

CHAPTER THREE: THE THUMB

1. If it is true that the fingers are different from each other, the thumb is surely the ‘most different’ among them. It is felt so different that even its being a finger has been challenged.

On this point, conflicting evidence is noticeable. Gr. ἀντίχειρ (sc. δάκτυλος) ‘thumb’ describes this finger as being *opposite* to the fingers. The definition of Engl. *finger* in the *Oxford Dictionary of English*, second edition (2003), reads as follows: «each of the four slender jointed parts attached to either hand (or five, if the thumb is included)». ¹²⁹

How many fingers Prs. speakers instinctively attribute to hands is made clear from the mere fact that *panje* ‘hand; the five fingers’ is a derivative from *panj* ‘five’. ¹³⁰ However, there is enough evidence that Prs. speakers may also perceive and verbalize the four fingers from the forefinger to the little finger as a separate and independent concept. ¹³¹

2. Prs. *šast*, a highly polysemic word with a wide semantic range, is the usual Prs. name of the thumb. No antecedent is recorded in Old and Middle Iranian. A quick glance at the different Prs. dictionaries shows that *šast* means: (1) ‘60’; (2) ‘thumb (and big toe)’; (3) ‘bone-ring, worn by the archers on the thumb (synonym of *zehgir*)’; (4) ‘ringlets or objects with circular or semicircular shape (of rope, hair, etc.; also the sacred belt worn in the Zoroastrian rituals, more commonly called *zonnār*)’; (5) ‘fish hook’; (6) ‘snare, net’; (7) ‘plectrum (for musical instruments)’; (8) ‘string (for musical instruments)’; (9) ‘lancet for phlebotomy’, etc. Many of these senses are clearly related to each other. If all of them are related is not so clear. Possibly, more than one lexeme *šast* is involved: at least two homonyms could be envisaged. FF e.g. contains three different entries *šast*.

As far as I know, the origin of Prs. *šast* has not been convincingly explained. ¹³² We do not know whether this was a basic term for ‘thumb’ or originally denoted something else, with the meaning ‘thumb’ acquired through a

¹²⁹ See also the definition of *finger* in COD, quoted above, p. 53, fn. 31.

¹³⁰ See above, pp. 76 ff.

¹³¹ See also above, p. 42.

¹³² See also MOKRI 2005: 263. Ilya GERSHEVITCH, who very kindly read a draft of my paper on the finger denominations in Balochi, told me he had in mind a proposal for the etymology of *šast*, which he was still refining. I gave me no anticipation on the details on that occasion.

semantic shift, on the basis of some conceptual association. Consequently, we do not know which, if any, among the thumb's peculiar features, are highlighted with it. A few, preliminary remarks are in FILIPPONE 2000–2003: 61–62. POTT 1847: 225, fn. * emphasizes the close link between this finger and the art of practising archery.

Since an open hand in a vertical position presents four fingers standing up and one lying down (the thumb), one solution could be considering *šast* as the result of a conversion and a semantic change (through conceptual contiguity) of the past participle of (MPrs.) *šastan* 'to lie down, prostrate' (NYBERG 1974).¹³³ Following BAILEY's reasoning, NYBERG (ibid., with literature) points to a derivation of Phl. *šastan* from **xšata-* 'lowered'. I prefer considering Phl. *šastan* as related (same verbal root with no prefix) to MPrs. *nišastan*, Prs. *nešastan* 'to sit, sit down', for which see CHEUNG 2007: 125–126, **had* 'to sit, be seated'. Outcomes of this root with no prefix are still in use in Fārs: cf. Nud. *ša:san*, Somṛ. *šasseḍan*, Gorgn. *ša:sidan* (SALĀMI 2005: 254–255), Mās. *ša:seḍan*, Kuz. *ša:san* (SALĀMI 2004: 252–253), Birov., Dorun. *ša:seḍan*, Dādenj. *ša:san* (SALĀMI 2006: 272–273). All of them are equivalent in meaning to Prs. *nešastan*.

Prs. *šast* 'thumb' is a current word almost everywhere in the Prs. speaking areas: cf. Taj. *šast*, Fārsivān dial. of Turkmenistan *šast* (MAHMUDOV 2001: 47), Badaxš. *šast*, Sist. *šas* (AFŠĀR SISTĀNI 1986), Birj. *šas(t)*. Bal. *šast* 'thumb' represents a lexical feature of the WBal. areas, where it is very likely a Prs. loanword. Prs. loanwords are also Par. *šast* (*yušt*) (IIFL-I) and Sgl. *šast-ingit*.

Prs. *šast* and its cognates (or simply Prs. loans) are also found in the following dialectal areas: (1) Central/SouthKrd. dialects; cf. Sul. *emust y shest*, Krmnš. *šas*;¹³⁴ (2) the Lori cluster; cf. Lo. (Xorramābād) *šas* (HASURI 1964: 24), Bxt. (ČLang) *šas*; (3) Lārestāni and Banderi; cf. Lār. *šast* (KAMIOKA – YAMADA 1979), Min. *šast*; (4) Central dialects; cf. Yzd. *engošt-i šast* (SORUŠIĀN 1956), Esf-JPrs. *šath*, Gz. *šās* (*šoss* ŽUKOVSKIJ 1922: 110), Xur. *šas* (FARAHVAŠI 1976: 2), Siv. *šāse* (from Andreas; *šas* LECOQ 1979), Voniš. *šost*, Zefr. *šoss*, Keš. *šoss*, Nat. *šass*, Bohr. *šast*, Sed. *šoss*, Del. *šās-dae*, Kah. *šast*, Kerm. *šast*, Abiā. *šas*, Nāi. *šas* (LECOQ 2002), Biz. *šaxs*, Ardest. *šas*, Qohr. *šas*, Tār. *šos*; (5) NWIr. area; cf. IrĀz. *šasd* (NAVĀBI 1992), Semn. *šast(a)*, Sang. *šast*, Lāsg. *šast*, Māz. (Kelār.) *šas*.

¹³³ See also Phl. *šast* 'drooping' (NYBERG 1974).

¹³⁴ JABA – JUSTI 1879 has *šest* 'main' (from PALLAS 1786), which has surely originated from a misunderstanding.

The *šast*-type seems extraneous to the lexicon of the Fārs dialects; see however the isolated Dorun. *penje-y ša:s* ‘thumb’.

3. The large size of the thumb is a universal physical feature, shared by all human beings: describing it as “the big (or strong) finger” is quite natural, and for this reason the thumb is named in many languages by means of lexicalized phrases containing basic terms for ‘finger’ plus adjectives meaning ‘big, bulky, stout, etc.’¹³⁵

In Iranian, many labels for ‘thumb’ portray it as a big finger or the biggest among the fingers. However, since many of the Ir. adjectives meaning ‘big, large, stout’ (with reference to physical appearance) are also used in the meaning of ‘old, elder; adult’ (with reference to age), or ‘great, eminent, important’ (with reference to social status), most of the expressions we are going to consider may be differently interpreted: one has to decide whether considering them as simply descriptive names, or as figurative ones, with the fingers equated to a human being. In this case, the thumb is singled out for its stoutness as “the eldest” or “the senior” among the fingers. To take a position in this regard is not easy. For this reason, all the “big fingers”, the “old fingers”, the “great fingers” etc. are gathered in this paragraph, without proceeding with a more refined sorting. The iconomastic patterns on which these denominations for ‘thumb’ rest are felt so “natural” and universal that they do not require further comments. In what follows (§§3.1–3.16), I will rather concentrate on the Iranian adjectives used in this connection and try to outline, when possible, their areas of diffusion.

Since some of the adjectives we are going to survey mean in a general sense ‘having a large size’, and are neutral with regard to the dimension considered, they may also be used to stress specific physical peculiarities, such as TALLNESS. It follows that a few “big-finger” labels are also used to name the middle finger, as it happens, e.g., to Prs. *angošt-e bozorg*.¹³⁶

3.1. BARTHOLOMAE (1904, s.v. *maðma-*) quotes the following Av. expressions: *kasištahe ərašvō* [...] *maðmahe ərašvō* [...] *mazištahe ərašvō* (*Vd.* 6.10–14), and translates the three genitives as “des kleinsten [...] eines mittelgrossen [...] des grössten Fingers”. Correspondingly, the Phl. translation of

¹³⁵ See for instance VEENKER 1981: 368; ZVELEBIL 1985: 664 (for the Nilgiri tribal languages, Drav. family). One might produce countless examples of this naming process.

¹³⁶ For the conceptual mapping THUMB = MIDDLE FINGER (including lexical alternation), see also above, p. 47 and below p. 139.

this passage reads: *kehist* (<ksyst>) *angust* [...] *miyānag angust* [...] *mehist* (<msyst>) *angust*. ANKLESARIA (1949: 136–137) translates: “of the smallest finger [...] of the middle (medium) finger [...] of the biggest finger”.

BARTHOLOMAE’s and ANKLESARIA’s interpretations are fully motivated by a rhetoric figure recurrent in Av. and Phl. texts, consisting of a comparison in a highly codified manner of different elements having progressively descending or ascending dimensions. For example, in *GrBd.* II.18, the movements of the Sun, the Moon and the Stars are compared to the movement of a very large, an average-sized and a small arrow, respectively shot by a very big man by means of a very large bow, by an average-sized man by means of an average-sized bow, by a short man by means of a small bow. This *GrBd.* passage reminds the structure of the Av./Phl. *Vd.* one quoted above. Here, three different bones with different dimensions are taken into account, and their dimensions are equated to the foremost joints of three fingers, progressively bigger. However, in the case of *Vd.*, two different strategies might have coincided. I mean, it could be possible that the three mentioned adjectives on which this Av. and Phl. rhetoric figure is built, are the same used (also in the superlative)¹³⁷ in descriptive labels for individual fingers, and in particular, the thumb, the middle and the little finger. They really happen to be conceived as the ‘big(gest)’, the ‘middle’¹³⁸ and the ‘small(est)’ finger. A gloss in Phl. *Vd.* 8.71 (ANKLESARIA 1949: 214) explains that, in order to expel the Druj Nasu out of the body, the left toes should be besprinkled “from the little to the big (*az keh* <ks> *tā ō meh* <ms>)”. Another explanatory annotation added by the Pahlavi translator informs the reader that the opposite direction is also admitted (*hast ke az meh* <ms> *tā ō keh* <ks> *gūyēd* “there is who says from the big to the small”). Phl. *meh* (*angust*), *keh* (*angust*) should refer to, and be the name of the thumb and the little finger, respectively.

That *kasištahe arəzvō* [...] *maḍamahe arəzvō* [...] *mazištahe arəzvō* could represent the gen. forms of the Av. names of three specific fingers has already been hinted at by some Avesta scholars, including some from the Zoroastrian milieu. DARMESTETER’s interpretation («of the little finger [...] of

¹³⁷ Superlative forms in finger names are also found in Sanskrit; cf. *madhyamā-* ‘middlemost’ (RV) (CDIAL 9810); ‘the middle finger’; *kaniṣṭhā-* ‘youngest’ (RV), ‘younger brother’ (Lex.) (CDIAL 2718); *kaniṣṭhā-* ‘little finger’ (CDIAL 2719). See also “kučektarin angošt-e dast”, Prs. gloss to Yzd. *angošt-e kiliči* ‘little finger’ in AfšAR 1989.

¹³⁸ According to this interpretation, Av. *maḍama-* (‘der in der Mitte befindliche, mittlere nach Lage, Reihe, Grösse, Zahl, Wert’) does not entail here an intermediate stage in a scale of value, but specifically refers to a spatial collocation in the sequence of the five fingers.

the fore-finger [...] of the middle finger», 1880: 67–68) is particularly remarkable: he also thinks of three specific fingers, but not of the same fingers suggested here. While *mazištahe arəzvō* could actually denote the middle finger, *maḍamahe arəzvō* for the forefinger remains unmotivated.

The Buddhist Sgd. text P 14 (ll. 17–37) contains the description of a *mu-drā*. Unfortunately, the text is in a very poor condition and its many gaps do not allow a good understanding of the passage. In l. 25, however, one distinctly reads *dwa mazēx angušt* (<’δw mz’yγ ’nkwšt >), which probably refers to thumbs. BENVENISTE (1940: 138) translates «les deux grands doigts». In the same passage, the names of the forefinger (*nivēdēne-angušt*) and the middle finger (*miḍānč angušt*) also occur; see below p. 123 and pp. 133, 136.

Sgd. *mazēx angušt* (<mz-’yγ ’n(k)[wšt]>) also appears in the body parts list (*Book of the Limbs*) published in SUNDERMANN 2002: 142–144. In this text, however, as SUNDERMAN rightly suggests (ibid.: fn. 71), the mentioned “big finger” should be identified as the middle finger, since the name of the thumb probably occurs two lines below as *n(r)šk*.¹³⁹ It follows that the same label was used in Sogdian to refer to both the thumb and the middle finger, according to a usual practice, for which see above (p. 95). Contextual or co-textual parameters may intervene in these cases to remove any ambiguity.

As (close) parallels to Av. (gen.) *mazištahe arəzvō* and Sgd. *mazēx angušt* ‘thumb’ one may quote KurmKrd. *tilīya mezin* and W/SBal. (Nal; Noške; Makrāni MORGENSTIERNE 1932a: 40) *mazanē lankuk*, Korš. *mazzanun penja*, SBal. *mastarē lankuk*, the latter with the comparative degree of the same adjective. These descriptive Bal. expressions may coexist with other labels for ‘thumb’ in the lexical repertoire of a single Bal. speaker.¹⁴⁰

Av. *maz-* ‘big; great, eminent’, (YAv.) *mazant-* ‘big, large; high’ (comp. *mazyā-*, sup. *mazišta-*), Sgd. *mazēx* ‘great’ (comp. *mazyātar*), Krd. *mazin/mezin*, Bal. *mazan* ‘big, great, etc.’ are commonly related to IE **meǵh-*, to which should also belong Man. MPrs. *mazan* ‘monstrous; giant, monster’, Khot. *maysirka-* ‘large, great’, Vfs. *mæzæn* ‘big, large’, Pšt. *māzay, māzay* ‘big, massive, fat; strong’, Wan. *mūza* ‘strong’, as well as Skt. *mahānt-* with its modern IA outcomes (EWA II: 337; CDIAL 9946).

Phl. *mahist* (<msst>) in the phrase *mahist angust*, translating Av. (gen.) *mazištahe arəzvō* in *Vd.*, is a superlative form from *meh* (<ms>) ‘great(er), old(er)’.

¹³⁹ See below, p. 112.

¹⁴⁰ The Bal. speaker living in Oman, for example, who provided me with *mastarē lankuk* ‘thumb’, considered it as an alternative to *mātak*.

Phl. *meh*, *mahist* (Man. MPrs. *mahy* ‘bigger’, *mahist* ‘greatest, eldest’) are generally referred to IE **maġ-*, together with Av. *mas-* ‘long; large, big’ (comp. *masyah-*),¹⁴¹ OPrs. *maθišta-* ‘greatest’, Man. Prth. *masišt* ‘greatest, highest’, *masādar* ‘greater, older, of higher rank’, Sgd. *masyātar* ‘greater, higher’.

Prs. *meh* ‘great’, *mehin* ‘greatest, eldest’ continue the MPrs. *meh*-series but they are quite peripheral in the Prs. lexicon. In Modern Ir. languages, the *mas*-type¹⁴² for ‘big, etc.’ characterizes the dialects of Northern and Central Iran. One may quote Semn., Lāsg. *masin*, Srx. *mosin*, Sang. *master* (sup. *masterīn*, ŽUKOVSKIJ 1922: 130), Aft. *masin*, Ham-JPrs. *māsār* (‘great’), Mah. *masar*, Āmor. *masdar* (‘big’, *masdatar* ‘bigger’), Āšt. *masdar*, Kah. *masdar*, Anār. *masa*, Nāi. *mas*, *masa*, Sed. *mehīn*, Xuns. *mossar* (also *missār* in EILERS 1976), Voniš. *mussar*, Yzd-JPrs., ZorYzd., ZorKerm. (MAZDĀPUR 1995 s.v. *bozorg*) *mas*, all meaning ‘big, large, great, etc.’.¹⁴³ SBšk. (Garu) *mohok* ‘big’ (G. BARBERA p.c.) could belong here.

As for Elr., one may mention Pšt *māšar*, *māšr* (Wan. *míser*) ‘elder (brother, etc.)’, referring to both age and social position (PSTRUSIŃSKA 1985–1986: 13).

It seems likely that in some areas and/or different ages, forms originally belonging to the *mas*- and the *maz*-type have merged.

3.2. Prs. *angošt-e bozorg* (Taj. *angušt-i buzurg*) is a common thumb name, alternative to *šast*. As already stated above, it may also be used to name the middle finger.

Prs. *bozorg* is the most usual Prs. term for ‘big’. It covers many senses, being used with reference to real dimensional evaluation (‘big, large, stout, etc.’), age (‘grown, adult’), high social status (‘important, eminent’), etc. In AfyPrs., however, *bæzorg* is perceived by speakers as a word belonging to the classical heritage, and is actually not used for physical dimensions (‘grand au sens figuré, majestueux, respectable; sage, saint, sainte’, BAU 2003). The same is true for Taj. *buzurg*.

Antecedents of Prs. *bozorg* are OPrs. *vazrka-* and MPrs./Prth. *wuzurg* (Paz. *guzurg*) ‘big, great’. An Elr. cognate is Sgd. *wazark* (<wz’rk, wzrk>) ‘big, great’. Related forms in Modern Iranian (in some cases adapted Prs. loanwords)

¹⁴¹ In *Vd.* 6.14 the mss. alternate between *mazišta-* and *masišta-*. This passage would be the only evidence for an Av. *mas*-form. According to R. SCHMITT (p.c.), one might assume *mazišta-* as the “correct” reading, and delete *masišta-* from the Av. documentation.

¹⁴² Comparative forms of this type are sometimes positive in meaning. A few comments on old comparatives in Xunsāri, used as positive adjectives, are in EILERS 1976: 54.

¹⁴³ The *mas*-type ‘big, large’ is only found in the SE and NW subgroups of Central dialects; see KRAHNKE 1976: 215–217 (with Map V – 28).

are found in a few Central dialects; cf. Qohr. *bözörg* ‘great’, Bard. *gohark* ‘big, huge’, Esf-JPrs. *bođorg*, Kuhp. *vəzark* (KRAHNKE 1976: 217), etc.

To explain Kerm. *gohort*, Soi *gurt*, Farizandi *gōrd*, Bšk. *gohort* ‘big’, GER-SHEVITCH (1964b: 12–13, fn. 4) reconstructs OP **vaδrta-*, synonymous with *vazrka-*, whose suffix should have been lost in Yzd. *gohor*, and in the side-forms with *-z-*, namely Bšk. *gozer* and Xur. (comp.) *girzotor*. To these latter, one may add Jir.-Kahn. *gozer*, Frv. *gazar*, and Xur. *gozâr*. To a hypothetical Old SW form **vadrak(a) > *vard(ak) > gurd* also points STILO (2007: 108) to explain the *gord*-type forms for ‘big, large’ of the Kāšān area, like Soi *gurt*, Fariz. *gōrd*, mentioned above. It could also be possible, however, that this latter group does not belong here; for a different suggestion see below, § 3.7.

3.3. Prs. *angošt-e sotorg* ‘thumb’ parallels Ydy. *“sturo-guščo* ‘thumb’.

Prs. *sotorg* (a literary term, according to LAZARD 1990a), Taj. *suturg*, *siturg* ‘large, big’ have MPrs. *sturg* ‘gross, coarse’ as their immediate antecedent. They belong, together with Ydy. *“stur*, to the large Iir. lexical family which includes, in Iranian (< **stūra(ka)-*), Khot. *stura-* ‘large’, Bactr. $\alpha\sigma\tau\omicron\pi\gamma\omicron$, $\sigma\tau\omicron\pi\omicron\gamma\omicron$, $\sigma\tau\omicron\pi\omicron\gamma\omicron$ ‘great’ (SIMS-WILLIAMS 2000), Oss. *styr* (D *stur*, *ästur*, *istur*, *ustur*) ‘big, great’, Bal. (probably only EBal.) *istūr* ‘coarse, thick’, SouthKrd. *estūr*, *stūr*, KurmKrd. *stūr* ‘thick, stout’, Pšt. *stər* ‘big, large’, Örm. *“stur*, *stur*, Ydy. *“stur*, Mnj. *stur* ‘big’, Par. *ostāro*, *ostāru* ‘stout, thick’, etc., and, in IA, Skt. *sthūrā-*, *sthūlā-* ‘thick, strong, etc.’ (EWA II: 768–769) and its outcomes in modern IA. Possibly, here also belongs YAv. *°stūra-*, extrapolated by MAYRHOFER (1979: [78], [240]) from the proper names *Pairištūra-* and *Baēšatastūra-*.

3.4. MOKRI (2005: 263) records Prs. *angošt-e setabr* ‘thumb’.

Prs. *setabr* (Taj. *sitabr*), directly following Phl. *stabr* ‘big, coarse, strong’, Man. MPrs. *istabr* ‘strong, firm’,¹⁴⁴ belongs to the Ir. family of Av. *staβra-*, Khot. *staura-* ‘firm, strict, severe’, etc., and, with a different semantic specialization, Oss. *st’ælf* (Dig. (\ae)*st’ælfæ*, *st’ælfæg*) ‘stain, point’.

¹⁴⁴ According to BELARDI (2009: 159), Arm. *stowar* ‘coarse, big, strong’ should not be considered as a “pure Armenian” word, as in HÜBSCHMANN 1897: 493, where this form is connected to the etymological family of Skt. *sthūra-*, Bal. *istūr*, etc. (see § 3.3 above), but as a loanword from Prth. *istabr*. Note, however, that the form *stbr* referred to by BELARDI could be a MPrs. word in a Man.Prth. text (see DURKIN-MEISTERERNST 2004 s.v.).

3.5. Bxt. *kelič-e* (or *angost-e*) *gapp* (my own data), Mamas. *kelič-e gapu*, Knd., Hay. *penje-y gapu* and Lārest. (Lār., Ger.) *kelike-gapû*, all meaning ‘thumb’, contain *gap*-forms for ‘big’, characterizing a band stretching all across the region from South-Central Kurdish, Lori and Fārs areas down to the belt along the Persian Gulf in South Iran. Here belong SouthKrd. *gap* ‘thick, huge’, Krmnš. *gap*, SulKrd. *gep* ‘bulky’, Šuš. *gap*, Dezf. *gap* (comp. *gaftar*), Bxt. *gap*, *gaf*, (ČLang) *gap*, Mamas. *gapu*, Lo. *gap*, Šir./Kāz. *gap* ‘big’, Mās. *gäp* (‘groß, erwachsen’, MANN 1909), Zarq. *gap*, Buš. *gap*, Dašt. *gap*, Lir.-Dayl. *gap* (LIRĀVI 2001: 239), Kumz. *gayp*, Min. *gap*, Horm. *gäp*, Fin. *gap*, Bast., Farām. *gap*, Xonj. and Lār. *gap* (KAMIOKA – RAHBAR – HAMIDI 1986), etc. ‘big’. Apparently isolated in Central Iran we find Sirj. *gap* ‘big and huge’. Prs. *gap/gab* ‘thick’, recorded in traditional dictionaries (see DEHX), should be considered as a dialectal form.

At the present state of our knowledge, the origin of this lexical set is unknown. VAHMAN – ASATRIAN (1987: s.v. *gyap*) refer to Sgd. *γarf* (<γrβ/f>) ‘much’, but the etymology proposed for this Sgd. word by SIMS-WILLIAMS (1983: 49; < **faruwam*), if accepted, would render such a connection untenable.

In fact, a form which may hardly be kept apart from Sgd. *γarf* is Buš. *γarp* ‘big; notable, great; fat; aloud’, *γarpele* ‘abnormally big (also derogatory)’. To Sgd. *γarf*, MORGENSTIERNE doubtfully connects Wx. *γafč* (*γafči* in IIFL-II) ‘much’, on which see now STEBLIN-KAMENSKIJ 1999 s.v. *γα*, *γafč*. Some of the forms quoted ibid. (in particular Yγn. *γāba* ‘thick’) could be easily associated to the *gap*-forms listed above. I would add here Yγn. *γaftar* ‘more’ (MIRZUZODA 2008). As far as Wx. *γafč* is concerned, STEBLIN-KAMENSKIJ (1999) points to a possible connection (old lw. with *č* < *c*) with Šγn. *γāfc* ‘thick’ (already in EVŠG), which in its turn could be considered as an adapted lw. from Taj. *γafs*. Taj. loanwords are also Mnj. *γafs* ‘fat; thick’ and Yγn. *γafs-* in *γafskama* ‘with a thick neck’ (MIRZUZODA 2008). However, as STEBLIN-KAMENSKIJ 1999 rightly underlines, the origin of Taj. *γafs* is by no means clear: it could be itself a lw. from an EIr. language. Compare also Taj. (Dušanbe) *qaws* ‘gros (homme, animal)’ (BAU 2003), AfγPrs. *γabs*, *gabz* ‘large, broad-shouldered man’ (Mazār-e Šarif *γafs* BAU 2003), Haz. *γaps* ‘very fat’ (*γabs* BAU 2003), Madagl. *γafs*, Badaxš. *γaws* ‘thick (of a stock etc.)’.

Should it be possible to prove some kind of connection between the WIr. *gap*-type and Šγn. *γāfc*, we could add Šγn. *γāfc angixt* ‘thumb’ (ZARUBIN 1960) to the thumb names listed at the head of this paragraph.

3.6. Dav. *pinže-y gotu*, Dahl., Mās., Somy., Ban., Pāp., Dusir., Rič., Gorgn., Mosq., Kal. (Lor), Baliā., Birov., Dādenj. *penže-y gotu*, Kuz., Dežg. *penže-y gottu*, Kal. (Tāj.) *penjar-e gat*, Siv. *gusse gutū* (ŽUKOVSKIJ 1922: 110) and Abd. *penže-y get* (*angušte get* ŽUKOVSKIJ 1922: 110) ‘thumb’, all from Fārs, induce the following considerations.

The *got*-type adjective for ‘big, huge, thick’ is a lexical feature of the Fārs dialectal area; cf. Šir. *got* (with particular reference to physical size), Kāz., Gavk., Sarv., Dav., Dahl., Kal. (Lor), Ban., Rič., Pāp. (also ‘tall’), Dusir., Mosq., Somy. (also ‘tall’), Gorgn., Nud., Baliā., Birov., Hay., Dādenj., Dāreng., Dorun., Dežg., Mās., Zarq. *got*, Kuz. *guvet*, Kal. (Tāj.) *gat*, Buringuni *gut* (MANN 1909), Mamas. *got*, *γot* (LIRĀVI 2001: 243), *gut* (MANN 1910), Abd. *get* ‘big’.

The *got*-type is also found along the coastal strip South of Fārs and eastwards up to Lārestān; compare Lir.-Dayl. *got*, *γot* (LIRĀVI 2001: 239, 243), Buš., Dašt., Fin., Lār., Farām., Bast. *got* ‘big’.

The presence of *got* ‘big’ in Koroši, the Bal. dialect spoken in Fārs, is due to the influence of Fārs dialects on Koroši. The same could be true for Sivandi, generally acknowledged as a Central dialect, where one find *gut* ‘big’ (ZIĀN 1960), *gutū* ‘big’ (*gut(u/ə)kunū* ‘eldest, biggest’).¹⁴⁵ However, though not so diffused as in Fārs and South Iran, the *got*-type is not completely extraneous to Central dialects; see Ardest. *got* ‘great’, Sirj. *got* ‘big and thick’ (ĀZĀDIXĀH 1983).

Abd. *get* ‘big’ has parallels in Kurdish, as is quite natural, being Abdui a Krd. dialect spoken in Fārs; cf. SouthKrd. *git*, *kit* ‘prominent, big’, *gita* ‘huge’, Krmnš. *get* ‘big and huge, hefty’.

Prs. lexicographers record *gote* ‘great, large, grand’ and *gat*, *gate* ‘id.’ (DEHX). These are with all probability dialectal items, with a specific areal connotation: while the *got*-type characterizes Fārs and South Iran, the *gat*-type seems to be mostly diffused in Māzandarān and Northern Iran. Compare Māz. *gat*, *gati* ‘big; grandfather’, Qasr. *gaht*, *gahte*, *gahta* ‘big’, Tehr. *gat* ‘big’ (ADIB TUSI 1963–1964), but also Kal. (Tāj.) *gat* ‘big’ in Fārs. In Colloquial Persian, the adjectival compound *got-o-gonde* ‘big, thick (and un-

¹⁴⁵ EILERS (1988) dubitatively suggests a connection between Siv. *gutū* and Soi/Kalun (Kalān)-Abdui *gurd/t*. Similarly, in CHRISTENSEN – BARR 1939: 469 there is a cross-reference between Soi *gurt* and Kal.-Abd. *git*. I think that the two lexical clusters (*gord/gerd*-type and *got*-type) are not (directly) connected and should be kept apart. See also below, § 3.7.

shapely)¹⁴⁶ (NAJAFI 1999) has the intensive semantic implication of the (pseudo) echo-compounds; similarly, one finds *kat-o-gonde* ‘large, big’ (NAJAFI 1999) and *kat-o-koloft* ‘corpulent’ (LAZARD 1990a). Is *kat-* a meaningless ideophonic device, or an autonomous lexical form?

In fact, *kat-* recalls a group of adjectives fairly widespread in the Eastern Ir. world, namely in Eastern Persian and EIr. languages. One may quote Sist. *kata* ‘big, huge’, AfyPrs. *kata* ‘big’, Her. *katta*, (dial) Taj. *kata*, *katta* ‘big; adult’ (RASTORGUEVA 1963, ROZENFEL’D 1982),¹⁴⁷ Haz. *kaṭa* ‘big, large; aged, old, adult’ (*katta* ‘tall’, Kāb. ‘thick, coarse’ DULLING 1973), Pšt. *kaṭá* ‘big’, Yṅn. *kátta* ‘big, large; aged, eminent’, Par. *kaṭo*, *kato* ‘old’, Išk. *kata* ‘big’, Šṅn. *ka-ta-* ‘big, elder, adult’, *katā*, *kattā* ‘big; senior; adult; experienced’, Oroš. *ketā* ‘groß’ (LENTZ 1933), etc. Birj. *kotta*, which has been recorded in a 19th c. dictionary by Mollā ‘Ali Ašraf Sabuhi with the meaning of ‘big’, nowadays rather means ‘fat and compressed’ (REZĀI 1966).

Cognate forms are found in Central dialects, though not so homogeneously diffused; cf. Sirj. *katte* and Xur. *kattā* ‘big, huge’. In addition, we may mention here IrĀz. (Ker.) *ketma* ‘big’ (ZOKĀ 1954: 58), and a few *l*-derivatives such as Māz. (Tabari) *katal* ‘huge, large’ (ADIB TUSI 1963–1964), Lo. *kotil* ‘huge, large’ (ADIB TUSI 1963–1964), Xor. *γotol* ‘fat and large; round’ (see MONCHI-ZADEH 1990: 79), Yzy. *qatol* ‘big; large; adult’, etc.

It has been suggested that some or all the Ir. *kata*-forms are due to the influence of Eastern Turkish languages, particularly Uzbek.¹⁴⁸ However, how the relevant forms in Eastern Turkish are linked to each other is by no means clear;¹⁴⁹ an Ir. ultimate origin is not to be excluded for them, as suggested by ORANSKIJ (1970: 158 fn. 26), who points to an OIr. base **katāna-* (Šṅn. *ka-tanak* should also belong here). Furthermore, it seems reasonable enough to associate to Pšt. *kaṭá* ‘big’, the *γ*-series of Pšt. *γaṭ* ‘big, stout; fat; great in rank or power’, Wan. *γuṭ* ‘fat’ and Örm. *γuṭ* (K. *gwaṭ*, Lo. *ghoṭa*) ‘fat’, even if the details are still unclear. Whatever may be the origin of the *kata*-forms

¹⁴⁶ Cf. also Buš. *got-o-gonde* ‘very big’ (used as a mockery term); Yzd-JPrs. *gad-o-gondo*, Hanj. *gat-o-gonda* ‘id.’.

¹⁴⁷ FZT, mostly including literary Tajik, does not record *kat(t)a*, which probably only belongs to the informal/colloquial register.

¹⁴⁸ See for instance ANDREEV – PEŠČERVA 1957 (for Yṅn. *kátta*), MORGENSTIERNE (IIFL-II; for Išk. *kata*) and LENTZ 1933 (for Oroš. *ketā*).

¹⁴⁹ There are also scholars (as for example BOGDANOV mentioned by LENTZ 1933: 173), who have attempted to derive the Turk. forms from Hi. *kittā*, *kettā* ‘how much?’. One could wonder why then not to point directly to Hi. *kattā* ‘stout, strong, etc.’, which, though not satisfactorily explained itself, seems hardly detachable from our *kata*-forms.

in Iranian and Central Asian languages, this lexical cluster seems to represent an areal feature with a wide diffusion.

One could even wonder whether some kind of relationship between the *kata*-group and the *got*-group mentioned above may be envisaged. A suggestion by MONCHI-ZADEH (1990: 237), who however does not take into consideration the Turkish evidence, goes in that direction. I agree with him in principle, even if all the matter requires much prudence and many phonetic details are still to be sorted out. Be that as it may, contamination and blending among the different lexical groups treated in this paragraph might easily have happened.

All this considered, we might add the following thumb names to the list at the top of this paragraph:¹⁵⁰ Pšt. *yaṭá gúta*, *kaṭá gúta*, Ōrm. *yuṭṭa-ṅgušt* (MORGENSTIERNE 1932b), Sgl. *katta narxāk* and Yǵn. *katta paxxa* (MIRZOZODA 2008, s.v. *paxxa*), which is however recorded as one of the names of the forefinger as well.¹⁵¹

3.7. KurmKrd. *tiliya girdikē* (RIZGAR 1993) ‘thumb’ contains a derivative of Krd. *girde* ‘big’ (KURDOEV 1960). ŽUKOVSKIJ (1922: 110) records Siv. *šasse gird* ‘thumb’, a lexicalized phrase whose head itself means ‘thumb’.¹⁵² Such apparently pleonastic expressions might be a peculiarity of popular/low registers. I recorded e.g. *šast bozorg* ‘thumb’ from a woman, native speaker to Kermānšāh, who strongly questioned that *šast* alone (viz. not modified by *bozorg*) could be considered as an “acceptable” name for that finger.

Krd. *girde* and Zā. (Çermik) *gird* (Kiği *girs*) ‘big, large’ (see also HADANK 1932: 156) find their motivation in the mental association equating ROUNDNESS (cf. Prs. *gerd* ‘round’) with BIGNESS, according to a well known iconomastic pattern, on which Prs. *gonde* ‘big’ and cognates also rest.¹⁵³ I

¹⁵⁰ Thumb names in some Turk. dialects spoken in Xorāsān also contain *kata* ‘big’; cf. Douyā’ī *kata birmax*, Joyātāy *kata burmax*, Jonk *kata bīrmax*, Qara-Bāy *kata aṅguštīn*, etc. (DOERFER – HESCHE 1993, pp. 106, 149, 160, 213).

¹⁵¹ See below, p. 131. Cf. the Yǵn. sentence *či du katta paxxaiš tirš xorta* ‘he got a bullet in his two big finger (= thumb and index finger were torn off by a bullet)’ in MIRZOZODA 2008, s.v. *paxxa*¹.

¹⁵² See Siv. *šas* ‘thumb’, quoted above, p. 94.

¹⁵³ Cf. ROSSI 2002: 155 ff. Dimensional concepts other than BIGNESS are also associated to the notion of ROUNDNESS. Words for ‘round’ may acquire the meaning of ‘squat’ or even ‘small, short’; see e.g., Xor. *girdī*, SouthKrd. *gird*, *girda*, etc., Xuns. *girdilā* (EILERS 1976), Dav. *gerdel*, Zaraq. *gerdelak*, Buš. *gerdele*, Bxt. (ČLang) *gerdela* (also *gerd-ogelil*), all meaning ‘plump and short person’. See also Dav. *moR-ek* ‘plump and short per-

suggest associating here the *gord*-type ‘big’, mainly spread in Central Iran, where it characterizes a north-central dialectal sub-area (KRAHNKE 1976: 215–217, Map V-28). For a different explanation see above, § 3.2.

3.8. The adjectives for ‘big’ occurring in the thumb names in a few languages of the Šyn. group, in particular Šyn. *baq angixt*, Bart., Baĵ. *beq* ^h*ngaxt* (SKÖLD 1936: 140), and Roš. *bēq ingaxt*, are similarly motivated by the conceptual association ROUNDNESS = BIGNESS.

Šyn. *boq* (fem. *baq* and *beq*), Roš.-Xuf. *boq* (fem. *bēq*), etc. ‘projecting; bulky; big’ parallel *buγ* and *buq* ‘bulky, big’, found in the Taj. dialects of Darvāz and Vanĵ (ROZENFEL’D 1982), respectively. Elsewhere, cognate *buq*-forms refer to the general property of being round (Yzγ. *poq* ‘round’) or are used as words for specific things having a round and projecting shape, belonging to the body and landscape domains. In particular, they may denote (1) humps in human and/or animal bodies; cf. Pšt. *bok* ‘hump; raising; bump’, Haz. *boko* ‘camel’s hump’, Yγn. *būk* ‘hump; humpbacked’, *būkra* ‘humpbacked’ (*buka* MIRZUZODA 2008), Taj. *bukak*, Yzγ. *poqmaðan*, Oss. *būk* (Dig. *bok*) ‘humpbacked’; (2) hillocks, mounds, and similar natural elements; cf. Pšt. *bok*, Wx. *buq*, dial. Taj. (Darvāz, Vanĵ) *bəqi* (ROZENFEL’D 1982), Badaxš. *buq*, Sariq. (TV) *biq*, (B) *būq*, Roš., Xuf. *boq*, *boqay*, Yzγ. *poq*, Mnĵ. *buq*, Išk. *biq*, Oroš. *boq*, Šyn. *buq*, etc.

AfγPrs. *buγund* ‘round (thing)’, *buγundī* ‘hillock; mound of earth’ (also ‘fat baby’), Her. *boqond* ‘projecting and raising thing’, Haz. *buγundi* ‘mound; hill’ could be explained as the result of a merger of two different words (*buq* and *γund*).

The origin of these *buq*-forms is unknown; they could also be Turk. elements in Iranian, as suggested by ANDREEV – PEŠČEREVA 1957 (Yγn. *būk* < Uzb.) and by STEBLIN-KAMENSKIJ 1999 (Wx. *buq*, Taj. or Turk. *lw.*). ABAEV convincingly points to a phonosymbolic basis (IESOJ I: 269). That the *buq*-form is a lexical feature typical of the Eastern Ir. regions seems to be indisputable. However, a few traces of it can also be found in the Iranian West: cf. Jir.-Kahn. *bok* ‘bulgy, prominent, embossed’, Šušt. *boq* ‘bubble on the water; prominence’ (FÄZELI 2004).

3.9. An adjectival base for ‘big’ characterizes the Kurdish, Gorāni and Zāzā speaking areas. Here we find KurmKrd. *gumre*, *gumreh* ‘big, huge; powerful’

son’ as contrasted with *moR* ‘round’; Buš. *gompulak* ‘any round thing’ as contrasted with *gempel* ‘plump and short person’, etc.

(CHYET 2003), *gewre* ‘big, large’ (RIZGAR 1993, KURDOEV 1960), *givr*, *givrik* (CABOLOV 2001), (Sul.) *gewre* ‘big, grown up, senior’, SouthKrd. *gawr* ‘big’, *gawra* ‘great, aged, senior’, (Mahâb.) *gawra* ‘big (in a physical sense)’, (Garr.) *gāorā* ‘tribal chief’, Gor. (Awr.) *gawra* ‘big’, (Kand.) *gaurā*, *gourā*, *gourī* ‘great, powerful; aged, elder’, (Gahw.) *gôûrā* ‘great, big’, (Bājalāni) *gaur* ‘great, big; senior’ (HADANK 1930: 420). Here also belongs *gôrā* ‘big’ found in Koruni, a dialect of Krd. origin spoken in Fārs.

Kurdish has most likely influenced dialects spoken in the surrounding areas, namely Fārs and Lori areas, as is proved by Šušt. *gowra* ‘big, stout, thick’, Dav. *gavor* ‘big, of robust frame’, Dašt. *geverak* ‘grown (said of children starting early to walk or the like)’,¹⁵⁴ see also Šahm. *gowre* ‘big’. In the Čahār Lang dialect of Baxtiāri, *gowra* has acquired the restricted sense of ‘particularly big male dog’; IZADPANĀH 2001 attributes the same sense to *gowra* found in the Lori dialects of Pāpi and Bālā Garive. In the dialect of this latter village, *gur* means ‘thickness, fullness’ (AMANOLAHİ – THACKSTON 1986).

No convincing explanation of the origin of this lexical group has been advanced so far. HADANK (1930: 250) quotes an improbable suggestion by KARST connecting it to Sumerian *guru* ‘high’. CHRISTENSEN – BARR (1939: 301) tentatively point to an OIr. base **garu-*, to which they also relate Av. *gouru-* ‘schwer’ and Pšt. *gar-* in *gar-nīkâ* ‘great grandfather’ (see EVP and NEVP). CABOLOV 2001 suggests a derivation of Krd. *givr* etc. from *gumre*, which is given as a lw. from Turk. *gümrah*.

Bxt. (ČLang) *gowra* ‘particularly big male dog’ shows striking analogies with Sist. *bowr* ‘big and bad-tempered dog’. MOHAMMADI XOMAK (2000 s.v.) considers *bowr* as the “ancient pronunciation” of Prs. *babr* ‘tiger’, and *sag-e bowr* as basically meaning *sag-e babrgune* ‘tiger-coloured dog’, adding that nowadays only few Sistāni people would be aware of this. AfyPrs. *babar* means ‘hairy, shaggy’, and *babrak* denotes a kind of thick, coarse woollen cloth. In the Ir. Bal. area that is largely influenced by Sistāni, however, and in particular in Sarāwāni, Lāšāri and the dialect of Gošt,¹⁵⁵ *bowr* is an adjective meaning ‘thick’. On the occasion of an interview focussed on the dimensional domain lexicon, a Bal. speaker from Gošt used *bowr* with a very high frequency in order to describe thick pieces of wood, legs, thread and similar things (*bowrē dār*, *bowrē pādā*,¹⁵⁵ *bowrē bandīk* etc.). Does Sist. *bowr* ‘big dog’ have really something to do with *babr* ‘tiger’, as suggested

¹⁵⁴ Cf. also the Dašt. sentence *beče-yku geverak vāvide* ‘that child has grown a lot [*ān bačče nesbatan bozorg šode*]’.

¹⁵⁵ Information taken from an unpublished (Ir.) Bal. dictionary, for which see above, fn. 97.

by MOHAMMADI XOMAK? I would prefer looking for another solution, also in the light of forms like Zefr. *būr* ‘big’ (ŽUKOVSKIJ 1888: 75).¹⁵⁶ The whole question appears particularly entangled but it sounds intriguing, and merits a closer investigation, which I reserve for another occasion. One could also think of reassessing the case of the OIr. proper name recorded in Elamite writing as *kam-ra-ak-ka₄* and *ka₄-u-ra-ak-ka₄*. The reconstructed OIr. form **Gauraka-* (-*ka*-extension of **Gaura-*) has been interpreted as ‘wild ass’ by GERSHEVITCH (the same as the MIr. proper name *Gōr*) and has been related to Old IA *ghorá-* ‘inspiring fear’ by MAYRHOFER (and recently also by TAVERNIER 2007: 188 and 589 with literature).

The thumb names containing the mentioned adjectives for ‘big’ are the following: SorKrd. *qamkī gewre* (KURDOEV – JUSUPOVA 1983), Sul. *emustegewre*, *pencegewre*, SouthKrd. *kilka gawra* (*angusta* / *kilka* / *panja gawra* SAFIZĀDE 2001, *angūsa gawra* EBRĀHIMPUR 1994a), Krmnš. *kelek gāwrāga* (besides *kelek bozorga*), Mukri *qāmīk-e gawrah*, Gor. (Gahw.) *kilik-i gōūrā*.

3.10. The adjectival base contained in Gil. *pile angušt* and Zā. *engišta pīl* (TODD 1985) ‘thumb’ is spread all along a north-western band, including Gilaki, some varieties of Ir. Āzari, Tāleši and Zāzā, with the meaning of ‘big’. Instances are Gil. *pile* ‘big; large; strong, powerful; bulky; tall’, (Rāms.) *pilā*, *pile* ‘big’, IrĀz. (Šāli) *pilla*, (Hazārrudi) *pille*, (Tākestāni) *PELLA* (LECOQ 1989a: 304), (Sagz., Ebr.) *pila*, (Čā.) *pil(l)a*, Tāl. (Zidei, Māsāl) *pille* (BAZIN 1981: 276), Zā. *pīl* ‘old; eldest; big’ (Siverek, Čabaxčur *pil*, Kur *pīl* in HADANK 1932: 163), etc.

There is no satisfactory etymology for the *pil*-‘big’ lexical group. EILERS (1979) mentions Gil. *pil(l)e* s.v. Gz. *bāli*, *bālē* ‘groß’, which he refers to SW Ir. **barda-* ‘hoch’. In HADANK 1932: 295, 296, Zā. (Kur) *pīl* ‘alt; groß’ and *pīr* ‘alt’ are cross-referred and both related to Prs. *pīr* ‘old, aged’. The same connection has been suggested in JABA – JUSTI 1879, where s.v. *pīl* ‘grand, l’ainé’, labelled as Zāzā, Krd. *pīr* ‘vieux, viellard’ is quoted. HENNING (1954: 164 fn.4), however, rejected HADANK’s hint («Zaza *pīl* [...] often wrongly confused with Prs. *pīr* ‘old’»), without any further comment.

Prs. *pīr* ‘old, aged’, as well as its MPrs. antecedent *pīr* (< **par-ya-*; see GERSHEVITCH 1964a: 82), is always used with reference to social hierarchy (‘head; spiritual leader’) or age (‘old’), and never works as a dimensional ad-

¹⁵⁶ STILO (2007: 108) suggests for Zefr. *būr(g)* a possible derivation from OIr. **vadraka-* (**vadrak(a)*) > **vadark* > **vadarg* > *bu(d)arg* > *būrg*).

jective. Since the BIG → AGED transfer represents a privileged conceptual path in Iranian, the inverse process could be considered as predictable as well. A confirmation is given by Daštestāni, where *pir*, besides its usual sense of ‘old’, has also acquired that of ‘big, large, huge’ (qualifying things), as proved by phrasal expressions such as *pir čomâq* ‘big cudgel’, *pir sang* ‘big stone’, etc.

Waiting for a better explanation, I would not completely discard a Prs. *pir* ~ Zā. *pīl*, etc. connection. This could be supported by the $l > r$ development in a few words, which at least resemble Prs. *pir* ‘old’, in languages of the area where the *pil*-‘big’ group is found. An instance is Gil. (Rāms.) *pilālsāl* ‘the year before last’ as contrasted with Prs. *pirārsāl* (*pirār* < **para-yār*-GERSHEVITCH 1964a: 82).

Should we somehow relate Wx. *pUluk* ‘thumb’ (for which MORGENSTIERNE [IIFL-II] tentatively suggests a connection with Lat. *pollex*) to Gil. *pile angušt* and Zā. *engišta pīl*?

3.11. In Southern Kurdish, we find *kilka kalā*, *kalā amust/angust* (*panj kala* SAFIZĀDE 2001), Garr. *kelik e kal*, all meaning ‘thumb’; see also Sul. *kelemust*, Gor. (Talahed.) *kelek kalena* and Lak. *kelekekela*.

To these Kurdish and Gorāni thumb names, the following may be associated: (1) (West Iran) Lo. *kalak-e kala* (UNVALA 1958: 15), (Xorramābād) *kelek kala* (HASURI 1964: 24); (2) (North Iran) Gil. *kale-angušt*, (Māč.) *kal angušt*, (Rāms.) *kalā ongušt*, Tāl. (Rep. of Azerbaijan) *kallā angīštā* (PIREJKO 1976), (Kargānrudi) *kela angāšta*, (Asālemi) *kāla angāšta* (D. GUIZZO p.c.); (3) (Central Iran) Gz. *kal*; (4) (EIr. languages) Yzγ. *kāly^waxt*, *qāly^waxt* and (comparative degree) *kāldūr waxt* ‘thumb’ (GAUTHIOT 1916: 254 fn.1), also quoted in SKÖLD 1936: 186 (*qālduri waxt*); EDEL'MAN 1971 has *qāldūri γ^waxt* as ‘middle finger’.

The adjectives occurring in the lexicalized phrases mentioned above belong to Prs. *kal* ‘big’ (DEHX; only in *kalčašm* ‘big-eyed’), which is with all probability a “dialectal” form. Consider Šir. *kal* ‘big’, Birj. *kalā* ‘big, large’, SouthKrd. *kaḷ*, *kalā* ‘big’, SulKrd. *keḷ* ‘strong, powerful, high’, IrĀz. *kal* ‘big’ (REZĀZĀDE MALEK 1973 with further references), Gil. (Rāms.) *kal*- (only in compounds) ‘big’, Lo. *kala* ‘big’ (ADIB TUSI 1963–1964), Gz. *kal*, *kāl* ‘big, great; manly; eldest, chief of a human group’. In EIr., Yzγ. *qāl*-, probably never used as an independent lexical form, is also recorded in other compounds, such as *qālxéx* ‘large river’, *qālbawān* ‘big hole in a mountain’, *qālbandáy* ‘embankment’, etc.

Prs. *kalān* ‘big, massive, great’ is well documented in the main dictionaries but is mostly used in Eastern Persian; see AfγPrs. *kalān* ‘big, large’, Xor.

kolū(n), Qāi. *kəlu*; Birj. *kalō[n]* ‘old, aged (especially of sheep)’, TrbHayd. *kulu(n)*, *kolon* ‘big’¹⁵⁷ and Taj. *kalon*.

Taj. *kalon* ~ (Iran) Prs. *bozorg* may be considered as one of the salient lexical shibboleths differentiating Tajik from Persian (LAZARD 1956: 180). In Boxārāi, *kalon* is the usual adjective for bigness in all possible extensions, and also includes reference to age. A different derivative from the same base is (Taj.) Vanj *kaluk* ‘old’ (ROZENFEL'D 1982).

The only Mlr. antecedents we know are Man. Prth. *kalān* ‘great, big’¹⁵⁸ and Khwar. *kl'(n)* ‘big, great’. Cognates of, and sometimes direct loanwords from Prs. *kalān* are largely documented on the whole Iranian plateau. In many cases they have acquired the restricted, specialized meaning of ‘senior; head of the village’, and frequently occur in the comparative (cf. Prs. *kalān-tar*). However, while *kalān* appears extraneous to the core lexicon of Standard Persian of Iran, its cognates are largely used in other Wlr. languages, in particular Central dialects,¹⁵⁹ Southern Kurdish (Lakki, Kelhuri, Kermānšāhi¹⁶⁰), Lori and Fārs dialects,¹⁶¹ as well as in the languages spoken in North Iran (Caspian area).¹⁶²

Different etymological proposals have been advanced for the *kalān*-group. According to ORANSKIJ (1970: 157–159), Prs. *kalān* / Taj. *kalon* has an Elr. origin; it should be considered as a loanword from some dialects having *l < t* (< OIr. **katāna-*; see also above p. 102). In view of Prth. *kalān*,

¹⁵⁷ The relevant forms found in Elr. (Šyn. *kalōn*, Sgl. *kalān* ‘big, large’, Wx. *kalon* ‘famous, great’, Yzy. *kalon* ‘senior’) are Prs. loanwords.

¹⁵⁸ Note that there are two Man. Prth. (homographs or homophones?) words *q/kl'n*, the first meaning ‘great’, the second meaning ‘pure’ and being the equivalent of Sgd. *kr'n*, as first noticed by SIMS-WILLIAMS (1989: 329). According to SUNDERMANN (1994: 123 fn. 4) the meaning ‘pure’ makes better sense than ‘great’ in most passages in which Prth. *kl'n* occurs. The meaning ‘great’ may be admitted for only a few of them, while others remain ambiguous. Werner SUNDERMANN, whom I consulted on the matter, expounded his thinking in a letter sent to me on 19/11/2001; to him, for his usual kindness, go my heartfelt thanks.

¹⁵⁹ Cf. Xuns. *kalun* ‘big, out of size, plenty’ (AŠRAF ALKETĀBI 1983: 445), Gz. *kālān* ‘big, great’, Krm. *kelān* ‘big; large’, Rāv. *kelūn* ‘big’, etc.

¹⁶⁰ Krmnš. *kalen* ‘big, great’, Lak. *kalen* ‘big (for people and things)’, *kalēn* ‘big; senior; elder’, (Tarhāni) *kaleyn* (HASURI 1964: 59). According to a chart in *Contrast of some Words in Kurdish dialects in Iran* [www.KurdDialectContrast.html, quoting *Awine* 25 (1375/1996), 81–83], Kelhuri/Lak. *keln* contrasts with SorKrd. and Awr. *gewre* ‘big’.

¹⁶¹ Bxt. *kalon*, Lo. *kalo*, Dav. *kalun* ‘leader; great’.

¹⁶² Cf. Gil. *klā* ‘big’, Harz. *kala*, *kālā* ‘big’ and, eastwards, Dāmyāni *kalān* and Šahrudi *kelon* ‘big’ (ŠARĀTZĀDE 1992). See also *keleng* ‘big, great’ in the IrĀz. dialect of Lakestān, Šahrestān of Xoy, Western Azerbaijan (ADIB TUSI 1963–1964).

one might suppose that this word entered the Western plateau *via* Parthian, and penetrated into Tajik through a direct contact with an EIr. dialect spoken in the area of the historical Bactria. EILERS (1979: 681–682 s.v. *kal* and *kalān*) points to some kind of connection between *kal* and *kalān*, envisaging for *kal* a possible loan from Gr. κάρδακες ‘mercenaries’ (on which see SZEMERÉNYI 1971: 672, with literature, prospecting an Ir. origin for the Gr. word).

I would prefer considering Prs. *kalān* as an *ān*-derivative¹⁶³ from a base **kal-* ‘big’, whose modern outcomes have been mentioned above.

3.12. In Waxi, the thumb is named *lup yāngl* (IIFL-II, LORIMER 1958),¹⁶⁴ a lexicalized phrase containing the adjective *lup*, which means both ‘big; adult; elder’ and ‘much’.

Wx. *lup* has unquestionable counterparts in a few EIr. languages: Išk. *lip*, Šyn., Roš., etc. *lap* ‘much, many’; see also dial. Taj. *lum(b)* ‘big; much, many’ (ROZENFEL'D 1982). As possible cognates of Wx. *lup*, STEBLIN-KAMENSKIJ (1999 s.v.) also mentions Pšt. *loy*, *luy* ‘big, large; adult; great, important; high (of voice)’, as well as (Dardic) Bašgali *ola*’, Aškun *aulú*, Kati *al* ‘big’, to which one could add Traieguma *úlláh* ‘big’ (LENTZ 1939: 197).

Without taking a definite stand on Pšt. *loy*,¹⁶⁵ I would connect Tāl. *yol* ‘big; adult, senior’ (*yol* in Anbarān Mahalle and Šānkāvar, *yul* in Jeid according to BAZIN 1981: 276) and Sang. *yāl(e)* ‘big; tall’ to the Dardo-Kafir forms mentioned above.

The presence of these items in languages spoken in North Iran could be attributed to a Turk. influence: cf. Turk. *ulu*, TurkĀz. *ulu* ‘big’. The same could be true for Bašgali *ola*’, Aškun *aulú*, Kati *al*, etc., for which in CDIAL 1211 an (unconvincing) protoform **āpula-* is reconstructed. Note that a connection between Turk. *ulu* and Pšt. *loy* had already been advanced in TOMASCHEK 1880: 816.

¹⁶³ On the suffix *-ān* deriving adj. from adj. see HORN 1898–1901: 176.

¹⁶⁴ As already noted by MORGENSTIERNE (IIFL-II), Wx. *hip i°* ‘thumb’ recorded in SKÖLD 1936: 141 should be explained as a misreading of a handwritten form *lup i°* in SKÖLD’s original field notes.

¹⁶⁵ See SKJÆRVØ 1989: 398 (< **dahākah-*); NEVP 47 («A derivation < Av. *hu-ḍāta-* ‘well-created, -built’ is semantically unsatisfactory», with reference to NEVP 42). Both proposals have recently (and in my opinion rightly) been challenged by CHEUNG 2005: 129 («This word is possibly a regional borrowing, cf. Wa. *lap*, Sarik. *lɛwr* ‘id.’»).

As a label for ‘thumb’ in Turkish-Mongol, one may quote OTurk. *uluḡ äriñäk*, lit. ‘the big finger’ (ERDAL 1981: 122) and probably Kalmyk *alae* quoted by POTT 1847: 297.

Is (South?) Krd. *âl* ‘thumb’ (EBRĀHIMPUR 1994b, s.v. *angošt*), recorded as *âl*, *yâl* ‘middle finger’ in HAŽĀR 1990 and EBRĀHIMPUR 1994a, to be put in connection with one of the lexical sets discussed in this paragraph? Should one analyse (South?) Krd. *âlxwâj* ‘thumb’ in EBRĀHIMPUR 1994b, s.v. *angošt* (‘forefinger’ in HAŽĀR 1990 and EBRĀHIMPUR 1994a), as a lexical compound containing *âl* and a reduced form of *xwâjâ*, *xwâja* ‘man of distinction, master’, a term of respect that only a humanized, high-ranking finger might deserve?¹⁶⁶

3.13. The thumb name in Koruni, a Krd. dialect spoken in Fārs, is *kelek-e qeyi*. The adjective *qeyi* ‘big’ (SALĀMI 2006: 189) is an Ar. lw. (cf. also Prs. *qavvi* ‘strong, stout, robust’) strongly integrated in the vocabularies of Kurdish, Lori, and surrounding areas. One may quote KurmKrd. *qewî* ‘strong; very, very much’, SouthKrd. *qavî* ‘strong; powerful; sound and healthy; much, many’, Krmnš. *qaiila* ‘fat and huge’ (*qä(y)ün* in *qä(y)ün-ü rân* ‘Oberschenkel’ CHRISTENSEN – BARR 1939: 353), Lo. *qevi* ‘fat, robust, thick’, Bxt. (ČLang) *qeyin* ‘big, strong’, Āvarz. *qey* ‘big’, Šuš. *gevend* ‘fat and robust’ (FĀZELI 2004), Vfs. *qævi* ‘strong’, Tāl. (Māsāl) *ḡavi* ‘strong’ (NAWATA 1982: 116), Siv. *kävîn* ‘thick’, recorded by ANDREAS (CHRISTENSEN – BARR 1939) but not confirmed by LECOQ’s informants (1979: 200), etc.

3.14. Oss. *xīstær/xestær* means ‘elder’; to it also belong Ydy. *xušči*, Mnĵ. *xuškī*, *xuškəy*, *xuškī* ‘greater, elder’. OIr. and MĪr. antecedents (superlative forms) are Av. *hvōišta-* ‘first; best’, Khot. *hvāšta-* ‘best, chief, pre-eminent’, Sgd. *xwyštk*, *ḡwyštk*, etc. ‘teacher’, (Man.) *xwyštr*, *xwštr* ‘chief; superior’. As outcomes of old comparatives from the same base, we have Šŷn. *xidār* (m.), *xadār* (f.) ‘bigger, elder, grown up’ (EVŠG), Haz. *ḡadār* ‘much, many; large’, AfŷPrs. *xadal* ‘big and disagreeable man’.

Oss. *xīstær æng_ovlʒ*, ~ *k’ūx*, Mnĵ. *xuški agūška* and *xuškəgha*, Šŷn. *xidār anġixt*, Roš. *xaid inġaxt*, Šahdara *xadār anġixt* (SKÖLD 1936: 186) ‘thumb’ are therefore figurative expressions, stressing on the social hierarchy (based on age or rank) characterizing humanized fingers.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁶ An instance of a similar shortened form is Dav. *xoĵ* ‘master, sir’.

¹⁶⁷ The thumb may be depicted as the ‘eldest (brother etc.)’ in Modern IA as well; see CDIAL 5286 s.v. *ḡyēštha-* ‘first, chief’, *ḡyēšthá-* ‘eldest; eldest brother’.

3.15. Prs. *angošt-e samin* ‘thumb’, recorded in traditional dictionaries but unknown to my Prs. informants, contains *samin* ‘fat, full, plump’, an Ar. loanword; cf. Ar. *samīn* ‘fat, corpulent, plump; thick’.

3.16. Par. *ghaṇḍ* ‘big; elder’, occurring in Par. *ghaṇḍ yošt* (also *aṅgušt-e ghaṇḍ*) ‘thumb’, is a word of IA origin; cf. CDIAL 4424.

4. Though thumbs are thicker than other fingers, they are at the same time relatively short, or, we could say, of a quite low stature, if equated to human beings. This physical feature has been considered as conceptually salient and has favoured the creation of thumb designations in some languages in the world. In Gondi (a central Drav. language), for example, it is just this peculiarity to be emphasized: see *mundā wiring (irinj)* ‘thumb’ (lit. ‘the short finger’) in DED² 4938. In Lithuanian, the word for ‘dwarf’ (*nyštukas*) has been derived from the name of the thumb (*nykštis*). Note that the character known as *Poucet* in French (from Perrault’s tale *Le Petit Poucet*; cf. also Engl. *Tom Thumb*, Germ. *Däumling*, It. *Pollicino* etc.) represents a perfect prototype of a dwarfish man.

Prs. *angošt-e kutāh* ‘thumb’, lit. ‘the short finger’, quoted in MOKRI 2005: 263, is the only instance I found in Iranian of this iconomastic pattern.

5. We have seen above (§ 3.11) a few *kal*-forms meaning ‘big, great’. There are also *kal*-forms that mean (or *also* mean) ‘male; strong’:¹⁶⁸ male animals, such as he-goats, he-lambs or oxen, are often designated *kal*.¹⁶⁹ How the notions of MALENESS and PHYSICAL STRENGTH may be associated to the notion of BIGNESS is easily understandable: it is a fact of common human experience that males have bigger and stronger bodies than females. Here the question arises whether the *kal*-labels for ‘thumb’ mentioned in § 3.11 should be interpreted as “big/great fingers” or as “male fingers”, as suggested by CHRISTENSEN – BARR (1939) for Kurd. (Garr.) *kelik e kal* and by EILERS (1979) for Gz. *kal*. It is not easy to take a stance. If it is true that the thumb finds in its physical dimension a natural motivation for its name, it is likewise true that in human imagery it is often equated to a living being,

¹⁶⁸ Cf. e.g. Gil. (Māč.) *kal* ‘male’, (Rāms.) *kal* ‘male; big (in compounds)’, etc.

¹⁶⁹ Cf. Prs. *kal* ‘the male of any animal’ with countless cognates in other languages. MAŠKUR (1978) compares Prs. *kal* with Hebrew *kar*, Akk. *kerru* ‘he-lamb, ram’.

and recognized not only as the eldest of the group, but also as a member of the male category.

This associative conceptual relation also underlies Prs. *angošt-e nar*, *nar-angošti* (DEHX), which is in fact a lexical peculiarity of Eastern Persian:¹⁷⁰ cf. Taj. *narangušt* (KALBĀSI 1995 *nar-čilik*) and AfγPrs. *angošt-i nar* (ŠĀLČI 1991). In EIr., one finds Sgl. *narangzšt*, Mnj. *narayyušt*, Ydy. *narangušć*, Par. *narān* *yošt*, Yγn. *narankūšt* ‘thumb’. Wx. *γəš-yangl(ək)* (IIFL-II *γəši-yāngəl*) ‘thumb’ similarly contains *γəš* ‘male’.

It is possible that some of the EIr. *nar*-expressions for ‘thumb’ quoted above are due to a Taj. or AfγPrs. influence. However, Sogdian speakers could also have conceived the thumb as a “male finger”, as proved by the Sgd. label *naršak* (<n(r)šk>) ‘thumb’ (<‘little man’), recorded in a Sgd. list of body-parts (SUNDERMANN 2002: 144 and fn. 74).¹⁷¹ To the thumb as a “male finger” also point some labels found in North Iran, namely Sang. *nar-angošt*, Lāsg. *nar-engošt*, Srx. *nōr-angošt*, Šahm. *nar-angošt*.

In fact, in a way specular to *kal*, for which one could envisage a BIG → MALE conceptual transfer, *nar* ‘male’ may acquire the additional sense of ‘big’. This is suggested by MORGENSTIERNE for Ydy.-Mnj. *nar-* («*nar* as a prefix indicates size or strength», IIFL-II, s.v. *narkafčī*) and by KIEFFER for Kab. *nar* («comme adj. ou en composition /nar/ peut signifier «grand, fort»», 1979–1980 s.v. *narān*).¹⁷² However, to consider the *nar*-fingers mentioned above as belonging to the “big finger” iconomastic type would be fully unjustified.

The “male-thumb” figurative expression is present in many languages in the world.¹⁷³ I limit myself to mention here Mongol *eregei chorogon* ‘thumb’ (cf. *ere* ‘man; manly’) and Kalmyk *irrekei* ‘thumb’ (cf. *irre*, *ere*, *aere* ‘man?’), quo-

¹⁷⁰ Persian speakers from Tehran which I have asked for on several occasions have not recognized this expression as an acceptable name for thumb.

¹⁷¹ R. SCHMITT (p.c.) observes that Sgd. *naršak* cannot be analysed as *narš-ak* (as one could possibly be led to assume from SUNDERMANN’s annotation «I.e. *naršak* ‘little man’, from Av. *narš* ‘man’ (Nom.) ? »), but only as *nar-^o*, being Av. *narš* a gen. form. Though the morphological structure of the Sgd. word remains to be better defined, the actual connection of Sgd. *naršak* to the *nar*-finger names seems to me very probable.

¹⁷² Similarly, one might interpret Dašt. *narre* ‘huge, bulky (of people and things)’, Buš. *narre* ‘ugly; coarse; bulky’ (‘(too) big’ → ‘graceless, ugly’ is a predictable semantic shift in Iranian). See also Xuns. *nartevar* ‘a kind of big hatchet’, as compared to *tevar* ‘hatchet’.

¹⁷³ In the Turk. dialect spoken in Ruh-Ābād, a Southeastern dialect of Xorāsān Turkish, the thumb is said *hāmuⁿ šast* (DOERFER – HESCHE 1993: 236), an idiom in which *šast* (loanword < Ir.) is modified by *hāmuⁿ* ‘male’.

ted by POTT 1847: 297, since here certainly belongs Haz. *erka* (Besut *ireka*, Dai-zangī *erata*, DULLING 1973) ‘thumb’, one of the many Mongol/Kalmyk elements in Hazaragi. As far as IA is concerned, note Skt. *vṛṣo* ‘*ṅgulinām* ‘the chief among fingers, the thumb’; cf. Skt. *vṛṣan-* ‘male, strong, etc.’ in EWA II: 575f.

6. Since Prs. *nar* and cognates are neutral as to the nature of living beings referred to, the image evoked by the thumb names listed in the previous paragraph might be that of either a ‘humanized’ or an ‘animalized’ male finger. The animal world is surely the source domain for the conceptual association that has produced the “ram-finger” type denominations for thumb in Kurdish: cf. KurmKrd. *tīliya beranī*, *beranekê*, *beranek*,¹⁷⁴ SouthKrd. *barânê* (EBRĀHIMPUR 1994b *dipilâ barânê* s.v. *angošt*, SAFIZĀDE 2001 *barânkê*, *barânak*), all of them derivatives, or lexicalized phrases containing a derivative from Krd. *beran/barân*¹⁷⁵ ‘ram’.

7. Attributing to fingers a kinship relationship represents a universal, having a worldwide, albeit discontinuous, distribution. In particular, the thumb is often equated to a parent: sometimes to an unspecified parent,¹⁷⁶ in few cases to a father, mostly to a mother.¹⁷⁷ The important role played by the thumb, as well as its strong constitution and its isolated position with respect to the other fingers, may account for this association, through which people ascribe to the thumb the role of a guide and guardian of the others.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁴ Note the conflict between the conceptual category and the morphological gender; Krd. *beranek* is feminine, just as *tīliya beranekê* is, since *tīli* ‘finger’ is a fem. word.

¹⁷⁵ For etymological references, see CHYET 2003 s.v.

¹⁷⁶ See e.g. Japanese *oyayubi* ‘thumb’ (lit. ‘parent-finger’).

¹⁷⁷ For more details, see BROWN – WITKOWSKI 1981: 601–602 (Table 4), where examples from different languages are listed. Further instances are *ne.kpe* (mother-hand) ‘thumb’ in Monzombo, a language from the Niger-Congo family (THOMAS 1981: 349); Malayam *talla viral* ‘thumb’ (from *talla* ‘mother’) and Parji *tal vanda* ‘thumb’ (from *tal* ‘mother’) in Dravidian (DED² 3136).

¹⁷⁸ Cultural expressions other than denomination processes may reveal the same human attitude towards their fingers, though the images evoked may vary. By way of illustration, consider the following Dezfuli riddle: *čiya čiya buniya dokuniya čâr bozenø: čupuniya?* (EMĀM 2000: 97) «What is this? There is a roof, there is a shop, four goats and one shepherd». The solution is: *dasø: kelekâ* (‘the hand and the fingers’) and may be explained in this way (ibid. fn. 1): the roof (*bun*, Prs. *bām*) represents each swelling at the bottom of the fingers; the shop (*dokun*, Prs. *dokkân*) represents the hollow in the palm of the hand; the shepherd (*čupun*, Prs. *čupān*) represents the thumb (which is obviously considered as a leader), while the four goats (*boz*) are the remaining fingers.

As derived from SBal. *māt*, WBal. *mās*, EBal. *māθ* ‘mother’, one may quote the following Bal. labels for thumb: *mātī* (*mātak* recorded from an Omani Bal. speaker), optionally followed by *lankuk* ‘finger’, widespread in SBal., with the exception of Karachi¹⁷⁹ and *māsī lankuk* or *māsīnk* (Panjgūr). MORGENSTIERNE (1932a: 40) records *mātī*¹⁸⁰ *angul* from a Bal. speaker of Noške. For EBal., MAYER (1910 s.v. *thumb*) and HETU RAM (1898) provide *māθani murdānay* and *māθkī mordānay*¹⁸¹ respectively. However, EBal. speakers I asked about, claimed to have never heard any of these expressions, or anything resembling them, so I do not know if and where they are (or were) actually used.

According to SAYAD HASHMI 2000, Bal. *mātī*, which basically means ‘maternal’, has the additional meaning of ‘big, great, important, etc.’. The association of the notion of MOTHER with that of BEST REPRESENTATIVE of any category, perceived as the origin and the paradigm, is well known in the Middle East. However, though one may find a few Bal. instances of *māt*-compounds (such as *mātband* ‘big embankment’, *māšāh* ‘the main branch of a river’ etc.), there is no evidence of any consistent usage of Bal. *māt* in the sense of ‘big’. Therefore, there is no reason to interpret Bal. *mātī lankuk* as “the big finger” rather than “mother-finger”.

In addition to the Bal. “mother-finger”, we have at least another “parent-finger” in Iranian, in this case a “father-finger”. It is found in the Fārs dialect of Kāzerun, where the thumb is named *bovaki*, a derivative from *bovo* ‘father’.

8. If Prs. *šahin* is a phonetic variant of *šāhin* ‘regal’ (a derivative from *šāh* ‘king’), the Prs. label *angošt-e šahin* ‘thumb’ would emphasize the importance attached to this finger. However, the scanty lexicographical documentation of this lexicalized phrase (see DEHX) make its presence in Persian at least dubious (a dialectal form?). To find a sure “regal” thumb one should look at Vfs. *šangoštæ*, *šahængošte* (MOQDAM 1949), Āšt. *šā angošt*, Āmor. *šāšgonda* (*šā angošt* MOQDAM 1949) ‘thumb’, and dial. Taj. *šalik* (ROZENFEL’D 1982), which means ‘thumb’ in the area of Darvāz, where *lik* is the usual word for ‘finger’.

¹⁷⁹ The Karachi Bal. name of the thumb is *gaḏḏī* (see below p. 139).

¹⁸⁰ Actually *matī* in MORGENSTIERNE (ibid.); this form could be explained as a misprint, a mishearing or a contextual phonetic variant of *mātī* produced by the speaker.

¹⁸¹ MORGENSTIERNE (1932a: 40) did not recognize in these words the base *māθ* ‘mother’ and hinted (with his annotation «*θ = z ?*») at possible variants of *mazan* ‘big’. Analogously, I think that MORGENSTIERNE did not recognize the connection of *matī angul* (recte *mātī*; see fn. 180 above) with *māt* ‘mother’.

Further instances of a “regal finger” (or better a “very important finger”)¹⁸² will be met with in the following chapters: the thumb shares this iconomastic pattern with both the fore- and the middle finger.

9. Taj. *sarangušt*¹⁸³ ‘thumb’ is equivalent to Turk. *başparmak* ‘thumb’ and lit. means ‘the finger at the head’. From a Panjgūri Bal. speaker I have recorded *lankuke sarag* ‘thumb’, but the syntactic structure of this expression, different from the one expected in Bal., with the dependence construction moving towards left, points to an external influence (Persian or Balochi of Ir. Sarāwān?).

However, Taj. *sarangušt*, which apparently depicts the thumb as a leader, could also be explained resorting to another motivation: it could point to the position of the thumb in comparison with the other fingers, describing it as the finger coming first (‘at the head’) in the topography of the hand.

10. Killing lice by swatting them seems to have been a task for which the thumb has proved to be particularly functional.¹⁸⁴ It is one of the functions fulfilled by this finger that has beaten the human imagination, and influenced naming processes in many languages.

In Iranian, a few thumb names diffused in the South/Central Kurdish area provide evidence for this argument. They are Sor. *espêkuje* (pop.) (HAKIM 1996), *qamkî espêkuže* (KURDOEV – JUSUPOVA 1983), SouthKrd. *espê kuže* (*sipîa kuža* EBRĀHIMPUR 1994a), Krmnš. *šepesh košak*. They have parallels in Central Iran and in South-Eastern Iran; compare ZorYzd. *šepesh košog*, Xur. *spež kož* (ŠĀYEGĀN 2006: 171), Rod. *šoškošak*. All these expressions share iconym, lexical structure and etymology: they are lexical compounds with agentive forms of the verb ‘to kill’ governing the word for ‘louse’ as their object (‘(the one) who kills lice’). Min. *marge šošon*, NBšk. (Sardašt) *marge rešon*, SBšk. (Garu) *marge xešan* (G. BARBERA p.c.) ‘thumb’ rest on the same motivational pattern. In these dialects, however, through a metonymi-

¹⁸² Prs. *šāh*, *šah* ‘king’, as well as its several cognates in many Ir. languages, is commonly used to form nominal compounds referring to high-level members inside a category. Instances are Prs. *rāh* ‘road’ vs. *šāhrāh* ‘main road, highway’, *tut* ‘berry’ vs. *šāhtut* ‘black mulberry’, etc.

¹⁸³ Not to be confused with Taj. *sarangušt* ‘tip of the finger’, i.e. the ‘head (upper part) of the finger’.

¹⁸⁴ In Gilaki, this practice was called *čungul*. For this operation (*čungul zēn*), people generally used to help each other, and especially women used not to go to sleep before having performed it (BOŠRĀ 2002: 213).

cal association (intra-domain mapping), the thumb is directly equated to the effect of its action, i.e. death (*marg*); it is conceived as ‘the death of lice’.¹⁸⁵

In favour of the fact that many people in the world (and not only the Kurds, or the Zoroastrians of Yazd or the inhabitants of some SE Iranian areas) have found it expedient when necessary to get rid of lice using their own thumbs, also speak the corresponding Mediterranean figurative expressions for ‘thumb’ pointed out by SERRA (1971–1973: 445–446), viz. *accira prúkkju* or *skázza prúkkju* (lit. ‘the killer [or the swatter] of lice’) in a few dialects of Basilicata (Italy); *igémz* (lit. ‘[the one which] swats’) in the Berber variety spoken in Zuwāra (Libya) and *gaṭṭā el-gúmla* (‘[the one which] swats the lice’) in the Ar. dialect spoken in Tripoli. Similar denominations are found in Northern Italy (Alta Valtellina), as *mizaciöc* (Alboseggia), *mazaplögl* (Livigno), *mazza piöcc* (Brianza), etc. (BRACCHI 2009: 286). One may also produce several instances of finger-rhymes for children where the thumb is introduced in its capacity as lice-killer (Arabic: CHEBEL 1999: 88–89; Low German: POTT 1847: 293, also VEENKER 1981: 375).

The “lice-killer” thumb is generally felt as a popular designation; it is therefore doomed to be cancelled from the lexicon of each language in its normalization phases.

11. Long time before the uniqueness of fingerprints was recognized, and long before the signature was currently used to validate documents, fingers and nails¹⁸⁶ had an important function in the bureaucratic procedures. They were used as individual seals of acts in many cultural environments, though according to different practices. As demonstrated by KUMAMOTO (1987b), Khotanese people used the Chinese and Tibetan “finger-seal” method (Chin. *huazhi*), i.e. drawing lines symbolizing the shape and length of fingers at the end of documents, while there is no Khot. evidence of an alternative usage of the Chinese method (*zhinyin*) that consisted of making a fingerprint (probably with the thumb) over the personal name. Consequently, Khot. *hamguṣṭa* (other spelling *hagaṣṭa*) ‘finger’, occurring at the end of many Khot. documents along with personal names, has to be interpreted as ‘finger-seal’, and not ‘finger-mark’. However, the practice of making fingerprints as substitutes for sig-

¹⁸⁵ Note that dialects of that area have different words for ‘louse’; in some it is *šoš* (cf. Prs. *šepēš* and cognates ‘id.’), in others it is *reš* (cf. Prs. *rešk* and cognates ‘nit’); in the SBšk. dialect of Garu it is *xešk* (G. BARBERA p.c.).

¹⁸⁶ For the usage of nails to validate documents in Mesopotamia, see EBELING 1957; in Bactria, see SIMS-WILLIAMS 2000: 112, 113 doc. U27, etc.

natures by illiterates should have been widespread on the Ir. plateau. It has survived in culturally peripheral areas, as is proved by an episode described by BALSAN in the account of his travel in Bašākerd in late 1967 («Ali Nushirwani accepta, à condition que l'accord fût transcript sur un bout de papier signé par moi et par le Sayed Reza [...] Puis il apposa son pouce», 1969: 264). Evidence is also provided by the Siv. idiom *gos vin deyan* 'signer avec le pouce enduit d'encre' (LECOQ 1979). KurmKrd. *tilya navnišanê* 'thumb' (AMÍRXAN 1992), containing *navnišan* 'sign, token, marking', could be explained resorting to the 'signing' function performed by the finger.

12. The botanical world has probably served as the domain source for metaphorical associations that produced a couple of labels recorded in South Kurdish. These are *nāl* (EBRĀHIMPUR 1994b s.v. *angošt*) and (Mahâb.) *tilyâ gizrê* (AWRANG 1969); cf. *nāl* 'thin string of reed' and *gizre* 'thorn, straw'.

13. As all the other fingers, the thumb may be designated with terms whose primary meaning is (or originally was) 'finger' (semantic change), or which derive from words for 'finger'.¹⁸⁷ In Iranian, one finds Sed. *uṅguss* and Wan. *nguṭā* (also 'fore- and middle finger'),¹⁸⁸ both belonging to the *angošt*-type group (see above, pp. 56 ff.).¹⁸⁹ Similarly, Sor./SulKrd. *qamk* 'thumb' (HAKIM – GAUTHIER 1993, s.v. *pouce*) is originally one of the (South/Central) Krd. words for 'finger' (see above p. 84), while Bast. *angošt bačo*, Farām. *boča, bača* 'thumb' could be connected with Phl. *bačag* for which see above p. 86.

Khot. *āṣṭī, āmṣṭī* 'thumb' probably falls into the same iconomastic typology. It derives from **anguṣṭiya-* 'connected with fingers' (BAILEY 1979) or **anguṣṭika-* (DEGENER 1989), with a compensatory lengthening.

Khot. *āṣṭī* induces the following digression on an Av. word that sounds similar to the Khot. form, without being etymologically related.

Y. 9.11 and Yt. 19.40, two parallel passages with minor differences, recall the killing of the mythical hero Kərəsaspā by Aži Sruuara, the poisonous, horse-devouring, men-devouring yellow serpent, on which yellow, *ārṣtyō-barəzan-* poison grows. Taking into account «Skt. *mucṭhyaguchṭha*, lit. 'le pouce du poing'», with which Neryosangh translates Av. *ārṣtyō-barəzan-*, BURNOUF (1845: 270–271), suggested interpreting *ārṣtyō-* as 'pouce'. Many

¹⁸⁷ A few examples in Slavonic languages are provided in VEENKER 1981: 364.

¹⁸⁸ «Borr. from Lhd. *angūthā*, but influenced by *n²gut* 'finger'» (MORGENSTIERNE 1930: 168).

¹⁸⁹ For IA parallels see Skt. *anḡuṣṭhā-* and cognates in CDIAL 137.

subsequent translations of these Av. passages have been influenced by BURNOUF's understanding. According to MILLS (1887: 234), from the body of the terrifying snake, «as thick as thumbs are, greenish poison flowed aside» (*Y.* 9.11). Similarly, DARMESTETER (1883: 295) translated «yellow poison flowed of a thumb's breadth» the parallel passage *Yt.* 19.40. A new interpretation of *ārštyō-barəzan-* ('von Klafterhöhe') and consequently of *Y.* 9.11 («auf dem das Gift klafterhoch floss») is advanced by BARTHOLOMAE (1904), who explains *ārštyō-* as derived from **ārštya-* 'Höhe, Lange eines Speers', «Ableit. aus» *arštya-* 'Speer, Lanze'.

BARTHOLOMAE's suggestion has generally been accepted by Western scholars (see lastly HINTZE 1994: 212 and HUMBACH – ICHAPORIA 1998: 116–117), but never fully accepted in Zoroastrian circles; compare KANGA 1909 (s.v. *thumb*) and BAHRĀMI 1990, where Av. *ārštya-* is still recorded as 'thumb'.

Notwithstanding the clear, general sense, the proper understanding of the relevant passages has been a question ever since. Even the Pahlavi translator of *Y.* 9.11 should not have grasped too much of the original Avestan text, at least judging from *asp-bālāy*, i.e. 'to the height of a horse'¹⁹⁰ which translates Av. *ārštyō-barəzan-*, not to mention the long rambling gloss (quoted in HUMBACH – ICHAPORIA 1998: 117) that he felt the need to add in order to justify his translation. And certainly Neryosangh had troubles in translating into Sanskrit, as well. However, which reasoning led him to produce the odd compound «*muchtyaguchthta*» is really very difficult to understand. It is plausible that since the topic was about a dimensional value, Neryosangh thought to introduce an element commonly used as a measure of length, and the thumb meets the case perfectly. Even the context (poison growing over a surface) could have favoured the recourse to a small measure, like a finger, rather than a big one, like a spear or a similar object. May Neryosangh have been influenced by the assonance with some cognate(s) of Khot. *āṣṭī* 'thumb', also used as a measure of length,¹⁹¹ or Av. *ašti-* 'four fingers' breath, palm'?

14. Ar. *ibhām* 'thumb, big toe' has found its way in Persian and has become a (very) formal alternative to *šast*; cf. Prs. (*angošt-e*) *ebhām* 'thumb,

¹⁹⁰ Note that the Phl. translator resorted to a conventional expression which also occurs elsewhere in Phl. texts and is used to emphasize the big dimension of a specific element; cf. *WZ* 16.3.

¹⁹¹ Cf. *āṣṭye āṣṭye mase gvīhā: rruṃ jsa gūmalyāñā* "to size of a thumb each with butter to be smeared on" (*Siddhasāra* 122r1; quoted in BAILEY 1979 s.v. *āṣṭī*).

great toe’, Taj. *angušt-i ibhom*. At first sight, this Ar. label could seem to represent the thumb as “the finger of the ambiguity”; cf. Ar. *ibhām* ‘obscurity, ambiguity’, also found in Persian as a loanword (*ebhām*). This should have been, at least according to my knowledge, a figurative expression with no check from any other (Iranian and non-Iranian) languages. In fact, Ar. *ibhām* ‘thumb’ and *ibhām* ‘ambiguity’ are merely homonyms; the former belongs (with «-m < *-n by assimilation to b-») to the same root as Akk. *ubānu*, *upānu* ‘finger, toe’ and the related Semitic words collected in MILITAREV – KOGAN 2000: no. 34, already quoted above p. 90.

15. In Balochi, three different names for thumb represent isoglosses with a clear-cut areal distribution: *šast* characterizes WBalochi, *mātī* characterizes SBalochi, while the most usual thumb name in EBalochi, practically unknown in other Bal. varieties, is *deb/ḍeb*.¹⁹² This latter word, which has not been recorded with any other meanings in Bal. dictionaries and glossaries, seems at first sight to have an Indian origin, but I have found no Indian language, whether contiguous or not with the Bal. area, in which the name of the thumb somehow resembles *ḍeb/deb*. Is there any connection with Krd. *tipil/dipil* ‘finger’ seen above pp. 90 f.? I also have no suggestion as regards the etymology and iconym of one of the Pšt. labels for ‘thumb’, viz. *bāta* (*gūta*), and one of the thumb names recorded in Fārs, viz. Dāreng. *penḷe-y šādi* and Nud. *penḷe-y šad*.

Oss. *muč’a* ‘thumb’, which was given to me by speakers from different Ossetic areas, is not commented in IESOJ. Caucasian origin?

¹⁹² Also *dep*, *dīp/dīp*, according to DAMES 1891, MAYER 1910 and GILBERTSON 1925.

