



BĪD I. THE WORD

i. The Word

New Persian *bīd* (earlier *bēd*, Middle Persian *wēt*, Avestan *vaēti* (fem.) “willow (branch),” cf. Old Indian *veta* (masc.) “aquatic climbing plant” or “branch,” Greek *itēa*, Latin *vitis* “vine,” Old High German *wīda*, are all derived from Indo-European **wei-t-* “to turn, bend, wind.” In modern Iranian dialects the word takes forms such as Kurdish *vī* or *bī*, Baluchi *gēt*, Pashto *wala* (see *AirWb.*, col. 1314; *Grundriss* I, 2nd ed., pp. 49, 299, and elsewhere; Mayrhofer, *Dictionary* III, pp. 254f.; G. Morgenstierne, *An Etymological Vocabulary of Pashto*, Oslo, 1927, p. 86; Horn, *Etymologie* and Hübschmann, *Persische Studien*, no. 251; Pokorny, p. 1122; W. Eilers, *Westiranische Mundarten aus der Sammlung Wilhelm Eilers* I (Kvānsārī), p. 5 n. 8 on p. 6, p. 388, and II [Gazi], p. 643).

The concept of “turning, bending, winding” which underlies New Pers. *bīd* and German *Wiede* reappears in English “willow” (from Anglo-Saxon *welig*), Dutch *wilg*, Greek *helikē*; but these are from Indo-European **weli-kā* and therefore from *wel* “to turn, wind” (Pokorny, p. 1141). Flexible willow shoots are still used today for making baskets, creels, etc. (*bīdbāft*).

The Armenian for “willow” is *urī*, and the Arabic is *ṣafṣāf* “tree which grows in rows” (Arabic *ṣaff*, Semitic ṢP), willows being usually planted in rows along water-courses. The Turkish for “willow” is *söğüt* (older *sögüt*), a word of uncertain etymology.

Willow trees are found in all the Iranian lands, mainly along streams and



canals, and since their leaves (*bīdbarg*) exhale a pleasant fragrance in the summer glare it is not surprising that place names with *bīd* should be widespread. In the following list (taken from Razmārā's *Farhang*) the *bīd* component of most of the names certainly means "willow": Bīd; with common suffixes Bīdak, Bīda, Bīdakān, Bīdān, Bīdača, Bīd(e)la, Bīdešk or Bīdešg, Bīdū, Bīdūk, Bīdū'iyā, Bīdābīd, and Bīdbīdak ("rich in willows"), Bīdestān; with attributives Bīdābād, Bīd-e Amīn, Bīd-e Boland, Bīdestakr, Bīdestū (in Baluchistan), Bīdgol, Bīd(e)kān, Bīdkvān, Bīdkvāb, Bīdkarakī, Bīdkayrī, Bīdkvor, Bīd-o-k(a)vīd, Bīdsarā, Bīd-e Sūkta, Bīd-e Sorḳ, Bīd-e Zāg, Bīd-e Zangol, Bīd-e Zard, Bīd-e Zarrīn, also Bēdvāz (mountain in Transoxiana, cited by Steingass), and several more which are debatable; with *bīd* as the second component, Ābbīd, Bāgbīd, Bāmbīd, Benābīd, Bonbīd, Čāhbīdū, Darbīd, Darabīd, Dehbīd, Gowdbīd Gowdbīdū'iyā, Kūšk(e)bīdak, Padabīd, Padabīda, Palabīd.

Words compounded with *bīd* given in the dictionaries are *bīdgīā* ("willow herb"), which means "artichoke," and *bīdgīāh* (the same), which is said also to mean "a bird" (= Arabic *tīl*, according to 'A.-A. Nafīsī, *Farhang-e Nafīsī* I, Tehran, 1355 Š./1976, p. 682); *bīdkeš* "a weapon" (made of willow wood?); *bīdmāl* "willow twigs used for cleaning or polishing"; *bīdvand*, a stone with medicinal uses. See ii, below, for names of different kinds of willow.

Like *bīd* in Iran, *söğüt* is a widespread toponym in Turkey. Twenty-six villages named simply *Söğüt* ("Willow") are listed in the *Köylerimiz* gazetteer. Also very common are *Söğütlü* (adjective, but perhaps a corruption of putative *söğtülük* "willow thicket"), *Söğütçük* (diminutive, cf. Pers. Bīdak), and compound names such as *Söğütalanı* "Willow Plain," *Söğütbel* and *Söğütgediği* "Willow Pass," *Söğütdere(si)* "Willow Valley" (cf. Darabīd and Darbīd in Iran), *Söğüteli* "Willow House."

In Armenian toponymy likewise, *urī* and *urēni* meaning "willow" often appear: e.g., *Urīk'* "Willow Thicket" (cf. Bīdestdān, *Söğütlü*), *Urēac' tap'* "Willow Plain" (cf. *Söğütalanı*), *Urēac' p'or* (cf. Darabīd, *Söğütdere*; see H. Hübschmann, "Die altarmenischen Ortsnamen," *IF* 17, 1904, pp. 197-490, esp. p. 462).

Finally it should be noted that *bīd* "larva" or "moth," the New Pers. homonym of *bīd* "willow," may in spite of the semantic difference be traced to the same Indo-European root *wei-t* "to turn" (Pokorny, 1120). Like willows, caterpillars bend and twist. Latin *vermis*, German *wurm*, English *worm*, from Indo-European **wṛmi/wṛmo*, similarly evoke the concept of turning and bending.



Bibliography : Given in the text.