

## Studying Impersonal Modal Verbs in Middle Persian Zoroastrian

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Received: 2021/04/06

Accepted: 2021/10/19

### 1. Introduction

Modality is of fundamental importance in studying the structure of all languages worldwide. Providing a comprehensive definition of this notion is difficult. In general, modality expresses the speaker's point of view towards the statement in the sentence. In terms of semantics, the modality is considered in two general categories: epistemic and root modalities. Epistemic modality expresses the speaker's assessment of the probability or predictability of the action. This type of modality involves the possibility or necessity of the proposition based on the judgment, evidence, or knowledge of the speaker. Root modality is used to express concepts such as coercion, permission, and ability and is divided into two subsets: deontic and dynamic. In deontic modality, external circumstances and power often oblige the third person or addressee to act or do an activity. In dynamic modality, the inner force or the existing conditions provide the necessity or possibility for the action to be performed. This kind of modality expresses the ability and capability of the actor.

### 2. Materials and Methods

This research provides an overview of the semantic and syntactic study of Middle Persian Zoroastrian impersonal modal verbs. This is a library-based study using a descriptive-analytical method. Data were collected manually from Middle Persian Zoroastrian texts. After the literature review, explanations are provided about the modality and inflectionality of Middle Persian impersonal verbs. Then, the semantic features of impersonal modal verbs (based on Palmer's 1997 division) and the syntactic behaviors of these verbs are examined. Categories such as negativeization, the use of these verbs in interrogative sentences, collocation with verbal complements, the movement of impersonal verbs, and their application as lexical verbs are studied and analyzed.

### 3. Results and discussion

The modal verbs of Middle Persian Zoroastrian are traditionally divided into personal and impersonal categories. The personal verbs of Middle Persian

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Zoroastrian consist of two verbs , “grifan” and “kāmistan” and the impersonal verbs are consisted of four verbs of “abāyēd”, “šāyēd”, “tuwān”, and “sazēd”. Personal modal verbs are used in terms of person and number, and impersonal verbs are often used in the same form for all persons and grammatical numbers. Often, the perfect infinitive or bare infinitive is present in the sentence as a complement to the impersonal verb before or after it.

In this section we refer to semantic and syntactic features of the modals in the Middle Persian Zoroastrian.

1. ud ān zan wāng kard kū ma tars Ardaxšīr...u-t xwadāyīh ērān-šahr was sāl **abāyēd kardan** (Kār-Nāmag ī Ardašīr ī Bābakan, 1977, p. 32).
2. ud amā mardōmān abar **tuxšāg abāyēd būd** kū xwēš ruwān rāy nekīh xwāhēm nē anāgīh (Dinkard Book 6, 2015, p. 73).
3. ud afsōn nekīh abar ēstēd nān xward gyāg **šāyēd wirāst** (The Pahlavi Rivāyat, 1990, p.199).
4. ēn-iz paydāg kū weh-dēn-ē ka tis-ē frāz rasēd ud nē dānēd kū az kardan kirbag ayāb wināh agar tis az ān ī-š tuwān spōxtan ka nē kunēd u-š be **spōxt tuwān** (The Pahlavi Rivāyat, 1990, p. 47).
5. ud ān ī abāg harw kas **sazēd dāštan** āštīh ud dōšāram (Dānāk u Mainyo-ī Khard, 1913, p. 115).
6. ud amā mardōmān abar **tuxšāg abāyēd būd** kū xwēš ruwān rāy nekīh xwāhēm nē anāgīh (Dinkard Book 6, 2015, p. 73).
7. ud ān-iz ī driyōštar mardōm ka nē dānēd xwardan ud dāštan pad xwāstag drahm-ē **šāyēd** be marg-arzānīh be **madan** (Dinkard Book 6, 2015, p. 203).
8. ud yazad... nūn-iz harw ka-š abāyēd **bērōn kardan** hu-garīhā **tuwān** (Dēnkard Book 5, 2007, p. 83).
9. frōd āwurišnīh ī sar niyāyišnīg pad ēr-menišnīh ō ham-dahišnān nē ān paristišn ast ī dādār pad-iš a-nīrmad-ē **sazēd būd** (Dēnkard Book 5, 2007, p. 73).

In the above sentences, the usage of the modal verbs in Middle Persian Zoroastrian text indicates the different types of modalities. Specifically, the first sentence represents the epistemic type, sentences two through five represent the deontic type, and the remaining sentences represent the dynamic type.

10. pad rāh kū šawēnd widarg ēdn be brīnēnd abāg āb be šōbēnd tā ē māh **āb xwardan nē šāyēd** (Pahlavi Texts, 1992, p. 204).
11. ud agar nasā wišuftag ast **čiyōn abāyēd kardan?** (Rivāyat ī Ādurfarrōbay ī Farrokhzādān, 2005, p. 73)
12. ēy Zarthušt anē tō rāy gōwēm ka mardōm dēndār u ahlaw ka dar ān zamān (ī) wattar abar kār kirbag kamtar **tuwān kunnd** (Manuscript M. U. 29, 1999, p. 292).
13. haštadahom bowandagīh ān bawēd kē ān ī nē **sazēd** nē menēd ud nē gōwēd ud nē kunēd (The Pahlavi Rivāyat, 1990, p. 227).

In terms of syntax, our data indicate that in all cases the negation sign and word questions are placed before the modal verb (sentences 10, 11). Additionally, some examples indicate the collocation of tense verbs with the modal verb instead of the infinitive (sentence 12). Of the four modal verbs, three (“abāyēd”, “šāyēd” and “sazēd”) have the role of lexical verb (sentence 13).

#### 4. Conclusion

Drawn upon the findings of this study, among the four impersonal modal verbs of Middle Persian, only “abāyēd” has readings in all three types of epistemic, deontic,

and dynamic aspects, while the other three verbs have been used to express both deontic and dynamic aspects. The modal verb of “abāyēd” in all cases expresses necessity. Three modal verbs “šāyēd”, “tuwān”, and “sazēd” are used to express both deontic and dynamic aspects and the degree of possibility. The degree of probability is also used with two verbs of “šāyēd” and “sazēd” in deontic modality. In terms of semantic variation, “šāyēd” implies various meanings such as “being possible”, “being able”, “being worthy” and “having permission,” and contains the most meanings among the middle Persian verbs of Zoroastrianism.

Modal verbs of the Middle Persian Zoroastrian exhibit the same syntactic behaviors. Examining some syntactic features of impersonal modal verbs, such as collocation with tense verbs and the simultaneous use of the three of these verbs in the role of independent lexical verbs and modal verb indicate that the process of grammaticalization have begun in the Middle Persian language.

**Keywords:** modality, impersonal modal verbs, semantic features, syntactic behaviors, grammaticalization, lexical verb, Middle Persian Zoroastrian.