

## CHAPTER FIVE: THE MIDDLE FINGER

1. In all languages, including the Iranian, the middle finger names emphasize in most cases the central position of this finger as compared to the others.<sup>228</sup> This plain acknowledgement accounts for Av. (gen.) *madəmahe arəzvō*, MPrs. *miyānag angust*, which have already been commented above,<sup>229</sup> Sgd. *miḍānč angušṭ*, occurring in P 14, the same Buddhist text in which *mazēx angušṭ* ‘thumb’ and *niwēḍēne-angušṭ* ‘forefinger’<sup>230</sup> also occur, as well as all the Modern Ir. labels for ‘middle finger’ that will be listed in what follows.

These are Prs. *angošt-e miāne/miāni/miānin* (MOKRI 2005: 264), Taj. *angušṭ-i miona*, dial. Taj. (Darvāz, Kara-Tegin) *lik-i mina* (ROZENFEL’D 1982), Bxt. *keliče miune* (my own data), Lārest. *kelike-mūna*, Gil. *meyoni angušṭ*, Semn. *miyonin angošṭ*, Šahm. *miyon angošṭ*, Lāsg. *miyonin engošṭ*, Zefr. *ünğüli meyū*, Bohr. *eṅgüš mühūna*, Sed. *uṅgulī-miyūn(i)*, etc. In Elr., one finds Pšt. *myándza gúta*, Örm. *mənzəngušt*, Par. (*angušṭ-e*) *myanakāli*, Ydy. *malanē oguščiḡo*, Mnj. *malenig aḡuška*, *mālenig (malanīgo aḡušk’o* IIFL-II), Yzy. *maḍeni ɣ<sup>w</sup>axṭ (maḍinī* GAUTHIOT 1916: 254 fn. 1), Šyn. *miḍenj angixṭ (miḍēnā angixṭ* and *miyūna angixṭ* ZARUBIN 1960), Baĵ. *miḍenɟ ingaxṭ* and Yɣn. *bidóni angušṭ*, *bidóni čincilák*, *bidóni panjá (bidūni paxa* XROMOV 1972).

EBal. *nīām(aɣ)ī* and SBal. *tokī* (adj.) ‘middle’ derive respectively from *nīām* (by metathesis from *mīān*<sup>231</sup>) and *tok* ‘centre, inside’.<sup>232</sup> EBal. (Mari) *nīāmaɣī murdānay* and *nīāmī moɣdayān*<sup>233</sup> shares with SBal. (Dašt) *tokī lan-kuk* the emphasis on the median position of this finger. However, these Bal. idioms are less used than *gaddī*, the current Bal. denomination of the middle finger, notwithstanding their being perceived as more polite and educated than the latter: they are used on those occasions in which *gaddī* might be considered too ‘rude’ (see below § 5).

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<sup>228</sup> A myriad of examples may be quoted from any language of the world; for a few instances see VEENKER 1981: 370.

<sup>229</sup> See pp. 95 ff., also for a possible different interpretation (“middle-seized finger”) of both phrases.

<sup>230</sup> See above p. 97 and p. 123.

<sup>231</sup> In the Ir. *miān*-family, further cases of metathesis are recorded; cf. e.g. Sist. *nmō*, Āmor. *ni’om (niyum* MOQDAM 1949: 90), etc.

<sup>232</sup> Probably a semantic extension from an original ‘valley’; cf. FILIPPONE 1996: 340–341.

<sup>233</sup> *nyāmaɣi murdān* (?) ‘forefinger’ in MORGENSTIERNE 1932a: 40 comes from a misfiling by MORGENSTIERNE of DAMES’ *Glossary* (where it correctly appears as ‘middle finger’).

CENTRE is often verbalized in Iranian by means of lexical processes (semantic change or derivation) based on metaphorical associations with body parts whose position is perceived as central, according to a strategy which may be considered as a universal. The waist is one of these parts. Prs. *miān* (and cognates) ‘middle’ probably originated in this way.<sup>234</sup> Similarly, Oss. *astæw* ‘waist; loins’ has acquired the sense of ‘centre, middle’.<sup>235</sup> The derived adjective *astæwkkag* ‘middle’ occurs in the Oss. middle finger name, which is *astæwkkag ængwylʒ* (my own data).

Other body parts which have been involved in similar processes are the heart and the navel.<sup>236</sup>

HEART is the metaphorical source for CENTRE in (Gor.) Gahwārai; cf. *dilî-râs* ‘middle’, with *dil* ‘heart’ and *râs* belonging to Prs. *râst* ‘right’ and cognates, many of which have acquired the additional meaning of ‘direction, side’; see Prs. *râstâ*, Šir. *râsse* (SAMANDAR 1999: 128), Hanj. *râs*, Vfs. *yek-rasd*, *yey-ras* (‘straight to, directly to’) and further references in CHRISTENSEN – BARR 1939: 322. Gor. (Gahw.) *dilî-râs* occurs in the lexicalized phrase *kilik-i dilî-râsin* ‘middle finger’.

NAVEL is the metaphorical source for many Kurdish nominals (nouns and adjectives) connected to the notion of CENTRE (‘(the) middle; (the) inside’):<sup>237</sup> see KurmKrd. *nav*, *navçe*, *navîn*, *nîv*, *naverast* etc., (°Amādiya) *nav* ‘centre (rare), milieu’, *nîv* ‘half, centre, milieu’, (Jabal Sinjār) *nêv*, *nîv* ‘milieu, centre’ (BLAU 1975), SouthKrd. *nâv*, *nâw*, *nâvî*, *nêvî*, *nâvîn*, *nâwig*, *nâwrâs*, *nêwarâs*, *nêwarâst*, *nêwân*, (Mahâb.) *nêw*, *nêwân*, *nêwarâst*, (Krmnš.) *nâw*, (Garr.) *nâârâs* ‘middle’. Obviously, Krd. *-ras/-râs* belong to the same *râst*-‘direction’ group we have seen above.

In Iranian, the NAVEL = CENTRE equation may be illustrated by further examples. Even Prs. *nâf* is used in the sense of ‘centre’, though seemingly mostly in association with specific collocates (*nâf-e biābān* ‘the middle of the desert’; *nâf-e dašt* ‘the middle of the country/desert’; *dar nâf-e šahr* ‘in

<sup>234</sup> Cf. Av. *maiðyāna-*, *maiðyāna-* «‘Mitte’; a) des Leibes [...] Ableit. aus <sup>1</sup>*maiðya-*»; <sup>1</sup>*maiðya-* « I) Adj. [...] ‘medius’, zeitlich; [...] 2) m., n. ‘Mitte [...] insbes. des Leibes, ‘Taille’ » (BARTHOLOMAE 1904).

<sup>235</sup> Oss. *astæw* is also used as a postposition with a locative function (‘in middle of, inside’); cf. IESOJ s.v.

<sup>236</sup> For the ‘heart’ → ‘centre’ shifting see FILIPPONE 1996: 307, with a few Ir. examples (to which add Tāl. (Māsule) *dela* ‘dedans’, LAZARD 1979); for the ‘navel’ → ‘centre’ shifting see also Skt. (RV) *nābhi-* ‘Nabel; Mittelpunkt’ (EWA II: 11).

<sup>237</sup> Note that KurmKrd. *nav* has also acquired the meaning of ‘waist’.

the middle of the town', etc.).<sup>238</sup> Kerm. *nāf*, Arāk. *nāf*, Xor. *nāv* (ADIB TUSI 1963–1964) may also be used with the sense of 'the middle'.

The centrality of the *nav*-series as 'middle; inside' in the Kurdish lexicon has favoured a lexicalization process which has produced a few *nav*-derivatives as the most current nouns for 'navel'; cf. Kurm. *nav(ik)*, *nêw(ik)*, SouthKrd. *nāv(ik)*, *nāwik(a)*, *nêvik*, *nêwik* 'navel'.

Kurdish and Lakki labels for 'middle finger' are: KurmKrd. *tīliya navîn*, *tīliya nêvî* (*tilya navê* KURDOEV 1960), SouthKrd. *dipilâ nêvakî* (EBRĀHIMPUR 1994b s.v. *angošt*), Mukri *qâmîk î nêwê* (also 'ring finger'), Bābā-Krd. *kámki nū rāst*, Garr. *kelik e nāârās*, Lak. *kelek nomen*.

Bast. *angošt mārka* is the Bast. name of the middle finger. It contains *mārka* 'middle', an adjective widespread in Lārestāni; cf. Lār., Ger. *māreka* 'middle, in the middle'.

As a formal alternative to *angošt-e miān(-e/-i)*, Persian has *angošt-e vasati*, with *vasati* 'middle', an ancient, well integrated Ar. loanword. Ar. *al-wuštā* 'middle finger' has been borrowed in Persian, as well: cf. Prs. *vostā* (also MOINFAR 1981: 230) and Taj. *angušt-i vusto*. KurmKrd. *orte* 'middle, centre' is a Turkish loanword; KurmKrd. *tīliya ortê* 'middle finger' parallels Turk. *ortaparmak* 'id.'.

It seems reasonable to interpret Haz. *narxūn-i-γulgina* 'middle toe' (DULLING 1973), but with all probability also 'middle finger',<sup>239</sup> as 'the finger/toe of the middle', connecting *γulgina* to Haz. *γōl* 'middle, centre' (< Mong. *γoul*), and rejecting DULLING's suggestion («? perh. *γulgina* < Tu. 'gol' (= hand) & dimin. suffix. '-gina'»).

2. Khot. *śq hamgušti* (BAILEY 1979: 50 s.v. *kaṇaiska*) 'middle finger' (lit. 'the second finger') takes into account the sequence of the fingers in an ordinal ranking. Khot. *śq* means 'second', and being second is what happens to the middle finger when one starts to count from the forefinger. In a similar way, the middle finger is called *kelenče dovvom* (lit. 'the second finger') in Minābi (G. BARBERA p.c.).

<sup>238</sup> This usage is considered "familiar" by LAZARD 1990a; according to 'Ali Ašraf SĀDEQI (p.c.), however, *nāf* as 'middle' is archaic, being mostly found in the old phases of New Persian.

<sup>239</sup> Since fingers and toes are not lexically differentiated in Iranian, any differentiation found in dictionaries may be ascribed to a projection by the editor of his own conceptual categories. Particularly odd is the meaning 'middle toe' attributed to *narxūn-i-γulgina* as confronted with the etymology doubtfully advanced by DULLING 1973.

3. The middle finger is undoubtedly the longest among the fingers, while in thickness it is second only to the thumb, which is, on its part, very short. For this reason, as already stated above (p. 95), the middle finger shares with the thumb the “the big(ger) finger” label type,<sup>240</sup> and this fact may create a large rate of ambiguity, which sometimes only the context may help to remove. Prs. *angošt-e bozorg* means both ‘thumb’ and ‘middle finger’; EBal. (Nāsirābād) *mazanē angrī* ‘thumb’ parallels W/SBal. *mazanē lankuk* ‘thumb’ (see above p. 97); Yzṯ. *qāldūri γ<sup>o</sup>aṣt* is given as ‘middle finger’ in ÉDEL’MANN 1971 and ‘thumb’ in GAUTHIOT 1916 and SKÖLD 1936 (see above p. 107). Similarly, (South.) Krd. *âl, yâl* is ‘middle finger’ in HAŽĀR 1990, EBRĀHIMPUR 1994a and ‘thumb’ in EBRĀHIMPUR 1994b (cf. *âl*, s.v. *angošt*).<sup>241</sup> Fluctuation in meaning is attested for Sgd. *mazēx angūšt*, as well. Since it occurs in two different passages where the names of other fingers are mentioned, we are allowed to assume that it means ‘thumb’ in P 14 and ‘middle finger’ in the body-parts list published by SUNDERMANN (2002: 144 no. 58; see also above p. 97).

The middle finger is depicted as “the big (finger)” by the following idioms: Prs. *angošt-e mehin* (DEHX),<sup>242</sup> (dial.) Taj. *čilik-i kalon* (KALBĀSI 1995), Lo. *kalak-e buzorg* (UNVALA 1958: 14), Gz. *engolī-bāle*,<sup>243</sup> Abiā. *angōšta gōrde*.<sup>244</sup> Semn. *masīna* is given as ‘middle finger’ in SHAKIBI-GUILANI – JAVAHERI 1993<sup>245</sup> and as ‘forefinger’ (*masin angōšt*) in SOTUDE 1963; see above p. 131.

Badaxš. *šāh-panja-i kalān* ‘middle finger’ deserves a few comments. What is defined here as big (*kalān*) is not a finger in general, but a *šāh-panja*, for which the meaning ‘forefinger’ has been suggested above, p. 128. If so, the relative dimension of this finger is not evaluated taking into account the whole fingers, but only two of them (both recognized as “regal”, *šāh*). And the middle finger is surely bigger than the forefinger.

<sup>240</sup> The middle finger as a ‘big(ger) finger’ is also found in other languages; compare for instance Fr. *majeur* ‘middle finger’.

<sup>241</sup> On the possible interpretation of SouthKrd. *âl* as ‘the big one’, see above, p. 110.

<sup>242</sup> On Prs. *mehin* see above p. 98.

<sup>243</sup> The *bale*-type for ‘big, large’ is an isogloss delimiting a south-central grouping in the Central Plateau dialect area (southeastern Kāšāni dialects and Esfāhāni dialects) (KRAHNKE 1976: 215–217, and Map V – 28). As for the etymology of Gz. *bāli, bālē*, EILERS (1979 s.v.) advances two alternatives: (1) < SW \**barda*- (NW \**barza*-) ‘high’; (2) < SW \**vardak* (< *vazrka*-, with metathesis). STILO (2007: 108) supports the latter.

<sup>244</sup> On Abiā. *gōrd* and the *gord*-type ‘big’ see also above pp. 103 f.

<sup>245</sup> On Semn. *masin* ‘big’ see above p. 98.

The middle finger is simply depicted as a “regal finger”, without further considerations, in Kargānrudi, a central Tāleši variety, where it is called *šo angəšta* (D. GUIZZO, p.c.).

4. To remove any possible ambiguity which a general reference to bigness may create, one may stress upon the middle finger’s relevant dimension, i.e. length. This is what happens with Prs. *angošt-e derāz*, (dial.) Taj. *čilik-i daroz* (KALBĀSI 1995), Gz. *engolī dirāz* and KurmKrd. *tilīya dirēj* (RIZGAR 1993), which have Engl. *long finger* ‘middle finger’ as their equivalent.

The appropriate usage of words belonging to the DIMENSION domain is in some way contingent on different alternatives of space and shape categorization inside any specific conceptual and cultural system. The question is complicated and goes beyond the aims of this book. The following scanty considerations, mainly focussed on Balochi, may be useful to our reasoning on the middle finger denominations.

In Balochi, the upright position of any object is a prerequisite for its vertical dimension to be recognized as *burzī* (‘height’) and for the same object to be, in case, recognized as *burz* (‘high / tall’). However, it is not a binding condition. In fact, the vertical dimension is often identified as *drājī*, which commonly refers to a horizontal dimension (‘length’). This does not mean that Bal. *drājī* and *burzī* with reference to the vertical dimension are semantically equivalent. When using *burzī* (or the adjective *burz*), one is not providing any information about the object’s shape, the considered dimension and the proportion between all the object dimensions, all factors which on the contrary condition the usage of *drājī* (and *drāj*). The vertical dimension of a three-dimensional object may be identified as *drājī* in the following cases: (1) the object is perceived as having a “controllable height” (with which I mean the possibility for human people, taking their body as a reference point, of “controlling” it), provided that it is not marked by another dimension perceived as more salient; (2) though having an “uncontrollable height”, the object has a tapering shape, such as, e.g., that of a lamp-post. The use of *drājī* when speaking of the human body height is absolutely frequent and areally unmarked in Balochi.

Prs. *derāz(i)* and cognates do not behave differently from Bal. *drājī(i)*. Consequently, the names of the middle finger listed above may describe it both as ‘long’ and as ‘tall’; in the latter case, the evoked image would be that of a standing up finger, similar to a little fellow. This could be the case with SouthKrd. *dōla dirēž* ‘middle finger’ (EBRĀHIMPUR 1994a, SAFIZĀDE 2001), if

one interprets the head of this lexicalized phrase as *dōl* ‘child, offspring’; see also Kurm. *dol* ‘seed, sperm; breed; descendents, offspring, progeny’ (CHYET 2003: < Turk.).

Similarly to the expressions containing *derāz*-cognates, Taj. *angušt-i raso* ‘middle finger’ may be interpreted both as a descriptive and a figurative expression, since *raso* means both ‘long’ and ‘tall’. To the figurative pattern that lays emphasis on the finger’s “tallness”, belong Prs. *angošt-e boland*, Gz. *engolī-bilānd*, SulKrd. *baḷaberze*, SouthKrd. (Krmnš.) *bâlâ barza*, (cf. SouthKrd. *bâlâberz* ‘tall’). SOTUDE 1986 attributes Nāi. *qabābilandu* ‘middle finger’ to the child language; even in this idiom the reference to tallness is evident, but I do not know how to interpret *qabā*.

In Gazi the middle finger, equated to a reputable, tall man, is also labelled *abo bulend* (ŽUKOVSKIJ 1922: 110); to him, the appellative *abo*, a well known Semitic loanword (cf. Ar. *abū* ‘father’, etc.), has been reserved.

To this humanized finger one might also ascribe a proper name. The Zoroastrians of Yazd call their middle finger *hasan dirāz* (VAHMAN – ASATRIAN 2002: 59), lit. ‘Hasan, the tall’, a name which parallels SBšk. (Garu) *hasan bolan* (G. BARBERA p.c.). Even an ethnic identity may be granted to this finger, as illustrated by *tork(e) boland* ‘the tall Turk’, an alternative to *hasan boland* in the NBšk. dialects spoken in Sardašt (G. BARBERA p.c.). The choice of Hasan as the middle finger’s personal name is not casual: being a very frequent name, it is often used to refer to paradigmatic characters having specific peculiarities. In Zarqāni, *hasan* is the name with which thieves address each other, or with which one addresses a thief, even when one knows the thief’s name; *hasan-e bozorg* means ‘the head of the thieves’. In Širāzi, *hasan-e gap* is used with exactly the same sense. In an Argot Prs. dictionary (SAMĀI 2003), *hasan* is given as ‘countryman’, or as ‘townsman with the education and culture of a countryman’, or simply as ‘stupid person’. Stupidity is just one of the features which human people sometimes attribute to their middle finger, as we will see below, § 7.

5. The middle finger is the only finger that is named with one and the same word all over the Bal. dialectal areas, with the only exclusion of Karachi. It is currently referred to as *gaddī*, which may or not be followed by the word for ‘finger’ current in each particular dialectal area (viz., *lankuk*, *hor* or *murdayān*). The Bal. labels quoted above (EBal. *mazanē angrī*, lit. ‘the big finger’, EBal. *nāmayī murdānay*, SBal. *tokī lankuk*, lit. ‘the middle finger’), iconomastic types based on the middle finger’s size and position, are only

possible alternatives, sometimes considered as more appropriate since they better meet the social expectations, especially in very formal situations.

The peculiarity of Bal. *gaḍḍī* consists in its being to a certain extent a taboo word, so that uttering or hearing it may cause a special reaction, such as a laughing up one's sleeve or a lowering of the tone of one's voice. The fact is that it immediately evokes images bound to the domain of sexuality and/or obscenity. This word, seemingly of Indian origin, is probably borrowed from Sindhi; cf. Si. *gaḍḍi* '(slang) thrusting one's finger up the fundament', which could be related to \**gaḍḍ-*<sup>1</sup> 'dig, bury', and \**gaḍḍa-* 'hole, pit' (CDIAL 3979 and 3981). However, no IA word for 'middle finger' resembling Bal. *gaḍḍī* is found, as far as I know. Br. *gaḍḍī* 'middle finger' (see also *gaḍḍī kanning* 'to stuff up (obsc.)' BRAY 1934) is possibly a Bal. loanword.

On the conceptual equation FINGER = MALE GENITAL ORGAN and the connection between sexuality and fingers denominations we have already spoken above (see p. 45). In most Bal. areas, sticking up the middle finger or bending it downwards while keeping straight forwards the other fingers, one transmits obscene messages: cf. *gaḍḍī kanag* 'to stick one's finger up (either physically poking someone from behind with the middle finger, or sticking this finger in the air as a sign of abuse. Very impolite)' and by semantic extension, 'to fiddle with, to mess with' (RAZZAQ –BUKSH – FARRELL 2001). In a few areas of Balochistan, however, one may transmit the same message using the thumb. This explains the fact that the Karachi Bal. speakers (and probably a few EBal. speakers) name their thumb *gaḍḍī*.<sup>246</sup> Karachi Bal. *gaḍḍī pešdārag* (RAZZAQ –BUKSH – FARRELL 2001) and EBal. *ḍeb ḍassay* (MĪTHĀ – SURAT 1960)<sup>247</sup> exactly correspond to Ur. *angūtā dikhānā* 'to show the thumb', i.e. 'to signify a desire for sexual intercourse' and, metaphorically, 'to give a refusal, to answer rudely' (PLATTS 1930).

A further instance of name alternation between middle finger and thumb, emphasizing the close conceptual relationship between these two fingers, is Bal. *dīp* 'middle finger', quoted in ELFENBEIN 1990-II and DAMES 1891. Bal. *dīp* seems to be a phonetic variant (a different recording?) of EBal. *deb/ḍeb* 'thumb'.<sup>248</sup> However, no EBal. speaker confirmed to me such a usage of *deb/ḍeb*, nor have I found any occurrences of it in published texts.

<sup>246</sup> Also *gaḍḍīṭē lankuk* (RAZZAQ –BUKSH – FARRELL 2001). For EBal., see MAYER 1910 (s.v. finger) *gaḍī* 'thumb' (unknown to my EBal. informants).

<sup>247</sup> On EBal. *ḍeb* 'thumb' see above, p. 119.

<sup>248</sup> Differently, DAMES (1891) distinguishes *deb* 'thumb' from *dīp* 'middle finger'.

6. Middle finger names deriving through a semantic restriction from words originally meaning ‘finger’ are the following: Wan. *nguṭā* (also ‘thumb and first finger’) and Yγn. *pánja* in Eastern Iranian; Keš. *anḡuš* and Voniš. *unḡuss* in the Central Dialect area; Sist. *āngol*, Lār. *kelike angol* (KAMIOKA – YAMADA 1979) and Min. *angol* (G. BARBERA p.c.) in South-East Iran. It is not excluded that the *angol*-type middle fingers may evoke the same obscene implications as Bal. *gaḏḏī*.<sup>249</sup>

Roš. *lakak iḡgaḡt* (SKÖLD 1936: 186) ‘middle finger’ is likely to be connected with the terms for ‘finger’ found in a few Tajik dialects, i.e. *lik*, *likak* etc. we have seen above, p. 62.

7. MAYER (1910) and GILBERTSON (1925 s.v. *finger*) provide *nizānaγī murdān* as one of the EBal. names of the middle finger. MORGENSTIERNE (1932a: 40) also quotes it. None of them tries to explain this idiom, of which I have found no occurrences, either in oral or in written texts. Bal. *nizānaγ* as an isolated word is unattested and its meaning was unknown to the Bal. speakers I asked about. We can only try to advance a hypothetical derivation.

In Balochi finger-rhymes, the middle finger is said to be *ganok* (‘fool, foolish, unwise’). The following are two instances of that kind of rhymes with five lines, where each line is devoted to one of the fingers:

(a)		(b)	
thumb	<i>śast ki mast</i>	little f.	<i>čunkī čulankī</i>
foref.	<i>kāsag-līsok</i>	ring f.	<i>zarrānī bānuk</i>
middle f.	<i>gaḏḏī ganok</i>	middle f.	<i>gaḏḏī ganok int</i>
ring f.	<i>zarrānī bānok</i>	Foref.	<i>kāsag čaṭṭit</i>
little f.	<i>čičkul mačkul</i>	thumb	<i>drustānī māt int</i>

The main difference between these two rhymes is the reverse order: (a), which I have collected from Ir. Bal. speakers from Sarāwān,<sup>250</sup> starts from the thumb, while (b), published in SAYYAD HASHMI 2000 s.v. *čunkī*, starts from the little finger and ends with the thumb, said *drustānī māt*, i.e. ‘the mother of all’. The middle finger’s *ganok*-nature has been confirmed to me by several Baloch.

<sup>249</sup> Cf. for example Sist. *āngol kardā*, Rod. *angol*, Lir.-Dil. *angūl(ak) dādan*, etc. All of them refer to real or figurative obscene senses and are used as a kind of abuse.

<sup>250</sup> The syntactic construction of *zarrānī bānok* (for which see below, p. 143), opposite to the usual one in Sarāwāni Balochi, suggests that this little rhyme did not originate in Sarāwān.



Another EBal. term for ‘foolish, ignorant’ is *nāzānox*, which MAYER (1910) provides together with *nādān/nāḍān*, a Prs. loanword; cf. Prs. *nādān* ‘foolish person, fool, unlearned’. Similar forms, with slight differences at the morphological level, are *nāzant*, *bezānt*, *nābizānt* (SAYYAD HASHMI 2000), *nāzant* (BARKER – MENGAL 1969), *nāzānt* (ELFENBEIN 1990-II) etc. All of them are composed by the negative prefix, *nā-*, plus the present stem *zān/(dān)-* ‘to know, to be wise’ (or the past stem *-zānt*) plus (as for *nāzānok/x*) the agentive suffix *-ok/x*. As for meaning, they all may implicate a lack of knowledge and a lack of experience (from ‘innocent, naive’, to ‘ignorant’, ‘stupid’, ‘fool’ etc.). Cognate forms in other Ir. languages are commented on in SKJÆRVØ 1975: 121.

However, *nizānayī* is not *nazānayī*, and the *-i-* vowel remains unexplained,<sup>251</sup> unless one assumes that *ni-* in MAYER 1910 is a misprint for *na-* (what is absolutely possible); GILBERTSON (1925) may have taken this expression directly from MAYER 1910, like MORGENSTIERNE (1932a) certainly has. Should this be the case, *nizānayī murdān* in MAYER 1910 would stay for *nazānayī murdān* and mean ‘the finger of the foolishness/ignorance’, a quite befitting label for a finger that in Balochi folklore is commonly treated as a *ganok*. But all this remains a guesswork for now.

Just as the middle finger is considered as stupid and simple-minded by Baloch, it is depicted as “the big naïf” or “the big without fruit” by the Maghrebine people, as may be inferred from children rhymes published in CHEBEL 1999: 88–89. The same prejudice against this finger might motivate SouthKrd. *zarnaquta*, *zirnaquta* ‘middle finger; small, unfledged sparrow’, Krmnš. *zaranaquta* ‘middle finger’. KURDOEV (1960) gives *zernelqūte* as a SouthKrd. word, meaning ‘nestling’ and ‘greenhorn’: we may recognize here the same metaphorical association which has produced the different senses [(1) young bird; (2) unexperienced person] of Engl. *fledgling*.

8. Wan. *lakó lakár* ‘middle finger’ (ELFENBEIN 1984), recorded in Pashto as ‘ring finger’ (see *lākūlakāra* below, p. 148), shares with Xur. *sozāboland* ‘middle finger’, lit. ‘the high grass’, the conceptual connection to the botanic domain.

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<sup>251</sup> I have found no *ni-* instead of the negative prefix *na-* in any published Bal. texts (nor have I any information of a verb in Balochi or any other Ir. languages composed of *dān-/zān-* ‘to know’) plus the prefix *ni-*.

9. To conclude, the following middle finger names remain unexplained: Abiā. *kūreqor'ōxōne*; KurmKrd. *tilîya daradûmê* (RIZGAR 1993); SorKrd. *qamkî helme tûte* (KURDOEV – JUSUPOVA 1983).