

CHAPTER FOUR: THE FOREFINGER

1. The forefinger is commonly used by people all over the world to indicate something by pointing to it. In naming this finger, laying emphasis upon the pointing function has proved to be one of the most predictable iconomastic patterns.¹⁹³

Late Skt. *deśinī-*, *pradeśinī-* ‘forefinger’ (EWA III: 269) may be referred to the verb *diśāti* ‘points out’ (CDIAL 6340, EWA I: 744–746), generally connected to IE **deik-* ‘to show, point’ (IEW 188–189), to which Lat. *digitus*¹⁹⁴ (> It. *dito*) ‘finger’, Lat. *index* (> It. *indice*) ‘index finger’, etc. also belong. Skt. *diṣṭi-* ‘a measure of length’ (CDIAL 6343; EWA I: 745) is connected to the same verb as Skt. *deśinī-*, etc. An Ir. counterpart of Skt. *diṣṭi-* is Av. *dišti-* ‘ein Längemass’ (BARTHOLOMAE 1904), which, according to *FrO* (XXVIIa), is equivalent to ten fingers.¹⁹⁵ In the scale of values, a *dišti-* is shorter than a *vīstasti-* and longer than an *uzašti-*, the last two being equivalent to twelve and eight fingers respectively (BARTHOLOMAE 1904; *FrO* *ibid.*). Modern Ir. and IA cognates of Av. *dišti-*¹⁹⁶ and *vīstasti-*¹⁹⁷ are all recorded with the meaning ‘span’, i.e. the distance between (outstretched) thumb and (outstretched) little finger. However, if Av. *vīstasti-* seems to be what is called a ‘large span’, Av. *dišti-* could be a ‘small span’, i.e., the distance between (outstretched) thumb and (outstretched) forefinger, equivalent to Prs. *fetr* (< Ar.).¹⁹⁸

All things considered, I suggest taking Av. *dišti-* as a name of, or as a form somehow related to an unattested name of the forefinger, etymological-

¹⁹³ Forefinger names based on this motivation are numberless; for a few instances see VEENKER 1981: 368–369.

¹⁹⁴ A collection of different etymologies for Lat. *digitus* is in ANDRÉ 1991: 99; for a new proposal on the formation of this word (nominalization from adverb) see SILVESTRI 2000: 123 fn. 20.

¹⁹⁵ Cf. also Phl. *dišt* in *FrO* (*ibid.*) and in the *Supplementary Texts to the Šāyest nē-šāyest*, XVI.4 (KOTWAL 1969).

¹⁹⁶ Cf. Oss. *dīsny* (IESOJ) and CDIAL 6343.

¹⁹⁷ A collection of cognate forms is in IESOJ s.v. *wyđīsn(y)*. See also ELFENBEIN 1992: 250–251.

¹⁹⁸ According to KLINGENSCHMITT (1968: 239), Av. *dišti-* «bezeichnet die beiden Handbreiten und gehört wohl zur Wz. *diś* ‘zeichnen’».

ly connected with *daēs-* ‘to show, point’.¹⁹⁹ Skt. *prādeśinī-* ‘a span long; the forefinger’, *prādeśá-* ‘the span of the thumb and forefinger, etc.’, *pradeśa-* ‘pointing out, showing; a short span (measured from the tip of the thumb to that of the forefinger), etc.’, as compared with *deśinī-* and *pradeśinī-* quoted above, could support such an assumption. Consider also Gr. λιχάς ‘the space between the forefinger and thumb, the lesser span’, hardly to separate from λιχάνός ‘forefinger’ (see also CHANTRAINE 1980: 629).

Leaving aside Av. *dišti-*, whose etymology and primary meaning still require a deeper investigation, we may quote some Ir. expressions for ‘forefinger’ describing it as the “pointing finger” or the “sign finger”. These are Prs. *angošt-e nešān*²⁰⁰ (*nešān* ‘sign’), Taj. *čilik-i-nišonte* (‘the finger giving signs’, KALBĀSI 1995), with their Krd. and Fārs dialect counterparts, e.g. KurmKrd. *t’ilīya nišanē/nišandekē/nišankirinē* (RIZGAR 1993 *t’ilīya nišandanē*), SouthKrd. *kilk nišān* (SAFIZĀDE 2001), Dav. *pinje-y nušuna* (SALĀMI 2004), Knd. *penje-y nešuna*, Rič. *penje-y nošuna*, all of them meaning ‘forefinger’.

Prs. *ešāre/ešārat* / Taj. *išorat* ‘pointing with fingers; sign’ occurs in Prs. *angošt-e ešāre/ešārat* / Taj. *angušt-i išorat* ‘forefinger’. It is an early Ar. lw. from the root ŠWR.²⁰¹ Here also belongs Prs. *mošire, moširat* ‘forefinger’ (STEINGASS 1963). In Fārs, one finds Kor. *kelek-e ešāra*, Pāp. *penje-y ešāra* ‘id.’.

Ar. *išāra* also entered the Khwar. lexicon; cf. *’š’rt* ‘sign, wink’. The adjectival derivative *’š’rt-mync* occurs in the expression *y’ ’š’rt-mync ’kwnd*, the Khwar. name of the forefinger.

The “pointing finger” type is not commonly used in Balochi, but does not have dialect restrictions; I have recorded EBal. (Mari) *išāraya murdānay*, as well as *išāra* and *nišāne lankuk*, these two latter from Ir. Bal. speakers.

In Ossetic, the forefinger is called *amonæn ængwylǰ*. Oss. *amonæn* derives from the verb *amonym* : *amynd* ‘to show, to advice’.

A “making signals” finger is also the image evoked by Prs. *angošt-e γammāz*, with *γammāz* ‘ogling; shaking’, from the Ar. root ΓMZ; cf. Ar. *ghamaza* ‘to make a sign, to signal’.

¹⁹⁹ See also Av. *dišti-* ‘that which points out; index; a measure of half a span about five inches’ in BĀHRĀMI 1990 (with the somehow odd labels “*adabi*” / “Lit.”).

²⁰⁰ A few Tehrāni speakers which I asked about, claimed that *angošt-e nešān*, differently from *angošt-e ešāre* and *angošt-e sabbābe*, is not a current forefinger name in Modern Persian, though it is well understood.

²⁰¹ Cf. Ar. (II) *šawwara* ‘to make a sign, to point out’, (IV) *ašāra* ‘to make a sign’, etc.

While using fingers in order to send messages, human beings observe a gestural code shared by the members of the community to which they belong. Some of the codified signs, however, have proved to be common to different cultures. For instance, to draw somebody to oneself making signals with the forefinger is a very common practice. Surely, Sogdians used to do it as well, and they left trace of this practice in their lexicon. Sgd. *niwēdēne-angušt*, i.e. ‘the inviting finger’ (cf. *nw’yδ-* ‘to invite; to inform’) is the Sgd. forefinger name. It occurs in the Buddhist text P 14, 25 (BENVENISTE 1940).

In the communicative practice, the proxemic code interacts with the speech code. Taj. *angušt-i xitob* ‘forefinger’, lit. ‘the finger of the approach’, stresses upon the use of the forefinger in conversation; by moving it, the speaker intends to draw the addressee’s attention.

2. Wagging or holding up one’s forefinger may be a deprecatory gesture, with which one expresses disapproval, reproach and even contempt. The forefinger may be used in order to frighten or to insult, and this fact explains the labels reviewed in what follows.

Prs. (*angošt-e sabbābe*),²⁰² Taj. (*angušt-i sabboba*) and Prs. *sebbat* (DEHX) are Ar. loanwords; cf. Ar. *sabbāba* ‘index finger’ (from *sabba* ‘to insult, abuse’). Here also belongs Gz. *engolī-šābbābe* ‘forefinger’. Prs. *angošt-e došnām* and *došnām-dehande* contain *došnām* ‘curse, execration’. The same human disposition towards this finger accounts for one of the late Skt. names of the forefinger, *tarjanī-* (cf. EWA III: 238, s.v. TARJ ‘drohen, schelten’).

Bal. *šābāš*, as well as Prs. *šādbāš*, *šābāš* and several Ir. cognates, is commonly used as an exclamation of approval (‘bravo! well-done, congratulations’). Apparently, EBal. *šābāš murdānaγ*, provided to me by a Bugti speaker (but unknown to Bal. speakers from other areas), would point to the usage of this finger to express the feeling of liking and admiration for someone or something.²⁰³ However, by means of contrast, an associative principle based in many cases on irony (as a rhetoric figure), Bal. *šābāš* may also become a mark of disapproval; *šābāš kanag* has acquired the meaning of ‘to curse, scold’ (= *la^cnat kanag*). Documentation (at least for the Raxšāni dialect) is given by Hans STRASSER in the *šābāš* cards included among the ca.

²⁰² Belonging to the literary language; cf. MOINFAR 1981: 230. G. BARBERA has recorded *sabāba* ‘forefinger’ in Mināb; this term was however perceived as a Prs. word by Min. speakers.

²⁰³ This was also the interpretation proposed in FILIPPONE 2000–2003: 65.

40,000 of his planned Bal. dictionary (now kept in the Archive of the Austrian Academy of Sciences – *Nachlass Strasser*).²⁰⁴

The forefinger may also be used in order to show protection and mercy towards other people and this motivates Prs. *angošt-e zenhār* (or *zinhār*) and *angošt-e amān*, with *zenhār*, *zinhār* ‘quarter, mercy, protection’ and *amān* ‘safety, quarter, peace’. Note, however, that Taj. *angušt-i zinhor* is recorded as one of the names of the ring finger.

The forefinger is the finger with which one may communicate to have doubts about something, to be somehow perplexed; hence, in Persian it is also called *angošt-e šak* (DEHX), lit. ‘the finger of the doubt’. It may be used when cautioning someone against doing something, in giving advice; it is the finger most concerned with intellectual activities and knowledge; therefore, it may be referred to as *andām-e dānā* (DEHX, lit. ‘the wise limb’)²⁰⁵ in Persian.

3. The forefinger is universally associated to the cultural domain of RELIGIOUSNESS: for this reason all over the world it may be referred to as ‘the finger of the prayer’ or similar expressions.²⁰⁶

Muslims hold up their forefingers during the declaration of faith, the *šahāda* (‘witnessing’). It follows that the forefinger is the ‘finger performing the *šahāda*’, as evidenced by *aš-šāhid*, the Ar. label for ‘forefinger’, which has strongly influenced the forefinger denominations in many Muslim communities.

In Iranian, one may quote the following: Prs. *angošt-e šehādat*,²⁰⁷ AfyPrs. *angošt-e šahādat* (BAU 2003), Taj. *angušt-i šahodat*, Lo. *kalak-e šāhed* (UNVALA 1958: 14), SorKrd. *qamkī šehade* (KURDOEV – JUSUPOVA 1983), SouthKrd. *šāda*; *šāda niwēž* (with *niwēž* ‘prayer’), *angûs šādat*, *dipilâ šāhidi* (EBRĀHIMPUR 1994b s.v. *angošt*), (Krmnš.) *angušt-e šādat*, (Garr.) *kelik e šāhat*, Lak. *šāhed*, Gor. (Gahw.) *kilik-i šāyid*, Zā. *gištā šādi*, Tāl. (Rep. of Azerbaijan) *šadətə angīštə* (PIREJKO 1976), (Kargānrudi) *šahodata angəšta* (D. GUIZZO p.c.), Šahm. *šahādat*, Kāz. *penje-y šādat*, Gavk. *penjēy šādat*, Dahl. *penje-y šāhādat*, Mās., Dāreng., Dorun., Nud., Birov., Dādenj., Dusir., Mosq. *penje-y šādat*, Kal. (Lor) *penje-y šadət*, Dežg. *penje-y šāhāde*, Abd., Somγ., Ban., Gorgn. *penje-y šāhādat*, Baliā. *penje-y šahādat*, Hay. *penje-y*

²⁰⁴ A preliminary report on Dr. STRASSER’s *Nachlass* is available in ROSSI 2004–2006: 68–69.

²⁰⁵ Or ‘the limb of the wise man’?

²⁰⁶ For a few instances, see VEENKER 1981: 369. The close link between the forefinger and the divine explains the concern expressed by this finger in the children-rhyme (a) quoted above, p. 49.

²⁰⁷ Tehrāni speakers perceive this Prs. term as a religious, legal term (REZĀI BĀTBIDI p.c.).

šahāde, Kal. (Tāj.) *penjar-e šādat*, Dašt. *pinje-y šā:dat*, Bast. *angošt šahāda* ‘forefinger’.

In Balochi, I have recorded *šahādate lankuk* (Makrān), *šahādate hor* (Noške), and *šahādat murdānay* (Mari); all of them, however, are formal terms, not used in everyday language. Koroši has *šahādatey penja*.

QALANDAR MOMAND – SEHRAYI 1994 record Pšt. *šahādāt gwāta* as a gloss to *šinŷāta* ‘forefinger’; Par. *anğušt-e šādat* is clearly a Prs. loanword.

In AWRANG 1969: 294, Krd. (*tilīya*) *dalastokī* is glossed by Prs. *angošt-e gavāhi*; a phrase where *gavāhi* ‘witness’ replaces *šahādat* ‘id.’.

With the forefinger, the worshipper gives witness of his own faith, but also appeals to God and eulogizes His name, as illustrated by Prs. *angošt-e allāhxān*, or *xodāxān*, *xodāvān* (DEHX) ‘forefinger’, with the present stem of the verb *xāndan* ‘to call, etc.’ as the second part of the compound,²⁰⁸ and Prs. *mosabbekat*, a lw. from Ar. *musabbiḥa* ‘forefinger’, morphologically related to *sabbāḥa* ‘to praise, glorify’.

Is it to God that one gives thanks with the forefinger, also called *angošt-e šokr* (‘the finger of thanks’), as recorded by the traditional Persian dictionaries (DEHX)?

4. All the pious activities mentioned in the above paragraph pertain to the spiritual life and to the human relationship with the divine. However, other, more prosaic and earthly activities also play an important role in life, and it does not pay to be too finicky and disregard them. Wisely, human people have never done it and have taken them into consideration in denomination processes.

Eating is one of the most important human activities, being a prerequisite to life. The relevance of the forefinger in the act of eating, and especially in eating with the hands, is undeniable. However, nutrition (to which a sacral aspect may also be attributed) is only a part of the FOOD EATING conceptual domain, which also includes references to human attitudes towards food as pleasures dispenser (relish, greed, gluttony, avidity, etc.). This aspect is emphasized by the names of the forefinger depicting it as a “plate-licker” or something like that, which people from quite different cultures have created. The wide spreading of this figurative expression is surprising,²⁰⁹ and even

²⁰⁸ Prs. *angošt-e xodāxān* occurs in the *Kāmel at-Taʿbīr*; cf. MOKRI 2005: 264. These idioms, however, are never used in everyday language.

²⁰⁹ Cf. Gr. λιχανός ‘forefinger’ (lit. ‘the licker’ «from its use in licking up»); Lat. (< Gr.) *lichanos* (ANDRÉ 1991: 102). POTT provides a few examples in Slavonic (1847: 292) and Mongol (1847: 297; *dologhobor chorogon* ‘forefinger’, prob. from *dologhocho* ‘to lick’).

when not stabilized as the finger's "normal" name, it is used all the same in folk songs and folklore throughout the world.²¹⁰ Iranian provides many examples of this popular association.

Taj. *kosales* 'flatterer' (cf. Prs. *kāselis* 'flatterer; beggar, low fellow') is used (in local varieties?) with the meaning of 'forefinger' (recorded in STEBLIN-KAMENSKIJ 1999: 189). In Central Iran, we find Gz. *kāselis*, Xur. *tāvālēs*, *tāvābelēs* (*tāvā leys* FARAHVAŠI 1976: 2), ZorYzd. *kōsa-līsōg* 'forefinger', lexicalized phrases containing the present stem with agentive function or the agentive form (Yzd. *līsōg*) of the verb 'to lick' (connected to Prs. *lisidan*), which governs a word for 'bowl' (Prs. *kāse*) or 'pot' (Xur. *tāvā*) as its object. Similarly, the forefinger is named *kāsaḡ-līsok*, *āsag-līsok* (with loss of the initial velar), *kāsa-laysō* in WBal. (Noške, Xārān), lexical compounds from *kāsa(g)* 'plate, bowl' and *līsag* 'to lick'. Bal. (Kalāt) *kāsa-čaṭ* simply differs from the just mentioned idioms in that it contains the present stem of *čaṭtag* 'to lick'. In my fieldwork in Balochistan, I noticed that the "bowl-licker" forefinger was used (or accepted) only by WBal. speakers, and even not by all of them.²¹¹ However, this figurative expression is found in dictionaries and glossaries of other Bal. varieties as well: cf. *kāsaḡ čatūk* (COLLETT 1983; basically Makrāni), *kāsaḡč^hat* (HETU RAM 1898; MAYER 1910 s.v. *finger*; EBal.). Br. *kāsalēs* 'forefinger' may be a Bal. lw. or derive from another Ir. source (ROSSI 1979: H628).

The present stem of *lapiden* 'to lick' is involved in the formation of Min. *kāsalap* 'forefinger' (G. BARBERA p.c.), which has parallels in Baškardi; cf.

SERRA (1971–1973: 445–446) quotes *lekká pjatt* ('plate licker') in a dialect of Basilicata (Southern Italy), *alḡas* ('(who) licks') in the Zuwāra Berber variety (Libya), *haṣṣal el-gās^a* ('(who) takes from the plate') in Tripolitan Arabic (see also the finger-rhymes quoted in CHEBEL 1999: 88–89). In Celtic, we find Breton *biz liper* ('the lick finger') and Cornic *lykka soresyow* ('the lick dregs') (FLEURIOT 1981: 136). See also *lic(h)iaflór* (lit. 'cream-licker') in the dialect of Livigno and other dialects of Alta Valtellina, in Northern Italy (BRACCHI 2009: 286). Skt. has *annādi-tamā-* 'forefinger', lit. 'eating the most' (ŚBr.).

²¹⁰ Some Ir. Bal. speakers from Sarāwān reported to me a children rhyme where each line is devoted to a finger, starting from the thumb (see below, p. 140); in it, the forefinger happens to be named *kāsaḡ-līsok*. They told me that this forefinger name is used only in this rhyme and only by children. Likewise, in a nursery rhyme in Low German (POTT 1847: 293; also VEENKER 1981: 375), very similar to the Bal. one, the forefinger is styled "potlicker".

²¹¹ The data I have collected are somehow conflicting; a Bal. speaker from Xārān, for example, gave it to me as unusual; another one, native to the same town, maintained that he currently used it as the name of the forefinger.

NBšk. (Sardašt) *kosalap*, SBAšk. (Angoran) *kosa lappoš*, (Garu) *kāsalap* (G. BARBERA p.c.).

The forefinger is also depicted as a “licker” in Kurdish, both in Northern and Southern dialects; compare Kurm. *tīliya firaxaliskê* (RIZGAR 1993), i.e. ‘the one who licks pots and pans’ (cf. *alastin* ‘to lick’ and *firaq* ‘pots and pans; the dishes’) and *tīliya dalastokî* (SAFIZĀDE 2001) ‘forefinger’, from *dalastin* ‘to lick’. See also SorKrd. (*qamkî*) *došawmiže* (KURDOEV – JUSUPOVA 1983), SouthKrd. (*qâmki*) *došawmiža* (HAŽĀR 1990), *angustî došaw miža* (SAFIZĀDE 2001), a compound of *došaw* ‘syrup of grapes’ and *miž-*, from *mižîn* ‘to suck’. The syrup of grapes is also evoked in one of the Gilaki forefinger names, *dušo-xori-angušt*, (Māč.) *dušâb xor angüšt*. In Abiānei, one finds *angöšta halîmxare* ‘forefinger’, i.e. the ‘finger eating the *halim*’.

The “licker-finger” iconomastic type is also attested in EIr.; cf. Roš. *ðakēc*, Šyn. *ðakījak angixt* and Baĵ. *ðakījak ingaxt* ‘forefinger’, all of them lit. meaning ‘the licker (finger)’ (cf. *ðak-* : *ðikt* ‘to lick’). Some problems arise in interpreting Wx. *yi:tokaiangl* ‘forefinger’, quoted by LORIMER 1958. However, LORIMER’s suggestion,²¹² i.e. a tentative connection between *yi:tok* and the verb *yaw-* : *yit-* ‘to eat’, could have a leg to stand on, being supported by what has been said above.

The forefinger names listed above reflect a sort of blame towards this finger. They do not portray it as a just eating finger, but rather as a greedy finger, eating piggishly. The meaning ‘flatterer’, with its negative implications, of Prs. *kāselis* or KurmKrd. *firaqalês* (RIZGAR 1993) reinforces this assumption. And that this finger, because of its avidity, is not immune from censure is also proved by the name used by the Waxi speakers, *ÿudyangl(ək)* (‘the thief (*ÿud*) finger’). In Old Turkish as well, the forefinger (*suq ärnäk*) is ‘the finger of the avidity’; the same happens in Kazakh, Kirghiz, Turkmen and other modern Turkish languages. Kāšġarī (11th c. Turkish lexicographer) explains the Turkish label pointing out the fact that the forefinger is the finger moving first when is time to take food (ERDAL 1981: 123).

5. The EATING FOOD domain could probably also explain Western Pšt. *miswāk gūta* ‘forefinger’ (RAVERTY 1860), *moswāka gwōta* (QALANDAR MOMAND – SEHRAYI 1994), being *miswāk*, *moswāk* a stick from a particular

²¹² «Can *yi:tok* represent an alternative form to *yitn* ‘to eat’?» (LORIMER 1958, not numbered page, inserted between p. 299 and 300 in the copy kept in the Library of the Dept. of Asian Studies, L’Orientale University, Naples). Morphologically unclear; however, a similar case of an agentive from the past stem could be *šitk* ‘murderer’ from *šāy-* : *šitt-* ‘to kill’.

plant, the *Salvadora persica*, traditionally used by people in the Middle East and Central Asia in order to clean one's teeth. The "miswāk-finger" could lay emphasis on the common human practice of using one's own forefinger to clean one's own teeth after eating. However, this Pšt. label might also be explained in a different way.

As we have seen above, the finger's shape, which makes it resembling to a stick, twig, sprig, etc., is perceived as one of its peculiar features and has favoured the creation of figurative expressions for 'finger' having the botanic domain as their conceptual source. In this perspective, one may also consider Eastern Pšt. *šinyáta* (*gúta*) 'forefinger' (also 'first toe' in RAVERTY 1860), as derived from *šinyáť*, 'unripe (*šin*) cereals'.

6. Equating the forefinger to a straight, pointed object is not common. However, the existence of a naming pattern based on this association is proved by a few examples we can find in some languages.²¹³ To them, one may associate Wx. *čuk yangl* (LORIMER 1958), which could be interpreted as 'the finger standing erect'; cf. *čuk*, *cuq* 'erect'.²¹⁴

If one considers Oss. Dig. 'yčht' (i.e. *uxt*; POTT 1847: 287) as a misprint and instead read 'ychst' (i.e. *uxst* 'spit'; TAKAZOV 2003), one could also add here Oss. Dig. *uxst aengulze*, lit. 'spit (*uxst*) – finger' (POTT: Spiessfinger), for which, however, I have only found POTT's quotation.

7. Similarly to the thumb (cf. above p. 114), the forefinger is accredited with a "regal" nature.²¹⁵ Zefr. *šō-üngüli* 'forefinger' bears witness to it. MAYER 1910 and GILBERTSON 1925 record Bal. *šāhmurdān* 'forefinger'; I have not found any confirmation of this label among Bal. speakers, but there is no reason to doubt its being (or having been) used somewhere in EBal.

Should we also have to assume a (unrecorded) *šāh-panja* 'forefinger' in Badaxšāni, where the middle finger is called *šāh-panja-i kalān*, lit. 'a big *šāh-panja*'?²¹⁶

²¹³ Cf. VEENKER 1981: 373. For instances in Dravidian, see DED² 2658 [3086].

²¹⁴ To the etymological references quoted in STEBLIN-KAMENSKIJ 1999: 115, add the following: Lo. *čok*, in *čok kerde* 'to straighten', *čokel* 'thin piece of wood which suddenly, like a nail, enters in someone's hand or foot or dress', (Bālā-Gar.) *čuk kirda* 'to prick up (the ears)', *čukal* 'twig', Dezf. *čok* 'erect, straight', *čokak* 'to stand up straight', and perhaps also Bal. and Br. *jik* 'upright, on end' (cf. ROSSI 1979: E73), Jir.-Kahn. *jek* 'id.' (said of hair or any other projecting or raised thing).

²¹⁵ On the forefinger as a 'Hauptfinger' see also VEENKER 1981: 369.

²¹⁶ See below p. 136.

8. As regards the fingers' sequence order, the forefinger is perceived as "the first finger" in Balochi and Minābi; cf. Bal. (Nal) *awlī lankuk* and (Mari) *sarī mordayān*, lit. 'the initial finger'), Min. *kelenč avvalin* (G. BARBERA p.c.). Khot. *paḍausya haṃguṣṭi* 'the first finger' (BAILEY 1979: 50 s.v. *kaṇaiska*), an idiom containing the adjective *paḍausya* from *paḍā* 'first', shows the same order perception.

A reversed counting direction is illustrated by the forefinger names that describe it as the fourth finger, and in particular Gz. *engulī čōram* (ŽUKOV-SKIJ 1922: 110), Ydy. *čoromī oguščiko, čarangušč*; cf. Prs. *čahār* 'four', *čahārom* 'fourth' and cognates.

9. When one takes into account the collocation of a finger, one may refer to its ordinal ranking or point to its position in comparison with that of another finger. Even in the latter case, different approaches may be accounted for.

The forefinger may be described as "the finger next to the thumb".²¹⁷ Instances are Bohr. *engüš palū-šaste* and (E)Bal. *ḍeba duhmī murdān*, provided to me by a Balochi speaker of the Mari area,²¹⁸ both meaning 'forefinger'. All this increases the probabilities that Sgd. *p(š)'nršk*, immediately following *n(r)šk* 'thumb' in a list of body parts and literally meaning 'behind the thumb' (SUNDERMANN 2002: 144, no. 61), may be taken as one of the Sgd. names of the forefinger, as already suggested (even if with many doubts; cf. fn. 75) by SUNDERMANN.

Yzy. *kəranai γ^waxt* refers to both 'forefinger' and 'ring finger', describing them as 'lateral (*kərana*)' fingers. Laterality is a feature that forefinger and ring finger share when the middle finger acts as the point of reference.

In the *Frahang-i Ōīm*, ch. X, immediately after the sequence which provides the Av. and Phl. words for 'finger' (173 *ərazu 'ngwst*), and before the sequence mentioning the 'nail' (175 *frauāxš slwb' cygwn n'hwn*), one reads what follows: *arazān frārāzān pyš W 'ĤR 'ngwst* (174). The interpretation of this graphic string presents problems of different level: (1) the meaning of

²¹⁷ An equivalent expression is Lat. *pollici proximus* '(the one) near the thumb' (POTT 1847: 289, VEENKER 1981: 374 with literature).

²¹⁸ Bal. *duhmī* (as Prs. *dovvom*) does not only mean 'second' but also 'next, another'; cf. e.g. *duhmī roč/rož* 'the next day, the day after'. The usage of words for 'second' with the sense of 'next' is attested in other Iranian languages, as well.

the words in Avestan garb (*arazān frārāzān*); (2) the exact reference of the Phl. words (<𐭯𐭮𐭩 *W* '𐭠𐭮𐭮' *ngwst*>, /pēš u pas angust/).

In JAMASPJI – HAUG 1867: 51, *arazān frārādhân*, considered as Av. words, and their Phl. 'equivalents' (*angūšt âkhar va pēš*) are interpreted as the names of two specific fingers, i.e. the forefinger and the little finger. REICHELDT (1901: 125) rules out the Avestan origin of the first two words («*arazān frārāzān sind Pazandwörter*») and attributes to the Phl. translations (*pēš u pas angust*) the meaning of 'vorderer und hinterer Finger'. However, he gives no clues about which would be the 'vorderer' and the 'hinterer' fingers, nor a suggestion for the possible source of the Pazānd forms. In any case, *arazān frārāzān* did not find any collocation in BARTHOLOMAE 1904.

From the Av. expression in Phl. disguise, KLINGENSCHMITT (1968: 64–65) reconstructs the dvanda construction **arəzu frārəzu** 'Finger und vorderer Teil des Fingers'. His reasoning is convincing as far as the Avestan side is concerned. It probably also fits the Phl. counterpart *pēš u pas angust*, which could be intended as 'the fore and the back part of the finger'. However, such a categorization sounds a bit strange and one could wonder which would be the salience of the back part of a finger. An alternative could be solving the sequence into *pēš angust* and *pas angust* and intending them as denominations for specific fingers. If so, which would be the fingers referred to? ABRAMJAN (1965: 5) records *axar angūšt* as 'little finger'. But there is enough evidence that, should have existed a Phl. designation *pas angust*, this should have been a name for the ring finger, and not the little finger (see below p. 146). No forefinger names similar in structure to *pēš angust* are recorded in any Iranian languages, as far as I know. But Phl. *pēš angust*, if actually a finger name, could have been one of the names of the forefinger. In this case, Phl. *pēš angust* : *pas angust* might only be explained taking the middle finger as the point of reference. This hypothesis, however, needs to be supported with more valid arguments; one should also explain why only two of the five fingers have been considered as worthy of mention in the *Frahang-i Ōīm*.

10. As we have seen above with regard to Yzγ. *kəranai* γ^w*ašt*, Yzγ. *cəldūri* γ^w*ašt* is used to name both forefinger and ring finger.²¹⁹ If one compares these two fingers with the middle finger, one realizes that the formers are both 'smaller (*cəldūr*)'²²⁰ in length and thickness. Should one reconsider in

²¹⁹ See also SKÖLD 1936: 186; GAUTHIOT 1916: 254 fn. 1 («l'index et l'annulaire s'appellent tous deux *cəldūr wašt* 'petit doigt' »).

²²⁰ On Yzγ. *cəldūr* 'small(er), young(er)' see below, p. 155 fn. 269.

this perspective Makrāni Bal. *kasānen* (?) ‘forefinger’ quoted in MORGENSTIERNE 1932a: 40, with which I did away elsewhere (FILIPPONE 2000–2003: 78 n. 41), treating it as a misunderstanding? Bal. *kasān* ‘little’ is actually used, together with the word for ‘finger’ and *never alone*, to name the little finger (see below p. 159). If it is really used somewhere in Makrān with reference to the forefinger, *kasānen* should in any case be followed by the relevant word for ‘finger’.

Possibly, to the forefinger’s relative dimension also points Pšt. *bónḍa gúta* ‘forefinger’. It could be explained as containing a form related to *bunḍ* ‘short; cut-off’.

The forefinger’s relative dimension motivates other forefinger names. However, in a stark contrast with those we have seen above, Lārest. *kelike gotū*,²²¹ Sed. *uṅgulī-bale*, Yṅn. *káttā pánja*²²² (*káttā pax(x)a* XROMOV 1972),²²³ and doubtfully Semn. *masin angošt*,²²⁴ all describe the forefinger as a “big finger”.

11. Words originally meaning ‘finger’, without further specification, may be used to name the forefinger, exactly as it happens to the thumb (p. 117 above) and the other fingers as well (pp. 140, 148 and 169 below). To this iconomastic type, the following belong: Lār. *angošt* ‘finger; finger *par excellence*, i.e. forefinger’ (KAMIOKA – YAMADA 1979),²²⁵ Keš. *aṅguš*, Voniš. *uṅguss*, Badaxš. *panja* ‘finger; the first finger’ (also ‘the open hand’), Siv. *gos* (ZIĀN 1960)²²⁶, Kāz. *penje* (BEHRUZI 2002; ‘finger’ in SALĀMI 2004), Wan. *nguṭā* ‘thumb, also the first and second finger’ and probably also Haz. *narxūn* (DULLING 1973).²²⁷

12. To conclude this review of forefinger names, it remains to mention a couple which I have not been able to analyse.

²²¹ On Lārest. *got* ‘big’ see above, p. 101.

²²² On Yṅn. *pánja* ‘the five fingers; middle finger’ see below p. 140.

²²³ According to MIRZOZODA 2008, *katta paxxa* is both ‘thumb’ and ‘index finger’; cf. above, p. 103 and fn. 151.

²²⁴ The data collected for Semnāni do not tally; cf. *masina* ‘middle finger’ in SHAKIBI-GUILLANI – JAVAHERI 1993.

²²⁵ However, *angošt* is recorded as ‘finger’ in KAMIOKA – RAHBAR – HAMIDI 1986 and lacks in EQTEDĀRI 1955.

²²⁶ Siv. *gūs* is recorded as ‘finger’ in EILERS 1988 and LECOQ 1976 (*gos*). See above p. 57.

²²⁷ See above, p. 84.

These are EBal. *kušāl*, provided to me by a Bugti speaker; (dial.) Taj. *suvor*, used in the area of Vaxio-Bolo (ROZENFEL'D 1982); Mamas. *lōti*.

LECOQ 2002 records Biz. *šepoškoš* as ‘forefinger’; however, the “lice-killer finger” is generally a common pattern for the thumb name (see above p. 115).