



MEYMA II. THE DIALECT

MEYMA, district in central Persia, on the road leading north from Isfahan to Qom.

ii. The Dialect

Meyma district is at the heart of the area where the [Central dialects](#) are spoken. Almost the entire district has been resistant to Persian in favor of the local vernacular (see [ISFAHAN xx](#)). Meyma'i is a variety of the local dialects of Kashan district (see [KASHAN vi](#)) and shows many similarities with other Central dialects (henceforth CDs), but also some differences that will be emphasized in this entry. The dialect is known through the documentation of Ann K. S. Lambton (texts, 3,100 words, supplemented by a glossary and verb paradigms; Lambton, pp. 5-43), a list of words by M.-R. Majidi (pp. 61-64), and, on the question of grammatical gender, several sentences by Ehsan Yarshater (p. 741).

PHONOLOGY

The vowel phonemes of Meyma'i are similar to those of modern Persian, consisting of the tense set /â î û/ and the lax /a e o/, with ε , ɔ , ü as allophones in Lambton's phonetic transcription, plus the diphthongs /ō/ (with the allophone ō̄ ; *ow* in Majidi) and /ey/. Lack of stress marks in the available data hinders our knowledge of certain morphological traits. Notable among consonants are the pharyngeal [ħ] and [ʕ], while not properly phonemes, are pronounced in several words of Arabic origin: *rūḥ* "soul," *ḥosūla* "patience," *saḥbe* "morning,"



saḥbā “tomorrow,” *ʿamal* “performance,” *ʿešg* “love,” *ʿezat* “glory,” *ʿomr* “lifespan.”

Diachronics. While belonging to the Northwest (NW) group of Iranian languages, Meymaʿi also shows significant Southwest (SW) elements, as revealed in the following characteristic developments. OIr. *dz > /z/: *zun*– “know,” *zumād* “son-in-law,” *heze* “yesterday,” *ezma* “firewood.” *dw- > /b/: *bar* “door,” (*a*)*bi* “other.” *y-, *wy- > /y/: *ye* “barley,” *yedā* “alone,” and *yā* “place,” also in *kuā* “where” and *yāgā* “quilt.” *θr > /r/: *pūr* “son,” *ṣr* “mill,” *owīre* “pregnant.” *j- is retained in *jan* “woman, wife,” *jande/a* “alive.” *-č- > /j/: *jīr* “under,” *rūjegār* “era” (but *rū* “day”), *tājī* “greyhound” (cf. Mid. Pers. *tāzīg* “swift”), *tājn*– “make run,” *dar-āvij*– “hang,” *rīj*– “pour,” *suj*– “burn,” *vāj* “call,” **vaj*– “dig,” **verūj*– “flee,” *-ji* “also,” and probably *tājah* “fresh”; note also *nomā* “prayers,” *pīč*– “cook.” *-rz, -rd > /l/ (a SW reflex in CDs, Meymaʿi included), as in *hal*– “put; allow.” *r > /l/ is found in *salt* “ladder” (< **sarta*-), *valk/varg* “leaf,” *dīvāl* “wall,” *xīyāl* “cucumber,” *zenjīl* “chain,” *pīlāsāl* “year before last.” The IE *l- may have been retained in *lū* “fox.” OIr. *-g > SW /w/ or zero: *rūa(n)* “ghee” (< **rōwan* < OIr. **raugna*-), *dōrū* “lie” (cf. Mid. Pers. *drō(w)*; Pth. *drōy*), *čērā* “lamp,” *gelo/ā* “crow,” but *tīg* “blade.”

*hw- is reduced to /x/ or /h/, with the succeeding vowel rounded: *xō*–/hō(i) “self,” *mamxōsrū* “mother-in-law” and *bāxsūra* “father-in-law” (< *mām/bāb* + OIr. **xwasura*-aka- < IE **swekuro*-), *āhun* “heap of threshed grain” (< *ā- + **hwah* “strike, thresh”; Cheung, pp. 141-43), *xōs*– : *xōst*–/hōst– “hit; throw” (< **hwah*-; *ibid*); but *vōt*– “sleep,” in spite of the noun *xo* “sleep.” *x-, *h- > /h/: *hūše* “cluster,” *harmīze* “melon,” *hesenje* “broom” (Jowš. *hasenjen xas* “small chip of wood” + **θanj*-), *hōle* “hole” (cf. Pers., Gilaki *xol*, Sivandi *fale*, Kurdish *kōl*), *hālu* (< Arabic *xāl*) “uncle.” *-xm- has shrunk to /m/ in *tum* “seed.”

The Mid. WIr. clusters *xr-, *fr- > /hVr/: *hurūs* “cock,” *herin*– : *heri*– “buy”; *hōrūš* “sale,” and the preverb *hā*– (< **frā*-), which is also found frozen in *hemer*– : *hema*– “break” (< **fra*- + **marH*) and *heran*– : *herāst*– “weave” (cf. Jowšaqāni *rān*– : *rāst*-). *-xr- > hr > /r, l/: *sūr* “red,” *ta()**l* “sour,” *estāl* “pool,” *čargīna* (< **čaxr-gōna*) “[round] basket.” — *-xt-, *-ft- > /t/: *dōt* “daughter,” *dar-āvīt* “hang,” *horut*– “sell,” *pat*– “cook,” *ret*– “pour,” *sōt*– “burn,” *vat*– “pull out,” *vā*– “say,” *pīt*– “twist” (< **pēxt*-), and possibly *rūt/rūt* “naked” (Pers. *lut*, *loxt*); *kat*– “fall,” *gat*– “seize,” *vōt*– “sleep”; note *bāft* “boasting” (cf. *bāf* in Pers. *zand-bāf* “nightingale,” Sogd. *wʿb* “say,” Av. *uf*– “sing”; see Cheung, p. 401), with the Perside reflex *w- > /b/, thereby a loanword. — *št, *st remain: *estāl* “pool,” *estāre* “star,” *kost*– “pound,” *herāst*– “weave,” *xōst*– “hit; throw,” *bast*– “close,”



fesest- “rupture,” *kast-* “dig,” *čāšt* “morning,” *ošto* “haste,” *angašt-* “look,” *hašt-* “put,” *rešt-* “spin,” *šōšt-* “wash,” *vāšt-* “run,” *vīšt-* “find,” *vōdašt-* “pass”; *hā-čāšt/d-* “sit,” *vā-šd-* : *šdā-* “stand.” — *š is lost in the nasal cluster *šN only in *čam* “eye,” *vaša* “hungry,” but not in *tašna* “thirst,” *ešnās-* “recognize,” as in Jowšaqāni.

Mid. WIr. *w- remains: *vī-* “without,” *vad* “bad,” *vīdār* “awake,” *vād* “wind,” *vārūn* “rain,” *valk* “leaf,” *vādu* “almond,” *vīt* “willow tree,” *vare/a* “lamb,” *vače* “child,” *vāhār* “spring,” *vedar* “better,” *vīš(tar)* “more,” *viya* “widow,” *vāj* “voice,” *vin-* “see,” *vaz-* : *vašt-* “run”; *vaša* “hungry,” **verūj-* “flee,” **vōder-* : **vōdašt-* “pass”; but *gōrg* “wolf,” **fesenj-* : *fesest-* “rupture.” — The final and medial *d is lost in *kia* “house,” *kōiya* “game,” *kue/a* “dog,” *kōmina* “which (one),” *māye* “female,” *rōxūne* “river,” *zū* “quickly,” *čā(r)šō* “veil,” *heri-* “buy,” *di-* “see,” *diār* “apparent,” *šo-* “go,” with as many counter-examples: *esbīd* “white,” *vad* “bad,” *vedar* “better,” *vād* “wind,” *vādu* “almond,” *vīdār* “awake,” *yedā* “alone,” *zumād* “son-in-law,” *-ida* verb ending 2nd pl. (Table 1), **vōder-* : **vōdašt-* “pass,” and *vīt* “willow tree,” where /t/ is a devoiced /d/. This dichotomy of loss vs. retention of an original *d clearly shows the superposition of two different developments in Meyma’i. — Loss of final consonants is common: *šū* “husband,” *lō* “flood” (cf. Pers. *lāy*); *mā* “month,” *n-* : *nā-* “put”; *čī* “thing”; *mele* “grasshopper”; adposition *de* (< *dar*; but *dūr* “far”), including the loss of final nasals: *ker* “worm,” *vādu* “almond,” *nū-zade* “fiancée,” *čupu* “shepherd,” *gertekū* “walnut” (cf. Pers. *gerdakān*), *pasī* “afternoon,” *tamo* “skirt” (cf. Pers. *tonbān* < **tanu-pāna-*), *zamī* “earth” (cf. Pers. *zami(n)*, Mid. Pers. *zamīg*).

Old labials are absorbed into adjacent vowels, yielding the long vowel /ō̄/ or the short /o/: *āP > /ō̄/: *ō* “water,” (also in *golo* “pear,” *dūšo* “syrup”), *owīre* “pregnant,” *xo* “sleep,” *ošto* “haste,” *awto* “sun” (< *tāp-, also found in *tovestun* “summer,” *towa* “frying pan”), while *gā* “cow” retains the quality of the old vowel; *āP > /ō̄/: *ōr* “cloud,” *šō* “night,” *lō* “at,” *kōk* “partridge,” *kōš* “shoe”; also *sōz* “green.”

Vowels. Three vertical layers can be identified: archaistic, modern, and innovative. This is illustrated by the Mid. WIr. *ē, which is retained as /e/ (*mera* “husband”; cf. Mid. Pers. *mērak* “young man, husband”), raised to /i/ under the possible influence of western Persian (*pīšīn* “midday”), or further developed to [ü] (*düm* “face”). — Another interesting development is that of OIr. *aka, via Mid. WIr. *-ak*, which has yielded both /-a/ and /-e/, with nearly even distribution among the inherited words of the dialect. This would be



highly unusual without considering the possibility of an underlying gender distinction (see below), although no correlation can be established, e.g. *püre* “boy,” *dōte* “girl,” *vačē* “child,” *dade* “brother” (cf. *dādā* “sister”), *mēra/e* “husband,” *dadamira* “husband’s brother,” *xāmira* “husband’s sister,” *axe* “man,” *māne* “mother,” *bɔɛ* “husband,” *bābāgūrde* “grandfather,” *bāxsūra* “father-in-law,” *owīre* “pregnant,” *hɔle* “hole,” *ruwa* “day,” *golū’e* “socks”; *viya* “widow,” *māye* “female.”

NOUN MORPHOLOGY AND SYNTAX

Nouns are marked with (1) *-ā* in the plural, as in *karkā* “birds,” *čamɔ* “eyes”; (2) *-e/-i* in an *ežāfa* construction, although it is not genuine to the dialect; (3) *-ī/-e*, especially when accompanied by *ye* “one,” to become indefinite: *ye jan-i/e bo* “there was a woman”; (4) *-e* (likely to be stressed, as in colloquial Persian) to become definite, *dūme* “the picture”; (5) *-ā/ε* (< Pers. *-rā*) to be signified as a definite object: *bāft-e hɔsn-e xɔšɛš-ε ake* “she was boasting of her beauty,” *tā mɔn īn mard-ā jande-š vɔkerɔn* “that I may turn this man alive” (otherwise unmarked: *mun bebe* “take me!” *īn māyegā xeb bemrūt* “I sold this cow well”). However, the distinction among the categories 3, 4, and 5 is not always clear, particularly when stress patterns are unknown. The problem becomes more complicated if we assume a faint trace of gender distinction in Meyma’i, on the grounds that its immediate northern neighbor, Jowšaqān (see [JOWŠAQĀN ii. The Dialect](#)), is one of the few known among the Central dialects that have best preserved this grammatical feature. Yarshater finds no trace of gender distinction in Meyma’i, but he construes the definition markers masc. *-a* and fem. *-e* for the animate accusative, from the examples *in quč-a/asm-a sarberbin* “slaughter this ram/horse” vs. *boz-e sarberbin* “slaughter the goat,” *in boz-e beba* “carry this goat,” although the assumption is vitiated in *in miš-a behrinda* “buy you this ewe” (Yarshater, p. 741, fn. 40). Further counter-examples to gender distinction can be drawn from Lambton’s documentation, e.g. *karg-a de mɔn de!* “give me the hen!” (See also a discussion on gender distinction under Diachronics, above.)

Pronouns. Independent pronouns are *mɔn*, *to*, *un*, *hōmɔ*, *šomā*, *un(h)ā*. Enclitic pronouns (Set II in Table 1) function as possessives (P), direct objects (DO), indirect objects (IO), and agents (A) in past transitive verbs (see below). Exx.: *ungūšt jele čam-š-εš dā* (P, A) “he held fingers before his eyes,” *yak daḡīḡa-t mohlat hānadɔn* (IO) “I won’t give you a moment’s extension,” *juwāb-š-εšun dā* (A, IO) “he gave them the answer.” As objects the enclitic pronouns may infix the verb: *a-m-xusenda* (DO) “they are beating me,” *hā-t-dun* (IO) “that I give to



you,” *hə-š-adun* (DO) “I give it” or (IO) “I give to him,” *be-m-ešun-xəst* (DO, A) “they struck me.”

The reflexive is *xə* – absorbs enclitic pronouns to function as an (1) emphatic: *xəm bamgī šo Šīrāz de* “I myself have to go to Shiraz”; (2) possessive: *pür-ε xəš₁-εš₂ aba* “he₂ would take his₁ son”; (3) direct object: *bāft-ε xəd neke!* “don’t boast about yourself”; (4) object of prepositions: *var xəš₁-εš₂ nā* “he₂ put it in front of himself₁.” A form *hə* is attested in *həiye xar naha* “the donkey itself was not (there).”

Adpositions. Major prepositions are *az* “from,” *bā* “with,” *bālā* “for,” *bar* “on,” *de/be* “to,” *dar* “in,” *rū* “in(to); on,” *var* “to, by, near,” *xo* “with.” Postpositions are *de* “from; in” and *rā* “for.” The most common of all is the polysemous *de*, a dative preposition and locative or ablative postposition: *nək-ešun de-un ahəst* “they were pecking at it,” *dotā ɣelā-š ya ya-de bedi* “he saw two crows in a place,” *čāšō sar-εš-de ārēšde* “he took off the veil from her head.” It also forms circumpositions: *bar-zamī-de ha* “it is on earth,” *bīšma var-ham-de* “let’s go together.”

VERBAL MORPHOLOGY AND SYNTAX

Stems. Past stems are either irregular (e.g. [pres. : past] *həger-* : *hengāft-* “talk”) or derivable from the present stem by adding the formant *-ā* (e.g. *pars-* : *parsā-* “ask”), also realized as *-a* and *-o*. The causative and the passive are formed by suffixing *-n* and *-i*, respectively, to the present stem: *dargīr-* : *darga-* (intr.) □ *dargīrn-* : *dargīrnā-* “kindle”; *hemer-* : *hema-* (tr.) □ *hemeri-* : *hemeriā-* (intr.) “break.” The two markers coexist in *bepūšniyəcijə* (i.e., *be-pūš-n-i-ā-a*) “is hidden,” from the process **pūš-* : **pūšā-* (intr.) “wear” □ *pūšn-* : *pūšnā-* (tr.) “cover” □ *pūšni-* : *pūšniā-* (intr.) “be covered.”

Affixes. The preverbs (*hā*, *ār*, *dar*, *bar*, *vā-*) suppress *be-* and precede *a-*, which differentiate the durative and non-durative aspects, respectively; *be-* appears in the imperative, subjunctive, preterit, and perfect (see Table 2). Durative marker occurs in (1) the present indicative: *a-vez-ən* “I run,” *dar-a-vaz-ən* “I lose,” *ār-e-vez-ən* “I jump,” *hāačīnən* “I sit,” *vāaparsən* “I ask,” *va:lun* (i.e. *va-a-^hal-un*) “I cast myself down,” (2) the imperfect (intr.) *a-harzə-ø* “it would cost,” *a-gerdā-ø* “he was wandering,” (trans.) *a-m-fahmā* “I would realize,” *a-š-ba* “he was carrying,” *a-š-vā* “he was saying.” The durative marker is omitted before vowel-initial stems: *“ašnə-’ən* “I hear,” *angašt* “he was looking,” *εšnāse* “he knows,” *āhe* “he was sitting.” (A historical form of the durative



prefix in Central Dialects, **at-*, surfaces in the imperfect forms of “come,” e.g. *at-eme-ida* “you were coming,” and is absorbed into the stem *tār-* : *tārd-* “bring.”) — The negative marker *ná-/né-* suppresses both aspect markers, thereby removes the indicative-subjunctive and durative-perfective distinctions: *nekere* “he does not/that he do not,” *vānaparsende* “(that) they ask not”; *nakatī* (from *dar-kat-*) “you did/would not fall,” *neangaštun* “I did/would not look at.”

Person endings consist of two sets, as shown in Table 1. Set I endings are used in the present tenses and the intransitive past. Set II endings, employed in the transitive past as agent markers, always precede the stem and are optionally fronted. Imperative endings are the singular *-e/zero* and the plural *-ide*: *beše* “go!” *bebe(re)* “carry!” *bepīč* “cook!” *bexūs* “hit!” *bōder* “pass!” *kerīde* “do!”

Tenses. Simple tenses are those shown in Table 2. A future tense is signified by the invariable *kom(i)*, inserted before preterit forms: *kom boyun* “I will be,” *kōmi dā* “he will have.” The perfect tenses employ the past participle, which is the past stem suffixed by the formant *-á/-é*: *bemaiyōn* “I have come,” *hā-m-gata* “I have bought,” *māst-edun hādāya* “you have given yogurt.” The Pluperfect is formed by the past participle of the main verb and the preterit forms of the copula: *beme boyon* “I had come,” *be-m-karda bo* “I had done.” The perfect subjunctive employs the past participle and the subjunctive forms of the copula: *āhe benda* (Pers. *nešasta bāšand*) “they may have sat,” *zūne bū* (Pers. *dānesta bāšad*) “he may have known.”

The transitive past. Meyma’i has retained an ergative construction in conjugation of transitive verbs in past tenses, where the enclitic pronouns, or Set II “endings,” appear before the stem to act as agent markers. There is a strong tendency in the past for the agent to be stranded from the verb and recede in the sentence to a preceding word, more often to (1) the direct object but also to an (2) indirect object or (3) adverb. Examples: (1) *bar-εš bast* “he shut the door,” *tō-š ji bālā mōn xelgāt bekarda* “he has then created you for me,” *tō-m... behrī* “I bought you”; (2) *de jan-εš-εš dā* “he gave to his wife,” *var xōš-εš nā* “he placed [it] in front of himself”; (3) *yak kam-εš bexā* “he ate a little,” *šāh bī-š bevā* “the king then said.” The agent optionally remains on the verb (*īn māyegā xeb be-m-rūt* “I sold this cow well”) and is repeated occasionally: *īn harf-εm bālā māyegā na-m-vō* “I would not say these words about the cow.”

Be and become. The substantive verb consists of the present stem zero, the past



stem *bo-*, and the subjunctive stem *b-*, conjugated regularly (save the 3rd sg.) with the person-ending Set I (Table 3). The copula is aspect insensitive, i.e. it takes no modal prefix in the affirmative. The past participle is *boya* and the imperative is *be* (sg.). Negative: *nebe* “be not!; it may not be” *naha* “is not,” *nehinda* “they are not.”

The locative (or existential) verb can be expressed by the copula (with the stem *h-* for the 3rd person), as in *ye pālun-e xar ha, ammā hwi-ye xar naha* “a donkey’s pack-saddle is there, but the donkey itself is not.” In most cases, however, the locative verb is expressed by the copula preceded by the locative *de* (see above), which at the same time functions as a postposition, often within a circumpositional phrase: *xo-de henda* “they are asleep,” *dokkūn-e xoš de bo* “he was in his shop,” *har yā-de bu* “wherever he might be.”

“Become” is based on the present stem *b-* and past stem *bo-*, which optionally takes the modal prefix *be-* or the preverb *vā-*. “Be” and “become” overlap in the subjunctive. Exx.: *pā boyun* “that I get up,” *neboyun* “I was/became not,” *maxvo voboyun* “I was lost.”

Modals. (1) *gī* : *gā* “want; must” is conjugated with Set II pronouns/endings as the agent in all tenses: pres. *a-m-gi, atgi, ašgi, amungi, adungi, ašungi*, past: *a-m-gā*, etc. Examples: *atgi hā-t-dun* “you want that I give [it to] you,” *ašgā ke ta’rif-ε dōt-εš bekere* “he wanted to praise his daughter,” *natgī* “desire not!” The agent may follow the stem (*harči del-et gīš* “whatever your heart desires”) or be fronted even in the present tense (*nun-e pīšīn-εm agi* “I want a midday meal”). The subjunctive is attained by dropping the durative marker: *gand-εš gī* “that he want sugar.” “Must” is expressed with the modal prefix *be-*: *hamgī šo* “I must go” (cf. dialect of Kuhpāya (q.v.), in which the senses “want” and “must” are constructed on the durative and perfective forms, respectively, and the neighboring dialect of Jowšaqān, where both “want” and “must” are expressed irrespective of the form and always with the durative marker.) (2) *naš(i)* “cannot; should not” is followed by the subjunctive, the apocopated infinitive (i.e. the past stem), or the infinitive of the main verb: *to naš k^ε... bāft bekeri* “you should not boast,” *heški naši xond* “nobody can read,” *naši šoyan* (corrected for *šoyun*) “I cannot go.” (3) The verb “can” is normally expressed idiomatically: *tiğ-εm arbīnī* (lit. “my blade cuts”) “I can,” *tiğ-εm bešberind* “I could.”

Other verbs. (1) *dār-* : *dā(rd)-* “have; hold” is irregular in aspect insensitiveness (*dār-enda* “they have”), except in compounds: *gūš a-der-ən* “I



hold.” (2) “Sit” is expressed by three roots: (i) *hā-čīn-* : *čašt-*, attested also in other CDs; (ii) the past stem *āh(ā st)-* (e.g. *marū bar dōmāg āhāst* “a mosquito sat on [his] nose,” *āhe benda* “they were sitting”), comparable to Qohrudi *āh-* : *āhā(d)-* “to be seated, remain,” Ṭāri *ax-* : *axā(y)-*, Ardestāni *ax-* : *āxo-*, Abyāna’i *ay-* : *ayā(y)-*, Abuz. *av-* : *avad-*, Nā’ini, Anāraki *aš-* : *āšes(s)-* (Lecoq, p. 194); (iii) *āni-* (in *čerā rū gābrastun de ānī?* “why are you sitting in the cemetery?”), is comparable to *hā-ni(n)g/k-* : *hā-ništ-*, typical of the southern and eastern Central Dialects. (3) *diār* “seen, apparent” combines with auxiliaries to make compounds: *rū dōkūn-e gēsābī diār abo* “is found in a butcher’s shop,” *diār akeron* “I find,” *xōdā... diōr maiya* “God has created/made apparent,” *mōšteri gā-š rā diar nema* “no buyer was found for his cow.”

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