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The Abdominal Sides as Containers: Some Indo-Aryan and Iranian Denominations

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Abstract

On the meaning of Ved. (dual) *kuṣṣí*, a denomination for pair body parts frequently equated to bodies of water in Vedic texts, different assumptions have been made by scholars. In particular, Stephanie Jamison suggested interpreting it as “the two cheeks”, Henk Bodewitz as “the two sides of the body”. The present paper supports Bodewitz’ claim that Ved. *kuṣṣí*- was used to refer to any of the sides of the abdomen. In fact, abdominal sides may be categorised as containers of liquids. This is also proved by the denominations for the abdominal side (as distinct from the thoracic side) recorded in some Iranian languages, which may be considered as part of the legacy of the ancient theory of humours and the microcosm-macrocosm theory.

Keywords

Vedic *kuṣṣí*-, Iranian Body Part Terms, Iranian Dialectology, Theory of Humours, Microcosm-Macrocosm Theory

1. In an article entitled “Linguistic and philological remarks on some Vedic body parts”, Stephanie Jamison (1987) offered new interpretations for a few body part terms, and in some cases also a new morphological analysis. Among these, there is Ved. *kuṣṣí*-, a well attested lexical item in Vedic and later, which is generally translated “belly”, and “for relatively good reasons”, according to Jamison (1987: 71). These shareable reasons are: (1) in post-Vedic and in Middle and Modern Indo-Aryan, *kuṣṣí*- and later outcomes (see Turner 1966: 164; idem 1985: 21, no. 3213) have meanings ranging from “belly” to “side of belly, side below ribs”, from “womb” to “lap” etc., all of them referring to the abdomen or its lateral sides;¹ (2) the stand-

¹ From the Iranian side, see Sogdian *kuš*-, *kušē* “side, flank” (Sims-Williams 1979: 134-135); Khotanese *kuvāysa* “side” (Bailey 1979: 63), etc.

ard etymology, connecting *kukṣí-* to Sanskrit *kóśa-* “bucket” would provide support for this meaning;² (3) *kukṣí-*, which occurs 10 times in the RV, always belonging to Indra and always filled, generally with Soma, “is entirely parallel to the use of other words for ‘belly’”, namely, *jaṭhára-* and *udára-*, as exemplified by the following passages, containing respectively *kukṣí-* and *udára-*:³

(1)

RV I.8.7 *yáh kukṣíḥ somapátamaḥ* “Which most soma-drinking *kuk-*
samudrá iva pínvate *ṣi* swells like ocean”.

(2)

RV I.30.3 *enā hy āsyódāre / samu-* “for thus there is established in
dró ná vyáco dadhé his belly an expanse (of soma)
like the ocean”.

What would have been the problem with this word, then? The problem, for Jamison, would be a grammatical one: five of its ten occurrences in the RV are dual (and in one, the adjective *ubhā* “both” modifies it). Since dual is a marked category in Vedic, no other chance is left than assuming the existence of two *kukṣí-* in a body. Translating the relevant texts, the dual form was simply overlooked by some scholars, who translated *kukṣí* as “belly”, as it were a singular; it was taken into account by others, who translated *kukṣí* as “two bellies” (a rather questionable solution, from an anatomical point of view), as “two sides, two flanks”, or combining the two lines, as “two sides of the belly”.⁴ This latter option was definitely rejected by Jamison on the ground that (dual) *kukṣí* are described as always filled with soma and “to fill the two sides” “doesn’t make sense in English, and it apparently meant nothing to the Vedic Indians either, because *pārśvá*, a secure word for “side”, never appears in such contexts”(Jamison 1987: 74). Accordingly, she suggested attributing to Ved. *kukṣí-* the meaning of “cheek” with the following motivations: cheeks are in number of two; they can be filled and swell up “when Indra gulps his

² This etymology is by no means certain (cf. EWA I: 360-361).

³ Quoted according to Jamison 1987: 72.

⁴ For references, see Jamison 1987: 73-74.

lakes of soma”; even the standard etymology might fit this new sense,⁵ since cheeks may be considered as “hollow receptacles”. However, some Vedic passages definitely point to a part located in an area of the body other than the head, as is proven by the following sentence from the Maitrāyaṇī Saṃhitā, as quoted in Jamison (1987: 78):

(3)

MS III.15.7 ... <i>girān plāśibhyām</i>	“(I gratify) the mountains with his
<i>úpalān plíhnā hradān kuṣībhyāñ</i>	two <i>plāśi</i> , the rock with his
<i>samudrām udāreṇa</i>	spleen, lakes with his two <i>kuṣi</i> ,
	the ocean with his belly”.

In these Vedic passages *kuṣi* co-occurs with other body part terms, as is the case of *plāśi*- in (3) above or *vaniṣṭhú*- elsewhere, whose exact referential value is unknown, but which should have to do something with the rectum or internal organs nearby.⁶ According to Jamison, dual *kuṣi* in (3) may only mean “buttocks”, a sense developed through a very natural semantic shift, attested in many languages.

Stephanie Jamison reconstructed the history of *kuṣi*- in the Saṃhitā and Brāhmaṇa period as a chain of semantic developments that from a “cheek” produced a “belly” (Jamison 1987: 80-81): *kuṣi*-, whose earliest meaning was “cheek”, underwent two independent semantic extensions in late RV based on shape resemblance (roundness) and happened to designate “buttocks” and “pregnant belly”, besides “cheek”; in later Sanskrit, however, “belly”, a semantic broadening of the latter sense, became predominant and triggered the reinterpretation of the relevant Vedic passages. Jamison’s paper gained widespread acceptance in the scholarly community. Both Manfred Mayrhofer (1989: 136-137) and Jared Klein (1990) have been convinced by her arguments; as a result, the treatment of this item in EWA⁷ strongly differs from that in KEWA.⁸ However, if we think in terms of conceptual relations between semantic notions and reg-

⁵ See above and fn. 2.

⁶ Cf. *plāśi*- “ein bestimmtes Eingeweide” in EWA II: 196; *vaniṣṭhú*- “ein Teil der Eingeweide, viell. Mastdarm oder Grimmdarm” in EWA II: 501-502.

⁷ Cf. *kuṣi*- “(meist Dual) Backe, Wange; später (Dual) Hinterbacke, (Sg.) schwangerer Bauch, Bauch, Unterlieb” in EWA I: 360.

⁸ Cf. *kuṣiḥ* “Bauch, Unterlieb, Höhlung / belly, abdomen, cavity” in KEWA I: 219.

ularity of semantic changes, we have to admit that Jamison's conclusions are rather weak since they entail an unnatural direction of change: to my knowledge, not a single case of chained or single conceptual shift in other languages may be put forward that equates "cheek" and "belly". The total disappearance of the original sense in post-Vedic and later Indo-Aryan languages also appears at least suspect.

The issue was revisited some years later by Henk Bodewitz (see 1992). Remarking that "filling both cheeks with food and drinks does not make more sense in English than to fill both sides of the belly" Bodewitz (1992:20) rejected the conclusions of Jamison's analysis and, on the basis of textual evidence, convincingly concluded that Ved. (dual) *kukṣí* cannot be understood otherwise than "the two sides of the belly"; the singular alternating with the dual might refer to the belly perceived as the totality of the two abdominal cavities. And since according to Bodewitz "duality" is not a significant aspect of the belly in human bodily experience, he assumed that the usage of this term with reference to people could only be explained as a transfer from the nomenclature of animal body (mainly of sacrificial victims) into that of human body: in the body of an animal like a cow, *kukṣí* probably referred to a cavity, designating a part, which contains something. The vagueness and indistinctness of this term would explain why it does not occur in the Vedic lists of dissected parts in ritual sacrifices; in fact, the *kukṣí* or the two *kukṣí* were containers rather than organs and could not be eaten.

The parallelism of the anatomical nomenclature of animals and human beings and the dependence of the latter from the former makes sense in general and perfectly fits most ancient human experiences; in most cultures, the anatomical knowledge rests on butchering and sacrificial animal dissection. This said, however, some questions remain open.

2. According to the ancient Indian physiology, the human body is compounded by the same five elements as the natural world (cf. Filliozat 1949: 21; idem 1955: 12-13). We are dealing then with a microcosm man. The first question to be put here is: considering that practically in almost all its occurrences in the Ṛgveda and other Vedic texts *kukṣí* is equated to bodies of water, like lakes, seas and oceans, how should we interpret this cosmic

image concerning the belly and/or its lateral sides?⁹ And secondly, is it really true that the abdominal bilaterality is not perceived as striking in human bodies, as stated by Bodewitz?

The image of the sea/(sides-of-) belly may seem rather odd in our eyes. However, things might have been different in ancient times since we find this image documented in texts stemming from cultural realities other than Indian, and in periods later than Vedic. We may assume that it was a circulating image.

Let us consider a small passage from chapter 28 of the Iranian *Bundahišn* (*tan ī mardōmān handāzag ī gētīg* “The body of human people is a model of the world”):

(4)

Bd. 28.4 <i>pōst čiyōn asmān, gōšt čiyōn zamīg, astag čiyōn kōf, ragān čiyōn rōdihā, ud xōn ī andar tan čiyōn āb ī andar zrēh ud aškamb čiyōn drayā ud mōy čiyōn urwar [...] ud jagar čiyōn zrēh ī Frāxkard ī bun-kadag ī hāmīn ud spul čiyōn kust ī abāxtar kū āšārišn ī zamestān [...]</i>.¹⁰	The skin is like the sky, the flesh like the earth, the bones like mountains, the veins like rivers and the blood inside the body is like the water inside the sea, and the belly is like the sea and the hair are like plants [...] and the liver is like the Frāxkard sea, base home of summer, the spleen like the northern region, where is the abode of winter [...].
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Bd. 28 (4) provides a good instance of the macrocosm-microcosm theory. Any part of the body is mapped to an element from the world domain: the skin (*pōst*) is equated to the sky (*asmān*), the flesh (*gōšt*) to the earth (*zamīg*), and so forth. Quite obvious appears the equation “blood inside the body” (*xōn ī andar tan*) with “water inside the sea” (*āb ī andar zrēh*), less obvious but more to the point here is the equation “belly, abdomen” (*aškamb*) with “sea” (*drayā*). Equally interesting is the association of the liver with the Frāxkard (Avestan *Vourukaša*), the cosmic ocean in

⁹ In fact, besides being filled with Soma, Indra’s *kukṣī* may also be filled with meat or other substances in RV ritual contexts. It is evident, however, that the abdominal area is perceived as primarily associated with liquids. See also Filliozat 1949: 23: “L’eau [...] siège surtout dans l’estomac”.

¹⁰ Quoted according to Pākzād 2005: 329-330.

Iranian mythology, situated in the southern skirts of Alborz and occupying one third of the earth. In Bd. 28 (8-9) this association is explained in detail: just as the waters of this sea rise up to the lofty Hugar, the peak of Harā, and there become purified, then one portion pours back to Frāxkard and another reaches the whole world by moisture and sprinkling, the blood in the body, having its house in the liver, every dawn rises up to the marrow of the head, then turns, one portion pours back to the liver, one portions again in the veins. The liver occupies the right side of the upper abdomen, here indicated as “base home of summer” (*bunkadag ī hāmīn*), i.e., south, just as the spleen occupies the left side, is similar to the northern region and is “the abode of winter” (*āšārišn ī zamestān*). In passing, I remember that the association of the right hand with the south and the left hand with the north is rooted in many cultural contexts in antiquity, as in Mesopotamia,¹¹ India, etc. and that the correlations between humours and seasons had already found their codification in Galen’s works. Attention to the strong relationship of liver and spleen with Jupiter and Saturn, respectively, according to principles of melothesia, has already been drawn by Sohn 1996: 230 n. 5 and 233 n. 26.

Bundahišn chapter 28, together with chapter 30 of the *Wizīdagihā ī Zādspram* and several passages from *Denkard* III, all of them dealing with human body and its functioning, have been thoroughly investigated by scholars interested to understand the knowledge of human anatomy and physiology in Sasanian Iran and its transmission through Zoroastrian literature, as well as the transfer system of the medical-scientific theories in antiquity. Among these, I just mention Philippe Gignoux (especially 1994; 1998; and 2001a), Peter Sohn (1996) and Paolo Delaini (2013; 2014).

In the Sasanian understanding of the composition and functioning of the human body, the macrocosm-microcosm theory, according to which the same patterns are reproduced in all levels of the cosmos and the man summarises the cosmos, is well rooted and coexists with the connected theories of elements and humours, which were not only the basis of pre-modern medical practice, but were also integrated into a whole cosmology, with the establishment of the elements and such diverse domains as

¹¹ Compare, for instance, Akkadian *šumēlu* “left” identified with the north (CAD 17: 271), and Arabic *šamāl*, *šimāl* “north”; *šimāl* “left (hand)”.

the plant and animal kingdoms, dietary practices, seasons, planets, etc. And even though nowadays the theory of humours has no place in the Iranian official medical science, vestiges of the humoral framework, that was once solid science, like the hot *vs.* cold, humid *vs.* dry categories, traditionally associated to elements and humours, has continued to exist in Iranian popular belief, affecting the people's perception of the body physiology and pathology, and affecting their dietary and pharmacological practices.

It has been stressed on several occasions that the before mentioned passage of the *Bundahišn* bears a striking resemblance to passages from the pseudo-Hippocratic tract *Περὶ ἐβδομάδων*, a work probably dating from the first century A.D. and known in its Latin version (the only one complete) with the title of *De Hebdomadibus* (see, for instance, Delaini 2013: 145ff.). This tract is most likely indebted to the Platonic tradition of the *Timaeus*.¹²

According to many scholars (Gignoux 2001a: 56; Delaini 2013: 147f.), the different speculations connected to the topos of the microcosm man have spread in the Iranian world thanks to the fortune that this enjoyed among the Neoplatonists, the Gnostics and the Manichaeans, who adopted the theory as their own, and through the mediation of Syriac intellectuals, who often took up the task of translating these concepts into Persian.¹³

Let us come back to the “sea-belly” cosmic image, already noted in the *Ṛgveda* and other Vedic texts, as well as in the *Bundahišn* (cf. (4) above). We also find it in the *De Hebdomadibus*, 6 (*maria [...] qui in visceribus est humor hominis*) (West 1971: 370);¹⁴ in the Hippocratic treaty *Regimen I.10* (le ventre a la propriété de la mer) (Jouanna 1998a: 171 and fn. 9);¹⁵ in the

¹² A different position has been taken by Götze (1923), who has assumed for this Greek work an Iranian influence, with explicit reference to the *Bundahišn*.

¹³ On the contribution of Syriac christians to the diffusion of scientific knowledge, see in particular, Gignoux 2001a and 2001b.

¹⁴ The quoted Latin passage is preceded by the following words: *aqua autem fluminum imitatio est venae et qui in venis est sanguinis; stagna autem vesicae et longao<nis>*. Note that the sea/belly image does not occur in the platonic dialogue of the *Timeus*, where it is stated that the moisture is distributed from the belly into the veins, but no cosmic equation is provided.

¹⁵ Here attention is called to the fact that in other treaties of the Hippocratic Corpus, belly is explicitly (or implicitly) connected to earth, occasionally to flesh, but never to sea.

Syriac treaty “On Man as a Microcosm”, written by the Pseudo Ahudem-meh, an author of the VI century, whose real identity is uncertain (*Caput figurat coelum, et pedes figurant terram, et venter ejus mare, et dorsum ejus aridum*).¹⁶

That the same image had also a place in the Chinese tradition, is confirmed by the Taoist version of the original Chinese legend of the dismembering of the giant P’an-kou, which dates from the 11th c. B.C. In this late version the original P’an-kou has been replaced by Lao Tseu. The relevant passage reads as follows: “Lao Tseu se transforma: son oeil gauche devint le soleil, son oeil droit devint la lune; sa tête devint le mont Kouen-louen, [...] ses intestins les serpents, son ventre les mers [...]”.¹⁷

Though the picture of the real diffusion of this cosmic image is still not full, it is rich enough, in my opinion, to foster a more extensive investigation on its trail, from which a more substantial amount of material for discussion might be recovered.

An organic presentation of the theory of four humours in Sasanian Zoroastrian literature is found in the *Wizīdagihā ī Zādspram*. In chapter 29.6, *Zādspram*, who is not so much sensitive to the cosmic confrontation, compares the digestion in the stomach to a cooking-pot filled with water and food and heated by the vital fire. Here the process of humour production starts, since the light and powerful liquid, separated from the rest, are attracted to the liver:¹⁸

(5)

WZ 29.6 <i>čē kumīg homānāgih ast ī dēg <ī> xwarišn ud āb andarōn dārēd pad ʾgyānīg ātaxš ēwēnīhā tābīhēd ka ō sāmān ī xwēš mad pad zōr ī čīhr ān ī rōšn ī zōrōmand be ō jagar āhanjēd az jagar pad rāgān ud rāgīzagān be ō sar ud abārīg tan rawēnēd [...].</i>	Car l'estomac est à la ressemblance de la marmite qui garde à l'intérieur les aliments et l'eau, et par le feu vital ils sont proprement chauffés : quand il est parvenu à sa limite, il attire dans le foie par une force naturelle ce qui est lumineux et puissant, il le conduit
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¹⁶ Latin translation in Chabot 1943: 70. Note that the belly/sea connection is considered odd by Gignoux 1998: 23 (“pourquoi le ventre correspond-il à la mer, et le dos au sec?”); see also Jouanna 1998b: 242.

¹⁷ Quoted according to Gignoux 1994: 51.

¹⁸ Quoted according to Gignoux/Tafazzoli 1993: 96-97.

du foie dans les veines, et les veines vers la tête et le reste du corps [...].

In WZ 30.14-15, the four humours (blood, phlegm, red and black bile) are listed, together with their main properties in terms of colour, taste, dryness etc. In WZ 30.16, the hydraulic process connected to the humours is described. WZ 30.29 reintroduces and enhances what has already been stated in chapter 29.6, also mentioning the taking force, which is responsible for heating the stomach and separating the clear water into four liquids.

The Greek derivation of various anatomical speculations found in WZ and other Zoroastrian texts is not a matter of doubt. The dependence on the works of Galen, who incorporated the humoral approach into an encompassing theory of the human digestive system, and on works produced by the Hippocratic school is undeniable, albeit mediations should be envisaged, as well as a careful adaptation to the Zoroastrian orthodox doctrine (cf. Delaini 2013: 161 and *passim*). The Greek influence must find its roots in the exchange of medical expertise already at the time of the Achaemenid dynasty; in the main centres of the Achaemenid state, doctors from Greece were invited and happened to live there for long. In no way, however, one can neglect the influence of cultural exchanges, ancient and constant over time, involving Indian, Greek, Iranian, Mesopotamian, etc. cultural contexts and producing a continuous and global circulation of knowledge and related images.

Giuliano Bonfante (1959) has demonstrated that notions connected to the macrocosm- microcosm theory have been current in Mesopotamia since the most ancient times. Philippe Gignoux, though considering convincing Tardieu's conclusion that the microcosm man theory was absorbed late in the Mazdaean thought, not before the Sasanian period and thanks to Mani, also admits the possibility of earlier Indian influences on the Iranian speculation (cf. Gignoux 2001a: 57, fn. 71; see also Filliozat 1949: 30f.). He acknowledges, however, that "it would be necessary to demonstrate how this Indian speculation passed on to Iran at such an early time" and also maintains that the macrocosm-microcosm theory should be kept separate from the myths of the primordial human sacrifice and the birth of the world (cf. Gignoux 2001a: 57-58). A similar position is

taken by Delaini (2013: 195). At this point the question is: could we find in the old, mutual cultural exchanges a justification to the persistence in time of the particular 'sea-belly' image?

3. A further evidence of the natural association of abdomen, and especially the abdominal sides, with liquids, is given by the denominations for these body parts still currently used in some Modern Iranian languages.¹⁹

Speakers of many languages (as English or Italian) do not discriminate in common conversation between abdominal and thoracic sides and use a single word (Eng. *side*, *flank*, It. *flanco*) to refer to both. Speakers of Iranian languages generally behave differently.²⁰ This is simply a matter of categorisation, and depends on the way people conceive their bodies and produce the relevant lexicon, linking language and cultural conceptualisations. This proves, however, that the abdominal bilaterality may also be perceived as salient in human bodies, and in fact it is in some cultures, contrary to what assumed by Bodewitz.

When many years ago I started my collection of body part terms in Iranian languages, to translate the Iranian terms denoting "abdominal side", I took the decision, in order to avoid ambiguity, of using in my database the term *hypochondrium* in the sense provided by the Oxford English Dictionary, i.e. "each of the two hypochondriac regions", with the plural *hypochondria* referring to "those parts of the human abdomen which lie immediately under the ribs on each side of the epigastric region" (also extended to "the viscera situated in the hypochondria: the liver, gall-bladder, spleen, etc."). In fact, the Iranian terms I started at that time to translate as "hypochondrium" are terms of actual common usage, while Engl. *hypochondrium* (as well as It. *ipocondrio*) is not.

For this body part, which is lateral, internal, in number of two, I have singled out in Iranian languages different denomination patterns. Since both upper cavity (chest) and lower cavity (abdomen) have been universally conceived by people as containers and denominated consequently,

¹⁹ On the humoral doctrine and its systematic influence on contemporary English vocabulary, see Geeraerts/ Grondelaers 1995.

²⁰ From this perspective one should consider the different referential value of *kuḫšī* and *pāršvā*, and also understand why the latter, "a secure word for 'side'" (Jamison 1987: 74), never appears in the same contexts as the former.

generally recycling terms for basins, trays, baskets, etc., one of these patterns is that we can call the “container lateral abdomen”; Ved. *kukṣi-* could belong here.²¹ Very productive is the “empty place”—abdominal side pattern, as showed below (Table 1).

Persian <i>tohiḡāh</i> , ²² Tajik <i>tihigoh</i> (FZT), ²³ Birjandi <i>tigā</i> (Rezāi 1994), Yaghnoobi <i>tigah/š</i> (Filippone 2013: 637) ²⁴	Pers. <i>tohi</i> “empty”, etc.
Kermānšāhi Kurdish <i>puta</i> (Sanqar <i>pūta</i>) (Darvišian 1996), Hamadani <i>pute</i> (Garusin 1991); Lori-ye Darre-Jowzāni <i>pitta</i> (Aliyāri Bābolyāni 2017) [= Prs. <i>pahlu</i>]	Cf. Kerm. Kurd. <i>put</i> , Ham. <i>put</i> , Lori-ye Darre-Jowz. <i>patti</i> “empty”
Afghan Persian <i>xālīgāh</i> (Afṡāni-Nevis 1956); Sistāni <i>xālīgāi</i> (Mohammadi Xomak 2000), South Kurdish <i>xālīga</i> (Hažār 1990; Bābān 1982, s.v. <i>ābgāh</i>), <i>hālīga</i> , <i>hālīa</i> (Bābān 1982, s.v. <i>kaš</i>); Lakki (Dolfān) <i>hālīga</i> ; (Fārs) Estahbāni <i>xālī-gā</i> (Hasandust 2010: 421 [= Prs. <i>pahlu</i>])	Pers. <i>xālī</i> etc. “empty”
Daštēstāni <i>piki</i> (Borāzjāni 2003), Lori (Xorram-ābādi) <i>pikigēa</i> (Nāderi 2011), Zarqāni <i>pike</i> , <i>pike y del</i> (Malekzāde 2001), Arāki <i>pukke</i> (Mahtāt n.d.); South Kurdish (Qasre Širin) <i>pūka</i> (Darvišian 1996)	Lori (XĀ) <i>pik</i> , Zarq. <i>pik</i> , Dašt. <i>pik</i> , Kurd. (Qasre Shirin) <i>pūk</i> , Prs. <i>puk</i> “hollow, empty”
Pašto <i>təšay</i> (Pashtoon 2009), ²⁵ Waziri <i>teshai</i> (Lorimer 1902),Ormuri <i>tusak</i> (Morgenstierne 1932)	Pašt. <i>təš</i> , Orm. <i>tusk</i> “empty”
Pato <i>dāda</i> (Pashtoon 2009); Waziri <i>daḡḡa</i> (Lorimer 1902) (“side (of body); side (of anything)”).	Pašt. <i>daḡ</i> , Waz. <i>daḡ</i> “hollow, empty”.

Table 1. The “empty place”—abdominal side (*hypochondrium*)

Particularly intriguing for the concern of this paper is the pattern, which equates the abdominal sides to a place for water. Prs. *ābgāh* is a

²¹ See however above, fn. 2.

²² “The right and left side of the abdomen; flank; pelvis” (Moʻin 1992); it has been a current word at least since Ferdowsi’s time (see Dehxodā 1946–1981).

²³ Probably only literary (not recorded in most of the dictionaries of Modern Standard Tajik).

²⁴ Cf. also *tegáy-m dāxšak ast* “my side aches” (Xromov 1970: 201). < Taj.; prob. borr. from a dialectal Tajik variety, similar to Birjandi *tigā*; see also *tigāh* in the Tafsir-e Surābādi (11th c.; Hasandust 2016), whose author, Abu Bakr ‘Atiq Nišāburi Surābādi, was with most probability Xorasanian by origin (from Herat or Nišābur; cf. Lazard 1963: 94).

²⁵ “1. side, iliac region; 2. groin; 3. empty place, free place; 4. (*Physics*) vacuum, void”.

transparent term that immediately evokes the image of a place for water. It means “pond, lake”; with reference to a human body, it is a common denomination for “hypochondrium”. Possibly, a reinterpretation, also favoured by human daily experience, as well as by semantic vagueness of the term, rather common in body terms for internal organs, caused a secondary shift of reference of the term in the direction of the urinary apparatus (cf. Sādeqi 2013: 310-311). In this way an alternative to Prs. *ābdān* “bladder” has been produced. The “place for water” denominative pattern for the hypochondrium or another part of the abdomen is very productive; we find it more or less everywhere in the Central, Southern and Eastern Iranian plateau: in Baxtiāri/Lori area, in Fārs, in Sistān, Xorāsān, in Central dialects. All the denominations for abdominal sides or other parts of lower abdomen collected in Table 2 below may be traced back to an old understanding of the human and animal anatomy and physiology, affected by the humoral doctrine.

Persian <i>ābgāh</i> (“pond; hypochondrium; bladder”) Tajik <i>obgoh</i> (FTZT); Sistāni <i>owgā</i> (“genital organ (in particular, male organ)”) (Mohammadi Xomak 2000); Xorāsāni (Heravi) <i>öwgā</i> (also “lower abdomen”) (Āsef Fekrat 1997), Baxtiāri <i>’a-gah</i> (Maddadi 2013), (Čahār Lang) <i>owga</i> (Sarлак 2002), Lori <i>owga</i> (Izadpanāh 2001), (Xorram Ābādi) <i>āwga</i> (Nāderi 2011), Lakki <i>āwogah</i> (also “watering-place”) (Kiāni Kulivand 2011), Qomi <i>ābgā</i> (Sādeqi 2001), Abyānei <i>ovgā</i> , Nāini <i>owga</i> (Lecoq 2002), Hanjani <i>ov-gā</i> (Āqārabi ^c 2004), Bardesiri <i>owge</i> (Barumand Sa’id 1991), Sivandi <i>owga</i> (Noruzi/Āzāde 2016); Delijāni <i>owgāh</i> (Safari 1994), Anāraki <i>owgah</i> (also “watering place for animals”) (Sohrābi Anāraki 1994), Totmāji <i>owgā</i> (Razzāqi 2016 [= Prs. <i>pahlu</i>]), Širāzi <i>ābgāh</i> (Behruzi 1969), Sarvestāni <i>owgā</i> (“the place of the testicles”) (Homāyun 1992), Zarqāni <i>owgā</i> (Malekzāde 2001), Daštēstāni <i>owga</i> (Borāzjāni 2003), Lārestāni <i>owgah</i> (Eqtedāri 1955), Bandar-e Xamiri <i>howgah</i> (“the body part where the kidneys are situated”) (Qatāli 2009)	Prs. <i>āb</i> “water” + <i>gāh</i> “place” etc.
Fišarvi <i>kol-e hā</i> (Salāmi 2009), Kāryāni <i>kol-e ō</i> (Salāmi 2007); Juymi <i>kol-e ōgā</i> (Salāmi 2011)	Fišarvi, Kāryāni, etc. <i>kol</i> “hole”
Kāzeruni (Fāmur) <i>dimōga</i> (2007); Gavkošaki <i>dimēy ōvga</i> (Musavi 1993), Lor Dārengāni <i>dam-e ō-ga</i> (Salāmi 2006), Daštēstāni <i>dim-e owga</i> : (Borāzjāni 2003)	Kāz. <i>dim</i> etc. “tail, extremity” + “place for water”

Baxtiāri <i>din-aw-ger</i> (Maddadi 2013)	Baxt. <i>din</i> “tail, extremity” + <i>’awger</i> “basin, lake” (= Pers. <i>ābgir</i>)
Western Balochi (Noške, Nal, Kalat etc.) <i>āpxāna</i> (also “lower abdomen; bladder”) ²⁶	Cf. Pers. <i>ābxāne</i> “water closet, etc.”
Iranian Āzari <i>āw.a lāk</i> “the place in the animal body where water is stocked (based on old beliefs); by metonymy, animal belly” (Sabz ʿAlipur 2011: 65)	Ir. Āzari <i>lāk</i> “belly, stomach (esp. of herbivorous animals [<i>dām</i>]) (Sabz ʿAlipur 2011: 183); (Lerd) <i>lākk</i> hypochondrium; side (of quadrupeds)” (Moʿarāji Lerd 2009)
Tāleqāni <i>āu lāb</i> (“the left side of cow, in the area where the thigh joins the basin and the spine”) ²⁷ (Fallāhi/Sādeqīān 2011)	Tāleq. <i>lāb</i> “side”
Sorani Kurdish <i>birk</i> (Hakem 2012), South Kurdish <i>birk</i> (Hažār 1990) (also “lake, pond”).	

Table 2. The “place for water” (or the like)—abdominal side (hypochondrium)

²⁶ Clearly a Pers. loanword (adapted to Balochi, as proved by initial *āp* “water”). I have recorded this denomination for “hypochondrium” from several Bal. speakers native of Brahōi/Balochi areas, all of them fluent in both languages. With the sense of “bladder” we find it recorded also in Brahōi, cf. *auxāna* in Rossi 1979: H51. Notably, Pers. *ābxāne* (as well as the many loanwords in Iranian and non-Iranian languages) does not belong to the body part lexicon. The semantic extension might have been occurred in Balochi and/or Brahōi, or in a Persian variety, which we are not aware of, and could have been the direct source for Bal. *āpxāna*, Br. *auxāna*.

²⁷ In Tāleqāni, the right side of a cow’s body is said *dan lāb* (cf. *dan* “seed, grain, etc.”). In Fallāhi/Sādeqīān (2011: 88, 216), the difference between the two abdominal sides of a cow, also emphasised by different denominations, is explained as follows: in a cow’s body, the left side is more hollowed than the right one. When the cow is hungry, the depression of the right side becomes more visible; when, after eating forage, the cow becomes full, this depression is no more visible. In this way one knows if the cow is hungry or full. This explanation reminds us the Vedic passage that, according to Jamison (1987: 76ff.), would provide the strongest evidence for *kukṣī-* meaning “cheek”, since to imagine a “lopsided belly” would be tantamount “to invent a totally unnatural piece of natural history”; also in this case one can only agree with Bodewitz (1992: 23), who rejects Jamison’s conclusion as rather bold.

4. One may also consider as part of the legacy of the theory of humours another group of words mainly recorded in Fārs and Lārestān, i.e., in an area in South Iran rather homogenous from the dialectological point of view. These words do not refer to a region of the body but to a specific organ, i.e., “spleen” and, in one case, “liver”.²⁸ Both spleen and liver, situated in the right and left abdominal sides, played a very central role in the hydraulic cycle of the humoral theory. The relevant denominations, collected in Table 3 below, are compound terms (“water” + “mouth”), which depict the spleen (or the liver) as an outlet for liquid.

Bastaki <i>āwkāp</i> “liver” (Bastaki 1980)	Bast. <i>kāp</i> “mouth”
Hayyāti <i>ō-kap</i> , Dežgāhi <i>ō-kap</i> (Salāmi 2006), Xonji <i>hō-kap</i> , Zāxoruye <i>ō-kap</i> , Kāryāni <i>ō-kap</i> , Tang-Kiši <i>ō-kap</i> , Qalāti <i>hō-kap</i> , Aheli <i>ō-kap</i> (Salāmi 2007), Lāri <i>owkapū</i> , Aškanāni <i>hō-kap</i> , Evazi <i>hō-pak</i> , Galledāri <i>ō-pak-u</i> , ²⁹ Fišvari <i>hō-kap</i> , Bixei <i>ō-kap</i> , Banāroviyei <i>ō-kap</i> , Kurdehi <i>ō-kap</i> , Fedāyi <i>ō-kap</i> (Salāmi 2009); Ĵuyimi <i>ō-kap</i> (Salāmi 2011), Xamiri <i>howkap</i> (Qatāli 2009); Farāmarzi <i>hāvkap</i> (Farāmarzi 1984) “spleen”	Hayyāti, Dežgāhi, etc. <i>kap</i> “mouth”
Balyāni <i>ō-dahan-ak</i> “spleen” (Salāmi 2006)	Balyāni <i>dahan</i> “mouth”.

Table 3. *The “mouth of water”—spleen (/ liver)*

An explanation to these “mouth-of-water” denominations for inner organs can probably be found in the *Wizīdagihā ī Zādspram*, chapter 30.16, where reference is made to the gall-bladder having its mouth (*dahān*) always open.³⁰

(6)

WZ 30.16 <i>pas zahrag ī azabar</i>	Ensuite la vésicule qui est au-
<i>jaqar be ēstēd ān ī bārīg ī tēz ul</i>	dessus du foie, attire vers le haut ce
<i>āhanjēd be ō wiš ī suxr bawēd</i>	qui est subtil et vif, et (cela) devient
<i>bāstān dahān wišād dārēd</i>	la bile rouge, (car) elle garde
	constamment la bouche ouverte.

I would like to recall here the passage with a body part litany from the *Maitrāyaṇī Saṃhitā* quoted by Jamison (1987:79) in order to strengthen her thesis of the cheek-becoming-belly semantic change:

²⁸ See Bastaki *āwkāp* “liver” below.

²⁹ *-pak* seemingly a metathesised form of Evazi, Galledāri *kap* “mouth”.

³⁰ Quoted according to Gignoux/Tafazzoli 1993: 100-101.

(7)

MS III.15.9 *pūṣāṇaṁ vaniṣṭhūnān-* (I gratify) Pūṣan with his rectum
dhāhīnt sthūragudāyā sarpān gú- (?), the 'blind' snakes with the
dābhir vihrūta āntrāir apā āsyèna large intestines, worms with the
vṛṣaṇā āṇḍābhyām ... entrails, waters with the 'mouth',
 the two bulls with the two testi-
 cles ...

According to Jamison, *apā āsyèna* would attest a case of transference of the name of part of the head (*āsyà*- "mouth") to the abdominal region, similar to that assumed for *kukṣí*- "cheek". She states that "*āsyèna* here should mean "bladder" or some part close by. [...] The point is merely the metaphorical application of a term for the part of the face for another, perhaps somewhat tabooed body part". Bodewitz dissented from this hypothesis as well, remarking that it is not clear why bladder should be more tabooed than testicles, actually found in the same passage; he preferred to envisage here a shift in the order of the body parts (abdomen and head sometimes are interchanged). But if he is surely right when he states that "[t]he assumption of a metaphor based on only one text place is dangerous" (Bodewitz 1992: 22), one may wonder whether it would be possible to perceive in the *apā āsyèna* "waters with the mouth" an allusion to a popular understanding of the body, contemplating the presence of a mouth-outlet in the body hydraulic system, associated to the abdomen. The same popular understanding on which the "mouth-of-water" Iranian denominations we have seen above for abdominal inner organs rest.

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