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## **A grammar of Kumzari : a mixed Perso-Arabian language of Oman**

Wal Anonby, C.A. van der

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**Author:** Wal Anonby, Christina van der

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## 8 Preposition

### 8.1 Prepositions: Morphosyntax and semantics

Prepositions in Kumzari represent the head of prepositional phrases, consisting of a preposition followed by its complement. Prepositions have simple shapes, containing one or two syllables. Certain locational prepositions derive to form nouns or adjectives.

Kumzari prepositions precede the noun phrase that is their complement, and within a clause the entire prepositional phrase most often occurs after the noun or verb phrase to which it refers. Exclusively prepositional syntax distinguishes Kumzari as belonging to the southwestern branch in the Indo-Iranian language family, since its northwestern cousins Kurdish and Baluchi have postpositions as well (Stilo 2012b:4).

The most common prepositions in Kumzari are *ba*, *pi*, *wā*, and *inda*. These and others are set out in Table 47 below and examples of each follow.

Table 47. Prepositions

| preposition  | gloss                 |
|--------------|-----------------------|
| <i>ba</i>    | to, for, of, on, with |
| <i>bağa</i>  | without               |
| <i>bar</i>   | belonging to          |
| <i>ğay</i>   | except                |
| <i>hata</i>  | until                 |
| <i>inda</i>  | in, inside            |
| <i>mayya</i> | between, among        |
| <i>naxa</i>  | aboard (a vehicle)    |
| <i>pana</i>  | beside, near          |
| <i>pi</i>    | from, than, since     |
| <i>sīna</i>  | toward                |
| <i>tē</i>    | before                |
| <i>wā</i>    | with, at, -ward       |

The preposition *ba* has instrumental, spatial, beneficiary, comitative, and purposive meanings, and is glossed ‘to’, ‘for’, ‘of’, ‘on’, or ‘with’:

(394) R1099

filhāl, kaw bard -iš **ba** yē.  
 in.any.case marriage.contract carry:REAL -3s to 3s  
 ‘In any case, he carried the marriage contract **to** him.’

(395) G250

jāmağ xō wād -iš, faraša yē gid -iš **ba** gawd -ō ...  
 man’s.skirt REFL bring:REAL -3s spreading out 3s do:REAL -3s on cave -the

wa bard sōd -iš **ba** yē.  
 and stone put:REAL -3s on 3s

‘He brought his skirt, spreading it out **over** the cave... and he put a stone **on** it.’

(396) S73

jāga kin            **ba** mē inda yē **ba** nwāz.  
 place do:2sIMPER for 1s in 3s for prayer  
 ‘Make a place in it **for** me **for** prayer.’

(397) P1060

dit            šēx -ō            xistārī            gid -in            **ba** mē.  
 daughter sheikh -the engagement do:REAL -3p to 1s  
 ‘They engaged the sheikh’s daughter **to** me.’

(398) U218

qaṣṣa māraq yē gid -iš **ba** ḡuṣṣ -ō.  
 cutting throat 3s do:REAL -3s with sharp stone -the  
 ‘He cut its throat **with** the sharp stone.’

The prepositions *pi* ‘from’, ‘than’, ‘since’ and *ḥata* ‘until’ both cover temporal, spatial, and abstract meanings of those words:

(399) S117

sōntī -ē wād -iš            **pi**            ēwō **ḥata** ṣaḥarē -ō            ba blind -ī.  
 raft -a bring:REAL -3s from here until cabinetry -the in high -NOM  
 ‘He brought a raft [measuring] **from** here **up to** the cabinet in height.’

(400) P939

dgō            ba mē ba yē na **ḥata** šaw -ō, xwaw -ō gid -iš            mē.  
 say:3sIMPF to 1s it’s.all.right until night -the sleep -the take:REAL -3s 1s  
 ‘She said to me, “It’s all right,” **until** the night, sleep overtook me.’

(401) S709

ṭiyar            tē’ -ē            **pi**            čāz            ā,            brē’ -ē            wā=            zēran  
 finished become:IMPF -2p of lunch SUB go:IMPER -2p -ward down

pana sōntī -ō wa grē’ -ē.  
 beside raft -the and cry:IMPER -2p  
 ‘When you have finished **of** [eating] lunch, go down beside the raft and cry.’

The spatial preposition *inda* is equivalent to ‘in’, ‘into’, or ‘inside’:

(402) G226

raft            **inda** xilxil -an.  
 go:3sPERF into small.wadi -PL  
 ‘It had gone **into** the small wadis.’

The prepositions *pana* ‘beside’ and *naxa* ‘aboard’ both refer to spatial relations, as demonstrated in this sentence:

(403) S817

tō tāt -ī            xwā -ī            **pana** mē **naxa** sōntī -ō.  
 2s want:IMPF -2s sleep:IRR -2s beside 1s aboard raft -the  
 ‘You want to sleep **beside** me **aboard** the raft.’

The opposite of *ba* ‘with’ in its instrumental and comitative meanings is the preposition *baḡa* ‘without’:

(404) A281

lakin maxlōq -ō, **baḡa** muxx kas dān -a yē kī na.  
 but crowd -the without head PERS know:IMPF -3s 3s who NEG  
 ‘But the crowd, **without** a head nobody knew who he was.’

The abstract preposition *ḡay* indicates exception:

(405) K345

ṣayaḡa tk-a, iṣī na **ḡay** wōwōwō wa čēnaḡī  
 shouting do:IMPF-3s anything NEG except woe and thirst

wōwōwō wa šē'id -ē.

woe and Islamic.death.creed -a

‘He was shouting, [saying] nothing **except** "Woe!" and "Thirst!", "Woe!" and a dying man's creed.’

The preposition *tē* marks both temporal and spatial meanings:

(406) G198

nakt-ē **tē** bang -ō ā, ṭēr āmad, ḡrāb -ē.  
 little-a before sunset -the SUB bird come:3sREAL crow -a  
 ‘A little **before** sunset, a bird came: a crow.’

‘Belonging to’ or ‘of’ is represented by the preposition *bar*:

(407) G70

āšīnan wa'b wā šan, wa ṣumr **bar** yē wa xār **bar** yē.  
 those.ones field with 3p and acacia belonging.to 3s and thorn.tree belonging to 3s  
 ‘Those ones had a field, and acacia trees **belonged to** it, and thorn trees **belonged to** it.’

The spatial preposition *mayya* (or *mayka*) has the meaning of ‘between’ or ‘among’:

(408) K427

dō' -um ba tō xānaḡ -ē palla gēnum wa jā **mayya** angar.  
 give:IMPF -1s to 2s house -a full.of wheat and barley between/among each.other  
 ‘I will give to you a house, full of wheat and of barley **among** each other [mixed together].’

(409) G638

miyyit -ō ā, č- im gēr yē tk -im **mayya** gēr -an  
 dead.person -the TOP go:IMPF -1p burying 3s do:IMPF -1p between/among grave -PL

ādamī tēmuš -in mā.

someone see:IMPF -3p 1p

‘That dead person, [if] we go to bury him **between** the graves, someone will see us.’

As do many languages, Kumzari uses body terminology for directionals, such as the preposition *sīna* ‘toward’; the word also means ‘chest’ in Kumzari:

(410) B575

burwā    **sīna**    asp -ō.  
 run:MIR    toward    horse -the  
 ‘He ran **toward** the horse!’

and a word similar to the body term for ‘back’ in Kumzari, *pištu*, is used as a spatial and logical preposition meaning ‘behind’ or ‘after’:

(411) R1385

brār    šmā    ra                    **pištu**                    šmā.  
 brother    2p    go:3sREAL    after/behind    2p  
 ‘Your brother went **after** you.’

(412) B1260

bap    mē    kōr    būs -ē                    **pištu**                    mē.  
 father    1s    blind    become:PERF -3s    after/behind    1s  
 ‘My father has become blind **because of** me.’

## 8.2 Prepositional Derivation

Some prepositions take an *-an* (or *-r*) to become a locational noun or adjective.<sup>84</sup> In prepositional form they require a complement. Examples of the derivation of prepositions are in Table 48 below.

Table 48. Derivation of prepositions

| preposition        | noun/ adjective <sup>85</sup>  |
|--------------------|--------------------------------|
| zēr ‘under, below’ | zēran ‘bottom’ ( <i>n.</i> )   |
| naxa ‘aboard’      | nēxan ‘aboard’ ( <i>adj.</i> ) |
| inda ‘in, inside’  | indur ‘inside’ ( <i>n.</i> )   |
| mayka ‘between’    | maykar ‘middle’ ( <i>n.</i> )  |
| ğay ‘except’       | ğayr ‘different’ ( <i>n.</i> ) |

## 8.3 Verbal goal arguments

Arguments that are verbal goals, including those of motion verbs, present without prepositions; rather, they follow the verb phrase directly. This phenomenon occurs in many Western Iranian languages (Haig 2011). In the following examples of verbal goal arguments, no prepositions are required.

(413) S83

bō                    kard                    mē    **dirya -ō**.  
 go:2sIMPER    drop:2sIMPER    1s    sea -the  
 ‘Go and drop me **into the sea**.’

<sup>84</sup> Comparable dual syntactic properties of certain noun-like prepositions in Persian are discussed in Pantcheva 2008c:11ff.

<sup>85</sup> Another possible derivational pair is the temporal preposition *tē* ‘before’ and the locational noun *tēğar* ‘before, in front of.’

(414) R1333

ka dafana ān gid -in **bard.**  
 right.away burying 3s.ANA do:REAL -3p stone  
 ‘Right away they buried him **with stones.**’

(415) B774

tāt -um dug -um yē **šū’ -ī.**  
 want:IMPF -1s take:IMPF -1s 3s husband -ADVR  
 ‘I want to take him **as a husband.**’

(416) G865

sā sōr wa pīma tk -um ba šmā **čāz.**  
 now salt.fish and green.onion do:IMPF -1s for 2p lunch  
 ‘Now I will make salt fish and green onion for you **for lunch.**’

(417) P900

ḥamala biš **šēx -ō!** tukš -a tō!  
 watching.out become:2sIMPER sheikh -the kill:IMPF -3s 2s  
 ‘Watch out **for the sheikh!** He will kill you!’

(418) R906

āw qaṭa’a tō’ -at **fālaḥ -ō.**  
 water cutting.off become:IRR -3s channel -the  
 ‘Water would be cut off **at the channel.**’

#### 8.4 Possessive preposition and proclitic directional *wā*

Like many of the world’s languages (Stassen 2009), Kumzari does not use a verb for ‘to have’. Instead, the possessive construction in Kumzari is formed by the preposition *wā* and a complement, which is the possessor.<sup>86</sup> It employs regular prepositional syntax, falling at the end of the clause. The possessive construction contains none of the verbal information about aspect, mood, or mirativity.

(419) A397

sā **šēx -ō** ā, jāmal **wā** yē.  
 now sheikh -the TOP camel with 3s  
 ‘Now, the sheikh, he **had** a camel.’

The possessive construction may be used as a factive,<sup>87</sup> in which case it takes factive syntax, appearing at the beginning of the clause. This frequently occurs at the beginning of a narrative to introduce a character or posit one’s existence.

<sup>86</sup> The preposition *wā* in its possessive capacity is glossed as ‘with’. The Northern Luri word for ‘with’ is the likely cognate *vārd* (MacKinnon 2011).

<sup>87</sup> “Factive verbs are those that describe the coming into existence of some entity” (Payne 1997:59). In Kumzari factivity is expressed only syntactically; the verb (or *wā* possessive as in this case) is promoted to the clause-initial position.

(420) S12

raft        šēx    wālēyit –ō,   **wā**   yē   si- ta        ditk -an.  
 go:3sIMPF   sheikh   country –the   with   3s   three- COUNT   daughter -PL  
 ‘There was a sheikh of the country; he **had** three daughters.’

Besides possession, the preposition *wā* additionally indicates direction (glossed as ‘at/-ward’), taking a locational noun as a complement. In its possessive function, *wā* does not lose stress to its complement. However, as a directional it cliticises to its complement: its vowel shortens, or drops out altogether if its complement begins with a long vowel, and stress shifts to the complement.

(421) R309

č -in        **wā= ēbar**        wa    tā’ -in        **wā= ēbar**.  
 go:IMPF -3p   at/-ward= over here   and   come:IMPF -3p   at/-ward= over here  
 ‘They would go **here** and **there**.’

(422) P548

inda   mina =in,    č -in        **wā= bāla**    arafāt   nwāz.  
 in    Mina =EX:3p   go:IMPF -3p   at/-ward= up   Arafat   tomorrow  
 ‘They were in Mina, they would go **upward** to Arafat the next day.’

(423) R1512

šaš -ta        zangērīr -an    mē,   si-   kas   ba   kitf        yē   **wā= rāstī**    ā,  
 six   COUNT   slave –PL   1s   three- PERS   of   shoulder   3s   at/-ward= right   SUB

wa   si-   kas   ba   kitf        yē   **wā= asrē**.  
 and   three- PERS   of   shoulder   3s   -ward= left  
 ‘My six slaves: three at his shoulder **to the right**, and three at his shoulder **to the left**.’

Table 49 below shows some common directionals with cliticised *wā* and locational nouns.

Table 49. Prepositional phrases with *wā* and locational nouns

| locational noun       | prepositional phrase with <i>wā</i> |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|
| zēran   bottom, below | wā= zēran   downward                |
| bāla   top, above     | wā= bāla   upward                   |
| tēgar   past, before  | wā= tēgar   forward                 |
| pištō   back          | wā= pištō   backwards               |
| indur   inside        | wā= indur   inward                  |
| barra   outside       | wā= barra   outward                 |
| ambar   over there    | wā= ambar   toward there            |
| ēbar   over here      | wā= ēbar   toward here              |
| rāstī   right side    | wā= rāstī   to the right            |
| asrē   left side      | wā= asrē   to the left              |

Some related languages also use prepositions in the possessive construction. Jügel notes that Old Persian “does not have a verb *to have*, and uses the possessive construction of the *mihi est* type instead” (Jügel 2009:144). Kurdish likewise uses a ‘to-me there-is’ construction: a possessive pronoun plus the third-person existential indicates possession (Thackston 2006:32). Domari, an Indo-Aryan language that borrows heavily from Arabic, has a

possessive construction much like that of Kumzari, with a directional preposition ‘at, with’ before its complement, a possessive pronoun<sup>88</sup>.

On the Domari possessive construction, Matras comments, “Although contact influence will not have been the source of the absence of ‘to have’, the specific Domari possessive expression *wāšī-m* ‘with-me, at-mine’ for ‘I have’ (rather than a construction of the type ‘to-me there-is, as in other Indo-Aryan languages) does resemble Arabic *ʿind-ī* ‘at mine’” (Matras 2007:156). Interestingly, the possessive construction in Domari is formally very close to that of Kumzari, as shown in Table 50.

Table 50. The possessive construction in three Eurasian languages

|         |               |                |
|---------|---------------|----------------|
| Domari  | <i>wāšī-m</i> | ‘at/with mine’ |
| Kumzari | <i>wā mē</i>  | ‘at/with mine’ |
| Arabic  | <i>ʿind-ī</i> | ‘at/with mine’ |

This is not to imply contact between Kumzari and Domari, however; rather it is apparent that both of these languages retain areal influence of Arabic at its northern and southeastern points. A similar possessive construction, with a possessive ‘connecting particle’ affixed to a pronoun, occurs in Modern South Arabian languages (Simeone-Senelle 1997:386).

## 8.5 Prepositions in Poetics

Prepositional phrases being non-obligatory and clause-final may seem to relegate them to minor status in the poetic programme. However, through repetition and rhythmic symmetry, even marginal constituents can become etched on the memory like a chant.

The poem about people giving charity wheat (G20) embedded in the folktale Ġrābō highlights the role of prepositional phrases in the rhetorical structure. The four lines of the poem’s list end with the same prepositional phrase *ba šan* ‘to them’, despite this repetition being unnecessary from the perspective of understanding the basic meaning of the section: ‘people brought them wheat.’ Still, the phrase repetition and grammatical symmetry is essential to understanding the tale’s emphasis on both the recipients of the quantities of wheat and their act of receiving it.

Table 51. Prepositional phrases in the poem about people giving charity wheat

| <b>Poem:</b> G20 (people giving charity wheat)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ġēla tkard-in,<br>ġēla, ġēla dig-in.<br>wā xuṣbā.<br>y’=ā xā... man-ē tār -a <b>ba šan</b> ,<br>wa y’=ā nīmī tār -a <b>ba šan</b> ,<br>wa ān ā, rub’-ē tār-a <b>ba šan</b> ,<br>wa ān ā, nuṣnuṣuf tār-a <b>ba šan</b> ...<br>laba pañj mā, šaš mā,<br>pañj mā ġēla ḥasala tk-in nā.<br>They were harvesting wheat,<br>They were gathering wheat, wheat. |

<sup>88</sup> Thackston (2006:37) mentions a directional *wār-* meaning ‘up’ that is used as a preverb in Sorani. This is possibly related to the Kumzari directional *wā=*.

[The land] was flourishing.

These households... they brought a measure [of wheat] **to them**,

and these [people], they brought a half [of wheat] **to them**,

and those [people], they brought a quarter [of wheat] **to them**,

and those [people] brought a small share [of wheat] **to them**...

about five months' [worth], six months' [worth],

five months' [worth] of wheat that they were getting.

**rhetorical structure of the poem:**

harvest wheat

gather wheat, wheat

these brought {quantity of wheat} **to them**

these brought {quantity of wheat} **to them**

those brought {quantity of wheat} **to them**

those brought {quantity of wheat} **to them**

get wheat