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## A Comparative Study of the Phonetic System of the Early Shirāzi with Middle Persian Based on the Works of Shāh Dā'i Shirāzi

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### Introduction

The early dialect of Shiraz, also known as Šerazī, is one of the few Iranian languages for which diverse texts from the 5th to the 11th century AH has survived. Texts from Sheikh Rouzbahan Baqli, Sa'di, Shams Pus-e Nasir, Hafez, Khatib Shaf'avi, Bushaq At'ameh, and Shah Da'i Shirazi are among these works. In this study, we have compared the phonological system of this dialect with that of Middle Persian. This comparison covers the sounds and phonotactic constraints, the phonetic changes from Middle Persian to Early Shirazi, and the most significant phonological processes in Early Shirazi, focusing on Shah Da'i's works.

### Methodology

What phonetic and phonological similarities and differences does Early Shirazi have with Middle Persian, and what changes has it undergone? To these questions, this paper attempts to find answers. While there have been scattered studies on the phonological system of Early Shirazi, none have independently and linguistically addressed the phonological system of Shah Da'i's works and its comparison with Middle Persian. Given the linguistic value of Shirazi texts, especially those of Shah Da'i, conducting an independent study is justified to introduce the phonological system of this dialect and compare it with Middle Persian.

### Discussion and Results

From comparing the phonological systems of Early Shirazi with Middle Persian, the following results can be obtained:

- The sound /ž/ (voiced postalveolar fricative) in Middle Persian is an allophone of /j/ (Sundermann, 1989: 144-145; Skjærvø, 2009: 201), but it is not found in Early Shirazi.

- The sound /θ/ (voiceless interdental fricative) is not present in standard Middle Persian, but it appears in some learned words (Sadeghi, 1394/2015). This phoneme is observed in Early Shirazi texts until the 7th century (cf. Rezaei Baghbidi, 1382/2003: 37-35; Sadeghi, 1383/2004: 12; Sadeghi, 1394/2015: 4; Sadeghi, 2013: 216).
- The sound /q/ (voiced uvular plosive) is absent in Middle Persian but appears as an allophone in early Shirazi (Sadeghi, 1385/2006: 23-24).
- The two sounds /w/ (voiced bilabial approximant) and /v/ (voiced labiodental fricative) alternated in different varieties of Middle Persian (Sadeghi, 1357/1978: 127-128; Sadeghi, 1383/2004: 7-8), but only /v/ is present in Shirazi (ibid), although /w/ appears as an allophone of /v/ in some contexts (compare with contemporary Persian).
- The sound /ð/ (voiced interdental fricative) seemingly existed as an allophone of /d/ in Middle Persian (cf. Sundermann, 1989: 144). This sound also appears in some early Shirazi manuscripts after vowels.
- The sound /ʔ/ (glottal stop) does not exist in Middle Persian, but its presence in Shirazi can be inferred based on prosodic evidence (Forouzandeh-Fard, 1395/2016: 88).
- The sound /β/ (voiced bilabial fricative) is an allophone of /b/ in Middle Persian (Sundermann, 1989: 144) and is sometimes considered an allophone in Parthian (e.g., Rezaei Baghbidi, 1385/2006: 45) and other times a phoneme (e.g., Skjærvø, 2009: 201). In Early Shirazi texts, particularly Sa'di's works, the preposition “ۛ” *va* (which we believe is a remnant of Middle Persian *abar* and not *pad*) is written as the simple f or the three-dotted f, representing this sound (e.g., Sadeghi, 1390/2011: 396-397; Sadeghi, 1391/2012: 35).
- The sound /xw/ (labialized velar fricative) is considered an allophone in Middle Persian by some researchers (Sundermann, 1989: 145) and a phoneme by others (Skjærvø, 2009: 201). This sound appeared in earlier Shirazi texts but gradually lost its labialization, similar to Persian, with the vowel *a* following it turning into *o*.
- Short front vowels *e* and *i* in Middle Persian are considered two independent phonemes by some scholars (MacKenzie, 1967: 23-24) and one by others (Sundermann, 1989: 144). The situation for short back vowels *o* and *u* is similar to that for *e* and *i*.
- Long front vowels  $\bar{e}$  and  $\bar{i}$ , known, as the *majhūl* and *ma'lūm yā'*, respectively, are two independent phonemes in Middle Persian. This distinction existed in Early Shirazi at least until the 8th century. The situation for long back vowels  $\bar{o}$  and  $\bar{u}$ , known as the *majhūl* and *ma'lūm wāw*, respectively, is similar to the *majhūl* and *ma'lūm yā'*.
- In Early Shirazi, like Dari Persian, a syllable consists of at least one vowel (nucleus) and an obligatory onset consonant. The syllable's coda may optionally contain one or up to two consonants; thus, the Early Shirazi syllable

structure can be represented as CV((C)C). In Middle Persian, a syllable can start with a vowel, which is not the case in Shirazi. Also, an initial consonant cluster in Middle Persian is broken by inserting a short vowel in Shirazi. Some phonetic changes from Middle Persian to Early Shirazi include the change of *ā* (Middle Persian) to *a* (Shirazi); *ān* to *on* (when followed by an enclitic; cf. Forouzandeh-Fard, 1395/2016: 80-81); *an* to *o*; *ē* to *e*; *ō* to *o*; *b* to *v* and *w* to *b*; *wi* to *go* initially; *x* to *h*; *g* to *γ* intervocalically; *ag* to *γ* or *x* in final position (when followed by a word with an initial vowel; cf. Forouzandeh-Fard, 1395/2016: 84; also cf. Mahyar Nawabi, 1376/1997); *m* to *v*; and *č* to *z*. Additionally, the final consonants “n” (/n/), “d” (/d/), “r” (/r/), “z” (/z/), and the final clusters “rd” (/rd/), “ft” (/ft/), and “xt” (/xt/) can be deleted.

## Conclusion

In this article we discussed different phones of the Early Shirazi and Middle Persian. Phonotactic constraints was the next section of our study. At the end, we some of the phonetic procedures of the Early Shirazi emphasizing on Shah Da'i's works.

**Keywords:** Early Shirazi, Middle Persian, phonology, phonological processes, Shah Da'i Shirazi

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