

# THE DARI LANGUAGE PROJECT

---

## *2004 Fieldwork Endeavor Summary of Findings*

*Authors:*

ANNAHITA FARUDI

M. DOUSTDAR TOOSARVANDANI

127 CHEAT CANYON PARK DRIVE  
MORGANTOWN, WV 26508  
INFO@DARILANGUAGEPROJECT.ORG

*This Dari dialect is only used by the guebres amongst themselves, and all of them, so far as I know, speak Persian as well. When they speak their own dialect, even a Yezdi Musulman cannot understand what they are saying, or can only understand it very imperfectly. It is for this reason that the Zoroastrians cherish their Dari, and are somewhat unwilling to teach it to a stranger...To me they were as a rule ready enough to impart information about it; though when I tried to get old Jamshid the gardener to tell me more about it, he excused himself, saying that knowledge of it could be of no possible use to me.*

E. G. BROWNE (1893)

## *Acknowledgements*

We are grateful to the patrons of the Dari Language Project's 2004 Fieldwork Endeavor for their generous financial support:

*The Alavi Foundation,  
The Atlanta Zarathushti Anjuman,  
Mr. Sobrob Farudi,  
The Iran Heritage Foundation,  
Mr. Trita Parsi,  
PayaHost Web Solutions,  
The Rosban Cultural Heritage Institute,  
Mr. Parviz Zavareh,  
The Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Washington, and  
The Zoroastrian Society of Ontario.*

We would also like to thank:

*Lise Dobrin,  
Mahin, Hassan, Maryam, and Massy Azimian,  
Abbas Toosarvandani,  
Parvin Khosrovi,  
Katayoun Mazdapour,  
Jamshid Varza,  
Shahin Bekhradnia,  
Amir Salehzadeh,  
Mehri and Yadollah Jalali,  
Parvin Farkboni of the Porouchista Foundation, and  
Golchehr Felfeli of the Vohuman School.*

I.

ON THE ZOROASTRIANS AND DARI

*I have entertained [Zoroastrians] of standing and Mussulmans of standing together on public occasions; and I have no hesitation in saying that even the bigoted Mussulman recognizes the bond of common citizenship, although it is certain true that on most occasions he prefers the bond of religion.*

N. MALCOLM (1903)

*“I was not aware,” I remarked, “that it was possible under any circumstances for one not born a Zoroastrian to become one. Do you consent to receive back a renegade after any lapse of time?”*

*“No,” answered Iran, “not after six months or so; for if they remain Musulmans for longer than this, their hearts are turned black and incurably infected by the law of Islam, and we cannot then receive them back amongst us.”*

E. G. BROWNE (1893)

## 1. INTRODUCTION

As is to be expected, the Zoroastrians of Iran identify strongly with their religion. But, while the Yazdi population of Zoroastrians is on the whole a very small and unified one, it is spread out amongst a number of different villages, and its members also identify to a remarkably large extent with the village they are from (or in many cases the village their ancestors were from). In the course of introductions among Zoroastrians, one’s village association is invariably the subject of much interest and speculation, and it is second only to one’s name as a mark of identification. Many to whom we were introduced spent a few concentrated minutes trying intensely to link Annahita’s family name (Farudi) with one of the city’s *deh* (villages). Given the importance of village identity, then, we were fortunate to carry out our first fieldwork experience living and working in the village of Qāsemābād (see *2003 Summary of Findings*). Through this unique opportunity we were able to experience, perhaps as intimately as possible for outsiders, the daily rhythm of life as it is lived in a traditional Zoroastrian village today.

Historically, the villages’ economies were based on small-scale agriculture that made them largely self-sufficient; and because travel between villages was difficult and infrequent, each village developed its own language, culture, and administrative structure within the larger Zoroastrian community. In addition to the larger Yazd and Tehran *anjoman* (community councils), each village has its own *anjoman* concerned with the welfare of its members. The *anjoman* are also charged with organizing the many *jashn* (religious events) throughout the Zoroastrian year and with administering the village’s *ātash kadeh* (fire temple) and minor *pir*

(pilgrimage sites).<sup>1</sup> Some *deh* have certain reputations: Sharifābād is considered the oldest, as well as the most conservative and orthodox;<sup>2</sup> Khorramshāh is among the wealthiest; Qāsemābād is relatively new. Thus, one perhaps doesn't really know a Zoroastrian until one knows his village, for while the traditional village life style itself is rapidly becoming obsolete, and indeed many no longer reside in the village they identify with, it is nonetheless a way of life that has profoundly shaped the Zoroastrian sensibility.

But any understanding of the current Yazdi Zoroastrian community built solely on observations of life in Qāsemābād, or in any other such *deh*, would be deceptively inaccurate. This is not only because the villages are gradually losing their autonomy to the modern city of Yazd but also because it does not consider the Zoroastrian population with respect to the majority Muslim population. During our fieldwork this year, we were hosted by a Muslim family in the Safāiyeh district,<sup>3</sup> where we were afforded the chance to observe the life of the majority Muslim population of Yazd and to gain much-needed perspective on the place of the minority Zoroastrian population within the city as a whole.

At the same time, we made a deliberate effort to deepen the relationship with the Zoroastrian community we had established the previous summer by spending the majority of our time in Yazd's two Zoroastrian traditional arts schools, Vohuman and Pouruchistā. In addition to offering classes in a variety of visual and performing arts, these institutions serve as *de facto* community centers and gathering places for Zoroastrians of all ages from a wide range of backgrounds. When not conducting linguistic informant sessions, we took advantage of invitations to teas, lunches, and dinners from the schools' directors. By interacting personally with Zoroastrians from a wide range of age groups and villages, we refined and expanded our internal view of the Zoroastrian community, while by concurrently establishing ties in the Muslim community, we gained an external vantage point from which to consider it.

## 2. FROM THE OUTSIDE

By the twentieth century, the farming that historically comprised the economic base of Zoroastrian villages had ceased to be an economically feasible means of making a living. Consequently, the previous strict segregation of Zoroastrians and Muslims largely collapsed as many Zoroastrians joined Muslims in taking advantage of the new economic opportunities engendered by Yazd's rapid growth and urbanization. Muslims and Zoroastrians now work side by side at many of the same professions, as we saw by the number of Zoroastrian co-workers and acquaintances our hosts had. They, like other Muslims that we met in Yazd, spoke but with the highest regard for their Zoroastrian counterparts, highly praising their cleanliness, work ethic, and

---

<sup>1</sup> In addition, while the six major *pir* are considered the domain of all Zoroastrians, the responsibility of overseeing each one of the major *pir* is the responsibility of a specific village *anjoman*.

<sup>2</sup> Though the Zoroastrians with whom we discussed it cited proximity as the reason that Sharifābād's *anjoman* is in charge of *pir-e sabz*, generally considered the most important among the six major *pir* and by far the most famous, Sharifābād's status as the oldest, most "pure" of the villages no doubt played some role in the choice as well.

<sup>3</sup> An upscale district on the outskirts of the city, quite near to Qāsemābād.

fairness, and commenting with interest, even pride, on their traditions and *jashn*. On the surface, it seems that Yazd's Muslim and Zoroastrian communities have made tremendous progress in arriving at a rapprochement, especially when we consider how much worse treatment of the Zoroastrians, official and unofficial, was as recently as twenty years ago. One of our hosts' daughters, a young woman in her late twenties who had grown up in Tehran, recalled being struck, when she visited Yazd for the first time as a young girl, that Zoroastrian shop owners were required by law to post a sign on their storefronts informing the public of their religion.

Our anecdotal evidence suggests that such government-sanctioned discrimination was reflected to a large extent in the attitude of the Muslim populace as well. For instance, in the course of explaining why she had decided to take on the directorship of the Pouruchistā school, Ms. Farkhoni, a friendly and energetic woman of about fifty years, recounted how, while working as a teacher in a government high school, she had had to specially request a prayer room for the Zoroastrian students, since public worship is generally shunned by Zoroastrians. She had been fortunate enough to receive permission, only to have it revoked shortly thereafter, as her students had been watched incredulously and taunted by their fellow Muslim students, who believed, incorrectly, that Zoroastrians neither prayed nor worshipped a god. This anecdote is revealing since, by Muslim standards, accusations of godlessness constitute the gravest of insults. It is particularly cogent to our experience in that it reflects how much the historical animosity of Muslims towards Zoroastrians is based on ignorance. And though history has shown that in many cases intolerance is based on ignorance, Iran might seem to be an exception because of the country's "cultural schizophrenia", the widely observed tendency for Iranians to identify religiously as Muslims, while simultaneously relating culturally to the pre-Islamic Persian Empire, which was, of course, officially and culturally Zoroastrian. In fact, many believe, ironically, that Muslims' opinion of Zoroastrians improved drastically after the 1979 Islamic Revolution precisely because their fervent dislike of the current régime sparked a renewed interest in their Zoroastrian heritage.

In light of this trend, we were struck by how the gushing tones of our Muslim acquaintances, when they spoke about Zoroastrians, belied how little they actually seemed to know about them. Even though they had had relatively frequent occasion to witness various Zoroastrian customs and *jashn*, they were still almost completely ignorant of what Zoroastrians believed. One day, for example, we took our hosts' grandchildren to visit the two *dakhme* situated on the outskirts of Yazd. Though these traditional funerary towers are probably the aspect of Zoroastrianism best known to the general public, as well as one of the most famous landmarks of Yazd, the children knew little, if anything, about their use and significance. One cannot help but wonder, therefore, how much of Muslims' views reflects a personal acquaintance with individual Zoroastrians and how much is simply the repetition of stereotypes, reflecting their hatred for the current régime rather than any deep affinity with Zoroastrians. Indeed, not all of the stereotypes related to us were positive. According to Muslim Yazdis, Zoroastrians are known for their ugliness, resulting from too much intermarrying within the same small community, and for being exceedingly stingy (and consequently exceedingly rich). As such, it often seemed to us that Muslims' praise of Zoroastrians indicated deeper feelings of separation, which rose to the surface occasionally in

subtle tones that we could only interpret as condescension. For instance, one middle-aged woman, recounting her experiences working with a number of Zoroastrian women, said that they would always gossip about her in Dari, assuming that she and her Muslim co-workers couldn't understand; but since, she thought, the language wasn't very difficult to learn, she claimed that she soon picked it up and surprised her co-workers by responding the next time she heard them talking about her.

### 3. INTERLUDE: THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOLS

Our general impression is that despite the surface appearance of completely amicable relations between the city's majority and minority communities, latent tension continues to exist today. For Zoroastrian youth, schools such as Vohuman and Pouruchistā can function to provide an atmosphere of respite from the subtle pressures inherent in the position of being a historically persecuted minority in a largely monocultural society. For us, these schools served as an ideal means of gaining exposure not only to Dari but also to its community of speakers.

Indeed, we could little have guessed the extent to which Vohuman would figure in the success of our research this year, when we paid a visit for the first time to the small but tasteful school, located in an unassuming alley off one of the main thoroughfares of the old Zoroastrian district and housed in a traditional Yazdi house remodeled to the purpose. We did not realize that the simple piece of fabric hanging over the doorway through which we passed from the small reception area and into the central courtyard beyond would come to symbolize, in a sense, the role of the school itself in our own research—a bridge leading to the Zoroastrian community. Even more than to the school itself, we are indebted to the school's director, Ms. Felfeli, whose invaluable contribution to our research indicates just how much, in turn, the thriving existence of the school depends on the work of its director. Ms. Felfeli, who is a middle-aged Zoroastrian woman of great intelligence, warmth, and optimism, and who struck us as singularly committed to the preservation of Zoroastrian culture and community, served as our primary informant during the four weeks. Because of her duties at Vohuman, it was often easier for us to meet her at the school, where we would hold four to five informant sessions per week.

Ms. Felfeli's own sense of community and fellowship is reflected in how she approaches her position as director of Vohuman, as friendly overseer rather than distant authoritarian. Administrative duties were fulfilled by many different women and men with only loose affiliations to the school. The parents of students, teachers, or friends of Ms. Felfeli all contributed to the tasks that needed to be completed, from cleaning, organizing, and supervising down to watering the garden. This spirit often extended to our own work with her as our linguistic informant. As there were often a number of women—mothers picking up their children from class, volunteers, teachers—gathered to chat when we arrived, informant sessions often became group adventures, with one or two other speakers participating actively with Ms. Felfeli in the linguistic task at hand, and often a few more observing and occasionally offering comments. We gained in this way the advantage of a greater diversity of speaker judgments and dialectal

variants. And speakers, most importantly young speakers, gained exposure to the largely unfamiliar methodology of linguistics, reminding them, we hope, of their language's significance.

This arrangement was advantageous not only because it afforded us increased exposure to Dari, but also because we found the school to be a pleasant space, tranquil and inviting. As in all traditional Yazdi houses, rooms of varying size surround a large uncovered courtyard, in the center of which is a thriving bed of greenery. The rooms surrounding it on three sides include a few, small multipurpose classrooms, a special classroom containing a weaving loom, and one large room, containing a television and DVD player, which functions dually as a classroom and gathering place. This circular, open layout is conducive to the school's community-minded philosophy, as we noticed especially on busier evenings, when the central courtyard hummed pleasantly with stray notes spilling out from the music class, the chatter of students at work in other classes, and the causal cadences of conversations between students and their relatives and friends milling about.

Vohuman's students, who include both girls and boys ranging in age from five to eighteen, vary in number according to the time of year (there are more students, as is to be expected, during the summer). The classes offered include *naqāshi* (drawing), *papier mâché*, calligraphy, carpet weaving, *koshti*-making,<sup>4</sup> and musical instruction in traditional Persian instruments such as the *tombak* (a type of drum). The school's official policy is that these classes be conducted in Dari, and we often observed that this extended to the students' talk amongst themselves. For Ms. Felfeli, establishing an atmosphere in which students feel comfortable speaking Dari is an essential step to creating a space where Zoroastrian children can feel at ease in their individual identities as Zoroastrians.<sup>5</sup>

More broadly, the school plays a role as a kind of extended support system to ensure the success of the minority's youth. Some students who begin attending at a very young age continue to do so throughout their child and young adulthood, gradually developing from students into teachers or volunteers. On the morning the results of the nation-wide university entrance exam were announced, Ms. Felfeli immediately busied herself looking through her files, noting how the school's current and previous students had done in order to compile a list of those who had passed, and so acknowledge them appropriately within the Zoroastrian community.

The other Zoroastrian crafts school in Yazd, Pouruchistā, appears on the surface to be quite different from Vohuman. First, it is much bigger; at the time of our visit it had over 500 students and some ten teachers. Moreover, a recent donation had recently enabled the school to move into a brand new, custom-built facility, a large, modern building of white tile and marble located just a few blocks from the old city center. In addition to several large classrooms on each of its three stories, one of which includes a fully equipped kitchen for the purpose of cooking classes, the

---

<sup>4</sup> The Zoroastrian initiation ceremony, (*sedrah pooshi*), involves the wearing of a simple white shirt, (*sedra*), around which is tied the *koshti*, a sacred cord that symbolizes the wearer's decision to be bound by the laws of *āshā*, or the righteous path. Traditionally, both are worn at all times after the initiation ceremony. During prayer, the wearer unties and then reties the *koshti* in a specific pattern meant to remind her of the diligence with which she must practice Good Thoughts, Good Words, and Good Deeds.

<sup>5</sup> This extended to relaxing some obligations imposed by Islam, such as the head scarf, which women and girls were allowed loosen or remove inside the school.

building also includes a sizeable office and a patio garden for small-scale gardening. In essence, however, Pouruchistā's goals and methodology are similar to those of Vohuman. While, for various reasons, we were not able this year to spend a comparable amount of time at Pouruchistā, the time we did spend there, talking at length with the director, Ms. Farkhoni, touring the facilities, and even sitting in on a women's cooking class, made it clear that the school's methodology is deeply informed by a desire to maintain Zoroastrian society through encouraging the success and self-esteem of its youth and by exposing them to Zoroastrian culture and values. As at Vohuman, the school's many classes provide a context of total or partial Dari immersion. In addition, the time between and after classes often provides an opportunity for social interaction, as do the classes themselves, since the collective engagement in productive, creative activity provides a shared ground for discussion.

One significant factor distinguishing Pouruchistā from Vohuman that is perhaps worth noting is that the founding of Pouruchistā was motivated by socioeconomic as well as cultural considerations. Specifically, a particularly bad period of economic depression about five years ago had resulted in threatening rates of desperation among youth—especially minority youth—in Yazd. A few Zoroastrian philanthropists in the United Kingdom responded by founding Pouruchistā in order to give hope to the Zoroastrian youth idling in the streets by providing a means of participating in productive and creative activities, the results of which would, in addition to instilling a sense of accomplishment and pride, also garner a bit of profit. As such, Pouruchistā caters to an older age group than does Vohuman. Most of its students are girls in early adolescence or older and its curriculum is in general much more established, with specified class requirements that must be fulfilled in order to obtain a formal certificate of completion. Courses focus primarily on crafts and domestic skills that produce tangible results which can be displayed and sold, the proceeds going directly to the students as extra income. To this end, the school offers classes in *mojjassamehsāzi* (literally 'statue-making', it refers to the making of small clay and ceramic decorative figurines), makeup, sewing, and cooking. There are also, as at Vohuman, courses in more traditional arts like *koshti*-weaving and tailoring of traditional Zoroastrian wedding attire of green silk.

In keeping with its vocational leanings, Pouruchistā's teaching staff includes Muslims as well as Zoroastrians, since the skill in which a teacher is knowledgeable is ranked higher as a criterion for employment than her religion or her ability to speak Dari. Teachers who do speak Dari are obligated to conduct their classes in Dari, though this does not ensure that the students will speak in Dari amongst themselves, since, although almost all of Pouruchistā's students understand, only about fifty per cent speak Dari themselves, a statistic which Ms. Farkhoni attributes mostly to those children's parents speaking Farsi rather than Dari to them. Ms. Farkhoni also spoke angrily of the fact that some students were embarrassed to speak Dari, expounding her conviction that the language is among the last parts of traditional Zoroastrian culture that has not been taken from them and that it would be a travesty for the current generation of Zoroastrians to consent to losing it.

#### 4. THE ZOROASTRIANS

For their part, the Yazdi Zoroastrians—who are quick, if not quicker, than their Muslim counterparts to point out the dramatic improvements in their status over the last thirty years or so—stay largely to themselves. We observed that while Zoroastrians and Muslims may interact freely in their daily business life, social activities are much less integrated. Zoroastrians’ attend many communal gatherings—such as the *gāhambār*<sup>6</sup> and the *jashn* at the *pir*—that are traditionally very central to their culture. Moreover, Zoroastrian children, with very few exceptions, attend separate schools, and Zoroastrian families today continue to reside almost exclusively in traditionally Zoroastrian districts of the city.

To be fair, we should point out that Muslims’ general ignorance of the details of their ancestral faith is surely not alleviated by the reluctance of many Zoroastrians to discuss their religion and culture with outsiders. Ironically, this reluctance may be fueled in part by fear of saying something that will reinforce the many inaccurate but widely held beliefs about the creed—for example, that its members worship fire or do not pray.<sup>7</sup> One of our informants deliberated at much length before deciding to tell us a traditional Zoroastrian folk tale about a poor thorn picker. Though we assured her that we were much more interested in the linguistic aspect of her narrative than its content, she worried nonetheless that people might assume from the traditional rustic tale that modern-day Zoroastrians were uncivilized or backwards.<sup>8</sup>

In fact, that particular informant was among the most open of the Zoroastrians from whom we attempted to elicit texts this year. Time after time, the very same men and women who were willing, and often eager, to help us translate the texts we had already collected, and to digress at length on various dialectal differences, withdrew suddenly when we suggested that they themselves tell a story or discourse on some topic for us to record. We grew very fond, for instance, of one elderly acquaintance, a friend of Ms. Felfeli, whose adept listening and translating skills were of particular help to us in translating the *A Trip to Mashad* story (Appendix B). We were genuinely interested in learning something of her life and, as she had always been friendly and open, welcoming us to observe and participate in the school’s activities, we proposed that she herself provide a personal narrative like the one she had been helping us to translate. She demurred, saying that her life in one of the Zoroastrian villages would be of no interest to us, and then tried to change the subject through a lengthy and humorous anecdote; in the end, upon being pressed, she refused outright.

---

<sup>6</sup> Historically related to the harvest cycle, *gāhambār* are religious and social gatherings held several times a year in honor of the Amesha Spenta, creators and guardians of the seven sacred elements (see Boyce 1979 and 2003 *Summary of Findings*).

<sup>7</sup> This widely held stereotype about Zoroastrians, most likely stemming from the Muslim conquerors’ branding of them as *gabr* (infidels), is reflected in a traditional Yazdi rhyme naming of each of the five fingers, in which the thumb is called the *gabr-e bi namāz* (‘Zoroastrian [infidel]without prayer’).

<sup>8</sup> Which is not to imply that we are not, as linguists and as researchers, interested in the both, nor that the two are always completely divisible, though different theoretical approaches differ in the extent to which they are. See Part II: Interweaving Elicitation and Text Analysis for further consideration of this complicated matter.

On another occasion, a group of Zoroastrian women from a number of different villages was sitting around the office of the school when we arrived for our session with the director. Observing the opportunity this presented to record a dialogue in Dari, we asked all of them if they would mind if we made a recording of them discussing some topic of their own choosing. As all seemed to find this proposal agreeable, they settled on the topic of the *gāhambār* and the discussion was naturally and skillfully initiated and guided along by the director, who had been tacitly appointed mediator. We unfortunately waited until the exchange had drawn to a close before reading them the consent statement asking permission to record their speech and to use it in publications.<sup>9</sup> But before we had even finished reading the statement, one woman, who had been among the most talkative of the participants, interrupted with an abrupt and curt “*Nah!*” (No!). Since we had never encountered any problems with obtaining this consent before, we were taken aback and sat speechless for what seemed to us, in our embarrassment, several seconds. Trying hard to hide our disappointment at the lost data, we assured her that we would delete all of the sections in which she had spoken, a promise we fulfilled immediately after the session.

Of course, the idiosyncrasies of individual personalities played as large a role in these two instances as any, yet the strong adverse reactions of these two women to our recording their speech, even for our own private use, does reflect the general, at times almost overwhelming, impression of distrust that we received from the Zoroastrian community. If we had received similar impressions the year before when we were accompanied to Qasemabad by a relative, Annahita’s aunt, who introduced us to the members of the Qasemābād community, it did not compare to our experience this year, when we went to Yazd alone. Several weeks prior to arriving in Yazd, we had sent a letter to the Zoroastrian *anjoman* there, requesting suggestions or assistance by way of finding accommodation and/or potential informants. We received no response. We also tried approaching the *anjoman* in Tehran. But after making numerous phone calls and two or three visits to their offices at the *ātash kadeh*, we were unable to get in touch with, much less make an appointment with, the person in charge and we abandoned the effort. Our spirits were raised considerably, however, by our encounter with a man from the Yazdi village of Mazra’e-ye Kalāntar, who had been volunteering at the fire temple since moving to the capital. He introduced himself in a friendly manner and invited us to attend a major *jashn* that was to be held in his village a few weeks later. This man’s welcome stood in stark contrast to the reception we received from a younger man who was responsible for maintaining the fire temple grounds. Though he permitted us to enter the temple, the desultory, slightly suspicious manner in which he did so clearly displayed his wariness of non-Zoroastrians. Yet more striking to us, however, was his refusal to answer even the most straightforward of questions about the temple, when the building had been constructed, for instance. He staunchly refused, insisting that he had no information in this regard and that all questions should be addressed to the *anjoman*’s office. As if by way of reconciliation, he unlocked the drawer of a desk outside the temple entrance as we were leaving and offered each of us a mass-produced pamphlet on the basic tenets of

---

<sup>9</sup> The Dari Language Project is approved by the University of Virginia’s Institutional Review Board to use human subjects for the purposes of linguistic fieldwork.

Zoroastrianism. We accepted it out of politeness, of course, though we were, in fact, already familiar with the pamphlet and knew that it contained no specific information about that or any other particular *ātash kadeh*.

We encountered an even cooler reception at the fire temple in Yazd, considered the most important of the working temples in Iran today.<sup>10</sup> It is also the best known Zoroastrian fire temple and has, like many important mosques in Iran and cathedrals in Europe, come to serve the dual roles of place of worship and tourist attraction. On the walls of the front hall open to the general public are hung excerpts from the Avesta alongside their Farsi and sometimes English translations, in addition to a fewer number of signs containing information on the fire enthroned there and on Zoroastrianism. The fire temple's overseer, an elderly priest, was present daily to watch over the visitors and to answer their questions, though we never heard him offer anything more than slightly modified repetitions of the information provided in the signs. Perhaps because she was aware of the intense secrecy belied by the temple's welcoming façade, Ms. Felfeli invited us to meet her at the temple one afternoon so that she could introduce us personally to the priest, whom she thought would be a good source of information for our research. Struck by the coolness of the priest's initial reaction to the introduction, we had serious doubts about venturing to ask him any substantive question, but we decided in the end to trust the great importance of personal connections in Iranian society, and we returned the next day with a list of questions relating to our research on Dari. Who better, we thought, than a religious official versed in the history and faith of the religion to offer his views on whether or not Dari had played a role in the Zoroastrian community's continued existence over the centuries and through innumerable hardships? The interview began awkwardly when the priest deliberately avoided showing any sign of recognizing us or acknowledging that we had been introduced the previous day by our mutual friend. We had barely finished asking our first question when the priest replied staunchly that he only answered questions relating to the fire and abruptly turned his back to us, making it abundantly clear that further entreaty would be in vain.

As frustrating as such receptions were to our research efforts, it is precisely to the secretiveness of Zoroastrianism's religious guardians that we owe some of our most treasured discoveries. In one the *kucheh* (alleys) near the Vohuman school, for instance, a small, very old temple is tucked away so inconspicuously that it would certainly have escaped our notice had it not been pointed out to us by the two young informants we were working with that day. While we had the good fortune to enter and observe the interior of the beautiful, high ceilinged structure, it was only because we were accompanied by our two Zoroastrian friends. The tiny old woman in traditional garb inside cleaning and tending the fire, who, we were told, had been tending the temple for as long as anyone could remember, eyed us with obvious distrust, reluctantly permitting our entrance only because of the reassurance of our guides.

Even stricter than the *ātash kadeh* with respect to the admission of non-Zoroastrians are the *pir*. As we learned when we visited *pir-e sabz* again this year with our Muslim hosts, while the

---

<sup>10</sup> It receives many visitors, both Muslim Iranian as well as foreign; it was one of the few places in Yazd where we saw Westerners on more than one occasion.

mountainside and the surrounding pavilions were full of Muslim picnickers, the pilgrimage site itself is open only to Zoroastrians. The friendly, relaxed chatter of the young Zoroastrian who admitted us to *pir-e sabz* stands in stark contrast to the overseer we encountered at *pir-e herisht*, an elderly man who spoke in an incomprehensible combination of Farsi and Dari. When we asked to be able to see the pilgrimage chamber, he looked evasively away in an attempt to convey the impression that he lacked the authority to grant us entry, though he consented after repeated insistences from Annahita, and our Muslim taxi driver, that she was in fact Zoroastrian.

To be sure, if the contemporary Zoroastrian religious institution in Yazd is suspicious of outsiders, it is difficult, in all fairness, to expect otherwise. No doubt, attitudes such as those we encountered during the experiences we describe above have been crucial in the religion's survival through a history of persecution and discrimination. But another contributing factor very likely stems from within the Zoroastrian community itself. The small size of the population and the closeness of the traditional village communities ensure that everyone knows everyone else. This, in combination with the deep concern for reputation and appearance that is among the defining features of Iranian culture in general, naturally makes some Zoroastrians exceedingly cautious in their personal interactions.

This attitude is changing drastically among Zoroastrians of the younger generation. All the Zoroastrians of our own age or younger with whom we interacted displayed little of the suspicion or antagonism expressed by their older coreligionists. Since many of them were not only fluent in Dari but also well-informed regarding the traditions of their religion, we often found working with them to be especially productive. It would seem that the generational differences in attitude we sensed stem in large part from the environment young Zoroastrians grow up in, significantly changed since even one or two generations ago. Widely exposed to Western culture through the Internet and television, they are full of curiosity about life in the United States and elsewhere, and many have relatives living abroad. But the environmental changes are not only external in nature. Just as the rapid urbanization and expansion of Yazd in the last thirty years have coincided with changes in the relationship between the Zoroastrian and Muslim communities, the changing economic and demographic landscapes have also effected significant changes within the Zoroastrian community itself.

## 5. THE DIALECTS OF DARI

This change is manifested most noticeably in the shift in Zoroastrian population from the *deh* (villages), like Qāsemābād, to the city. Not only have many of the traditionally Zoroastrian villages died out, but many have been swallowed up by the rapid growth and development of the city of Yazd. In no sense do they constitute independent geographical units as they did as recently as fifty years ago, when the entire population of Yazd numbered in the tens of thousands (compared to the one million people today) and travel between the villages themselves and with the city proper was largely infrequent.

The individual villages have also lost their economic independence. In Qāsemābād, for instance, the once-extensive *bāq* (gardens/fields) languish unkempt and overgrown inside their

crumbling mud walls. Only a very few residents still keep goats, as they all once did, housing them at night in the front rooms of their *kāhgel* (straw mud) houses. Today, most young people who do not go abroad or to Tehran work in the city of Yazd, no longer as farmers but in commerce, business, or retail. As a result, the population of *mahale-ye yazd*, the old Zoroastrian section of Yazd, is no longer limited to those families who have always lived there but includes people from all the Zoroastrian villages: Maryamābād, Khorramshāh, Qāsemābād, and others. The staff and students of Vohuman and Pouruchistā, both located in the *mahale-ye yazd*, have heritages from a wide range of different villages though most of them now live with their families in the old city. The schools thus do not serve as a meeting place only for the residents of *mahale-ye yazd* but rather, in some sense, for all of the villages.

In general, the culture of the Zoroastrian community of Yazd seems to derive less from its subdivision into villages than in the past. Social interactions are no longer centered on the village, with Zoroastrians from all geographic backgrounds mixing in the city. Interestingly, however, most of the Zoroastrians we talked to continue to express a strong sense of identification with their ancestral village, if only out of a sense of obligation to perpetuate their respective villages' distinct identity, even in the face of the villages' decreasing demographic significance.

Significantly for the linguist, the Yazdi Zoroastrians' desire to maintain the cultural heritage of their respective villages is apparent most strongly in their enthusiastic attitude towards the Dari language in general and its dialectical variation. Mazdāpour (1995) describes the "sweet tradition" of mimicking, often in jest, the accents and turns of phrase of other dialects, a pastime we witnessed on countless occasions. Speakers, old and young alike, displayed such a great propensity for listing dialectal variants that an informant session was rarely complete without one or more lengthy digressions on an utterance's equivalents in other dialects. Given the demographic changes we discussed above, it seems that the Zoroastrians' village identity is determined more by the variety of Dari they speak than their physical place of residence. One woman with whom we spoke, when asked where she was from, responded Khorramshāh. Later, we found out that she and her parents had grown up in the *mahale-ye yazd* and that it was her grandparents who had actually lived in that village. Nevertheless, since she spoke the Khorramshāhi variety of Dari, she identified herself as being from that village.

Dari speakers share certain established views of the relationship among the dialects, which, though non-technical, often contain accurate linguistic insights. For instance, most speakers divide the dialects roughly into two or three major groups based on perceived similarity of accent and ease of intelligibility. Sharifābādi is generally considered the most difficult to understand by the speakers of other dialects, an opinion which very likely reflects the fact that it is among the most linguistically conservative of the dialects. This is not completely unexpected since Sharifābād is one of the most remotely located villages and is considered one of the most culturally and religiously conservative. In a similar spirit, the *mahlati* dialect is unanimously considered the "standard" or neutral dialect, and some dialects, presumably those that are most similar to *mahlati*, are considered to have no special "accent" of their own.

The convergence of speakers of various dialects in the *mahal-e yazd* has had major effects on Dari's linguistic vitality. Dari's individual dialects are becoming more and more similar to one

another as speakers of different dialects gradually minimize differences when speaking with each other, and more infrequent phonological and lexical variants fall out of use. Farsi also has a pervasive effect on the language, something that is most evident when comparing the speech of younger and older speakers. Despite the insistence of both groups that young people's speech is equal in competency and kind to the elders', young speakers spontaneously produce imported neologisms almost exclusively, though they may understand an older form. These pressures pose a grave threat to the Dari language and its varieties. And while there are approximately twenty-four distinct varieties of Dari today, many that were spoken until quite recently have already died out. Mazdāpour (1995) lists Deh-no, Deh-ābshāhi, Ahmadābād, Shāhābād, and Mehdiābād as dialects that have become extinct within the last thirty years (10-11).

## 6. CONCLUSION

At best, all that linguistic documentation (descriptive or analytical) can do is to record and archive as many grammatical aspects of a language as possible while speakers of the language still remain. It cannot preserve the language in its true, living form with all its rich cultural associations. Language, as a dynamic cultural phenomenon, can only be kept alive through usage—usage that is, moreover, not limited to particular contexts but is of a natural and pervasive sort. In the case of Dari, the language enjoys somewhat of an advantage in this regard, since its speakers, the Zoroastrians of Iran, seem to take a great pride and interest in their language, and are not, as is often the case among speakers of a minority language, blatantly ashamed of it. As we have seen, however, this attitude alone is not sufficient to halt the decrease in the vitality of the Dari language set into motion by societal and demographic factors.

The adults' pride in their language does not necessarily ensure that they will speak Dari with their children in the home. As an example, one of our informants, a middle-aged lady from the village of Aliābād, told us that though her daughter, now a doctor in America, learned Dari as a young child, she does not speak it with her parents, since they are "in the habit" of speaking Farsi with each other. That she fell into the custom of speaking Farsi rather than Dari with her parents was undoubtedly due in large part to influence from peers. Linguistic evidence suggests, and our experience confirms, that a young person's peers exert a far more powerful influence on her speech than that do her parents. One sixteen-year old informant of ours had been born in a non-Zoroastrian village in the mountains outside Yazd, but her family had, while she was still a baby, subsequently moved to a Zoroastrian community in Yazd. As a result, she, as the youngest child in her family, was the only one amongst her siblings who spoke Dari, since she, unlike them, had grown up in an environment where Dari was spoken not only in the home but also in the outside community.

It is largely for this reason that schools like Vohuman and Pouruchistā, through their capacity as what might be called "passive language classrooms", are poised to play an instrumental role in the effort to preserve Dari. That is, since most of the schools' students speak or at least understand Dari, the schools need not offer formal language classes. Rather, by tacitly encouraging the use of Dari, they can contribute to its maintenance. But, if there seems to be

some hope for maintaining Dari in Yazd, the same strategies viable there are not suited to promoting the use of Dari in Zoroastrian communities abroad. Zoroastrians who live in the United States, Canada, and Europe far outnumber those living in Yazd, with more leaving each year. In view of the threats Dari faces in its native environment, it is not hard to see that, without any efforts to the contrary, the language faces virtually no chance of surviving in the Zoroastrian community abroad. If the émigré daughter of our informant, a native speaker, does not even speak Dari with her own parents, it is certain she will not do so with her own children, who, like the children of so many other Iranian Zoroastrian immigrants, will then not acquire the language natively.

As we have pointed out often, Dari has been essential in maintaining the strength and vitality of the Zoroastrian community since the eighth century, when, some speculate, the Zoroastrians “invented” the language as a means of separating and protecting themselves from their Muslim persecutors.<sup>11</sup> Even today, Dari speakers’ accents continue to be among the primary identifying features of their origins, though the various varieties correspond only negligibly to actual geography. Indeed, a strong linguistic community has often proved instrumental in fostering a strong and unified sense of community among immigrant populations, as, for example, in the case of Iran’s Armenian and Assyrian populations. At this stage, however, the status of Dari among Zoroastrians abroad is not such that children provided with a Dari speaking environment can be expected to speak in Dari amongst themselves, or, for that matter, to have any competency in Dari at all.

Obviously, the same sort of “passive” language immersion that the schools in Yazd provide would be ineffectual in strengthening the use of Dari among Zoroastrian youth outside of Iran. Among Zoroastrian populations abroad, what is needed at this point is linguistic intervention of a more proactive sort, which includes such ventures as creating and making widely available complete, systematic, and lucid grammars and dictionaries. Such materials could in turn be used in the development and implementation of curricula for formal language instruction in Dari to be offered in Zoroastrian community centers abroad, as well as in university settings. University courses in Dari are doubly beneficial: in addition to the obvious benefit of giving second generation Iranian Zoroastrians the opportunity to learn their ancestral tongue, or, if they have had some exposure to the language, to solidify and reactivate their grammatical competence, academic courses also have the potential of invoking interest in Dari among future non-Zoroastrian scholars, who can contribute to documentation and/or preservation efforts. Finally, the mere availability of formal classes in an endangered language has the effect of raising general awareness of the language and its plight, both within and without the native speech community. Research undertakings such as the Dari Language Project are essential to such projects, in so far as we aim to document the language and to organize the data in the analytically clear and thorough fashion necessary for grammars. Moreover, theoretical investigations of Dari such as

---

<sup>11</sup> Though this proposal, which we discuss briefly in the *2003 Summary of Findings*, has been advanced in various places, most of them out of date, from a linguistic standpoint it is of little scientific validity. However, the fact that it has gained such a status, and, more importantly, that it is a belief held by many current Dari speakers, is telling.

the Dari Language Project undertakes are important, since discoveries of theoretical significance make a language more appealing as a subject for future fieldworkers and researchers.

All of these are very extensive goals, to be sure, and while we realize that they will not be achieved immediately, we are also constantly, acutely aware of the urgency with which they nonetheless demand to be realized. Dari is in many ways a perfect illustration of the linguistic adage that the further along the path of decline a language is, the more difficult it is to revive it. To paint the grim picture in slightly more concrete terms: there is at present an entire generation of second-generation Zoroastrian Iranians in the United States that has grown up with virtually no speaking competence in Dari. Many of them, however, have been heavily exposed to the language, or are competent at the level of comprehension, because they have grown up hearing their parents speak Dari amongst themselves. Were the use of Dari to be actively encouraged among the first-generations' grandchildren, those children would still potentially be able to practice with native speakers, or at least to have some exposure to the language. But in just one generation, with the death of first-generation immigrants, this will for the most part not be the case.

In this undeniable rapidly-advancing state of affairs lies the major reason that, in our view, the type of response necessary abroad is fundamentally different from that viable in Iran. In the case of the latter, a solid base of native Dari speakers exists, even while the younger generations are increasingly influenced by Farsi. In America, influence from Farsi is outweighed heavily by that of English, and Dari, to many second and third generation Zoroastrians, is so far removed from daily life as to seem a mere curiosity. Linguistic preservation efforts must, therefore, effectively start from scratch. The Dari Language Project can help to foster awareness and use of Dari among Iranian Zoroastrian youth abroad through the measures discussed above. Of course, if these measures were to prove effective, we would ideally arrive at a point in which the same type of "passive language" instruction offered by Vohuman and Porouchista would become applicable abroad. In this respect, the Dari Language Project will be ultimately successful, when it, and other research projects like it, cease to be relevant.

This being said, some might question the necessity for a project devoted to the saving of languages at all, especially when, in the turbulent sociopolitical atmosphere of today, so many other humanitarian issues vie for attention and resources. There are many good scientific arguments for why the study of language is absolutely crucial to the study and understanding of human cognition, for how rich a resource every single human language is, for how great the loss constituted by any one of them, no matter how few speakers it has. But, in a sense, one does not need to be a linguist by training in order to recognize this, for anyone who has ever encountered an unfamiliar language for the first time realizes it almost immediately. Indeed, any of our readers who have ever experienced the alternating delight and equally intense frustration of learning an unfamiliar language--have ever felt the epiphany accompanying the moment a particularly foreign grammatical construction suddenly makes sense, have experienced the victorious feeling of using a strange grammatical pattern naturally for the first time, or have simply marveled at the ingenious way in which the language allows you to express a concept that is simply inexpressible

in your own language—will have an idea of the unique, deeply consuming experience that is fieldwork.

We try to give the reader a further glimpse of that experience in Part II, and, in the ensuing appendix, we share with you the fruits of almost four weeks of painstaking labor—the detailed grammatical analysis and translation of two oral texts related to us last year by two elderly women of Qāsemābād. What will perhaps seem at first glance two rather insignificant narratives contain to the Dari speakers who helped us translate them, and, now to us, a wealth of information about the speakers’ personalities and life circumstances, the conditions of a particular socio-cultural community at a particular time in Iran’s history, and the joys and sorrows of two lives. We fell asleep each night with the words of these stories running through our heads like melodies. We are not being sentimental when we say that we no longer need to read these narratives, because the words literally leap off the page in song: the bell-like tones of a woman’s pleasure in taking a rare opportunity to travel, the somber cadences of an old woman recounting a life heavily jaded by misfortune. We consider it a valuable accomplishment to have completed the analysis of these texts and thus to have made a contribution, however small, to the corpus of such specimens in Dari. For, as we have stressed above, such documentation is essential to language preservation efforts. Nonetheless, we cannot help but note that, in contrast to the forms in which we heard them, on paper, separated from their speakers, these stories seem somehow devoid of their magic, perhaps because they are so integrally connected to the identity of their speakers, just as the Dari language is to the Zoroastrian community. This contrast is a perfect example of why the Dari Language Project considers its duty to Dari to be of a twofold nature, for why we are committed not only to language documentation but also to using that documentation in practically-oriented language preservation efforts. A language that exists solely on paper suffers much the same fate as a musical score that languishes unperformed on the dusty shelf of some talented but overlooked composer. Just as we would hardly consider notes on a sheet of paper to be music, a language that exists solely on paper is, in essence, not really a language at all.



*Plate 1.* Exploring one of the old, abandoned buildings at the foot of the *dakhme* (funerary tower) on the outskirts of Yazd. This structure of mud and brick built high atop a hill was used up through the early twentieth century for the disposal of the Zoroastrians' dead. The *dakhme* are one of the most famous landmarks of Yazd, and also one of the most recognized aspects of Zoroastrianism. Unfortunately, today, the city of Yazd has expanded practically to the foot of the hill on which the *dakhme* is situated, making them a popular site of recreation for Muslim youth, who ride their motorcycles up and down the *dakhme* and vandalize them with graffiti. This, in combination with the city's rapid encroachment, make us fear that the *dakhme* are in danger of being destroyed.



*Plate 2.* Atop the *dakhme*. Up through the nineteenth century, the Zoroastrian dead were brought here and exposed to the elements. At that time, the funerary towers were located far off in the desert, distant from civilization, in order to avoid contaminating the living through exposure to the corpses, which were considered unclean and therefore impure. After corpses had been stripped of flesh by vultures and their bones dried and bleached by the sun and driving wind, they were thrown into the ossuary pit in the center of the *dakhme*. When the tradition of exposure was discontinued in the twentieth century, the bones were removed to a regular cemetery located nearby.



*Plate 3.* Inside the old *ātaš kadēh* (fire temple) we discovered by accident one day. The old woman caretaker has been looking after the temple for as long as most people living in the neighborhood can remember. The cedar painted on the wall above the door at the top of the picture is an extremely common Zoroastrian icon, symbolizing *āshā*, the good way of life.



*Plate 4.* The door to the main *ātaš kadeh* of Yazd, slightly open in welcome. The main fire temple in Yazd is located in a beautiful park-like setting. The simple, yet elegant, oval pond creates a calm and soothing environment for *andisheb* (meditation, thought).



*Plate 5.* Inside the main *ātash kadeh* of Yazd. The fire housed behind the glass has been burning for over a thousand years and traces its lineage to one of the holiest fires of the ancient Persian empire.



*Plate 6.* The offering table at the shrine in *seti-pir*, the only one of the six major *pir* located within the city of Yazd.. A variety of offerings have been made, including incense, dried chick peas, and *suruk*, a type of sweet, fried bread.

II.  
ON LINGUISTIC FIELDWORK

## *Interweaving Elicitation and Text Analysis*

Linguistic fieldwork is a vastly different experience depending which language one is studying. In the case of a well-known, well-studied language with a large literature, such as, for example, English, the linguist might approach fieldwork with the intention of investigating a particular grammatical subsystem that had not yet been well-understood. The opposite instance, of a language hitherto unstudied with no literature, necessitates a different type of approach, which makes different requirements. With no previous experience, and no resources on which to draw, the linguist, upon beginning fieldwork, is thrust into a (likely strange) environment where everybody is speaking in long, rapid strings of incomprehensible sounds. Where does he start?

### 1. ELICITATION

The linguist usually starts off by **eliciting** various words in the language. Our situation was not quite as dramatic as the hypothetical situation in which one has no way of communicating with members of the language community, since the speakers of Dari are all bilingual in Farsi as well. We thus had the additional advantage of sharing a language in common with the speakers, and so were able to ask simply: “What is...?”

We elicited words from different grammatical categories, *i.e.* nouns, verbs, etc. In fact, the first thing we elicited was a series of one-hundred words that supposedly exist in all the world’s languages—known as the Swadish word list after the linguist who devised it in the first half of the twentieth century. (While the highly controversial list is regarded by few if any current scholars as truly universal, it is nevertheless a useful point from which to start fieldwork.) An abbreviated Swadish word list in Dari, with the English and Farsi translations, is shown below.

#### (1) Abbreviated Swadish List

#	English	Farsi	Dari	#	English	Farsi	Dari
1	I	<i>man</i>	<i>mε</i>	19	fish	<i>māhi</i>	<i>mōhi</i>
2	you	<i>to</i>	<i>tā</i>	20	bird	<i>parande</i>	<i>parandā</i>
3	we	<i>mā</i>	<i>mō</i>	21	dog	<i>sag</i>	<i>svā</i>
11	one	<i>yek</i>	<i>yak</i>	22	louse	<i>šepaš</i>	<i>sveš</i>
12	two	<i>do</i>	<i>do</i>	54	to drink	<i>nušidan</i>	<i>xārtun</i>
13	big	<i>bozorg</i>	<i>mas</i>	55	to eat	<i>xordan</i>	<i>xārtun</i>
14	long	<i>boland</i>	<i>bled</i>	56	to bite	<i>gazidan</i>	<i>grāftun</i>
15	small	<i>kuček</i>	<i>kas</i>	57	to see	<i>didan</i>	<i>didvun</i>
16	woman	<i>zan</i>	<i>yen</i>	58	to hear	<i>šenidan</i>	<i>ašnoftun</i>
17	man	<i>mard</i>	<i>merd</i>	59	to know	<i>dānestan</i>	<i>zonudvun</i>
18	person	<i>ensān</i>	<i>udem</i>	60	to sleep	<i>xābidan</i>	<i>xoftun</i>

From there, we progressed to eliciting **verb paradigms**, which show the form of a verb in each person, gender, and tense in the positive, as well as the negative. Note that all of these categories do not necessarily exist in all languages. In Dari, as in Farsi, no gender distinction is made in the third person, as in English between *he* and *she*. We give an abridged paradigm for the verb ‘to run’ in Dari below:

(2) Abbreviated Paradigm ‘to run’

davodvun (=to run)				
Imperative				
singular			plural	
	<i>bedāv</i>	‘(you) run!’	<i>bedāvid</i>	‘(you) run!’
negative				
	<i>madāv</i>	‘(you) do not run!’	<i>madāvid</i>	‘(you) do not run!’
Present				
singular			plural	
1	<i>dāve</i>	I run	<i>dāvim</i>	we run
2	<i>dāvi</i>	you run	<i>dāvid</i>	you run
3	<i>dāvā</i>	s/he/it runs	<i>dāven</i>	they run
Progressive Present				
singular			plural	
1	<i>dore dāve</i>	I am running	<i>dorim dāvim</i>	we are running
2	<i>dori dāvi</i>	you are running	<i>dorid dāvid</i>	you are running
3	<i>dorā dāvā</i>	s/he/it is running	<i>doren dāven</i>	they are running
Simple Past				
singular			plural	
1	<i>dāvøe</i>	I ran	<i>dāvøim</i>	we ran
2	<i>dāvøi</i>	you ran	<i>dāvøid</i>	you ran
3	<i>dāvøv</i>	s/he/it ran	<i>dāvøen</i>	they ran

After we had acquired a basic knowledge of the general shape and structure of Dari words, we proceeded to elicit sentences. At first, we only elicited simple sentences with one argument (subject):<sup>12</sup>

- (3) *sve mε e-dāv-ā*  
 dog me CONT-run:PRES-3SG  
 ‘My dog is running.’

Then sentences with two arguments (subject and direct object):

<sup>12</sup> The **arguments** of a verb are its subject and (direct and indirect) objects, if any.

- (4) *ānāhitā mε-rā ven-ā*  
 Annahita me-DO throw:PRES-3SG  
 ‘Annahita throws me.’

Then sentences with three arguments (subject, direct object, and indirect object):

- (5) *in o dāfdere-ro be-om e-t-ā*  
 he that book-DO to-me CONT-give:PRES-3SG  
 ‘He is giving that book to me.’

At this point, we can, tentatively, draw an important typological conclusion about Dari, namely that canonical word order in the language is: subject, object, verb (SOV). This is identical to the canonical word order of Persian and different from that of English, which is SVO.

Until now, the sole method of eliciting the Dari data we’ve seen has been translation. We give a word or phrase in Farsi and ask our linguistic consultant to provide the equivalent word or phrase in Dari. But sometimes we need to make active inquiries in order to figure out how a specific component of the language works. For instance, in example (3) above, ‘my dog’ is translated as *sve mε*. Interestingly, when dog is elicited in isolation the form produced is *svā*; furthermore, when the meaning of *mε* is asked for in isolation ‘me’ is given. What is *sve* then? What relationship does it bear to *svā* and how does it, when combined with *mε*, show a possessor/possessed relationship?

Our investigation here has the benefit of being informed by the close genetic relationship between Dari and Farsi. In Farsi, the equivalent to the sentence we have been looking at is:

- (6) *sag-e man mi-do-e*  
 dog-of me CONT-run:PRES-3SG  
 ‘My dog is running.’

The relationship of possession is created between the thing being possessed (*sag* ‘dog’) and the possessor (*man* ‘me’) by a suffix *-e*, which is traditionally called *ezāfe* and in this example carries the meaning ‘of’ (as in the English possessive construction ‘the palace of the king’).

If we assume tentatively that a similar suffix *-e* is used in Dari to create a possessive construction then we can rewrite the sentence in (3) as:

- (7) *svā-e mε e-dāv-ā*  
 dog-of me CONT-run:PRES-3SG  
 ‘My dog is running.’

As written above, we hypothesize that the underlying form of ‘my dog’ in Dari is ‘dog-of me’. Consequently, with a little linguistic insight from phonology, we can further hypothesize that, because it ends in a vowel, the final *ā* of the noun *svā* is deleted when followed by *-e*.

How can we test this hypothesis? We check whether this process, vowel hiatus (the deletion of one of two adjacent vowels), is linguistically generalizable. In other words, we check to see if it happens with other words that end in *-ā*. We can do this by finding other such words, forming possessive constructions from them in accordance with our hypothetical process, and then obtaining a grammaticality judgment from the linguistic consultant, testing the validity of our proposal. In its simplest form this entails asking, “Can you say...?” or “Is it correct to say...?” We learn that the same hiatus process which occurs in ‘my dog’ operates in the utterances below in the same fashion, providing support for our hypothesis.<sup>13</sup>

- (8)    *kzā*            ‘house’                    *kze me*            ‘my house’  
           *parandā*       ‘bird’                      *parande me*      ‘my bird’

Grammaticality judgments are extremely important in the formulation of linguistic generalizations as they provide direct insight into what the grammar of a language is. Don’t forget that in the field of linguistics, the term “grammar” is used in a very different sense from what most of us learnt it meant in “grammar” school. For the linguist, a grammar is a systematic account of the rules inside a speaker’s mind governing the operation of language. Therefore, in obtaining grammaticality judgments, and verifying whether a set of given forms qualifies as the correct output of a rule, we can begin to elucidate the function of the rule itself.

However, such a direct means to discovering the structure of a language’s grammar does have its problems (though it would make life for linguists a lot easier if it didn’t). First, the language through which elicitation takes place, in our case Farsi, interferes with the linguistic consultant’s responses.<sup>14</sup> As the phrases being asked for become more and more complicated, the linguistic consultant increasingly tends to provide word-for-word translations, or **calques**, for the desired phrase. For example, in the sentence we elicited in (5), the indirect object ‘me’ is introduced by the preposition *be* ‘to’. This directly parallels the construction in Farsi, as shown in (9):

- (9)    a. Dari:    *in*    *mo*    *dāfdere-ro*    *be-om e-t-ā*  
                   he    that    book-DO    to-me CONT-give:PRES-3SG  
                   ‘He is giving that book to me.’
- b. Farsi:    *in*    *un*    *ketāb-o*    *be*    *man mi-d-e*  
                   he    that    book-DO    to    me    CONT-give:PRES-3SG  
                   ‘He is giving that book to me.’

<sup>13</sup> We find the same process deleting the first vowel of a word-final *-āV* sequence operating in other parts of the language as well, further supporting our hypothesis.

<sup>14</sup> This complication would not arise in a monolingual fieldwork situation, in which all informant sessions are carried out in the language being investigated, as the linguist is learning to speak the language herself. Needless to say, while this method may eliminate a number of problems associated with conducting fieldwork through an auxiliary language, and may in the end yield greater results, it requires a great deal more time and effort, and as such remains highly controversial.

As we learned later on, however, this construction is in fact used rarely, if at all, in Dari. The authentic Dari construction, which is the one used in natural speech, consists of the indirect object without the accompanying preposition, as in (10a). In the past tense, the ergative construction creates another possible option, a suffix agreeing in person and number (10b).

- (10) a. *mε do t-ε*  
 I     you give:PRES-1SG  
 ‘I give it to you.’
- b. *in oš dō-i*  
 he   3SG give:PST-2SG  
 ‘he gave it to you’

Another difficulty with elicitation arises from judgment fatigue. Speakers are not able to give grammaticality judgments with equal ease for all sentences. Some linguists have claimed that speakers of a language share clear intuitions about a set of “core” sentences, which they accept or reject without hesitation. However, other sentences speakers have trouble judging unambiguously. When questioned repeatedly about these so-called “fringe” sentences, speakers may become confused about their own intuition and give conflicting responses, or give none at all. Such a sentence in English, which seems fine upon first glance, but which upon further consideration is difficult to interpret, is *More smokers smoke more Camels than any other brand* (Chelliah 159).

Finally, grammaticality judgments consist of much, much more than asking the speaker whether a given form is “correct” or whether she “can say it.” The process of obtaining an accurate judgment is often much more involved, largely because:

when speakers ‘judge sentences’ they are not judging abstractions on purely formal criteria; they are judging the reasonableness of someone uttering that sentence with some communicative intention. Even when speakers think they are making that judgment in a ‘normal’, ‘neutral’, or ‘null’ context, they will differ on how they define that term. The rest of the time they will vary even more widely, because they will vary, as individuals, in how imaginative they are in constructing POSSIBLE contexts in which that sentence might make sense [original emphasis] (Georgia Green in Li 1994).

Thus, the linguist must be constantly aware of the many pragmatic influences which affect the way language is used, and which she often finds herself responsible for controlling. Specifically, before concluding that a negative response signals the ungrammaticality of a form, she must ask questions that eliminate all extragrammatical factors.

For example, on one occasion during a group informant session, we asked our consultants whether “it was correct” to say *tā šāši ānāhitā-ro bekudi* ‘you can hit Annahita’. All three

vehemently replied that it was certainly not “correct” to hit Annahita. We had previously elicited this form from another informant and were merely double-checking its grammaticality, and so upon hearing this negative judgment were seriously confused. After a few minutes, however, we realized that this group of informants had judged the reasonableness of the sentence using the context we were then in—that of guests at their house having tea after dinner. It would, of course, have been quite socially unacceptable for one of them to actually get up and hit Annahita. In order to force them to abandon the context that was leading them to judge the social, and not grammatical, correctness of the test phrase, we repeated the question situating it within a context our informants would find socially acceptable. Imagine that a little girl, Annahita, has done something naughty, she has spilled milk all over the kitchen floor. Her mother suddenly comes into the room, sees the mess and moves to punish Annahita. But how? The mother goes into the living room and asks the father’s advice: “What should I do?” The father answers: “You can hit Annahita.”<sup>15</sup>

Because of such complications, the complexity and pervasiveness of which are only barely suggested by the above example, any generalizations drawn solely from elicitation or grammaticality judgments would be grossly—if not completely—incorrect. The linguist needs a source of data much closer to natural speech in order to draw valid conclusions. This takes the form of the text.

## 2. TEXT ANALYSIS

What exactly constitutes a text? For linguistic fieldwork purposes, almost any continuous stream of speech is a text that can be used as a means to understanding the grammar of the language. During our two stays in Yazd, we collected several texts, including travel narratives, an autobiographical narrative, a traditional Zoroastrian folk tale, and a lengthy conversation amongst a group of women on the *gāhambār* religious ceremony.

The first step after recording a text was to transcribe it with the help of a consultant. Since we recorded the text on audiocassette, we could, with a simple tape recorder, play the text over and over again as many times as was necessary in order to write it down using phonetic symbols (see Appendix A). Never, on the first the pass, were we able to get everything, but after the informant session we would listen to the recordings ourselves and retranscribe the text, adding any details we had missed. At this initial stage, our transcription would look something like this, the first sentence of the first sentence we worked on:

- (11) *masalenčorsolpištermemnebotemasalenčorsolpišterxādedotomođomođomovačogunošomiy  
edotekāsterimhādedotovačašođomođomomiyehemraštimmušinexāmašhad*

---

<sup>15</sup> Note, however, that the question was not always accepted, even when contextualized as we have done here. One of our informants balked when asked, since she strongly rejected corporal punishment, and indeed all forms of violence. We were never able to use the verbs “to hit” or “to kill” (useful for various grammatical reasons) in our elicitation with her as a result.

We next asked the consultant for a free translation of the text. Each sentence was glossed with a translation that attempted to capture the overall meaning. The sentence we had transcribed in (11) was glossed as:

- (12) For example, four years ago, didn't I say, for example, four years ago, with my daughter and my son-in-law and their children, my littlest daughter with her two children and my son-in-law, together we went in our car to Mashad.

Finally, only the hard tasks of obtaining a word-for-word translation and figuring out the internal structures of the words and sentences of Dari remained. After much thought and many questions of our informants, we arrived at a somewhat complete understanding of the meaning of the text we had recorded, both at the level of the story as a whole and at the level of each individual word and sentence. This is reflected in the following **interlinear gloss**:

- (13) *masalen*      *čor*    *sol*    *pišter*    *mε(-m)*    *ne-būt-e*      *masalen*  
 for example    four    year    ago      I(-1SG)    NEG-say:PST-2SG    for example  
 For example, four years ago, didn't I say, for example,

*čor*    *sol*    *pišter*    *xād-e*    *dot-om*      *o*    *đomođ-om*<sup>16</sup>    *o*  
 four    year    ago      with-EZ    daughter-1SG    and    son-in-law-1SG    and  
 four years ago, with my daughter and my son-in-law and

*vačō-gun-oš*    *o*    *miye*    *dot-e*      *kās-ter-i-m*      *hād-e*  
 child-PL-3SG    and    these    daughter-EZ      little-COMP-SUPL-1SG    with-EZ  
 their children, my littlest daughter with

*doto*    *vača-š*    *o*    *đomođ-om*    *o*    *miye*    *hemra*    *št-im*  
 two    child-3SG    and    son-in-law-1SG    and    these    along      go:PRPART-1PL  
 her two children and my son-in-law, together we went

*mōšin-e*    *xā*      *mašhad*  
 car-EZ    self    Mashad  
 in our car to Mashad.

With the translation of virtually every word in the text, we gained new insight into the language, whether phonological, morphological, or semantic. Especially with respect to the latter, we learned things that we would never have been able to learn through elicitation alone. Antonyms and synonyms, for instance, are particularly difficult to elicit because of their high

<sup>16</sup> Our consultant was elderly and lisped when pronouncing this word; other speakers of the same dialect would say *zomoz* 'son-in-law'. In transcribing her speech, we tried to include as many details as possible, including any idiosyncrasies.

sensitivity to context. But the greatest advantages of analyzing texts are not to be found at the level of the individual word. Perhaps most important among the rewards wrought from our analysis of texts was the access it afforded to a valuable repository of cultural information. Elicitation of isolated utterances alone, in contrast, offered not even a glimpse of this rich tapestry of world views, philosophies, superstitions and ways of life shared by Dari's speakers.

Why, we asked, for instance, was the narrator of this text going to Mashad? We had always considered the city dedicated to the shrine of Reza, the eighth Shiite Imam, a strictly Muslim pilgrimage site. In fact, many Zoroastrians—in spite of the custom requiring even non-believing women to wear *chādor* when visiting the shrine—make the pilgrimage alongside Muslims. Some Zoroastrians do so because of their belief that Reza issued from the union of his ancestor with a Zoroastrian princess, and for this reason is worthy of veneration. Others add to this that Reza, because of his mixed ancestry, is a symbol of the reconciliation of the Zoroastrian and Muslim faiths, something for which they fervently wish. From yet another, we received a deeply skeptical criticism of this “myth,” for whom the importance of Reza's shrine arose from its being a place where the prayers, hopes, and wishes of so many people converged—from its “positive energy,” so to speak.

Text analysis, however, also has its difficulties. Data is often patchy and incomplete. You only get what is in the story, and so must resist the temptation to become stuck at a certain point, resigning yourself instead to continuing even when previous material is not yet well-understood. Informant sessions can also easily lead out of the linguist's control. In elicitation, the linguist is always in charge, carefully posing questions and conducting the informant's responses in order to ensure their accuracy. In text analysis, on the other hand, the linguist becomes an unknowledgeable student who is being shown the linguistic, and cultural, way by the consultant. Sometimes she may get carried away, in which case, the linguist must move to pull the consultant's direction back towards the text.

### 3. INTERWEAVING ELICITATION AND TEXT ANALYSIS

Elicitation and text analysis are the two major techniques available to synchronic fieldwork research. We begun our fieldwork during the summer of 2003 with the former, eliciting words, simple phrases, and paradigms. During the summer of 2004, we progressed to the analysis of two medium-length texts, *A Trip to Mashad* and *A Life*, which we include in their entirety in Appendix B. While we learned an incommensurable amount through our work on these two stories, we realized in retrospect that we made fewer forays into areas of potential theoretical interest. This is not to say that we lacked questions to ask. Indeed, text analysis served as a plentiful source of unresolved issues; we simply did not have enough time to conduct the supplementary informant work necessary to probe further the questions which arose.

For example, we discovered that the order of components comprising a prepositional phrase differs depending on what the object is. When a prepositional phrase consists simply of a preposition, here *tu* ‘in’, and a noun phrase object, here *kze-i S.T.* ‘house of S. T.’, the preposition precedes the noun, as in English or Farsi:

- (14) *tu kze-i S.T. moz-e mirā pzer-e mirā*  
**in house-EZ S.T. mother (dim.)-EZ husband ther-EZ husband**  
 In the house of S.T., my husband's mom, my husband's father,  
*xāher-un-e mirā harru di e bz-im*  
 sister-PL-EZ husband everyone also be:PRPART-1PL  
 my husband's sister, we were all together.

However, when a pronoun takes the place of a noun as the object of the preposition, the order is reversed, and the preposition follows its object, unlike both English and Farsi:

- (15) *mi bṣ-o-ye mas e š došt ke čeqadar čom-o-ye*  
 these garden-PL-EZ big CONT 3SG have:PST that how much thing-PL-EZ  
 There were (he [the owner] had) these big gardens that had so many  
*xaš xaš še tu bo*  
 good tasting 3SG in be:PST:3SG  
 good tasting things in them.

Even more theoretically provocative, the preposition, in a phrase where the noun object is modified by a demonstrative pronoun, here *mṣ* 'this', follows the demonstrative pronoun, but precedes the noun object; in other words, the preposition is realized *in the middle* of the prepositional phrase!

- (16) *šv-im mo mṣ tu kzā*  
 go:PST-1PL we **this in house**  
 We went into this house.

A solution to this problem can only be sought through recourse to speaker judgments, since the data we have obtained through text analysis is patchy, as is evident from the examples we present in (14) through (16). We have observed this scrambling of preposition, object, and modifier almost solely in one preposition, *tu* 'in', and only with the two demonstratives *mṣ* 'this' and *o* 'that'. Before making any connection to theory, we would first have to verify that this phenomenon is not arbitrary, or lexically conditioned by this one preposition or modifier, but is in fact a general process that operates in many situations.

In order to obtain these parallel constructions, we would have to elicit them directly from the speaker. This is problematic, however, for a number of reasons, which we have discussed. Using the pronoun *ri* 'on', we get the following conflicting results:

- (17) a. Prep. + Noun: *ri sendali unig*  
**on chair** sit:imp:2sg  
 Sit on the chair!
- b. Prep. + Pronoun: *še ri unig*  
**3sg on** sit:imp:2sg  
 Sit on it!
- c. Prep. + Modifier + Noun: *ri mo kz-e yaki gorba hištoz-ā*  
**on this house-SPEC** one cat stand:PRES-3SG  
 A cat is standing on this house.

To review, there are several possible reasons a speaker may label a given form as grammatical, even though it may never appear in natural speech, and she herself might later find it ungrammatical. Primary among these are calquing, judgment fatigue, and pragmatic influences.

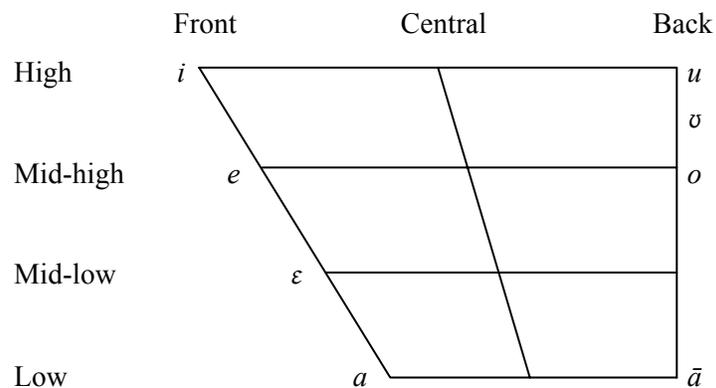
By using text analysis to guide elicitation, the fieldworker can alleviate many of the shortcomings of both. Calquing becomes a non-issue, since speakers are no longer being asked squarely to translate phrases. And judgment fatigue and pragmatic influences also become less of a concern, since, when elicitation questions are based on examples from a text, the speaker and the linguist share the context provided by the story, facilitating the speed and accuracy of grammaticality judgments. We see that the efficiency and accuracy of the fieldwork endeavor is much improved by interweaving text analysis and elicitation in a sensitive and nuanced manner.

## Appendix A

### Symbols and Abbreviations

#### PHONETIC SYMBOLS

In our transcriptions, we follow the conventional transcription used in the Iranian linguistics literature. Dari possesses eight vowel phonemes, four front and four back:



The language also possesses nineteen consonant phonemes with five points of articulation and five manners of articulation:

	Labial	Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Stops	<i>p</i>	<i>t</i>		<i>k</i>	
	<i>b</i>	<i>d</i>		<i>g</i>	
Affricates			<i>č</i>		
			<i>ǰ</i>		
Fricatives		<i>s</i>	<i>š</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>h</i>
	<i>v</i>	<i>z</i>		<i>q</i>	
Liquids			<i>l r</i>		
Glides	<i>w</i>		<i>y</i>		

#### ABBREVIATIONS

1	first person	IMP	imperative	PST	past tense
2	second person	INDEF	indefinite	PSTPART	past participle
3	third person	PART	particle	RA	direct object marker
CONT	continuous aspect	PL	plural	SG	singular
DO	direct object marker	PRES	present tense	SPEC	specificity marker
EZ	ezāfe	PRPART	present participle	SUBJ	subjunctive

## Appendix B

### Collected Texts

#### I. A TRIP TO MASHAD

- 1 masalen čor sol pišter me(-m)  
for example four year ago I(-1SG)
- 2 ne-būt-e masalen čor sol pišter  
NEG-say:PST-2SG for example four year ago
- 3 xād-e dot-om o ḏomoḏ-om o  
with-EZ daughter-1SG and son-in-law-1SG and
- 4 vačv-gun-oš o miye dot-e kās-ter-i-m  
child-PL-3SG and these daughter-EZ little-COMP-SUPR-1SG
- 5 hād-e doto vača-š o ḏomoḏ-om  
with-EZ two child-3SG and son-in-law-1SG
- 6 o miye hemra št-im mošin-e xā  
and these along go:PRPART-1PL car-EZ self
- 7 mašhad. az mo-trap-e rig-og  
Mashad from this-side-EZ fine sand-DIM
- 8 ešd-im (b)e mašhad. alhamdorelā ge nā  
go:PRPART-1PL to Mashad thank god that PTCL
- 9 bro-mo xāš ji e vḏārtā ya do yogā  
for-1PL happy also pass:PRPART one two place
- 10 menzel mo kārtā šāv e xoptoz-im o sobi  
resting place 1PL do:PRPART night sleep:PRPART-1PL and morning
- 11 rāv e kāpt-im ešt-im tā alhamdorelā ge xašhol-i  
way fall:PST-1PL go:PST-1PL until thank god that happy-ness
- 12 rasoz-im be mašhad. one-ji ḏomoḏ-om  
arrive:PRPART-1PL to Mashad there-also son-in-law-1SG
- 13 yaki kḏā xonavodā az tarap-e xā-šo mol-e  
one house family from direction-EZ self-3PL belonging to-EZ

- 14 šerkat-e      šahid      qendi      e      bđā.  
company-EZ    Shahid    Qendi           be:PRPART:3SG
- 15 šo-doštā              soxtemun-e      do-trāpā  
3PL-have:PRPART    building-EZ      two-sided
- 16 do-tvāqā.              bolo -i              bđā              o      miye  
two-storied              above-NOM      be:PART:3SG    and    these
- 17 šo-doštā              kđ-e              mas      o      xaš.  
3PL-have:PART      house-EZ      big      and      beautiful
- 18 masalēn              in              vađifā-š              bo              memū-š-ro  
for example              this              obligation-3SG      be:PST:3SG      mother-3SG-RA
- 19 hemrā      kr-ā              o              veš-u.              uso              kor-e      xzo      memū-š  
along      do:SUBJ-3SG    and              go:SUBJ-3SG      then              work-EZ    god    mother-3SG
- 20 do mā              ĵlāv-ter              ešdābo              mašhad  
two month              forward-COMP      go:PSTPART      Mashad
- 21 xād-e      dust      o      rafiq-e              moryavo-i-š              o              miye.  
with-EZ    friend      and    friend-EZ              Maryamābād-i-3SG      and              these
- 22 mū-di              omā              me      ād-e              memū-š  
this-also              come:PST      I      with-EZ      mother-3SG
- 23 [vevin              qesmat!]              ke              me      še      hemrā  
see:IMP:2SG      fate              that              I      3SG    along
- 24 kā,              qesmat.      age      nā      mū      di  
do:PST      fate              if      no      we      also
- 25 hišper      (h)ič-i              ni-štābu-im.  
never              nowhere-INDEF      NEG-go:PSTPART-1PL
- 26 mū-di              omā              o      me      še      hemrā      kārta  
this-also              came:PST              and    I      3SG    along      do:PRPART
- 27 o      hemrā-ye      hem              šo-im.              šo-im              mū  
and    along-EZ              each other              go:PST-1PL              go:PST-1PL              we
- 28 one-di              alhamdorelā              yā      hāftā      mū  
there-also              thank god              one    week              this
- 29 tu      kđ-e              xeili      xaš      brū-mū      vđart.  
in      house-SPEC      very      happy      for-1PL      pass:PST

30	mu	kǎ-e	hmaččima-š	moratab			
	this	house-SPEC	everything-3SG	neat, clean			
31	bo.	kǎ-e	jadid	xo šo	sotābo.	xeili	
	be:PST:3SG	house-EZ	new	self 3PL	build:PSTPART	very	
32	(h)mačče	hmačči-ma-š	e	xeili	xaš	bo.	
	everything	everything-3SG		very	beautiful	be:PST:3SG	
33	moratab	ruji	čen	bār	e	hemu	šā
	regularly	daily	a number	time		shower	go:IMP
34	bār o.	bād-eš	di	sob	o	pasin-e	
	out come:IMP	after-3SG	also	morning	and	afternoon	
35	mušin	e	našt-im	o pok	e	šo-im	
	car		sit:PST-1PL	and together		go:PST-1PL	
36	ge	gardeš	o	taprih	o	hame	yoga
	that	sightseeing	and	recreation	and	every	place
37	mi	sār-o-ye	kiyo	mi	sabze	mi	
	these	field-PL-EZ	someone	these	greenness	these	
38	xoreme—	xeili.	mi	bū-o-ye	mas	e š	
	greenness	very	these	garden-PL-EZ	big	3SG	
39	došt	ke	čeqadar	čom-o-ye	xaš		
	have:PST	that	how much	thing-PL-EZ	good tasting		
40	xaš	še	tu bo.	xeili	bū-mo		
	good tasting	3SG in	be:PST:3SG	very	for-1PL		
41	xaš	vǎart.	hama	sob	o	pasin	e
	happy	pass:PST	all	morning	and	afternoon	
42	gardeš	o	tafrih	bū-im.	nimru	di	
	sightseeing	and	recreation	be:PST-1PL	noon	also	
43	e	toma-im	o	xorok	mo pax	o	
		come:PST-1PL	and	food	1PL cook:PST	and	
44	dāvr-e	hem.	yāh	napar-e	bdi		
	around-EZ	other	one	person-EZ	another		
45	rafiq-oš	dust-oš	di	mušin	oš		
	friend-3SG	friend-3SG	also	car	3SG		
46	došt	ke	še	hemrā	bo.	mol-e	tu
	have:PST	that	3SG	along	be:PST:3SG	belonging to-EZ	in

- 47 šerkat-e      šahid      qendi      bo.      mol-e  
company-EZ    Shahid    Qendi    be:PST:3SG    belonging to-EZ
- 48 rāhmatāvo      bo.      in-ǰi      doto  
Rahmatābād      be:PST:3SG    3SG-also    two
- 49 vača      š      došt      o      še      hemrā      bān.  
child      3SG    have:PST    and      3SG    along      be:PST:3PL
- 50 xeili      rafiq-di-mo      xaš      bo.  
very      friend-also-1PL    good      be:PST:3SG
- 51 o      boham      xaš      bo-im      o      yāh  
and together      happy      be:PST-1PL    and one
- 52 hāptā      di      one      bo-im.      ov      mū  
week      also there      be:PST-1PL    water      1PL
- 53 tu      del      nā-jom-o.      bre      ge  
in      hear      NEG-shake-3SG      so      that
- 54 hmaččima-di-mo      moratab      bo,      mol-e      šerkat      bo  
everything-also-1PL    neat      be:PST:3SG    belonging to-EZ    company be:PST:3SG
- 55 kōā      o      kučā      o      iye-i      ge      mosaki      ve-š-en  
house      and alley      and 3PL-INDEF      that      spontaneously      SUBJ-go:PRES-3PL
- 56 xeili      sāxti      e      keš-en.      o  
very      difficulty      pull:PRES-3PL      and
- 57 šāv-i      čeqadar      āldi      šo      veu      do.  
night-INDEF      how much      money      3PL      must:PRES      give:PST
- 58 nā      bād-e      yāh      hāftā      di      hamai      yogā  
part      after-EZ      one week      also every      place
- 59 gardeš      o      tafrih      o      hamai      yogā  
sightseeing      and recreation      and every      place
- 60 gerto-im      o      kem      kem      di  
ambulate:PST-1PL      and little      little      also
- 61 omā-im      tā      raso-im      var      mū-trap-e  
come:PST-1PL      until      arrive:PST-1PL      towards      this-side-EZ
- 62 deryū-ye      šmol.      šo-im      (b)e      šmol.  
sea-EZ      north      go:PST-1PL      to      north

- 63 yāh šāv di e šmol menū-im  
one night also north stay:PST-1PL
- 64 vurun-e por o por e tomā  
rain-EZ full and full come:PST
- 65 mū-di hamai yogā šāvist šav-i  
this-also every place want:PST:3 night-INDEF
- 66 si hezar toman mo ā-t-ən<sup>17</sup> ke mō  
thirty thousand toman 1PL ?-give:PRES-3PL that this
- 67 kz-e eǰorā kr-im. mū-di xeili  
house-SPEC rent do:PRES-1PL (subj.) this-also very
- 68 grun e bar omā. oxār-oš [yā  
expensive out come:PST end-3SG one
- 69 napar] yā yoga-i raso-im ge  
person one place-INDEF arrive:PST-1PL that
- 70 yaki zunā o mirā o yaki doto  
one married woman and husband and one two
- 71 vače-ye gundā di šo došto. o  
child-EZ big (adult) also 3PL have:PRPART and
- 72 mō šo vō ge šāv ve-š-im.  
we 3PL say:PST that night SUBJ-go:PRES-1PL
- 73 došto di vurun-e por e por e tomā  
have:PRPART also rain-EZ full and full CONT come:PST
- 74 mū-trap-e šmol. šū-im mo mō tu kzā.  
this-side-EZ north go:PST-1PL we this in house
- 75 vačug-un-e đomođ-om di šo-ən o  
child-PL-EZ son-in-law-1SG also go:PST-3PL and
- 76 mōhi šo graft, one mōhi-š maruf-ān  
fish 3PL take (buy):PST there fish-3SG famous-be:PRES:3
- 77 šo-ən o mō mōhi-e šo graft  
go:PST-3PL and this fish-SPEC 3PL take:PST
- 78 omā-ən šāv mō mōhi-e mo dres  
come:PST-3PL night this fish-SPEC 1PL preparation

---

<sup>17</sup> ā-gor-ən  
?-take:PRES-3PL (subj.)

- 79 kārto. o xād-e rapiq o xā-šo  
do:PRPART and with-EZ friend and self-?
- 80 mʊ yaki otaq di šo mʊ do.  
this one room also 3PL 1PL give:PST
- 81 oxar-eš di na-nn-e punzda  
end-3SG also NEG-know:PRES-1SG fifteen
- 82 hezār toman, bist hezar yāh čom-i por šo  
thousand toman twenty thousand one thing-INDEF full 3PL
- 83 grapt-im. o mo yāh šāve  
take:PST-1PL and this one night
- 84 mənʊ-im o moruǰi sāt-e noh dah  
stay:PST-1PL and next day hour-EZ nine ten
- 85 harakat kārt-im. o kəm kəm  
motion do:PST-1PL and little little
- 86 omā-im tā terun. omāh-im tā terun.  
come:PST-1PL until Tehran come:PST-1PL until Tehran
- 87 terun di šʊ-im (b)e kō-e xār-om  
Tehran also go:PST-1PL to house-EZ sister-1SG
- 88 o mire-ye xār-om o miyε.  
and husband-EZ sister-1SG and these
- 89 hemsaya-m xo-m e mārtabo.  
neighbor-1SG self-1SG die:PSTPART(:3SG)
- 90 mire-ye xār-om o dote por-oš  
husband-EZ sister-1SG and two son-3SG
- 91 bo-εn o šāv di šʊ-im o one  
be:PST-3PL and night also go:PST-1PL and there
- 92 mundoboš mo kārta. one mən-im  
live together 1PL do:PRPART there stay:PST-1pl
- 93 o moruǰi ǰi sobi rāv kāpt-im  
and next day also morning way fall:PST-1PL
- 94 šʊ-im (b)e karaǰ. dādāš-om  
go:PST-1PL to Karaj brother-1SG

- 95 karaj-ā.                      šu-im              (b)e karaj      ĵi  
Karaj-be:PRES:3SG          go:PST-1PL      to Karaj          also
- 96 one          dizeni      mo kārto          sobi              tā              pasin  
there          sights      1PL do:PRPART      morning          until              afternoon
- 97 di e          karaj          bu-im.              o          pasin              ge  
also          Karaj          be:PST-1PL          and afternoon      that
- 98 bo                  pe              omāh-im              (b)e terun.  
be:PST:3SG          back          come:PST-1PL          to Tehran
- 99 yāh švendāru          bdi          tu          terun          bu-im  
one day & night          another      in Tehran          be:PST-1PL
- 100 o          bād-oš          harakat-e          yāzd          kār-im.  
and after-3SG          motion-EZ          Yazd          do:PRPART-1PL
- 101 o          bād-oš          omāh-im              (b)e yāzd.      nā  
and after-3SG          come:PST-1PL          to Yazd          PART
- 102 alhamdorelā          sar-e          punzda          ru          omāh-im              (b)e  
thank god              head-EZ          fifteen          day come:PST-1PL          to
- 103 yāzd.          nā          xeili          bro-mo          xaš          vōārt              o          miye.  
Yazd          part          very          for-1PL          happy          pass:PRPART          and these

*Translation.* For example, four years ago, didn't I say, for example, four years ago with my daughter and my son-in-law and their children, my littlest daughter with her two children and my son-in-law, together we went in our car to Mashad. With the once-dirt road we went to Mashad. Thank God, we had a good time. At one or two places we stopped (rested) and slept for the night, and in the morning started off and, thank God, happily arrived in Mashad. There my son-in-law knew a family that had a house given to them by the Shahid Qendi Company. They had a building with two entrances and two stories. They were (there home was) upstairs. They had a big and beautiful house. For example, it was his obligation [my son-in-law's] to take his mother along and go. It was the work of God that his mother two months earlier had come to Mashad with a Maryamābādi friends of hers. He came and between the two of us it was Fate that he took me along, Fate! If he hadn't, we would have never gone anywhere (together). He came and took me along and together we went. We went there, thank God, and spent a very happy week in that house. In this house, everything was neat and clean. A new house they had built themselves. Everything was very beautiful. Regularly, we could go to the shower, a number of times, and come out. Afterwards, also, mornings and afternoons we got in the car and together went sightseeing, and everywhere (there were) these fields of someone's, this greenness—a lot! There were (he [the owner] had) these big gardens that had so many good tasting things in them. We had a very good time. All morning and afternoon we went sightseeing. At noon we came (returned) and cooked food and [were] together. Another person's friend's friend also had a car that was along with him. He worked for the Shahid Qendi Company. He was from Rahmatābād. He also had two children and they were along with him. Our friend was very good. And together we were happy and one week we were there. Water didn't move in our hearts. Everything of ours was neat, since it belonged to the Company, house and equipment and those who go

independently (spontaneously) have to take great pains and how much they would have to give. After one week sightseeing we went everywhere and little by little we came until we arrived at the north sea (the Caspian). We went to the North. We stayed one night in the North. A heavy rain was falling. Everywhere they wanted, nightly, to take from us thirty thousand toman in order for us to rent a house. This came out very expensive for us. In the end we came to a place that a woman and husband and one or two adult children had and they said to us let's go (here) for the night. A heavy, heavy rain was falling in the North. We went to this house. The children of my son-in-law went and bought fish, they went there where their fish is famous and bought fish. At night they came (back) and we prepared this fish and with the friend and my son-in-law and his family we had one room that they gave us. In the end, I don't know, fifteen thousand toman, twenty thousand, something a lot they took from us and this one night we stayed and the next day at nine or ten we started off. And little by little we came to Tehran. We arrived in Tehran. In Tehran, we went to the house of my sister and her husband. My neighbor (you know) had died. The husband of my sister and her two sons were there and at night we went there and we stayed together. We stayed there and the next day in the morning we started off and went to Karaj. My brother is in Karaj. We went to Karaj and there we went sightseeing from morning to afternoon in Karaj. And when it became afternoon, we returned to Tehran. One more day and night were in Tehran and after that we started off for Yazd. And after that, we came to Yazd. Thank god, in exactly fifteen days did we return to Yazd. We had a very good time.

## 2. A LIFE

- 1 mε az sizda sāl-e-gi bzārt,  
I from thirteen year-ADJ-NOM pass:PRPART
- 2 danu bale, borun-om šo kārta.  
? yes fiancé-1SG 3PL do:PRPART
- 3 mε ne-veostā di, sāvdo-i di,  
I NEG-want:PST also exchange-NOM also
- 4 yaki šo dozā yaki šo grāftā.  
one 3PL give:PRPART one 3PL take:PRPART
- 5 dar zendegi-di-m pan sāl  
in life-also-1SG five year
- 6 kze-i pzer e bz-ε. bād-e pan sāl  
house-EZ father be:PRPART-1SG after-EZ five year
- 7 šo kze-i bārt-ε. tu kze-i  
3PL house-? take:PRPART-1SG in house-EZ
- 8 Š.T., moz-e mirā,  
Š.T., mother (dim.)-EZ husband
- 9 pzer-e mirā, xāher-un-e mirā, hama  
father-EZ husband sister-PL-EZ husband everyone

- 10 di e bz-im. yāki bzozer-e mirā  
also be:PRPART-1PL one brother-EZ husband
- 11 di me dortā. bar-e dokun e  
also 1SG have:PRPART outside-EZ store
- 12 bz-ā. falaǰ e bzā.  
be:PRPART-3SG paralyzed be:PRPART-3SG
- 13 nasib-e eški na-bu eški e xā  
destiny-EZ no one NEG-be:SUBJ:3SG no one self
- 14 na-bin-ā. bohen miye hma  
NEG-see:PRES-3SG (subj.) together these everyone
- 15 zendigi mo kārtā. doto di  
life 1PL do:PRPART two also
- 16 āvlod mein mo di e mzā.  
offspring between we visible come:PRPART:3SG
- 17 bād-e mo dote āvlod mas e bz-en,  
after-EZ this two offspring big be (become):PRPART-3PL
- 18 o mo zjunā e rāsn-oz-en o vače  
and we wife arrive:PRES-CAUS-3PL and child
- 19 di e rasn-oz-en, me-ǰi az  
also arrive-CAUS-3PL I-also from
- 20 mirā ǰzo-he. az mirā ǰzo-he  
husband separate-be:PRES:1SG from husband separate-be:PRES:1SG
- 21 hem-orus-om mārt, moz-e mirā-m  
fellow-bride-1SG die:PST mother-EZ husband-1SG
- 22 mārt, bzozer-e mirā-di-m mārt,  
die:PST brother-EZ husband-also-1SG die:PST
- 23 pzer-e mirā-di-m mārt, hmā  
father-EZ husband-also-1SG die:PST everyone
- 24 omr šo do, bi noxti bi noxti,  
soul, life 3PL give:PST without dot without dot
- 25 šmō o hmā. me-di piš-e  
you and everyone I-also with-EZ
- 26 orus o por-om, nāvā-he; oxar  
daughter-in-law and son-1SG grandchild-be:PRES-1SG in the end

- 27 be xaš-i be na-xaš-i dor-ā vedri.  
to happy-NOM to NEG-happy-NOM have:PRES-3SG ?
- 28 omr-om di mo-qadare vzārtā.  
(necessities of) life-1SG also this-amount pass:PRPART:3SG
- 29 dar bād mālim na-hā čin ve-b-ε,  
in after evident NEG-be:PRES:3SG how SUBJ-become:PRES-1SG
- 30 čin na-b-ε, oftāda na-b-ε,  
how NEG-be:PRES-1SG (subj.) fallen NEG-become:PRES-1SG (subj.)
- 31 dāšt o po-m e mārt na-o.  
hand and foot-1SG break:PST NEG-come:PRES:3SG (subj.)<sup>18</sup>
- 32 mo miyε-m zendegi e bz-ā.  
this these-1SG life be:PRPART-3SG
- 33 korbun-ed b-ε (h)eš xaš-i doi  
sacrifice-2SG be:PRES-1SG (subj.) none beauty-EZ world
- 34 di me ne-kārtā. ne tā  
also 1SG NEG-do:PRPART not until
- 35 ešt-ε mo tu kz-e, nā mo  
go:PRPART-1SG this in house-SPEC part this
- 36 āvlod-om še hār yog-i bārt-ε  
child-1SG 3SG every place-INDEF take:PRPART-1SG
- 37 še hār yog-i ort-ε, črā drov  
3SG every place-INDEF bring:PRPART-1SG why lie
- 38 ve-vej-ε. vali o tu kzā  
SUBJ-say:PRES-1SG but that in house
- 39 ke bz-ε, me yaki pir-e  
that be:PRPART-1SG I one Pir-EZ
- 40 mrod, korbun-oš b-ε— ešt-e  
Mrod sacrifice-3SG be:PRES-1SG (subj.) go:PRPART-2SG
- 41 xo? ne-ešt-e? vali ager  
(xob) NEG-go:PRPART-2SG but if

<sup>18</sup> *mārtvun* ‘to break’ is irregular in how it forms the passive. It’s the only verb that takes *omdvun* ‘to come’ instead of *šodvun* ‘to go’.

- 42 ve-š-e, korbun-oš b-ε— pir-e  
SUBJ-go:PRES-2SG sacrifice-3SG be:PRES-1SG (subj.) Pir-EZ
- 43 mrod, ne rivin-e ne-bz-ε ge ve-š-ε  
Mrod ? permission-ADJ NEG-be:PRPART-1SG that SUBJ-go:PRES-1SG
- 44 vali ne alhamdorelā nā  
but no thank god PART
- 45 vače-g-om mε hama yogā  
child-PL-1SG I every place
- 46 br-ā mε tor-ā, orus-om, hmā.  
take:PRES-3SG I bring:PRES-3SG daughter-in-law-1SG everyone
- 47 yāh zendegi mən-ε, heš  
one life stay:PST-1SG none
- 48 gozarun-i di me ne-kārtā, heš  
recreation-INDEF also 1SG NEG-do:PRPART none
- 49 xaš-i. hād-e panšto vača di  
beauty-NOM with-EZ five child also
- 50 mo tu kzā zendegi mo kārtā,  
this in house life 1PL do:PRPART
- 51 mo mas e kārt-εn. yaki-šo  
1PL big do:PRPART-3PL one-3PL
- 52 hušang-ā— na-zon-e? ve-pam!  
Hushang-be:PRES:3SG NEG-know:PRES-2SG IMP-understand:PRES:2SG
- 53 šmṵ rā br-e— xorej-ā.  
you way take:PRES-2SG abroad-be:PRES:3SG
- 54 məmlekat-e xorej-ā. yaki āvlod  
country-EZ foreign-be:PRES:3SG one offspring
- 55 dor-ā. zjun-e onε-ji še kārtā.  
have:PRES-3SG wife-EZ there-also 3SG do:PRPART
- 56 doto-di-šo mone-hen: yaki-š  
two-also-3PL here-be:PRES:3PL one-3SG
- 57 dot-e āmā še šdedā ke  
daughter-EZ paternal aunt 3SG take:PRPART that
- 58 dot-e xāher-e mirā-m bu.  
daughter-EZ sister-EZ husband-1SG be:PST:3SG

59	yaki-di-š one-also-3SG	dot-e daughter-EZ		xiš-o-xom-e family-EZ	šmø [...] you
62	o-di that-also	orus-e daughter-in-law-EZ		mε-hā, I-be:PRES:3SG	D.-di; D.-also
63	miyε these	hmā all	o IPL	kārtā. do:PRPART	abzi-di till-also
64	dor-ā have:PRES-3SG		hmaččima everything	hεmε live	vedri. live
65	mo-di this-also	āfder-e book-EZ		mε. I	

*Translation.* When I had finished my thirteenth year, yes, they gave me to my fiancé. I didn't want it, it was an exchange, they gave one, they took one. For five years of my life I was in the house of my father. After five years, they took me to their house. In the house of Š.T., my husband's mom, my husband's father, my husband's sister, we were all together. I had one brother-in-law also. He was always (sitting) out side his store. He was paralyzed. Let it be no one's destiny. Let no one see it himself. We all lived together. Between the two of us, two children came into the world. After these two children grew up, and we brought them to marriage and also to children, I was separated from my husband. I was separated from my husband and my fellow bride died, my husband's mom died, my husband's brother died, my husband's father died, everyone gave their lives, "bi noxti bi noxti,"<sup>19</sup> for you and everyone. I am (live) with my daughter-in-law and son, and grandchildren; in the end, life is passing for better or for worse. The necessities of life have been taken care of. After this, it's not clear what shall become of me, what shall not become of me, that I shall not fall, that my hands and feel shall not break (lit. be broken). This has been my life. Let me be your sacrifice, I haven't made the world beautiful at all. Not until I went to this house, this child of mine takes me everywhere brings me everywhere, why should I lie? But in that house where I was (before), I didn't once go to *pir-e mrod*,<sup>20</sup> let me be its sacrifice—have you gone? haven't you gone? But, if you go, let me be its sacrifice—*pir-e mrod*, I didn't have permission to go but thank God my children take and bring me everywhere, my daughter-in-law, everyone. This has been my life. I haven't had any diversions, any happiness. With five children we have lived in this house. We raised them. One of them, Hushang—do you know him? Listen! Know!—he is abroad. He's in a foreign country. He has one child. He took a wife from over there. Two of them are here: one of them took a cousin [daughter of a paternal aunt] (as wife) who is the daughter of the sister of my husband. The other has (as wife) a daughter of some family of yours[...]That one is my daughter-in-law, D. We have done everything together. This is my life.

<sup>19</sup> This is a set phrase used in speech to separate discussion of the dead and living.

<sup>20</sup> Pilgrimage site located near Qāsemābād.

*Appendix C*

*2003-2004 Expenditures*

*09/16/03 through 09/15/04*

Part A: 2004 Fieldwork Endeavor	
Transportation	
Airfare to Tehran and Yazd, Iran	\$2,493.62
Other transportation	\$73.13
Accommodations	\$375.74
Materials	
Books	\$23.75
Recording supplies	\$47.88
Equipment	
Laptop computer	\$1,735.49
Audio software	\$40.00
Gifts for linguistic consultants	\$81.36
Part A Total	\$4,870.98
Part B: Non-Fieldwork Expenses	
Transportation	
Airfare to CHRONOS6 Conference	\$1,086.22
Other transportation	\$34.25
Communication	\$26.80
Materials	
<i>2003 Fieldwork Endeavor Summary of Findings</i>	\$239.51
Photocopies	\$124.52
Shipping	\$34.62
Books	\$125.83
Other materials	\$7.77
Gifts	\$42.94
Miscellaneous	
Bank fees	\$112.00
Other fees	\$186.13
Part B Total	\$2,020.59
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$6,891.57</b>

## *Bibliography*

- Boyce, Mary. (1979) *Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices*. London: Routledge.
- Browne, E. G. (1893) *A Year Amongst the Persians*. London.
- Chelliah, Shobhana. (1997) *A Grammar of Meithei*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Farudi, Annahita and M. Doustdar Toosarvandani. (2003) *2003 Fieldwork Endeavor Summary of Findings*. The Dari Language Project. <http://www.darilanguageproject.org>.
- Li, Wen-Chao. (1994) Summary: Linguistics versus normals. *The Linguist List* 5-855. <http://www.linguistlist.org>.
- Mazdāpour, Katāyun. (1995) *A Dictionary of Zoroastrian Dialect in the City of Yazd*. Tehran: Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies.