Grammatical gender in New Azari dialects of Šāhrūd*

Aharon Vardanian
Yerevan State University
aharon.vardanian@ysu.am

This paper is dedicated to
my daughter Lucie

Abstract

Unlike some other New Azari dialects[1] (Kalāsurī, Harzandī,[2] etc.), Šāhrūdī[3] preserves grammatical gender, which is reflected in nouns and sporadically in adjectives, pronouns and the verbal system. In this regard Šāhrūdī is similar to the Tākestānī dialects, in which the opposition of feminine and masculine is also attested in nominal, adjectival, pronominal and verbal systems (Yarshater 1969a: 198–9). In the Šāhrūd dialect group there is no gender marker for masculine, except for the 3rd person singular of the present tense of the auxiliary verb.

Keywords: Iranian dialectology, Tati studies, Tati grammar, Tati etymologies, Tati lexicon, Comparative linguistics

Gender in the verbal system

Grammatical gender in the verbal system is attested only in the 3rd person singular with short unstressed -*a*[4] for masculine and long stressed -*fī* for feminine,

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1 The Iranian dialects of Azerbaijan province are called Median dialects of Aturpatakan (Yarshater 1969b), Tati, Southern Tati, Azari (Lecoq 1989: 296–308), and New Azari (Voskanian 2010–11: 50–1). The last term seems more correct and historically well-grounded.
2 The abbreviations used in the text are: Gl. (Gīlavān subdialect), Dz. (Dīz subdialect), Eb. (Ebrahīmābād subdialect), Eš. (Eštehard subdialect), Tk. (Tākestān dialect), Lr. (Lerd subdialect), Xi. (Xiāraǰi subdialect), Šr. (Šāhrūd dialect group), Kl. (Kolūr subdialect), Čl. (Čal subdialect), Sg. (Sagzābād subdialect), Kr. (Karīn subdialect), Sv. (Sivandi dialect), Lūr. (Lūrī dialects), Cauc. Pers. or NT (Caucasian Persian or North Tatic).
3 The rural district of Šāhrud is situated in the Xalxāl region, Ardabīl province, lying between Zanjān to the south, the Sefīd Kūh mountain chain to the west, Xalxāl town to the north, and Gilān province to the north-east and east. The Xalxāl region includes the rural districts of Šāhrūd, Xūreš-e Rostam and *Hašǰīn*. The local New Azari dialects are almost lost in the last two areas and preserved only in Šāhrūd, except for a few villages. The article is based on field materials collected by the author in July–August 2013 in Askestān, Asbū, Derav, Kolūr, Šāl, Gīlavān, Dīz, Karīn and Lerd villages of Šāhrūd.
4 This short -*a* goes back to OIr.-*aka* according to Morgenstierne (1973: 96). According to the village where the gender index is met, it can have -*a/-e/-ə* sounds.

e.g. *bevazz-a* 'he ran', *bevazz-i- fl* 'she ran', *Bahman devašta ba* 'Bahman had run away', *Mariam devašta bi- fl* 'Mariam had run away', *čəman zuā beš-a Xerā*[5] 'My son went to Xerā', *čəman kəla beš-i- fl Xerā* 'My daughter went to Xerā'. The masculine and feminine of the auxiliary verb in the present are formed by *-e* and *-fl*, respectively,[6] e.g. *Fereydūn dalū e* 'Fereydun is crazy', *Mariama*[7]*dalū fl* 'Mariam is crazy',[8] *bām-e* 'he is coming', *bām-i- fl* 'she is coming' (see Tables 1 and 2).

Table 1. Šahrūd dialect group – Present future and present continuous[9]

Lerdī-Karīnī	Dīzī	Gīlavānī	
ā sābā ama	*ā sābā mā*	*a/ə sābā mā*	He will come tomorrow.
āva sābā amiyfl	*āva sābā mīyfl*	*a/ə/va sābā mīyfl*	She will come tomorrow.
Bahman dere ama	*Bahman der ame*	*Bahman dəre əme*	Bahman is coming.
Mariam deria amiyfl	*Mariam dere mīyfl*	*Mariam dəre mīyfl*	Mariam is coming.

Table 2. Šahrūd dialect group – grammatical gender and preterite

Lerdī-Karīnī	Dīzī	Gīlavānī	
ā bevrita	*ā vrita*	*a/ə bəvrit-a*	He ran.
āva bevrit- fl	*āva bevriti- fl*	*a/ə/va bəvrit- fl*	She ran.
em xeyli berbenesti-a	*em xeyli berbenesti-a*	*ə/a/m xeyli bärbenesti-a*	He cried a lot.
āva xeyli berbenesti- fl	*ema xeyli berbenesti- fl*	*a/ə/va xeyli bärbenesti- fl*	She cried a lot.

Grammatical gender in nouns

In the nominal system there is no special gender ending for the masculine. The feminine nouns usually have short unstressed *-a* as the gender marker.

5 Xalxāl is often called Xerā by the inhabitants of Šāhrūd.
6 The New Azari dialects of Čāl, Eštehard, Ebrahīmābād and Sagzābād (Yarshater 1969b) and Kajal (Yarshater 1960) accordingly have *-e/ē, -a/-i, -e/-ē, -e/-ey* endings.
7 The female personal names in the Šāhrūd dialect group, particularly Lerd and Karīn sub-dialects, have a grammatical gender marker, e.g. Golāb > Golāba, Māh > Māha, Maryam > Maryama, Xānom > Xānoma, Mehrangīz > Mehrangīza, Dastagol > Dastagola, etc. However, when a personal feminine name is a word ending with a vowel, the feminine marker does not change, e.g. jūjū, Tājī, Zība Nana, Fātema, Xadīja.
8 The negative is formed with *-me* and *-niā*, respectively, e.g. *Fereydūn dalū me* 'Fereydūn isn't crazy' (masc.), *Mariam dalūni-ā* 'Mariam isn't crazy' (fem.).
9 In order to have some richer material, a few examples from neighbouring New Azari dialects must be shown, e.g. Tk., Čl., Sg., Eb., Eš. *ā sābā ma* 'He will come tomorrow', *āva*

Natural and grammatical gender

The identity of natural and grammatical genders is expressed in almost all dialects.

Some animal names ending with -*a* make their masculine and feminine forms accordingly with the words *nara* 'masculine'[10] and *māya* 'feminine'[11] (see Table 3).

Table 3. Šāhrūd dialect group – natural grammatical gender

Masculine form	Feminine form				
General	Lerdī	Karīnī	Dīzī	Gl.	
-	*māgowa*	*Māgāva*	*māgāva*	*gowa*	cow
kərk[12]	*kərka*	*kərka*	*karka*	*karka*	hen
vərg	*vərga*	*vərga*	*varga*	*varga*	wolf
xər	*xəra*	*xəra*	*xara*	*xara*	donkey
šišak	*šišaka*	*šišaka*	*šišaka*	*šišaka*	pig
naragörbia	*māyagörbia*	*māyagörbia*	*māyagörbia*	*māyagörbia*	cat
naraoštöra	*māyaoštöra*	*māyaoštöra*	*oštora*	*oštora*	camel

Some animals have different names for masculine and feminine forms, e.g.:

masculine	feminine
qoč 'ram'	*miša* 'ewe'
yonagāv 'bull calf'	*dögia* 'heifer'
əsba 'male dog'	*māčči* 'bitch (female dog)'
lök 'male camel' (Dīz)	*mejia, arvunia*[13] 'female camel'
xurüz 'cock'	*kərka* 'hen'

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sābā māyfl 'She will come tomorrow', *Bahman dare ma* 'Bahman is coming', *Mariam dere māyfl* 'Mariam is coming'.

10 This word is encountered not just in New Azari dialects but also in some other languages, with the meaning 'male': Tal. *nī*, Cauc. Pers. or NT. *narna*, Sv. *nar*, Lūr. *nara, nera*, Kurd. *nêr*, Bal. *nar*, Afgh. *nar*, Pers. *nar* (< MP *nar* < Ir. √*nar-, *narya - 'male' < IE *neryo) (Abaev 1973: 166).

11 E.g. Pers. *māda,* Kurd. *māde,* Cauc. Pers. *mārna* 'woman' (a result of rotacism, Pers. *māda* < Cauc. Pers. *māra), Bal. mādag (< late MP *mādag* < early MP *mātak* 'female') (cf. Arm. loanword *matak) < O.Prs. *mātar (Horn 1893: 213). In this case in Šāhrūd dialect we are dealing with OI *-d- > -y- in intervocalic position, e.g. Kl., Šl., As., Ak., Dr. *vūya,* Dz., Gl., Kr., Lr. *weya* 'bride' < OIr. *wadū-ka- (*wad- < PIE *uedh- (Pokorny 1959: 1115), Sghd. *wδw, wδ*, MP *bayōk*, Pers. *bōyūg* بیوگ, NTal. *väyu*, Zaza *vēyvē* (Mann and Hadank 1932: 219), Krd. *būk*, Gur. *waywa, wawa, wawī*, Lūr.*bahī* (Asatrian and Livshits 1994: 84), etc., Cauc. Pers. *pīyar* > Cl. Pers. Pīdar; Cauc. Pers. *moy* < Cl. Pers. *mādar* (for details see Tonoyan 2015), Pers. *bōy* < MP *bauδa*, etc.

12 *Kərk* meaning 'hen' has feminine and masculine forms; when meaning 'bird' it has no grammatical gender forms.

13 The lexeme *lök*, besides Dīz, can be also seen in Eštehard dialect (for details see Yarshater 1969b: 70), cf. *lūk* [لوک] in Persian. *Mejia* and *arvunia* have certain differences in meaning; *mejia* is a feminine camel of one to four years old, and *arvunia* is a feminine camel of more than four years old.

There are some nouns in Lerd, Karīn and Dīz dialects which have only feminine forms:

a) animal names
   anguraka 'spider'
   speǰa 'louse'
   kelma 'worm'
   niāsa 'fly'
   gāvazaka 'tarantula'
   muča 'sparrow'
b) All season names, 'sun' and 'moon' are also feminine, for example, *zəməssun-a bam-i-ā* 'Winter came', *vahār-a bar ši-ā* 'Spring passed', *mong-a bar ām-i-ā* 'The moon rose'. These forms can be found only in the Lerd and Karīn subdialects; in the other villages (Asbū, Āskestān, Derav, Kolūr, Šāl, Dīz and Gīlavān) this rule does not apply.
c) All fruit trees in Lerd and Karīn subdialects:[14]

masculine	feminine
šāladār 'poplar'	*asifadār-a* 'apple tree'
via dār 'willow'	*veymadār-a* 'almond tree'
čenāradār 'plane'	*anǰīladār-a* 'fig tree'
nālbandadār 'elm tree' ('*Ulmus*')	*alevadār-a* 'plum tree'

In the Lerd and Karīn subdialects, when the noun takes the numerative *igla*/*ila* or-*i*[15] 'one', it is feminine, while in Dīz subdialect it is masculine.

> Lerd. *man igla xar-i bexurt-ā* (feminine) – 'I sold a donkey'.
> Krn. *igla xar-em rā ku bind-ā* (feminine) – 'I saw a donkey on the road'.
> Dīz. *rā-d-em bind ila mādiān bargenes* (masculine) – 'On the way I saw a mare fall down'.

In Gīlavān both variants are attested:

> *I xelik-eš iakat-ā bebard-eš ā ku*
> 'He picked up a spade and took (it) to the mountains.'

> *I yuz-eš-i /karkxā-š-i /čakulu-š-i akat-ā bebard-eš ā ku*[16]

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14   Exceptions are *yuzadār* 'walnut tree' and *ənāradār* 'pomegranate tree', which are considered to be masculine in spite of being fruit tree names.
15   This word consists of two parts: *i* 'one' (< **ig* < **ewak* < **aiwaka-*) and *gla*. According to Miller, the second part is -*lā*, not -*gla*, which came to New Azari dialects and the Talishi language from Persian, where it means 'layer', cf. *čand lā* 'once and again', *do lā* 'two layers', *čhār lā* 'four layers', etc. On the basis of some examples he tries to show that this word has lost its meaning and is not used as a lexeme, but only in *igla, illa, iglay, gla, gle, gəlay* morphemes (cf. South Tal. *čo gla tava* 'four exes', *se gla zuā* 'three boys', etc. (Miller 1953: 128, OIYA 1991: 130). As the Šāhrūdi material shows, the second part of this compound must be -*gla*, and never -*la*, cf. *sə gla* 'three items', *də gla* 'two items', *čhār gla* 'four items', etc. Otherwise, **səla, **dəla, **čhār la* would be expected.
16   The word *ku* 'mountain' here means 'summer house', 'pasture', as the villagers take their cattle to the pasture and it is a rule to take some food to the people on the 'mountain'.

'He picked up a walnut/an egg/a cock and took them to the mountain' vs.

igla karkx-ā-m akat (*masc.*), *rā dagenes-im, ǰegenes-ā* (*feminine*) *beškes-ā*
(*feminine*)
'I took an egg, started off, it dropped and broke.'

However, in Gīlavān the masculine and feminine forms often have the same or a similar structure, though the masculine forms are dominant. The relationship between the masculine and feminine genders can be seen in the following example: *igla pādeša-i be igla asb-i-š dāšteya (asb* – masculine, *dāšteya* – past continuous), *asb-eš-a* (feminine) *bəxurt-ā do gla-š asser* (masculine) *ara-gate* 'There was a king, he had the horse, he sold a horse and bought two mules'. In the first part *igla-i* shows that *asb* has an indefinite article and is masculine, otherwise we would have *asb-a.* In the second part 'horse' has an indefinite article too (*asb-eš-a),* but is feminine – *asb-eš-a.* In the first part *asb* is masculine probably because it is used with the word *pādeša* 'king' (masculine).

However, it must be mentioned that the lexeme *igla/ila* is used mostly in the feminine form, cf. *xāvem ku igla asb-i bind-ā* 'I saw a horse in my dream' (feminine), but when it is used with plural nouns, the verb is in the masculine form, cf. *xāvem ku sə gla-m asb bind* (masculine) 'I saw three horses in my dream'.

Grammatical gender in the pronominal system

Grammatical gender in the pronominal system can be seen in the 3rd person singular forms of personal and possessive as well as of demonstrative pronouns of Lerd and Karīn dialects.

a) Personal pronouns

singular		**plural**	
1. *az*	(-*e*)*m* 'I am'	1. *əma*	(-*e*)*mān* 'we are'
2. *tə*	(-*e*)*r* 'thou art'	2. *šəmā*	(-*e*)*rān* 'you are'
3. *a* (masculine) /*áva* (feminine)[17]		3. *avān*	(-*e*) *šān* 'they are'

-*eš*/-*iš* (masculine) 'he is' /-*a* (feminine) 'she is'

b) Possessive pronouns

singular	**plural**
1. *čəman* 'my'	1. *čəma* 'our'
2. *ešte* 'thy'	2. *šəma* 'your'
3. *ča* (masculine) 'his'/*čava*	3. *čavān* 'their'
(feminine) 'her'[18]	

c) Demonstrative pronoun

The grammatical gender of demonstrative pronouns can be found only in the singular direct forms (see Table 4).

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17   e.g. *a nāxoš bi-š* (masculine) 'he is ill', *áva nāxoš bi-ā* (feminine) 'she is ill'.
18   e.g., *ča pus-e xub-ā* (masculine) 'his skin is fine', *čava pus-a xub-ā* 'her skin is fine'.

Table 4. Grammatical gender of demonstrative pronouns

	Singular/Plural	Direct	
Proximate	masculine sing.	*em*	this
	feminine sing.	*éma*	this
	Plural	*emé*	these
Remote	masculine sing	*a*	that
	feminine[19] sing.	*áva*	that
	plural	*avé*	those

Gender agreement between noun and adjective

In Šāhrūd dialects there is noun gender grammatical agreement mainly between nouns and adjectives (in Lerd and Karīn subdialects). Attributive adjectives do not generally show grammatical gender. Predicative adjectives, however, mark the gender in some dialects.

Predicative adjective

Lerd   *čəman xar bad sar ni* (masculine) 'My donkey isn't obstinate'
       čəman xar-a bad sar-a ni-a (feminine) 'My donkey isn't obstinate'
       em pisbu (masculine) 'he is bad'
       ém-a pis-a bi-a (feminine) 'she is bad'

Krn.   *em mərdá nāxoš agahast* (masculine) 'This man feels bad' (lit.became ill)
       em-āženi-anāxoš-a agahast-a (feminine) 'This woman feels bad' (lit. became ill)
       ma bərā pilá (masculine) 'His brother is big'
       mā xāhá pili-ā (feminine) 'His sister is big'

The change of feminine marker

a) When an enclitic pronoun follows a feminine noun, the feminine index (*-a*) separates from the noun and stands after the enclitic pronoun:

noun - enclitic pronoun - feminine marker

I ruj beše ku naččir-a bez-eš bezz-e 'Once he went to a mountains (and) shot a wild goat', but *em naččir-a bez-eš-a* (feminine) *bezzi-ā bārd-eš-ā de* 'he shot this wild goat (and) brought it to the village', *Bahman-e čəman ǰigarbán-eš-a bebard-ā* 'Bahman stole my (cattle) guts'. *Āftow-em-a bind-ā* 'I was looking at the sun' (this sentence is an example of ergative structure and literally means 'the sun is being looked by me').

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19 E.g., *em qoč čāk-e* (masculine) 'this is a good ram', *éma miš-a čāk-ā* (feminine) 'this is a good ewe', *a qoč čāk-e* (masculine) 'that is a good ram', *áva qoč čāk-ā* (feminine) 'that is a good ewe'.

b) When a feminine noun is in the genitive case, the feminine marker changes to stressed -*é*. For example, *vey-é dass-é bigir* 'Take the bride's hand' (the nominative case of 'bride' is *veya*), *beše Zeynab-é bāvayā* 'go (and) bring Zeynab here' (the direct form is *Zeynaba*).

Conclusion

From the above-mentioned materials it can be concluded that in Lerd and Karīn and, partially, in the Gīlavān and Dīz subdialects of the Šāhrūd dialect group there are masculine and feminine forms of nouns. The nouns, ending with unstressed-*a* are of feminine gender, and the feminine nouns with natural gender also have -*a* at the end. Mostly this concerns animal names:

varg	*varga* 'wolf'
xar	*xara* 'donkey'
ordak	*ordaka* 'duck'
qāz	*qāza* 'goose'
gāv/gāvnar	*māgāva/gāva* 'cow'
guar	*guara* 'calf'
kiǰa (Glv.), *muča* (Lerd) 'sparrow'	*šena* 'pitchfork'
kela 'piglet'	*riša*[20] 'beard'
owa 'water'	*əspeja* 'louse'
ajura 'body brick'	*xala* 'ash'
tərəzga 'hail'	*kalma* 'worm'
darzəna 'thorn'	*lākapošta* 'tortoise'
vəla 'flower'	*aftowa* 'sun'
dāra 'hook'	*mong* 'moon'
zəməssuna 'winter'	*vəhara* 'spring'
təbəssuna 'summer'	*pəyaza* 'autumn'
vagla (Glv.), *xa* (Lerd) 'egg'	*sabza* 'greens'
veya 'bride'	*guja* 'dung'
əssa 'bone'	*doma* 'tail'

On the basis of the study of grammatical gender, Šāhrūd dialects can be divided into three groups (see the map in Figure 1):

Group 1. Here we have well-expressed grammatical gender. In this group two north-western villages of the Šāhrūd district can be included – Karīn and Lerd, situated on the bank of Lerd river and in the foothills of mount Palangā, which divides these villages from the other group of Šāhrūd villages.
Group 2. In this group grammatical gender is expressed only partially. Here we have the central villages.
Group 3. Here we have no grammatical gender. The villages of this group are Āskestān, Asbū, Derav, Kolūr and Šāl. The centre is Kolūr village.

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20 The word *riša* 'beard' is feminine, *əsb/p/ia riš* 'old man' (lit. 'with white beard') is masculine.
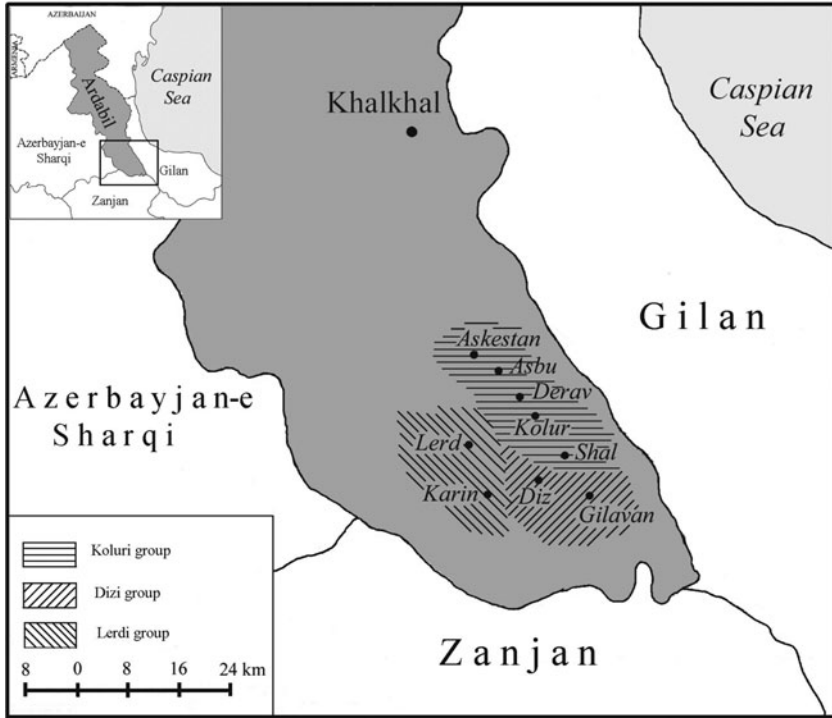
Figure 1. Spread area of the grammatical gender of Šāhrūd dialect group

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