	a	o	a	î/îme	î/ê	î/ê
PRES	a	î/ê	a	o	a	î/ê	î/ê	î/ê
PRET	a/e/ane/û	ê	a	o	a/e	î/ê/îme	ê/î	ê/î
SUBJ	ê/a	ê/e/î	ê	o	a	ê/me	ê	ê/î/ene/enê
IMPR		î/e					ê/î	
PERF	a/e/ane/û	ê	a	o	a	ê/me	ê	ê/î/ene/enê

2.8. Comparative Remarks on the Morphology of the Modan Dialect

Taken together, Modan morphology shows a mixed profile that aligns with both Central and Southern Dimili (Zazaki) while also preserving local innovations and archaic retentions -and contrasts sharply, in places, with the Zender dialect in the same region.

Gender and nominal morphology.

Modan patterns with Dimili generally in the breadth of gender agreement (spanning nouns, adjectives, pronouns, verbs, and the copula). A robust feminine cue *-e* / *-î* appears word-finally (e.g., *pismam* ~ *pismame*), but Modan allows vowel loss in some feminine forms (*qoq* ~ *qoqi* ‘head’), whereas Zender tends to retain *-e* overtly (*qoqe*, *awe*, *meşke*). This makes Modan less phonologically transparent for feminine marking than Zender and more similar to parts of Southern Dimili where final vowels are variably reduced. Number/case exponence follows the Dimili template (DIR Ø / OBL *-î* ~ Ø / PL *-î*, OBL.PL *-an/-a*), but plural *-î* deletion in spontaneous speech is comparatively frequent in Modan.

Ezaf morphology.

Modan shows the Dimili pattern of gender/number-sensitive Ezafe (M: *-ê/-î*, F: *-a*, PL: *-ê*) and *-y* after vowels, but exhibits two striking traits:

Prosodic prominence of masculine *-ê* (as a stressed unit) in Modan—absent in Zender;

Frequent Ezafe drop in Modan genitives (*dest kêna* ‘girl’s hand’), while Zender keeps Ezafe more consistently. These properties give Modan a phonologically lighter NP profile, closer to Southern usage where Ezafe reduction is reported, while Zender remains morphologically conservative.

Pronouns.

Modan innovates in third-person syncretism: gender distinctions (3sg.m vs 3sg.f) can neutralize in both independent forms (*ya* used for m/f) and in agreement, especially in Meydan data. It also possesses invariable weak oblique series (*pîne/pîn-* and *cîn-*), likely reflecting older Kurdish/Dimili pronominal complexes (*cîn-* to historical *dîn-*). By contrast, Zender preserves direct/oblique contrasts and 3sg gender more stably (*yo/ya*; *îne/hîne*), again marking Zender as more conservative.

Demonstratives and deictic adjectives.

A hallmark of Dimili is a Direct vs. Oblique split in demonstratives; Modan weakens this split, often recycling the same forms across cases. It also partly neutralizes gender in proximal forms (while distal forms keep *hawo/haya*). Zender again retains

clearer case and gender distinctions. Functionally, Modan is levelling the paradigm; Zender maintains it.

Quantification and numerals.

Modan shows local allomorphy for ‘one’ (yo ~ hî ~ yî before nouns) and rich tens variation (e.g., hîriyes, çarês, pancîyes), which is compatible with Central/Southern micro-variation; nothing here aligns it cleanly with a single macro-zone.

Comparison strategies.

Comparatives in Modan use “îr / îra / êrî”, matching Dimili “tîr/êr” patterns but with local allomorphy; the superlative with Turkish-like “en” is a contact-driven innovation, contrasting with Dimili “tewr” elsewhere.

Adverbs and prepositions/adpositions.

The temporal adverb inventory is Dimili-typical but locative series (e.g., hetîye/etîye/tîye ‘here’) show dense local allomorphy. Prepositionally, Modan has bi/be with wide combinatorics and compound uses, but Zender showcases a broader prepositional grammar (e.g., be with passives/causatives; stacked de...de / di...de sequences reminiscent of older texts). Modan does have locative de/di/d’/der as a productive case-like marker, aligning with broader Dimili.

Copula and agreement.

Both Modan and Zender maintain gender on 3sg copula (-o vs -a), but Modan shows ongoing erosion (3sg.m o used with feminine referents in connected speech). Zender keeps 1sg/1pl archaic endings (-ane, -îme) more robustly. Negative copula paradigms in Modan (nîya, nîyo, niyê) are streamlined and widely used.

Present tense and the -n issue.

Dimili often marks present progressive with -n; Modan shows a split system (many verbs without -n), whereas Zender retains -n more regularly, especially with -re stems. Critically, Modan keeps the stem-final -re in the present (e.g., arena, wera), but often without -n—a distinctive Modan profile. Zender frequently has -re + -n (e.g., areno), aligning it with more conservative Dimili zones.

Present-locative participial periphrasis.

Modan’s present-locative particles (e/ya/yî ... di/de) are richly attested (Eza keye d’ ane; Pêw hê Îstambul di), echoing Central Dimili periphrastic patterns while differing in exact allomorphic spread from Zender.

Person marking.

Comparative person-suffix table shows gender opacity in 2sg/3sg across several TAMs in Modan (variable -î/-ê vs -a / -o), whereas Zender preserves gender-transparent distributions more often. This supports the broader picture: Modan is levelling/analogizing; Zender is conserving.

Interim classification.

Morphologically, Modan bridges Central and Southern Dimili through:

Southern-leaning traits: Ezafe reduction; plural-Ø tendencies in fast speech; limited diphthongs.

Central-compatible traits: rich present-locative periphrasis; broad gender agreement domain; retention of some archaic forms (e.g., *-re* stems).

Local signatures: weak oblique series (*pîn-*, *cîn-*), demonstrative levelling, partial gender syncretism, and distinctive comparative allomorphy (*îr/îra/êrî*).

Against this backdrop, Zender appears as a conservative enclave within the Modan area—keeping Ezafe, maintaining 3sg gender and case oppositions, preserving *-re+-n* presents, lacking / ϕ , β / and several vowel/allophonic options—hence less transitional than Modan proper.

Modan is an internally diversified, transitional dialect whose levelling and contact-driven changes set it apart from Zender and link it structurally to both Central and Southern Dimili. This supports the claim about Modan's intermediate position within the Dimili dialect continuum.

Conclusion

This study provided the first systematic description of the Modan (Mutki) dialect of Dimili/Zazaki and examined its place within the Dimili dialect continuum. Drawing on original field data, this linguistic description, both introduces the Modan dialect and situates its position within the Dimili dialect continuum revealing its characteristics as a transition form between the central and southern dialects. The Modan dialect also exhibits internal variation. While some sub-regions show morphological reduction forms and variants, others preserve archaic forms such as those found in the Zender dialect. Linguistic differences within the Modan dialect are particularly pronounced between the Zender dialect and the other dialects.

The findings revealed that the Modan dialect possesses 32 consonant phonemes and an eight-vowel system. Its most distinctive phonological characteristics include the presence of interdental fricatives / θ / and / δ / (often replacing / s / and / z /), aspirated plosives [p^h , t^h , k^h , tʃ^h], and pharyngealized consonants such as [$t^{\text{ɣ}}$]. The dialect also maintains both bilabial (/ ϕ , β /) and labiodental (/f, v/) fricatives, and uniquely allows word-initial / h /, a feature rare in other Zazaki varieties. Its vowel system includes the allophones [y] in the Meydan sub-dialect and [æ] in Zender, though diphthongs are no longer productive. Phonologically, Modan clearly reflects a transitional character between the Central and Southern zones, showing both conservative and innovative traits.

Morphologically, the Modan dialect retains the Dimili system of gender, case, and number marking, with feminine nouns often indicated by the suffixes *-e* or *-i*. However, vowel reduction and deletion lead to a less visible expression of gender compared to Zender, where final vowels are preserved. The Ezafe construction, inflected for gender and number, shows reduction and prosodic emphasis in Modan—another innovation not shared by Zender. The personal pronoun system in Modan exhibits partial gender syncretism, while weak oblique forms such as *pîn-* and *cîn-* represent possible relics of older Kurdish or Dimili pronominal forms. Demonstratives and adjectives display case levelling and partial gender neutralization, while comparison and superlative formation reveal clear contact influence from Turkish through the use of “en” for the superlative.

When compared with other varieties, Modan aligns with Southern Dimili in features such as Ezafe reduction, the loss of diphthongs, and contact-induced change, but

it also shares with Central Dimili the broad domain of gender agreement and the presence of locative periphrastic constructions. Within the Modan region, the Zender dialect stands out as a conservative enclave, retaining clearer gender and case distinctions, the regular use of *-re+-n* in the present tense, and lacking bilabial fricatives and the [y] allophone found in Modan proper. These differences reveal internal micro-variation that reinforces the view of Modan as a transitional and diversified dialect zone.

The analysis of Modan's morphology and phonology therefore supports its classification as a bridge variety between Central and Southern Dimili. Its mixture of conservative and innovative features, combined with localized allophony and ongoing levelling in gender and case morphology, situates it geographically and linguistically at the intersection of major Dimili isoglosses.

In conclusion, the Modan dialect emerges as a transitional and internally diversified variety that bridges the Central and Southern branches of Dimili. Its documentation provides new empirical data for Zazaki dialectology and enriches our understanding of micro-variation within the Kurdish-Iranian linguistic continuum. The study underscores the urgency of continued field-based research and documentation to preserve Modan and related dialects before they undergo further erosion or loss.

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Extended Abstract

This study presents a comprehensive descriptive and comparative analysis of the Modan dialect of Dimili (Zazaki), a Kurdish dialect spoken exclusively within the borders of Turkey. Despite the growing body of literature on Dimili dialects, many local varieties remain under-documented, particularly those located in geographically peripheral and linguistically transitional regions. The Modan dialect, spoken in the Mutki (historically Modan) district of Bitlis, represents one such understudied variety. This research aims to fill this gap by providing the first systematic account of its phonological and morphological structure, while also addressing its position within the broader Dimili dialect continuum.

The primary objective of the study is threefold: (i) to identify and describe the phonological and morphological features of the Modan dialect based on empirical field data, (ii) to compare these features with those of Northern, Central, and Southern Dimili varieties, and (iii) to determine whether the Modan dialect exhibits transitional characteristics that place it between established dialect groups. In doing so, the study contributes both to descriptive linguistics and to the ongoing debates surrounding the internal classification of Dimili.

The research adopts a synchronic, descriptive, and comparative dialectological framework. The data were collected through multiple periods of fieldwork conducted in the Modan region, using qualitative methods such as participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and audio recordings with native speakers from different sub-tribes. The analysis focuses on segmental phonology, morphophonemic processes, and inflectional morphology, followed by a comparative evaluation with previously documented Dimili dialects.

The findings reveal that the Modan dialect maintains the core structural features of Dimili while simultaneously displaying a number of distinctive innovations. Phonologically, one of the most salient features is the systematic presence of dental fricatives /θ/ and /ð/, which correspond to /s/ and /z/ in many other Dimili dialects. Additionally, the dialect exhibits contrastive aspiration in plosive consonants and includes pharyngealized allophones, indicating a relatively complex articulatory system. Another noteworthy feature is the presence of the voiceless lateral fricative /ɬ/ in word-initial positions, which is rare or absent in several other Dimili varieties. Vowel system analysis shows an eight-vowel inventory with regionally distributed allophonic variation, including the presence of [y] and [æ] in specific sub-varieties.

Morphologically, the Modan dialect reflects the typical Dimili system, including grammatical gender, case marking (direct, oblique, and vocative), and Ezafe constructions. However, certain features demonstrate variation or simplification, such as the partial erosion of case distinctions in personal pronouns and the flexible use of gender markers. The dialect also shows variation in demonstrative pronouns and adjectives, particularly in the reduction of gender distinctions in proximal forms. Furthermore, the presence of unique pronoun forms and innovative uses of interrogative and indefinite pronouns indicates internal diversification within the dialect.

Comparative analysis suggests that the Modan dialect cannot be fully classified within the traditional tripartite division of Dimili (Northern, Central, Southern). Instead, it exhibits a combination of features associated with both Central and Southern varieties, along with locally developed innovations. This supports the argument that Modan

occupies a transitional position within the Dimili dialect continuum. Additionally, micro-level variation within the dialect—particularly between the Modan and Zender sub-varieties—highlights the existence of internal isoglosses and further complicates rigid classification models.

In conclusion, this study provides the first detailed linguistic description of the Modan dialect and demonstrates its significance for understanding dialectal diversity within Dimili. By documenting its phonological and morphological features and situating it within the broader dialect continuum, the research contributes to both Kurdish dialectology and Iranian linguistics. Moreover, given the endangered status of Dimili, the documentation of such local varieties is crucial for the preservation of linguistic diversity and cultural heritage. The findings of this study offer a valuable empirical foundation for future research on dialect classification, language contact, and micro-variation in lesser-studied Iranian languages.