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Etymological Analysis of Six Mazandarani Toponymical Suffixes

Abstract

Toponyms are among the most conservative elements of language, often preserving lexical, syntactic, and morphological features across centuries. Due to its relative geographic isolation from the Iranian plateau, Mazandarani - a northwestern Iranian language spoken in Mazandaran province - has retained lexical items traceable to Old Iranian, including archaisms absent in other Iranian languages. Mazandaran, historically known as Tabarestan, is a southern Caspian littoral region whose well-protected terrain, shielded by the Alborz Mountains, has safeguarded its linguistic heritage from invasions and external influence. Consequently, Mazandarani, or Tabari, preserves a rich inventory of Middle and Old Iranian vocabulary, including Avestan and Middle Iranian lexical items, as well as borrowings (Borjian, 2021). Spoken by approximately 2.5 million people, Mazandarani is also the only Iranian language with recorded written literature dating to the medieval period, including works such as *Nikināme*, *Marzbānnāme*, *Bāvandnāme*, and various Koranic exegeses, some of which have been later translated into Persian or lost (Borjian, 2021; Najafzadeh, 1989).

This study investigates the etymology and semantic development of six Mazandarani toponymic suffixes. From a dataset of 1,184 rural Mazandarani toponyms, 43 suffixes were extracted, of which six were selected for detailed analysis due to their semantic ambiguity. The results indicate that all six suffixes ultimately derive from Proto-Indo-European, via Proto-Indo-Iranian and Iranian stages, exhibiting parallels with other Indo-European language families, including Germanic and Balto-Slavic. Phonetic forms and semantic content, however, underwent transformations through processes of grammaticalization and semantic change, including decategorization, desemanticization, erosion, and metonymical generalization (Hopper & Traugott, 1993; Heine, 1993; Trask, 2003; Geeraerts, 2010). For example, the common noun *marz* (“border”) experienced decategorization, losing its nominal function and becoming a functional suffix; through desemanticization and metonymic processes (synecdoche), its meaning broadened from “border” to a general sense of “land.”

The findings corroborate Tame’s (2020) conclusion that many toponymic suffixes originate as ordinary lexical items that acquire specialized toponymic functions through semantic change. Suffixes such as *kelā* (“village”), *marz* (“border/field”), *male* (“village”), and *keti* (“hill”) illustrate this trajectory. Comparable suffixes appear in other Indo-European languages, particularly Germanic and Balto-Slavic groups, reflecting shared etymological roots and inherited tendencies in word formation. The recurrence of related phonetic forms with consistent semantic functions further suggests the impact of successive waves of Indo-Iranian settlement in Mazandaran, the retention of Indo-European archaic forms, and the subsequent influence of Persian as a regional lingua franca. Overall, this research highlights the significance of regional dialects in reconstructing lost etymologies, preserving linguistic archaisms, and understanding the mechanisms of toponymization

Keywords: *toponyms, Mazandarani, Indo-European languages, etymological analysis, grammaticalisation, semantic change*

1. Introduction

1.1 Toponyms and Mazandarani

Toponyms are among the most conservative linguistic units and retain significant information about the places they refer to. They are classified into Oikonyms (residentials), Hydronyms (bodies of water), and Oronyms (hills, mountains, shores, canyons, valleys) based on their features. Furthermore, according to their constituent elements, they are divided into eleven categories as follows (Ahadian and Bakhtiari 2009):

1. Ethnotoponyms or toponyms named after tribes and clans, some of whom are no longer alive;
2. Zootoponyms or the names of animals that probably live or used to live in the region;
3. Phytotoponyms or the names of the plants;
4. Anthrotoponyms or the names of specific individuals who bear cultural or historical significance for the area and could be its founders or rulers;
5. Hydrotoponyms are the names of the rivers, seas and springs of the area;
6. Cosmotoponyms are the names of the celestial bodies;
7. Mythotoponyms are the names of the mythical heroes and figures;
8. Memotoponyms are named in memory of some individual in a city or a residency;
9. Theotoponyms are derived from a religious figure or concept;
10. Emmigrotoponyms are based on the migration of a group of people who name their new habitat after their former dwelling place;
11. Pathrotoponyms are formed directly from the surnames of some families and individuals.

Studying Mazandarani toponyms can reveal various aspects of the topological, historical, social, cultural, and political realities of Mazandaran and its inhabitants. Due to the relatively undocumented history of the language, Mazandarani toponyms involve considerable ambiguity regarding their meaning and etymology. The Current Mazandarani language is a northwestern Iranian language. It retains Old and Middle Iranian lexical items and grammatical features but significantly borrows from New Persian, which has been the dominant language of literary production and the lingua franca of the Iranian plateau.

In this study, the focus is on exploring the meaning and etymology of six Mazandarani toponymic suffixes. Mazandaran, formerly known as Tabarestan, a southern Caspian littoral province, preserves a rich lexicon of ancient vocabulary due to its well-protected territory by the Alborz Mountains, which shield it from internal and external invasions and military attacks. Therefore, Mazandarani, known as Tabari, the northwestern Iranian language spoken in Mazandaran, features Middle and Old Iranian vocabulary, including Avestan and Middle Iranian lexical items and borrowings (Borjian, 2021). Spoken by approximately two and a half million people, Mazandarani is the only Iranian language with recorded written literature dating back to medieval times. Materials written in Mazandarani include Nikināme, Marzbānnāme, Bāvandnāme, and many Koranic exegeses and translations, although some have been later translated into Persian and others no longer exist (Borjian 2021; Najafzadeh 1989).

1.2. Grammaticalisation

As Hopper and Traugott (2003) and Heine (1993) state, grammaticalisation suggests that content words change meaning and acquire a grammatical function. This process is often unidirectional from concrete to abstract. Over this process, a word undergoes different types and stages of change. Parameters of grammaticalisation include desemanticization, also called bleaching; the process in which a word experiences loss or generalisation of its older content meaning; decategorisation or loss of morphosyntactic properties characteristic of lexical or other, less grammaticalised forms; citisisation, the situation when one

word in rapid speech blends with the next word and depends on another word phonologically, such as 'em in them, and finally, erosion or phonetic reduction and loss of phonetic features.

1.3. Semantic Change

One type of linguistic change is the alteration of meaning, which occurs over time mainly due to external factors. It is often classified into six main categories: Generalisation, Specialisation, Amelioration, Pejoration, Metaphor, and Metonymy. Semantic expansion broadens the range of a word's meaning, covering a broader scope than a specific instance. For example, the borrowed word *arrive* originally meant to reach a river in France, but in English today, it means to reach any place.

Conversely, semantic reduction or specialisation narrows a word's scope from a general area to a more specific, limited one, such as the English word *hound*, which initially referred to all types of dogs but now denotes only a particular type of hound. The enhancement or deterioration of a word's implied meanings gives it positive or negative connotations, affecting its emotional impact. For example, the word *queen* used to refer to women generally, but now denotes explicitly a female monarch, exemplifying semantic amelioration. Conversely, *villain* originally meant a villager or farmer, but today, it carries an offensive connotation of an evil, selfish person. In metaphorical usage, a word is employed because of a perceived similarity; for example, *head* refers to both the upper part of the body and the beginning or leader of something. Additionally, it is permissible to substitute one word for another based on some relationship, especially the whole-to-part or part-to-whole relationship, such as using *White House* to mean the residents of the White House or the US Board of Governors (Trask 2003; Dirksen 2008; Geeraerts 2010).

2. Literature Review

Several studies have addressed toponymy in Iran and, more narrowly, Mazandarani toponyms. Toponymic research in Iran has mainly concentrated on typology and morphological structure. Ahadian (2010) offers a linguistic definition of toponymy, proposes a method for analysing lexical elements, and presents a classification procedure for toponyms. However, focused studies on the Mazandarani language and its place-names remain comparatively scarce. Early European work was undertaken by the Polish Iranologist Aleksander Chodzko - the first European scholar to study Persian folklore - who investigated southern Caspian dialects and poetry, including material relevant to Mazandarani (*Encyclopaedia Iranica*, n.d.).

Subsequent local scholarship expanded the lexicographic and etymological base: Kia (1948) compiled a thematic list of Mazandarani vocabulary using the Persian alphabet; Houmand (1989) sketched the history of Mazandarani and discussed its phonology, morphology, syntax, and the etymology of selected items; Hejazi Kenari (1995) produced a concise Mazandarani lexicon with Pahlavi and other ancient-Iranian cognates; Mahdipour Omrani (2003) examined numerous Pahlavi elements in Mazandarani using textual sources; Koulaian (2008) offered a comparative etymology of Mazandarani–Sanskrit agricultural terms; and Borjian (2020) explored particular suffixes (e.g., “sul,” “us”) and discussed the element “div” in Mazandarani toponyms.

Tame (2020) analysed the morphological structure of Iranian toponyms, distinguishing simple from complex names and arguing that complex toponyms contain at least two semantically independent units - one of which may fossilize as a topoformant (a toponymic suffix) over time. Finally, through etymological analysis of many Baboli items, Fanaie, Hajiani, and Mahmoudi (2016) showed that some Mazandarani lexical items descend directly from Middle Persian and, in a few cases, ultimately from Avestan and Sanskrit.

3. Methodology

Mazandarani toponymy shows cases of semantic ambiguity in addition to the case of toponyms without a clear recorded meaning, neither in Mazandarani as the vernacular language nor in Persian as the historically official language of the region. Part of this semantic ambiguity relates to the vernacularity of Mazandarani and the lack of solid written records by which its linguistic history and developments could be distinguished and estimated. The present article attempts to conduct a diachronic, comparative and etymological research into the meanings of six Mazandarani toponymical suffixes that are semantically ambiguous to provide their meanings and etymology.

In order to collect data for the present research, four administrative districts were randomly chosen from the western, central and eastern regions of Mazandaran, providing 1184 rural toponyms, including compound and straightforward toponyms, out of 3035 Mazandarani toponyms attributed to rural areas. The choice of toponyms from rural areas was, firstly, due to their abundant number in contrast to 22 cities, and secondly, rural toponyms faced less linguistic standardisation and assimilation. Reviewing 1184 rural toponyms and excluding simple toponyms, 43 suffixal units were derived, of which 6 suffixal units were selected for analysis due to their ambiguous meaning, as the rest of the suffixal units, which were found, had clear and consistent meaning either in Mazandarani, Persian or even Arabic. Based on the frequencies counted within this list, kelā scored the highest with a total number of 196, -ābād 58, -mahalle 54, -deh 35, -keti 31, -ān 26, -si 25, -sar 22, -ben 19, -ek 18, -dašt 9, -serā 7, -sere 4, -marz 2, -māl 2, -pel 2. The other suffixes include -u 6, -(e)stān 3, -jār 5, -pey 4, -kaš 8, -xeyl 6, -lu 5, -in 1, -un 4, -em 1, -im 1, -um 1, -ām 2 , -et 1, -kuh 1, -kade 2, -restāγ 2, -taxt 2, āb 1, -gāh , -pošt 4, -kande 3, -rud 7, -band 2, -late 2, -darre 3, -čāl 8. Then, to shed light on the meaning and etymology of the selected suffixes, they were looked up in prominent books and dictionaries in the field of Indo-European, Iranian, Balto-Slavic and Germanic linguistics, such as Pokorny's seminal work Indogermanisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch, together with Mallory and Adam's Encyclopedia of Indo-European Culture, specifically for Indo-European roots and sound correspondences. As for the Iranian semantics, etymology and sound correspondences, Hassandoust's An Etymological Dictionary of the Persian Language in five volumes, Khanlari's The History of the Persian Language, along with Dehkhoda's Persian encyclopedic dictionary in sixteen volumes, were drawn on. For Balto-Slavic and Germanic etymology, Vasmer's Russisches Etylologisches Wörterbuch, descriptive and etymological Oxford dictionaries and The Danish Dictionary (ordnet.dk) were studied respectively.

In order to start the analysis, the toponymical suffixes in question were studied based on grammaticalisation mechanisms and processes by Hopper and Traugott (2003) and Heine (1993), such as decategorisation, desemanticization, cliticisation and erosion. The semantic change processes were also studied, as stated by Trask (2003) and Geeraerts (2010). Investigating the data according to grammaticalisation and semantic change mechanisms and processes could clarify possible changes to toponymical suffixes. Next, referring to etymological and explanatory dictionaries, the meanings of the lexical units and suffixes were studied, compared and contrasted to related and unrelated Indo-European roots. Part of the study was based on the first-hand investigation of the article's author as a Mazandarani inhabitant and native-speaker.

4. Etymological Analysis

-sar, -serā,

The toponymical suffix, *-sar*, appears in place names such as Bābolsar, Anbārsar, Čāksar, Yānesar, Kiāsar, Čeftesar, Otağsar, Bādābsar, Xānesar, Visar, Kandusar, Čelāsar, and Tilpardeāsar, stretching across the eastern to the western regions of Mazandaran. It closely resembles another suffix *serā/sarā*, found in

toponyms like *Serjeserā, Polserā, Ketāleserā, Tuleserā, Kelāgerserā, and Gaznāserā*. In modern Persian and Mazandarani, *sar* usually means *head* or a bodily organ, with connotations such as *chief, peak, beside of, on top of, between, and beginning*. This relates to Middle Persian *sar*, derived from Old Iranian **sarah*, and connected to Sanskrit *śíras* and Proto-Indo-European **kḗr-,* with parallels in Latin *cerebrum* and New German hirn (Hassandoust, 2016). *-Sar* is also used in combinations like *bāğ-esar* (garden), *sere(-e)sar* (house), and *zamin(-e)sar* (farm, field), emphasising the idea of place and land. The suffix *-sar* in these toponyms and compounds cannot be linked to the meanings related to the bodily organ *head*' or its connotations. Etymological research suggests that *-sar* as a suffix for place names might be related to the Proto-Indo-European **kḗls-*, originally meaning a (store) room, with cognates such as Latin *cella*, English *hal*', Greek *Kalīā́*, and Sanskrit *śāla* (Mallory and Adams, 2006). This reflects phonetic correspondences like Indo-European **k̂* to Iranian *s*, **ē* to *ā*, and **l* to *r* (Mallory and Adams, 1997, p. 305). The semantic shift may be due to metonymical generalisation, where the original meaning of room or storeroom expanded to signify any place. Notably, the word for house in Mazandarani is *sere* (Nasri Ashrafi, 2002). However, no evidence exists to determine whether Mazandarani *sere* is a borrowed and altered form of Persian *sarā* or a native inheritance from Indo-European **kḗls-*. Additionally, *serā* in Mazandarani today refers to a shepherd's cottage in mountain regions, whereas Persian *sarā(y)* means *house*, *dwelling*, or *castle*. If *serā* in Mazandarani toponyms is borrowed from Persian *sarā*, it likely descends from Middle Persian *srād*/*srāi*, related to Old Iranian **srāda,* rooted in *sar-* meaning *to cover* or *to protect* (Hassandoust, 2016). Conversely, *sarā(y)* is associated with the Gothic *hrōt,* meaning *cover*, which was borrowed into Turkish as *sārāy* with meanings such as *castle*, *house*, or *manger* (Vasmer, 1958), due to semantic change. If this were the case, then -sar could be the end result of the dropping final *a* due to the erosion process converting *-sarā* to *-sar*. Another hypothesis links the root *-sar* to the Indo-European **ser-* meaning *to flow*, with cognates like Sanskrit *saŕā* (river, stream, brook), Avestan *haraiva* (flowing), related to *hāre* (river) (Pokorny, 1959). Rivers, a prominent feature in forming settlements and place names, especially in rainy and humid regions like Mazandaran and nearby Gilan, support this theory. However, this is less probable, especially considering the presence of other Indo-Iranian lexical items in the region, such as sur and *suraj* meaning *sun* (rendered as *serā*'), *raukma* meaning *light* or *brightness* (*rokne*), *vāsu* meaning *goddess* (*vāsu*), and *Jaina* goddess (*jene)* in toponyms like *Surkelā, Serājkelā, Roknekelā, Vāsukelā, and Jene* (standardised based on folk etymology as *joneyd*).

-kelā

Kelā is probably the most common toponymical suffix used in many Mazandarani toponyms such as *Qādikelā, Vestekelā* and *Xermākelā*. Lexically *Kelā* means a village, settlement in Mazandarani (Nasri Ashrafi, 2002). It is believed to be related to *kalāya* and *kalāt* (hence Arabic *qalʔat* قلعة fortress) which means *castle* or *big village* which has been built on top of a mountain or a heap. Thefore, it is related to **kata-* considering the conversion of *-t-> *-d-> *-δ-> *-l- (Hassandoust, 2016). Mazandarani *kelum* (*pen, barn*), *keli* (*roost)* (Nasri Ashrafi, 2002), Kurdish *kol* barn (Sharafkandi, 1990: 638) and Luri *kola* nest, shelter (Sarlak, 2002: 214) could be other related variants from this root. Actually, **kata-* is derived from Old Iranian **kataka-* that means *house, home, room* being derived from the root *kat-* meaning *cover, protect, surround*, which is itself derived from Indo-European **kot-*/**ket-* which means *house, settlement* and is probably related to English *cot* from Old Teutonic **kotum* that means *small house, cottage* (Onions, 1992, Oxford Dictionary, 2009). The suffix *-kelā* is seen in toponyms in the Caucasus region in the Georgian *Nārikālā Fortress*, the Dagestani capital *Māxāčkālā* and the Kabardino-Balkarian city of *Nārtkālā* as well. Armenian *k'alak* and Georgian *k'alak'i* are related to this suffix though according to H übschmann the

Armenian word could be derived from Syraic *karxā* (Hassandoust, 2016). The Indo-European root **kel/kelə* to *tower, be high, hill*, OE. *Hyll*, Ger. *Holm*, Lith. *Keliu, kélti (heave, life)*, also Lith. *Kalvà* (*small hill*) and Latv. *Kalva (hill, river island*) could be relevant to this suffix (Pokorny, 1959). The latter Lith. *kélti* particularly draws attention when the word *keti,* in the Mazandarani language means *hill* (Nasr Ashrafi, 2002) and is also used as a suffix to form village toponyms in Mazandaran such as *Ketilate, Ketisar, Čemāzketi, Efrāketi, Bisketi, A ğuzketi, Palemket*i. The other Mazandarani word *keli* means *nest/roost* especially for poultry such as *kerk-keli* meaning *henhouse*. There is a visible change of meaning from a concrete *high spatial position* (tower, hill) to a broader abstract sense of *place* due to desemanticization in the toponymical suffix *-kelā*. Also, its usage as a topoformant is a clear instance of decategorization process.

-pel

-Pel is used as a toponymical suffix in many Mazandarani place names such as *Gālešpel, Efrāpel, Gerjipel, Akāpel, and Čalupel*. At first glance, *pel* is similar to the Persian *pol* and Mazandarani homonym *pel*, meaning *bridge*, which is related to Middle Persian *puhl*, descended from Old Iranian **pṛtu-* from *par-* present in Mazandarani toponyms *Tilpardesar* and *Pardesar*, where the term *–parde* is the remnant of the Old Iranian *pol* that means bridge from Indo-European **pṛ-tu-/*per-tu/*por-tu* in turn being related to **per* meaning *to cross*, cognate with Latin *portus*, German *furt* and English *ford* (Hassandoust, 2016). However, the other etymology could be related to **pel*^{h} meaning *fortified place, city*, with cognates such as Greek *polis* that means *city, citadel*, and Sanskrit *pūr* seen as the second part of the Nagpur, Jaipur and Singapore. This root is also attested in Lithuanian *pilìs* and Latvian *pile*, meaning *city, lock* (Mallory and Adams, 2006; Pokorny, 1959). The evidence here for this interpretation comes from the fact that in some areas where these toponyms are used, there has been no river, massive body of water, or any topological condition for the construction of bridges. Also, some of these toponyms are named after tribes and communities, such as *Gerjipel*, where *Gerji* means *Georgian* in Mazandarani, and *Gālešpel*, where *gāleš* means a *stock-farmer* living in mountainous areas and forests (Nasri Ashrafi, 2002). The semantic change from *fortified place, city* to *place* and from being a common noun to a suffix are instances of desemanticization and decategorization respectively.

-marz

-marz is attached to several names and has formed toponyms such as *Lalemarz, Enārmarz, Zāğmarz, Nargesmarz, Miānkolmarz*. Lexically, *marz* means *border, land*, or *area* in Persian and is related to Middle Persian *marz*, descended from Old Iranian ** marza*, which comes from the Proto-Indo-European **merĝ-/mereĝ-*. This includes Old English *mearc*, Danish *mark*, Old High German *marcha*, and Old Irish *mruig* (Pokorny, 1959; Oxford Dictionary, 2009; Onions, 1992). In Danish, *mark* signifies a larger area of land used for growing crops or grazing livestock (ordnet.dk). The exact usage can be attributed to Mazandarani; for example, in the toponyms such as *Lalemarz, Enārmarz, and Nargesmarz*, *lale* means *reed; enār* means *pomegranate*, and *narges* means *lily, daffodil*. These toponyms could therefore refer to the land or field where reeds, pomegranates, and lilies grow. Other instances of Scandinavian *mark* include Finnmark and Telemark. Evidently the semantic change from *border* to *land* in general in an instance of metonymical generalization due to desemanticization. Also, the change from a common noun to a function word as a suffix is an instance of decategorization.

-māl

The Mazandarani toponymical suffix *-māl* appears in *Umāl, Kenesmāl*, and *Le(h)māl*. According to standard Persian dictionaries, *māl* is an Arabic noun borrowed into Persian, meaning belongings, property, cattle, capital, cash, and figuratively referring t o gold and silver, which are unrelated to toponymy. In Mazandarani, *u* signifies water, *Kenes* refers to *medlar*, a plant known scientifically as *Mespilus germanica*, and *le(h)* indicates *sediment*, the soft clay remaining after floods. *-māl* could stem from the root **mel/melə/mo*lā, meaning *increase, high, or riverbank*, and the New Persian *bar* (side) derived from Avestan *varu/vouru*, related to Sanskrit *uru* meaning *width* (Hassandoust, 2016). Furthermore, - *māl* might relate to Latvian *mala*, meaning *edge, riverside*, or *area*, as in *jūrmala*, which signifies *sea-coast*; and Lithuanian *malà* and *pamalis*, meaning land or border respectively. Another Mazandarani term, *male,* meaning village or residence (Nasri Ashrafi, 2002), could be a borrowing from the Arabic *mahalle*. Notably, Latvian *jūrmala* and Lithuanian *malà* align well with the use of *-māl* in Mazandarani toponyms, where for example, in *Umāl,* the second element could imply *bank* or *shore*, thus meaning *riverside*. In *Kenesmāl*, it might denote *land* or *field,* suggesting *medlarfield*. The German equivalent is *ufer*, meaning *riverbank*, which correlates with *Umāl* considering the correspondence among *m, b, f,* and *l, r* (Khanlari, 2003) based on the cognateness of Mazandarani-*māl*, Persian *bar*, and German *fer* (Pokorny, 1959; Mallory and Adams, 2006). The Persian *bar/bār* means *edge* or *coas*t, as in *daryābār*, meaning *sea-coast* (Dehkhoda Dictionary). *-māl* used as a toponymical suffix shows instances of desemanticization and decategorization.

5. Conclusion

The present research provided meaning and etymology for six semantically ambiguous toponymical suffixes exclusively used in Mazandaran and demonstrated that these suffixes were all related to Indo-European roots; however, due to grammaticalisation and semantic change processes, they acquired altered phonetic forms or semantic content. The research highlights the role and significance of regional dialects in examining lost etymologies and linguistic archaisms due to the less standardisation and preservation of older linguistic materials. The study showed that grammaticalisation and semantic change mechanisms, as stated by Hopper and Traugott (2993), Heine (1993), Trask (2003) and Geeraerts (2010), have occurred concerning the suffixes investigated in this research, particularly through the processes of decategorisation, desemanticization, erosion and metonymical generalisation. An example is the case of the common noun *marz* (border), which, based on decategorisation, lost its grammatical part of speech as a common noun and converted to a functional word as a suffix, also based on desemanticization and metonymical processes (synecdoche), underwent meaning change from the meaning *border* to a broader sense of *land*. The research results were consistent with Tame's (2020) conclusion that some toponymical suffixes started as ordinary lexical items that, through later semantic changes, gained their current function as toponymical suffixes. For instance, words such as *kelā* (*village*), *marz* (*border, field*), *male* (*villag*e), and *keti* (*hill*) are mainly Mazandarani words also utilised as suffixes in place names. The research also showed that equivalent suffixes were used similarly by other members of the Indo-European language family, particularly in the Germanic and Balto-Slavic groups, with which Indo-Iranian languages shared a common homeland. The employment of similar concepts *like house, hill, castle, bridge, border*, as well as lexical items like German *ufer*, Mazandarani *umāl*, and Lithuanian *jurmala,* reveals inherited genetic features and tendencies in word formation and borrowings - two active mechanisms of toponymization. Moreover, the coexistence and use of different related phonetic forms with relatively consistent meanings of the toponymical suffixes may reflect the influence of multiple waves of Indo-Iranian migrants settling in various parts of Mazandaran, the potential preservation of Indo-European archaic forms in their languages, and the later dominance of Persian as the lingua franca across the Iranian or Persian plateau.

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