Two texts in the Arabic dialect of Khorasan

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Introduction

In the summer of 1996, during a visit to Iran, the opportunity arose to explore the question of whether there were still Arabs in the eastern Iranian province of Khorasan. The existence of a great number of Arabs in western Iran (in the province of Khuzestan) has long been known, though, at this point, it wasn't known whether Arabic villages still continued to exist in eastern Iran.

I became aware of Central Asian Arabic through a seminar on Uzbekistan Arabic by Otto Jastrow. In the year of 1926, a census by the former Soviet Union revealed the incredible fact that almost 30,000 Arabs lived in Uzbekistan, near the town of Buchara. Around the same time, the first indications arose of the existence of a large number of Arab speakers in outer northern-central Afghanistan. The unsubstantial research conducted to date regarding the language of these Arabs concluded that it is a very strange dialect, with many ancient characteristics, and, since it could not be categorised under the Arabic dialect types recognised so far, it was to be regarded as Central Asian Arabic. At the end of this contribution is a comprehensive bibliography of work conducted on this dialect group.

From the history of the Arab conquests, it is well known that Arab settlements in Iran were fundamentally limited to outer western Iran and eastern Iran, or Khorasan. Ancient Khorasan, however, stretched considerably further towards the east and north-east than it does today, encompassing present-day Uzbekistan and Afghanistan. I now began to explore the question of whether, in modern day Iran, the rest of these Arabs still existed. In the preparations to my journey, I began to research the Arabs of Iran, and soon discovered information in the *Encyclopedia Iranica* (cf. especially the entry "ʿArab"). The best and most recent cited source is an Iranian geographical encyclopedia from the year 1950: RAZMÂRÂ,

Farhang-e ǧoġrâfīyâ'ī-ye Īrân, a splendid appraisal of all Iranian villages with information about population, infrastructure, sources of income, religious affiliations and languages spoken. I obtained volume 9 of this work, which contains Khorasan villages, and found 27 villages listed for which Arabic speakers were reported. Essentially these are:

— in the district *Arabxâne*, south of *Birǧand*, in south Khorasan,
— in the district *Zīr Kūh,* around 100 km north-east of *Birǧand,* on the border of Afghanistan,
— in the neighbourhood of *Saraxs*, in the outermost north-east of Iran, on the border of Turkmenistan.

During the first few weeks of my stay in Iran I initially tried to find out whether the 1000-km-long trip east would be worthwhile, but I found nobody who knew anything of the existence of these Arabs. So I equipped myself with maps – which, in Iran, are of high quality: anyone who has ever conducted fieldwork in an Arab country knows that such a thing is very rare in the Middle East – and could identify, on this basis, five of the villages in question. One of them in the district *Zīr Kūh* in south Khorasan, near the Afghanistan border, appeared promising.

Around 20 km from my planned destination, my journey took me to a small village called *Sarâb*, where I asked whether there were any Arabs in the neighbourhood. To my great joy, I was told that half of the inhabitants of this village were Arabs and that any further travel would be unnecessary, since Arabs no longer lived in the village I had wanted to travel to. But I was told that there was a neighbouring village called *Xalaf* that is inhabited exclusively by Arabs. After making a few recordings in *Sarâb* (the texts published here are from this village), I drove on to *Xalaf* and was kindly received, spending three exciting and exhausting days with these people, far from any sort of 'civilisation', without electricity or running water. The younger generation in particular were especially interested in me and my stories of life in Germany and, in return, were happy to tell me about the Khorasan Arabs and their language: so much so that during the course of my stay, I filled two notepads. My days were spent in the village square conducting interviews on linguistic forms, with a focus on verbal morphology. I spent the nights moving between different hosts who would talk a little on tape, but only after long discussions. Yet it was, all in all, worthwhile for two hours of recordings.

On my journey back home, I made another short detour to *Saraxs*, since one of my five possible destinations lay in this region. I also found Arabs there and made a few recordings. Since *Saraxs* is a centre for natural gas extraction and I had managed to burst onto preparations for a big military parade, this short stop turned out to be rather more exciting than productive.

Geographical distribution

In the district *Zīr Kūh* (called *ʕiǧde* by the Arabs), there are four villages with Arabic inhabitants:

Xalaf (خلف): pure Arabic, around 120 houses/families

Darey Čarm (دری چرم): pure Arabic, around 100 houses/families

Muḥammadiyye (محمديه): a very small, pure Arabic village

Sarâb (سرآب): around 50 Arabic houses/families, the village is
approx. half Arabic speaking

The Arabs from *Zīr Kūh* are Sunnis of the Hanafite school and associate themselves with the *ʕarab al-ʕanāni* tribe. They make their living from agriculture and small livestock breeding and were semi-nomadic until recently; thus, they had summer and winter quarters. Immediately north east from *Sarâb*, in the villages around *Sūrand* (سورند), there had been Arabs about 50 years ago, although Arabic has completely died out in the interim. These Arabs call themselves *ʕarab al-Fallāḥi*.

The actual centre of southern Khorasan Arabic, however, seems to be *Arabxâne* (عربخانه) south of *Birǧand*, although I do not know this from personal experience. There are said to be many Arab villages still here. The Arabs of this region are called *ʕarab al-Xazāʕi*.

Isolated Arabic-speaking families live both in *Saraxs* and in individual villages in the surrounding areas. *Gūš Xazāʕī* (قوش خزاعى) and *Gonbadli* (گنبدلى) both have large Arab populations, perhaps around half of all inhabitants, or around 50 families/houses. The Arabs in the *Saraxs* region consider themselves *ʕarab al-Xazāʕi* or *Arab ol-Xozeym* and are mostly Shi'ites. They say that their forefathers came from *Arabxâne* around 100–150 years ago, a statement that corresponds to Yate's observations (p. 34): he writes that the Arabs from the *Saraxs* region settled there in 1874.

Around 10 km north-west of *Ġâyen* (قائن) is the small village of *Ōčânī* (اوچانى). Its 20–30 inhabitants came from *Arabxâne* approximately 100 years ago; thus, they are *ʕarab al-Xazāʕi*.

South of *Torbat Ǧâm* (تربت جام), in the region of *Bâxarz* (باخرز) is the village of *Tūne* (تونه), whose population came from *Xalaf* and *Darey Čarm* around 70 years ago, therefore making them *ʕarab al-ʕanāni*.

The inhabitants of *Xalaf* still remember that there were once Arabs of the *ʕarab al-Yaʕgūbi* tribe in the area of *Tabas* (طبس), west of *Nīšâbūr* (نيشابور). However, they now all speak Persian.

Finally, I was repeatedly told of Arabs in the area west or south west of *Šīrâz* (!), who are said to speak the same dialect as the Khorasan Arabs.

One can, therefore, conclude that there are more than a dozen Arabic-speaking villages in Khorasan, something that equates to 5,000–10,000 Arabs. But Arabic will not remain here long: electrification connects villages to radio and television, the children attend school in *Birǧand* during term time, and the men have cross-country motorbikes, so contacts to a Persian-speaking environment are increasing. Arabic gives the impression of a dying language most particularly in the region of *Saraxs*: here a few old Arabs still passively understand the Arabic of their parents, but they can no longer actively speak it. Additionally, the two big earthquakes in 1997 wreaked havoc in this region. The epicentre of the first and strongest quake, the effects of which were felt throughout Khorasan, and which destroyed hundreds of villages, was approximately 10 km east of *Xalaf*. I have, however, in the meantime received reliable reports that *Xalaf* and *Sarâb* do still exist.

After my return, I succeeded in finding an Arab from *Zīr Kūh* in Germany (in Sweden, there are said to be more). I began to work on the material and transcribe it with him. The following studies correspond to the analysis of the first recordings from the area of *Zīr Kūh*.

Phonology

Persian has left the same type of deep traces in this Arabic dialect as, hundreds of years earlier, Arabic had in Persian. The inherited Arabic phonetic alphabet has increased through the phonemes of southern Khorasan Persian. Since the surrounding area is entirely Persian-speaking, there are no Turkish influences, as there are in Uzbekistan Arabic. The Persian loan vocabulary is shown in the transcriptions below through a prefixed superscript [p]. The adopted lexicon was often not adapted to the Arabic phonetic system, especially with Persian nouns where stress is placed on the final syllable. Much of the Arabic lexicon has been borrowed secondarily from the Persian, for example, *ġabūl* "consent", *anvâ* "types, forms", *mantaġé* "area", *vaxt* "time". In counting, Arabic numerals are used up to the number five, after which Persian numerals are employed.

There are 5 short vowels *a, e, i, o, u* and 5 long vowels *ā, ē, ī, ō, ū*. Long *ā* appears in two variants: I use *ā* for the central, low realisation and *â* for the realisation in *Išmām*, i.e. a back articulation with light raising in the direction of open ɔ, as is common in many Persian dialects. *ā* is found most often in inherited Arabic words, rarely also in Persian loan vocabulary, *â* appears mostly in Persian loan words, but also increasingly frequently in established Arabic forms. *Imāla*, or fronting of *ā*, does not feature in the dialect. The difference between *ā* and *â* is recognised by speakers, and I was sharply corrected a few times when I used one instead of the other. A rule for the distinction between the two variants, however, continues to evade me. Short *a* is articulated extremely far forward in loan words – as is most common in Persian. Short *e* is generally realised as a closed vowel, but in final position, when it relates etymologically to a long *ā* – for example, in the suffixes *–he, –ne* < *–hā, *–nā* – it becomes more open, towards *ä*.

The most noticeable change affects old *a* in open syllables, which often changes to *i/e*, and in "u-colouring environments" to *u/o*, as in: *čitab* "he wrote", *ḏurab* "he hit", *fotan* "he understood", but *fotenow* "they understood", *guʕad* "he lived" but *guʕidow* "they lived". Laryngeals and liquids can block this sound change, however; compare here the following reflexes of the morpheme type **faʕīl* (which is problematic in all dialects):

ğidīm	"old"	*ḥalīb*	"milk"
ribīʕ	"spring"	*ṯaġīr*	"small"
ʔitīm	"orphan"	*vaṯīʕ*	"spacious"
diğīğ	"flour"	*šaʕīr*	"barley"
rifīğ	"associate"	*ḥamīr*	"donkeys"
čibīr	"big"	*baʕīr*	"camel"

Observe also the sound change *mare* "wife" but *muretah* "his wife', explanation for which – like so many other things – still requires proper clarification.

The former emphatics and gutturals can produce a lowering of *i>e* and *u>o*, whereby the new short vowels are in some cases allophonic variants, and also in some cases, due to Persian influence, appear to have become phonologically independent, as in: *fotan* (*√fṯn) "he understood", *ġide~geda/yoġodi* "to go", *ḥelab* "to milk".

The original diphthongs *aw, ay* are generally realised as monophthongs, as in: *yōm* "day" *lēle* "night". They remain diphthongs in the position *ayy~eyy* and *aww~oww*. Additionally the diphthongs *ow* and *ey* have come in from Persian. *ayy~eyy* is monophthongised to *ī* on affixation of a suffix: *niṯayy~niṯeyy* "we make", but *niṯīh* "we make it". *ow* as suffix on the verb in the 3rd person masc. pl. is monophthongised to *ū* on suffixation of a personal pronoun, as in: *ḏurubow* "they hit" *ḏurubūnne* "they hit us".

In terms of the consonant inventory, most striking is the loss of emphasis in the former emphatics and the fronting of sibilants to interdentals *s > ṯ* and *z > ḏ*, thus, *ṭ > t, ḍ/ḏ̣ > ḏ, ṣ > s > ṯ*. Furthermore, the labio-velar **w* is now realised as labiodental *v*. Examples: *ṯūf* (< **ṣūf)* "wool", *ṯāḥib* (< **ṣāḥib)* "owner", *ṯultān* (<**sulṭān)* "sultan", *inta/yinti* "to give", *ḏuhar* "to appear", *riḏīʕ* (<**raḍīʕ)* "child", *bēḏ* "egg", *ṯava* (< **sawa)* "to make", *iṯim* "name", *ṯāyal* "to question", *xubuḏ* "bread", *ḏēn* "beautiful", *vadda/yvadd* "to bring", *vēn* "where". At the same time, the fronting of sibilants to interdentals, which also occurs in words of Persian origin (for example, *ḏendegī* "life"), seems to be a particular phenomenon of the Arabs of *Zīr Kūh*: in *Saraxs* it does not exist, so one can, therefore, assume that *Arabxâne* is also unaffected by it. The *Zīr Kūh* Arabs are aware of this phenomenon and are apparently mocked for 'lisping'. At the beginning of my questioning – mostly of young Arabs who had Arabic lessons at school – my informants articulated *s* and *z*, presumably either due to school education or due to contact with "non-lisping" Arabs, where it is

etymologically correct. These Arabs also differentiate between sibilants and interdentals if they talk together in regional Persian.

The split of original *ق/ك into *g/k* (with back vowels) and *ǧ/č* (with front vowels including *a*) is typical among the livestock-rearing bedouin: as in: *guʕad/yugʕod* "to sit", but *ǧāʕadīn* "sitting (masc.pl.)"; *nofag/yunfug* "to marry", but the participle is *nāfug* (masc.) / *nāfǧe* (fem.); *čān/ykūn* "to be", *ičal/yōkul* "to eat", *bāǧir* (sg.) / *bugar* (pl.) "cattle".

As in Uzbekistan Arabic, the first stage of the *gahawa* syndrome is encountered, – i.e. (usually) stressless *a* is epenthesised after the laryngeal (sometimes exhibiting vowel harmony with *o*), as in: *ǧide/yóǧodi* "to go", *ḥelab/yáḥalib* "to milk", *ʕiraf/yíʕarif* "to know" (note the different prefix vowels in these verbs: *ḥelab* differs from normal paradigms in having *a* as a prefix vowel), *ṯáʕalab* "fox", *náʕaǧe* "sheep", *áxaḏar* "green". The imperfect of the verb *nihe~nahe/yinahi* "to achieve" seems likewise to follow this pattern. The Arabic word for coffee (which is drunk nowhere in Iran) has not remained, with the Persian *ǧahve* being used instead.

Morphology

The definite article is *al-* and it assimilates to every consonant, as in: *aḥ-ḥurme* "the woman", *ab-bāǧir* "the cow", *aʕ-ʕarūṯ* "the bride", *aʔ-ᵖʔafʔīye,* "the snake", *ag-gubbe* "the house", *aḥ-ḥūl* "the dread". Additionally, in perfect symmetry, there is an indefinite article *fal-*, which assimilates according to the same rules. Occasionally there is no assimilation of *l-* either in the definite or the indefinite article, particularly when speakers are searching for the correct word, and thus by using *al-* or *fal-* keep all possibilities open.

Personal pronouns

		Independent	Suffixed after consonant	Suffixed after vowel
Sg.	3rd m.	*uhū*	*–ah*	*–h*
	f.	*ihī*	*–he*	*–he*
	2nd m.	*inte*	*–ak*	*–k*
	f.	*inti*	*–ič*	*–č*
	1st c.	*ane*	*–i*	*–y*
Pl.	3rd m.	*uhumm*	*–(h)um*	*–hum*
	f.	*ihinn(e)*	*–(h)in(ne)*	*–hin(ne)*
	2nd m.	*intu*	*–kum*	*–kum*
	f.	*intan*	*–čin*	*–čin*
	1st c.	*aḥne (Sarâb) / iḥne (Xalaf)*	*–ne*	*–ne*

Verbs

Perfect		"to write"	"to hit"	"to milk"
Sg.	3rd m.	*čitab*	*durab*	*ḥelab*
	f.	*čitibat*	*durubat*	*ḥelebat*
	2nd m.	*čitabt*	*durabt*	*ḥelabt*
	f.	*čitabti*	*durabti*	*ḥelabti*
	1st c.	*čitabt*	*durabt*	*ḥelabt*
Pl.	3rd m.	*čitibow*	*durubow*	*ḥelebow*
	f.	*čitiban*	*duruban*	*ḥeleban*
	2nd m.	*čitabtu*	*durabtu*	*ḥelabtu*
	f.	*čitabtan*	*durabtan*	*ḥelabtan*
	1st c.	*čitabne*	*durabne*	*ḥelabne*

Imperfect				
Sg.	3rd m.	*yičtib*	*yudrub*	*yaḥalib*
	f.	*tičtib*	*tudrub*	*taḥalib*
	2nd m.	*tičtib*	*tudrub*	*taḥalib*
	f.	*tičⁱtbīn*	*tudᵘrbīn*	*taḥalbīn*
	1st c.	*ačtib*	*adrub*	*aḥalib*
Pl.	3rd m.	*yičⁱtbūn*	*yudᵘrbūn*	*yiḥalbūn*
	f.	*yičⁱtban*	*yudᵘrban*	*yiḥalban*
	2nd m.	*tičⁱtbūn*	*tudᵘrbūn*	*taḥalbūn*
	f.	*tičⁱtban*	*tudᵘrban*	*taḥalban*
	1st c.	*ničtib*	*nudrub*	*naḥalib*

The paragogic *n* of the plural is geminated before personal suffixes, as in: *yudᵘrbūnnah* "they hit him". The same process occurs when suffixes are affixed to verba tertiae infirmae and to nouns ending in a vowel, as in: *anta/yinti* "to give", *yintīnne* "he gives us"; *šāvī́* "small livestock", *šāvīnne* "our small livestock"; *ubū* "father", *ubūnne* "our father". As in Uzbekistan Arabic, participle forms take the infix *inn~unn* before a personal suffix, as in: *lāgtunnah* (√lqṭ) "he grabbed him", *āxiḏtinnah* "I (fem.) take him (to husband)", *āxḏunnhe* "I (masc.) take her (to wife)", *mintitunnah* "she gave him", *mintunnhe* "he gave her".

As in all previously described Central Asian dialects, the verba media geminatae pattern in the perfect tense in the same way as the verba tertiae infirmae in form II (also in the 3rd person masc.), and verba tertiae infirmae in form II pattern in the imperfect tense like verba mediae geminatae:

Verba mediae geminatae

Perfect		"to scratch"	"to bring"
Sg.	3rd m.	*ḥakka*	*vadda*
	f.	*ḥakkat*	*vaddat*
	2nd m.	*ḥakkēt*	*vaddēt*
	f.	*ḥakkēti*	*vaddēti*
	1st c.	*ḥakkēt*	*vaddēt*
Pl.	3rd m.	*ḥakkow*	*vaddow*
	f.	*ḥakkan*	*vaddan*
	2nd m.	*ḥakkētu*	*vaddētu*
	f.	*ḥakkētan*	*vaddētan*
	1st c.	*ḥakkēne*	*vaddēne*

Imperfect			
Sg.	3rd m.	*yuḥukk*	*yivadd*
	f.	*tuḥukk*	*tivadd*
	2nd m.	*tuḥukk*	*tivadd*
	f.	*tuḥukkīn*	*tivaddīn*
	1st c.	*aḥukk*	*avadd*
Pl.	3nd m.	*yuḥukkūn*	*yivaddūn*
	f.	*yuḥukkan*	*yivaddan*
	2nd m.	*tuḥukkūn*	*tivaddūn*
	f.	*tuḥukkan*	*tivaddan*
	1st c.	*nuḥukk*	*nivadd*

With the verba tertiae infirmae, the final vowel in the imperfect reappears before the suffix again, as in: *yivaddīh* "he brings him", in contrast to the real verba mediae geminatae: *yiṯullah* "he shoves him" (*ṯalla / yiṯull* √SLL*)*.

Syntax

The final position of the verb within the clause is particularly striking, as in: *aḥne fiğ-ğidīm mâldâr kunne* "we were herdsmen in olden days". This may be due to Persian surroundings, but can also be explained by internal Arabic tendencies: word order in classical Arabic was not yet firmly fixed and in some stylistic devices, for example in *Ḥāl* clauses, the predicate always occurred in final position. Likewise, the use of a copula is not entirely non-Semitic; in the 3rd person, the enclitic personal pronoun serves as auxiliary verb, otherwise the Persian loan *haṯṯ (<* Pers. *hast* "he/she/it is/exists") is in use:

Sg.	3rd	m.	(uhū)	*mašğūl hū*	"he works"
		f.	(ihī)	*mašğūle hī*	"she works"
	2nd	m.	(inte)	*mašğūl haṯṯ*	"you work" (m.)
		f.	(inti)	*mašğūle haṯṯi*	"you work" (f.)
	1st	m.	(ane)	*mašğūl haṯṯ*	"I work" (m.)
	1st	f.	(ane)	*mašğūle haṯṯ*	"I work" (f.)
Pl.	3rd	m.	(uhumm)	ᴾ*miṯalmân hum*	"they are muslims" (m.)
		f.	(ihinn)	ᴾ*miṯalmân hinne*	"they are muslims" (f.)
	2nd	m.	(intu)	ᴾ*miṯalmân haṯṯīn*	"you are muslims" (m.)
		f.	(intan)	ᴾ*miṯalmân haṯṯan*	"you are muslims" (f.)
	1st	c.	(iḥne)	ᴾ*miṯalmân haṯṯīn*	"we are muslims" (c.)

The production of compound verbs is found in many loan words, for example ᴾ*tey ṯava* from Pers. طی کردن "to go through, to cross", *darṯ gura* from Pers. درس خواندن "to read lessons = to learn", ᴾ*zahme ğarra* from Pers. زحمت کشیدن "to drag trouble = to struggle", *ʕimal ṯava* from Pers. کار کردن "to work, to do", ᴾ*gašt durab* from Pers. گشت زدن "to make a walk/stroll/excursion".

One of the most remarkable characteristics of this dialect are the many traces of *tanwīn*. Here follows a list of the occurrences transcribed to date. (Texts III-VII have not yet been published.)

fi hūnkât ᴾ*maṯalātin čānan in ṯukūne kun nugbuḏ* "there were problems for us to find a habitation" (I,2)

ᴾ*be* ᴾ*dendegânītin mišēxtin ʕabbart* "I have had it hard in life" (II,1)

lā miğliṯin šifne, lā … fī ğâmaḥtin ġidēne "we didn't sit with any respectable congregation, we didn't … go to university" (II,1)

in xalgin minnah ᴾ*ettefâde yiṯūn* "so that people profit from it" (II,3)

ḏād ᴾmišaġatātin, ᴾgereftārīye ᴾfarâvân am-ᴾmāldārīye ʕindhe "additionally, there are many problems and stress in working with livestock" (II,5)

ḏād ᴾxeyli ᴾham min al-… šâvī il šīyātin ḏēne ᴾdaṯgīr niṯayy "moreover, we get many good things from small livestock" (II,5)

labâṯin ḏēnin "beautiful clothes" (II,5)

yā ᴾmašaġatātin ᴾbeṯyâre "with many difficulties" (III,1)

hūnak ᴾkârin šaxṯi govaḏt "there I took an own work on" (III,5)

gult ᴾmaṯaltin mā hū aği ʕindak "I said, 'no problem, I'm coming to you'" (III,6)

gâl ᴾmaṯaltin mā hū taʕāl he said, "no problem, come here!" (III,7)

aṯ-ṯāʕ naʕmatātin ᴾhaṯṯ "now there are comforts" (V,2)

lafḏum lafḏin ʕarabiyye hū "their dialect is an Arabic dialect" (VI,1)

ᴾvaxta fī hal-… ᴾdendegīthum riḏīʕin il ad-dinye yiği "when in this … their life a child comes into the world" (VI,2)

baʕdan il ṯinīnin yinahi in, ᴾagar darṯah ᴾedâme intow (= inta o) ᴾyâ šaxṯ ᴾyâ âdim al vaṯṯ ᴾxod-e ğarye hū, ᴾkam kam il ḥaddin yinahi in ᴾtark-e taḥṯīl yiṯeyy ᴾyâ il fam-ᴾmartabow (= martabe o) ᴾmaġâmin yináhi, hō maḥallāt ᴾagar iddaʕat ᴾeḏḏevâğin yird kun yiṯeyy, ᴾmarâṯem al-ᴾeḏḏevâğ towrin hinnan "then he reaches the age, if he has pursued his studies and is either a person or a man in the same village, in which he slowly reaches the point that he either leaves his studies or achieves standing and position. At this point, if he wants to marry, then the wedding conventions are as follows" (VI,10)

min xalgin hongâmathum ᴾetebâre yikūn ʕindhe "whose oration is of importance to the people" (VI,11)

il ḥālṯin yinahi "he achieves a status" (VI,21)

ᴾtebġ-e širīʕin ᴾaval yiġaṯlūnah "according to traditional law, they wash him" (VI,21)

ag-gubūr ᴾham towrin hinne "the graves are as follows" (VI,22)

ᴾagar gâḥṯin yikūn "if it is craggy/stony ground" (VI,22)

baʕd min fah-ᴾhafte ᴾham kull aḥda xarğin yird kun yinti, xeyrātin yird kun yinti "after a week, everyone has given an offering, has given alms" (VI,23)

fax-ᴾxatmin ᴾâxondi ᴾyâ fax-ᴾxatmin ᴾġeyr-e ᴾâxondi yintūn "they hold a funeral with or without clergymen" (VI,24)

o ḏād ḏa far-ᴾraṯmin miṯṯi "and besides that, this became a custom" (VI,26)

ᴾagar ᴾčenânče ᴾmaṯaltin ᴾbar ᴾxord ṯava "if, for example, there is a problem which results in conflict" (VI,26)

ᴾagar fav-ᴾvaxtin fi bēnhum towrin iṯṯēn (= iṯṯe in) "if it became, at some point, between them so" (VI,27)

fal-yōmin vâḥid ğē "one day someone came" (VII,2)

faš-šītin intah "give him something" (VII,3)

šītin marīd "I don't want anything" (VII,3)

in šāf fal-ādmin ᴾğevīnin yiği min ağ-ᴾğelow, fal-ādmin ᴾğevīnin "there he saw a powerful man, who came towards him, a powerful man" (VII,13)

gâlin inta ᴾxō šītinin (!!) *mānak ᴾvali rifīğak ᴾhanūᵃ faš-šītinin hūᵃ, ᴾagar lā inta ᴾxō šītin mānak* "he said, 'You are nothing, but your companion is something. If he's no good, then you won't be either'" (VII,21)

ᴾšāyad faš-šītin yiṭṭūn "maybe they achieve something" (VII,25)

fav-ᴾvalvaletin hū vaṭṭ aš-ᴾšah "there is a tumult in the town" (VII,28)

ᴾxeyli bintin ḏēne hī "she is a very beautiful girl" (VII,30)

gâl ᴾkū baḥḥir, himānyāt ḏowwin felânin māmin in himā ġōḏe šītin hānyāt māmin, in ir rūḥne nitrayyag, xubuḏin nōkul "he said, 'look around to see whether there is fire in the area, whether there is something to eat here, so we can have lunch, eat bread'" (VII,31)

ᴾalbatte čān ʕindum diğīğin šītin "of course, they had some flour" (VII,32)

ğide šāf trē fab-bintin ḏēne hī fī himal ᴾbâlâxāne čānat, šāf fī humūnekât trē fab-beneytin ḏēne hī "he went, then he saw a girl who was beautiful; she was on a balcony, then he saw a young woman, who was beautiful" (VII,46)

o yiğīb lēle fal-ᴾlāšitin "and every night he brought some booty" (VII,50)

fa… ğarītin fōgtarin čānat "there was a high-lying village" (VII,51)

ᴾagar inti far-ᴾrağamin čān ḏurabti "if you use an trick" (VII,53).

Lexicon

Here follows (without commentary) a short list of conspicuous words:

ištow, ᴾče "how"	*ēš* "what"
lēš "why"	*ēmta* "when"
min "who"	*ᴾtâ* "until"
hāne "here"	*hūnak* "there"
vēn "where"	*il* "towards, to"
hāč "so"	*al* relative pronoun
ᴾal-ʔân "now"	

ya + suffix "(together) with", e.g. *yāh/yāhe/yāk/yāč* "with him/her/you (m.)/you (f.)"

ᴾxṓ particle to convey hope or conviction which can often be translated as "doch, natür-lich" in German, and "didn't you" in English.

šītin "something, stuff"	*ī* "yes"
ummā́ "water"	*íbu, úbu* "father"
inf "nose"	*kilikk* (kurd.) "finger"
iǧil "foot"	*terrāše / terārīš* "tree"

alle (without emphasis!) "God", as in the phrase *alle yukūn yākum* "God be with you"

ṯava / yiṯayy "to make"	*iṯṯe / yiṯṯi* (form VIII of *ṯava*) "to become"
hanǧam / yihanǧim "to speak"	*hangōme* or *hongōme* "speech"
čamčam / yčamčim "to build"	*fayya / yifiyy* "to come, to turn back"
baḥḥar / yibaḥḥir "to look"	*ṯayal / yiṯāyil* "to ask"

rād / yirīd "to want"; the imperfect comes in two variants, *yird* and *yirad*. An informant described the difference to me thus: *yirīd yoġodi* "he would like to go", *yird yoġodi* "he will go", *yirad yoġodi* "he must go", but, unfortunately, this temptingly simple explanation does not always comply with variants in form in the recordings: there the forms are occasionally synonymous for the basic meaning.

The texts

The following texts are from *Sarâb*. Alongside the texts, I am publishing the correlating MP3-recordings on the internet in 'SemArch – The Semitic Languages Archives' <http://www.semarch.uni-hd.de/>. On <http://semitistik.uni-hd.de/seeger_chorasan_en.html> you find some photographs from *Xalaf*.

Text I.

Mohamad Haġdâdí from *Ṯarâb*, approximately 40 years old

1. aḥne fi ğ-ğidīm ᴾmâldâr kunne, ᴾbe ᴾṯūrat-e maṯalan … ᴾyeylâġ o ᴾġešlâġ šāvīnne kun nivaddīhinne ᴾbīyâbân ᴾGōl ᴾMīrân. ve fiy al-ištā va m… ᴾmōġa ḏ-ᴾḏeh hūnkât ᴾtey kun niṯīh. va fi r-ribīʕ ᴾvâḏ ¹ *kun niği il ᴾmantaġat ᴾṮarâb.*

2. fi hūnkât ᴾmaṯalātin čānan in ṯukūne kun nugbuḏ o muddat ṯū ᴾmâh ribīʕ ᴾtey kun niṯīh, ve il himal ᴾmâldârīye o ḏālang ᴾedâme kun ʕinne.

3. baʕd min ḏâk maṯalan ᴾxošṯâl ğē o ᴾxalâṯé šāvīnne min al-bēn ġidan o ᴾtark-e ᴾmâldârīye ṯavēne. ᴾal-ʔân fi ᴾmantaġat ᴾṮarow ² *humūnekât ᴾkešâvarḏī o ᴾġâlībâfī o min hak-ᴾkârāt niṯayy va ᴾdendegītne ᴾxeyli ḏēn hī, ham-ᴾmantaġatne ᴾham ᴾxeyli ḏēn hī.*

4. ummi fi ṯinīn ᴾṯī ᴾṯâlegīye min ab-bēn ġidat. va aḥne ᴾteʔadâd-e ᴾčâr ᴾberâdar ᴾčâr arbaʕ uxve min ᴾradhe tilēne. va hal-arbaʕ al-uxve ᴾvâġan ᴾan-naḏar-e ³ *… min ᴾnaḏar-e ᴾbī ummīye ᴾxeyli il vaġuhne čān yiği.*

5. ubūnne ᴾham ᴾxō maṯalan ᴾgereftâr-e šâvī čān, ᴾmâldâr čān, ve aḥne ᴾaḏ ᴾnaḏar-e ᴾnūn o ġâḏe o ḏālang ᴾxeyli vaġuhne čān yiği. ve ubūnne ᴾeġdar ⁴ *ᴾtakīd vaġeh ᴾtavâd o ḏālang čān ʕindah, ᴾbe himal ᴾvaḏe maṯalan ᴾxōb, čān yirowwonne* ⁵ *il am-ᴾmadreṯe. fi ğ-ğarīt hal ᴾdendegīye kun niṯayy, ᴾmadreṯe mā čān.*

6. yā hamukal muxtaṯar ᴾmâldârīte ⁶ *čān ʕindah ᴾedâme it-taḥṯīl čān yintīnne maṯalan ᴾxōb fiy aš-ᴾšah,* ⁷ *ᴾmurtakib-e xarġne čān yitti, ᴾxalâṯé kullne ᴾbâ ᴾtavâd ṯavēne, ᴾal-ʔân min ač-ᴾčâr ᴾberâdar ṯū ᴾberâdar maṯalan ᴾxūb, fiy aš-ᴾšahr o ḏālang ᴾkârmandhum, fal ane maṯalan fi aġ-ğarye ᴾhaṯṯ.*

7. ᴾxalâṯé ᴾdendegīt ubūnne ᴾdar ᴾxūne xarâbīye, ᴾxeyli ᴾmošaġatbâr čānat, ᴾbâḏ muġaddadan il ᴾdobâre nofag, va ᴾxōb ᴾal-ʔân al-ḥamdo lā ᴾxeyli ḏēn hū. muṯībt al-ᴾbī ummīyow ⁸ *muṯībt al-… maṯalan ādim umm o ubūh min ab-bēn, min al-īd inta ᴾxeyli muškil hī.*

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1 Pers. باز .

2   = *Ṯarâb o* .

3 Pers. از نظر.

4 Pers. dialectal for اين قدر.

5 II. form, deriving from Pers. present stem رفتن "to go".

6 Diminutive form.

7 < Pers. شهر ; in many Persian dialects, the final consonant is not realised if a word ends in two consonants.

8   = *ummīye o* .

Translation of text I

1. We were herdsmen in the olden days, such that we brought our small livestock to summer and winter quarters in the *Gōl Mīrân* desert . And in the winter, during the birthing season, we moved there. And in spring we moved back to the region of *Sarâb*.

2. There were problems to find a habitation and during three months in spring we travelled around, and due to the work associated with herding, we moved on [with settling in the winter quarters].

3. Afterwards came, for instance, a dry year and, in a nutshell, our small livestock disappeared and we gave up cattle rearing. Now we work in the area around *Sarâb* and in it in agriculture and carpet weaving and similar work and our life is very good, this, our region, is also very nice.

4. My mother died at the age of 30. And we, four brothers in total, four, four brothers, remained behind. And, truly, these four brothers, because ... it came very much over our faces [= we had a hard life].

5. And our father, for example, also had small cattle, was a livestock owner, and we, in terms of bread and food, came into big difficulties. And our father was really so obsessed with education and the like, so that the situation, for instance, was good, he sent us to school. In the village that we lived in, there was no school.

6. With the small amount of cattle breeding that he did, he provided us with more education, for example a good one in the town, he met our expenses, to cut a long story short, he made sure that we were all qualified, and now of the four brothers, three are doing well. They are in the city and so on, established, only I, for example, am in the village.

7. In a nutshell, our father's life in the personal area was destroyed, laden with troubles. He also re-married for the second time and good, now, thank God, he is very well. The misfortune of having no mother and the misfortune of ... for example, a man, his mother and his father have left, gone away, this is very problematic.

Text II

Unknown speaker

1. aʔ ʔitīm kunt, lā umm šift lā ubū šift, ᴾbe ᴾdendegânītin mišēxtin ʕabbart, ᴾtâ ᴾpinğâh ᴾtâl ʕumri hū. ayy ᴾbadbaxtī o ᴾfaġīrī o … ᴾrâh o ᴾbīrâh ġidēt. guttᵃš ⁹ *ᴾtâ aṯ-ṯāʕ natīğe mā šift, ᴾtâ yōm al-yōm ᴾpinğâh ᴾtâl ʕumri miṯti, ᴾbe himal ᴾayyâmat ʕabbarne, ᴾna ᴾṯavâde šifne, lā miğliṯin šifne, lā … fī ğâmaḥtin ġidēne, gutt minḏil mā šifne min haʔ-ᴾayyâmat ᴾtâ yōm al-yōm al-… ᴾbe haṯ-ṯinn o ᴾḏâd* ¹⁰ *minahīn.*

2. ᴾmāldārīye ṯēne, ¹¹ *ġidēne il al-ᴾğangal, min ağ-ᴾğangal ğēne il al-… ᴾvâḏ ᴾtardṯīl,* ¹² *ᴾaylâġ, ᴾvâḏ min aʔ-ᴾaylâġ ᴾvâḏ ġidēne il al-ᴾğangal.*

3. šâvī kun ʕinne, kun nirāʕīhinne, ᴾvâḏ kun niğībhinne fiy ag-gōš niṯīhinne, ᴾvâḏ kun nitlaʕhinne, naḥalibhinne, ḥalīb naḥalib minhinne, ḏēbde nugbuḏ, ğēšve nugbuḏ, čišk nugbuḏ, ᴾvâḏ maṯraf kun niṯīh, fi vaṯṯ al-xalg kun nintīhin, in xalgin minnah ᴾettefâde yiṯūn.

4. kunt oġodi il al-ġanam, ¹³ *rāʕi kunt, aḏ-ḏiyābe čān yiġan, čān yilugtan min aš-šâvī yivaddan, ᴾvâḏ čalb kun ʕinne, ač-čalb čān yōxuḏhinne min aḏ-ḏīb.*

5. ḏâd ᴾmišaġatātin, ᴾgereftārīye ᴾfarâvân am-ᴾmāldārīye ʕindhe, ḏâd ᴾxeyli ᴾham min al-… šâvī il šīyātin ḏēne ᴾdatgīr niṯayy, min šavâhō ¹⁴ *min ḏēbdathe min ğēšvathe min čiškhe min dihinhe min ṯūfhō ᴾġovâli yinaṯğan, il labâṯin ḏēnin min ak-ᴾkūrg* ¹⁵ *o ṯūf, ᴾbe īd yiğībūn, baʕd himāḏe.*

6. ḏaṯ-ṯāʕ ᴾkešâvardīye niṯayy, ᴾvâḏ ᴾtirārīš ¹⁶ *ᴾbe ṯamar minahīn, min daš ᴾdardâlu, ᴾtūt, ᴾṯīb, ᴾderešk, ᴾâlu ḏālang ᴾdatgīrne niṯayy, ᴾvâḏ ᴾmaṯraf niṯīh fi hak-ᴾkešvar.*

7. ḏâd tᵃrē himāḏe ᴾkârkâṯebītne xalg. ʕaraba ᴾfaġīre ᴾhaṯṯīn himāḏe hū. ḏâd aṯ-ṯāʕ ᴾxō yōm ᴾoftâdegītne hū.

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9   < HA قَطّ "ever; never", *gutt* or *guttᵃš* is used in the same way as Pers. هیچ.

10   Pers. زاد "birth", idiomatic phrase, synonymous with *ṯinn o ᴾṯāl*.

11   Shortened form of *ṯavēne*.

12   Pers. dialectal for سرد سیر "area with a cold climate".

13   In contrast to *šâvī*, *ġanam* refers to a large herd that can have many shepherds.

14   *-hō* is either a variant of *-he* (3.Sg.f. suffix) or a contraction from *-he o …*

15   Dialectal for Pers. كرك "soft wool".

16   Compare with Pers. تراش "lumbering, felling" and تراشه "wood shavings/pine".

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Translation of Text II

1. I was an orphaned child. I have seen neither a mother nor a father. I had it hard in life, up to the my age of 50. Misfortune and poverty again and again and … I went all possible ways. Until now I have achieved nothing, until now when I am 50; we went through such days, we have seen no education, sat in no [respectable] meeting, no … we did not go to a university, have never seen an [important] place from then until now, up to this age.

2. We were livestock owners, we went into the woods, and from the woods we came to … again into a colder area, [into the] summer quarters, then again from the summer quarters, we moved back into the woods again.

3. We had small livestock, we put them out to graze, then we brought them back again and put them in pens, then we took them out again, to milk them, to milk them for milk, to get butter, to get cream, to get dried milk, then we used it, we distributed it to people, so that people would profit from it.

4. I went to the small livestock herds, I was a herdsman. The wolves often came, they took some of the livestock, brought them away. We also had a dog, the dog took them away from the wolf.

5. Additionally, there are many problems and stress in working with livestock, however, one gains many good things from small livestock, including their meat, their butter, their cream, their dried milk, their oil, their wool. They weave rugs [from it], nice clothes from goat hair, and wool, they get [from it], and all that.

6. But now we work in agriculture, and we grow trees that produce fruit; for example, we produce apricots, mulberries, apples, barberries, plums and the like, and we also supply in this land.

7. That is, therefore, our traditional work. The Arabs who are poor, that's us. And now is the day of our downfall, is it not?

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