



# DEZFŪLĪ AND ŠŪŠTARĪ DIALECTS

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Dezfūlī and Šūštarī are two closely related Persian dialects spoken by the indigenous inhabitants of Dezfūl and Šūštar in Kūzestān province. The sedentary Iranian communities of Kūzestān, the inhabitants of which speak Lor dialects for the most part, seem to be located in a band along the foothills of the Zagros. The plain to the south and west is largely populated by Arabs. Dezfūl (population 151,420 in 1368 Š./1989; Markaz-e āmār, 1368 Š./1989; see *i*, above) and Šūštar (population 26,173 in 1355 Š./1976; Markaz-e āmār, 1355 Š./1976), 55 km apart, are two non-Lor islands within this larger ensemble.

Accurate statistics on speakers of Dezfūlī and Šūštarī are not available. Furthermore, population figures are misleading, as Dezfūl has experienced considerable immigration in this century, and many speakers of the two dialects have migrated to such nearby cities as Ahvāz and Masjed-e Solaymān.

Dezfūlī and Šūštarī are clearly of the Southwest Iranian type (cf. Schmitt, ed., pp. 295, 341-49) but diverge sharply from standard Persian in phonology, morphology, and vocabulary. The differences are particularly striking in verbal morphology. Dezfūlī and Šūštarī share features with surrounding Lor dialects but are distinct from them. The differences between Dezfūlī and Šūštarī result primarily from variation in low-level phonological processes.



*Phonology.* Dezfūlī has an underlying seven-vowel system /ī, ē, e, a, ā, o, ū/ and Šūštarī a six-vowel system /ī, e, a, ā, o, ū/. Dezfūlī ū is pronounced with considerable fronting, except before *n* and *m*. Three additional phones, Dezfūlī [ō] and Šūštarī [ē, ō], are probably best considered surface realizations of other underlying phonemes. Dezfūlī ō is a tense, front-rounded midlevel vowel. Šūštarī has [no front-rounded vowels].

The vocalic systems of Dezfūlī and Šūštarī can be derived from an early New Persian type of system but have been rearranged by historic processes of raising, merger, fronting, and laxing. In both dialects early New Persian ō has merged with ū, as in *pūs* “skin” (Persian *pūst*). In Šūštarī, but not in Dezfūlī, early New Persian ē has merged with ī, as in Dezfūlī *dēr*, Šūštarī *dīr* “late” (Persian *dīr*). All tense vowels were laxed before *h*, as in Dezfūlī and Šūštarī *pe*: “fat,” *ka*: “straw,” *ko*: “mountain” (Persian *pīh*, *kāh*, *kūh*).

Under certain conditions early New Persian ō and ū were fronted to Dezfūlī-Šūštarī ī, as in *bīd* “he was,” *kī* “blood,” *rī* “face” (early N.Pers. *būd*, *kūn*, *rō(y)*). Such fronting is common in western Iranian dialects and appears to have occurred before dentals and historic *y* (which later disappeared). Fronting did not occur before labials, palatals, or velars, which suggests an assimilation process in which Dezfūlī and Šūštarī ū, presumably after early New Persian ō had merged with it, was fronted in anticipation of the fronted articulation of the dentals.

Early New Persian ā merged with ū before nasals, as in *dūna* “seed,” *dūm* “snare” (early New Persian *dāna*, *dām*), a process that could have occurred only after the fronting of ū to ī, as this secondary ū did not become ī.

The Dezfūlī and Šūštarī consonantal system is close to that of Persian, but the Arabic pharyngeals ʿ and há have been borrowed in Arabic loanwords. These phones occasionally also occur in words not of Arabic origin, for example ʿas “bone.” In both dialects the distinction between *q*, a voiceless velar stop, and *ḡ*, a voiced palatal fricative, is maintained, whereas in standard Persian the two have merged in a single phone, primarily realized as a voiced velar stop. Dezfūlī and Šūštarī *y* and *v* occur only in prevocalic position.

Postvocalic *b* was spirantized after *a*, *ā* in words of Iranian origin, for example, Dezfūlī and Šūštarī *var* “on” (early NPers. *abar*). Between vowels *d* and *g* have been dropped sporadically, as in *mār* “mother,” *kuak* “boy” (Pers. *mādar*, *kūdak* “child”).



The chief synchronic phonological processes in Dezfūlī and Šūštarī are the raising and fronting of low vowels by a following high vowel or glide and the reduction of syllable-final *y*, *w*, *n*, and *h*, as in *bēn* “between” (Ar. *bayn*); Dezfūlī *dōr*, Šūštarī *dōr* “around” (Ar. *dawr*); Dezfūlī *lō* and Šūštarī *lō* “lip,” Dezfūlī *ō*, Šūštarī *ō* “water” (Persian *lab*, *āb*) but Dezfūlī *lōva* and Šūštarī *lōwa* “lips”; Dezfūlī *ōva*, Šūštarī *ōwa* “waters”; and Šūštarī *ūmē* “you came” (< *ūma* + *i*) but *ūmēya* “you have come” (< *ūma* + *i* + *a*). A following *i* raises *ā* to Dezfūlī *ō*, Šūštarī *ō*, as in Dezfūlī *dōrī* “you (sg.) have” (Pers. *dārī*), Šūštarī *ōhī* “you come” (subj.). These processes work under different conditions in the two dialects.

In both Dezfūlī and Šūštarī the syllable-final *n* is deleted and the preceding vowel nasalized, as in *dēā:dū* “tooth.” Syllable-final *h* becomes vowel length, as in *ka*: “straw.”

*Morphology.* The morphology of nouns in Dezfūlī and Šūštarī exhibits more or less the same categories as colloquial Persian, though some of the devices differ. The plural suffixes are *-ū* and *-(h)ā*. The former is restricted to animate nouns; the latter may occur with either animate or inanimate nouns. The latter is realized as *-hā* after low vowels in Šūštarī and after the low tense vowel in Dezfūlī, for example, Šūštarī *kūnahā* “houses,” Dezfūlī and Šūštarī *piāhā* “men.” Otherwise it is realized as *-ā*, as in Dezfūlī and Šūštarī *asbā* “horses.” Dezfūlī *-ā* replaces the low, lax final vowel, as in *kūna* “house,” *kūnā* “houses.” Inanimate plural subjects take the plural verb, as in Šūštarī *ī ārdā bīzehes:en a* “this flour (pl.) has been sifted.”

The Dezfūlī and Šūštarī *ežāfa*, *-e*, functions as in Persian.

The antecedent of a restrictive relative clause is marked by the enclitics Dezfūlī *-ē*, Šūštarī *-ī*. An indefinite noun singled out from another indefinite noun or nouns is also marked with the enclitics, as in Dezfūlī *dasmāl-e sēa-ē bebā:dom* “I’ll tie on a black kerchief.”

In both dialects definite objects are marked with an enclitic suffix realized as *-na* after low vowels, *-a* otherwise, as in *kūnana* “the house,” *piāna* “the man,” *asba* “the horse.”

In both dialects there is also a contrastive suffix, stressed *-ka*, which, like colloquial Persian *-é*, singles out a definite noun and contrasts it with another noun or nouns, as in *doḡtarka mord* “the girl (as opposed to some other person understood in the discourse) died.” Both also have a deictive suffix, stressed *-*



(h)a, which may occur with the demonstrative adjective. The suffix is realized as *-ha* after low vowels, otherwise as *-a*, as in *ū dūnaha* “that seed,” *ū aspa* “that horse.”

When the contrastive or deictive suffixes are used no *ezāfa* is permitted between noun and adjective, as in Šūštarī *kuak-e kūčik* “small boy,” *kuak kūčik:a* “the small boy” and Šūštarī *kīf-e gap* “large sack,” *ū kīf gapa* “that large sack.”

The personal pronouns are Dezfūlī *mo, to, ū, omù, šomù, ūšù* and Šūštarī *mo, to, ū, amā, šamā, ūšù*. The objective and possessive pronouns are the enclitics *-(o)m, -(e)t, -(e)š, -(o)mù, -(e)tù, -(e)šù*. In both dialects the demonstrative adjectives are *ī* “this, these” and *ū* “that, those.” Both also have a separate category of demonstrative pronouns, that is, Dezfūlī *ha, ìa* (this), *hanù* (these), *hù, ūà* (that), *hūnù* (those); Šūštarī *(i)he, ìa* (this), *(ū)hù, ūà*, (that), *(ū)hūnù* (those). The adjectives *ī* and *ū* may also be used pronominally.

Dezfūlī and Šūštarī verbal morphology diverges from that of Persian in important ways. Alone among reported Persian dialects they have an unstressed modal prefix *be-* to mark the present indicative and past continuous, as in *bebīnom* “I see,” *bedīdom* “I used to see.” The present subjunctive is signaled by the absence of a prefix, as in *bīnom* “(that) I see.” Verbs based on the present stem are stressed on the personal endings; verbs based on the past stem are stressed on the last syllable of the stem, as in *begoróm*, “I take,” *goróftom* “I took,” *bego-róftom* “I was taking.”

In compound verbs the incorporated nominal constituent is stressed. If the incorporated constituent ends in a consonant, the verbal prefix is realized as *-e* and is closely attached to the nominal, as in *sēl-e konom* “I watch” (< *sēl* “watch”). If the incorporated constituent ends in a vowel, the verbal prefix is realized as *-b* and is closely attached to the nominal, as in *do‘ā-b konom* “I pray” (< *do‘ā* “prayer”). The same rules hold true when a direct object precedes a simple verb, as in *ketāb-e kūnom* “I read books” and Šūštarī *jūma-b pūšom* “I’m putting on a shirt.” When preceded by the negative prefix, stressed *na-*, the *-b* is nasalized, as in Dezfūlī and Šūštarī *namkerom* “I don’t buy.”

A handful of verbs take unstressed forms of *me-* as prefix, for example, Dezfūlī *maḵom*, Šūštarī *moḵom* “I want,” Šūštarī *merom* “I go.” In Dezfūlī both prefixes must occur with a few verbs, like *bemīām* “I come,” *bemīārom* “I bring.” Dezfūlī and Šūštarī *da-rom, dunom, tarom* “I have, know, am able” do not take the



prefix.

The personal endings for the present stem in Dezfūlī are *-(o)m*, *-ī*, *-a*, *-ēm*, *-ē*, *-(e)n*, in Šūštarī *-(o)m*, *-ī*, *-a*, *-īm*, *-īt*, *-(e)n*. The endings for the past stem are identical phonetically, except for the third-person singular, which is unmarked. The past endings are enclitic and are identical with present-tense forms of “to be.”

A past continuous is formed by prefixing *be-* to the past tense, as in *bekeridom* “I used to buy,” *keridom* “I bought.”

In preverbal formations the preverb occurs just before the verbal stem and is preceded by the negative and *be-*, as in Dezfūlī *bedervōrdeneš* “they would take it out” and Šūštarī *namvārsaden* “they would not get up” (< *na-* + *be-* + *varsād-* + *-en*).

Present and past perfects are formed from past-tense verbs plus present or past third-person singular of “be,” as in Dezfūlī and Šūštarī *raftom a* “I have gone,” *raftī a* “you have gone,” *raftom bid* “I had gone.” A formation corresponding to the Persian perfect construction (past participle + “to be”) is used with certain intransitive verbs, like “sit,” “stand,” and “sleep,” to show state of being, as in Šūštarī *varsādām*, *varsādē* “I am standing, you are standing” (< *varsada* + *-m*, *-ī*).

Inchoative forms expressing change of state or process are built on the simple present stem plus *-(e)h-es:a* (Mid. Pers. *-īhist*). The form is often attached to intransitives and can express futurity. The vowel before *h* is completely assimilated to the following vowel, as in Dezfūlī and Šūštarī *berasohom* “I arrive,” *berasīhī* “you arrive” Šūštarī *šā lerhes be vazīr* “the king turned to the minister,” and Dezfūlī *ō rēzehes zemī* “water spilled on the ground.”

There is a corresponding transitivizing morpheme *-(e)nīd* (Mid. Pers. *-ēnīd*), as in Dezfūlī and Šūštarī *časbenīdā* “to stick (something to something).” Inchoative and transitivized verbs often occur in pairs, for example, Šūštarī *tapehes mī botrī* “it got stuffed in the bottle” and *mo tabnīdomeš mī botrī* “I stuffed it in the bottle.”

The distinction between “be” and “become” is expressed with the inchoative. Dezfūlī *bies:ā* and Šūštarī *bues:ā* “become” are simply inchoativized forms of Dezfūlī and Šūštarī *bīdā* “be” (present stem *-bū-*), as in Šūštarī *garm a* “it is warm,” *garm-e bua*, “it’s getting warm,” *garm bues* “it got warm.” “Be” and



“become” are identical in the subjunctive, as in Šūštarī *buwom*, *buwi*, “I be, you be” and so on. Persian *šodan*, *gaštan* “become” and the subjunctive stem *bāš-* do not occur in Dezfūlī or Šūštarī.

The imperative is the simple stem in the singular and the stem plus personal ending in the plural, as in Dezfūlī and Šūštarī *iketāba kù* “read (you sg.) this book,” Dezfūlī *ī ketāba kūnē* (Šūštarī *kūnīt*) “read (you pl.) this book.” The imperative is negated by the stressed prefix *má-*.

Wishes may be expressed by a precative consisting of present stem + *-ā-*, as in Šūštarī *vanhām* “may I be placed.” The Dezfūlī and Šūštarī precative of “be” is based on the stem *bā-*, as in Dezfūlī and Šūštarī *bām* “I be,” Šūštarī *bō*, Dezfūlī *bōi* you (sg.) be.” Unreal conditions and wishes about the past are expressed with a verb in the past continuous that may have unstressed *-ē* as a suffix, as in Dezfūlī *aga ī ketāba beko:dom-ē* “if I had read this book.”

*Vocabulary.* The Dezfūlī and Šūštarī vocabulary is distinctively western Iranian, for example, *bes:-/beh-* “throw” (Pahl. *wistan*, *wih-*), Dezfūlī *bōi*, Šūštarī *bōhī* “arm” (Pahl. *Psalter b'dwky = bāhūg*), *bua* “father,” *es:a-/os:ūn-* “take,” *gap* “large,” *īsù*, *ūsù* “now, then,” *kot-ī* “a little,” *mēra* “husband” (Pahl. *mērag*), *mì* “in,” Dezfūlī and Šūštarī *nāhā* “in front of,” *piā* “man,” *pē* “with,” *pet* “nose,” *sī* “for” (Pers. *sū* “direction”), Dezfūlī *šù:d*, *šūn-* “throw” (Pers. *šānd* “winnow”), *tares:-/tar-* “able to,” *vā:d-/van* “put, place” (vs. Pers. *afkandan*), *zūna* “wife.”

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