Functional Multilingualism and the Use of Standard Languages

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Abstract

I describe the complex linguistic situation that characterized my father's native village in the Ukraine in an attempt to demonstrate the multifarious uses of languages and dialects and the extent to which both vocabulary and grammar depend on the context in which they are used. Some of the conclusions are that writing is not language, and written language is only one form of strictly standardized language. Oral use of languages and dialects may be studied in many different "registers", from the freer forms used in everyday social interaction to higher and more formalized forms used in oral literature. Hypothetically, at least, there should be a difference between language used to formulate texts that are meant to be memorized verbatim, such as folk poetry, and texts that may be transmitted and re-performed with some variation, such as folk narratives. Finally, I will give some hints on how this can be applied to the study of Iranian oral literature.

A Swedish village

My father was born in 1905 in a Swedish village in Ukraine called Gammalsvenskby in Swedish (Altschwedendorf in German). This village was established in 1782, when my father's ancestors were forced by the Russian administration to leave their native island of Dagö (Hiiumaa) on the Estonian coast and march south to the newly colonized territories in Ukraine. The village can furnish us with an instructive example of what we could call "functional multilingualism". In their everyday life, the villagers spoke an east-Swedish dialect similar to the dialects spoken by other Estonian Swedes. When communicating with inhabitants of the nearest neighbouring villages they spoke a kind of colloquial German, and with neighbours further away they could use Ukrainian or Russian, for instance in the market of the neighbouring town Berislav. With the local authorities it was necessary to correspond in Russian. (My grandfather served as *selskiy pisar'*, i.e. village scribe, and wrote beautiful Russian.)

It was a small village. Of the somewhat more than 1,000 Swedish farmers who left Estonia, only 535 reached the area allotted to them by the Russian authorities. There they faced extremely harsh conditions, and by 1795 they numbered only 140 souls. Ten years later German colonists were settled in three adjoining villages, something that proved to be both a support and a threat to this fragile island of Swedish culture. Religious adherence seems to have been a main factor in the survival of their distinct national identity. The Swedish settlers clung to their Lutheran faith, and already after a few years they erected a simple wooden church – later replaced by a fine stone church in 1885. Two of the neighbouring German villages were also Lutheran (the third was Catholic), which turned out to be a mixed blessing for the Swedes. During the greater part of the 19th century, the Russian authorities granted religious minorities considerable independence in both administrative and ecclesiastical matters. The Swedish and the two Lutheran German villages were

governed by a special administrative committee (called in German "Fürsorge") and were united in an Evangelical Lutheran parish, in which the Swedes were a minority. This meant that clergy and teachers were predominantly German-speaking and often hostile to the use of Swedish in both church and school.

Towards the end of the 19th century, the Russian authorities took over both the secular and ecclesiastical administration, and from 1890 obligatory Russian schools were introduced all over the country. The Swedes, however, were allowed to keep a Swedish schoolteacher alongside the Russian one. Thus, they had to handle three "high languages", Russian, German and what they called "hegsvänsk", i.e. high Swedish, referring mainly to the language of the Swedish Bible translation and Christian hymns. Despite the fact that for many centuries Ukraine had had an independent history and culture, under Russian rule the Ukrainian language was regarded as a primitive peasant dialect and was completely ignored in schools and administration.

The Swedes clung to their spoken east-Swedish dialect, but their ability to write "high Swedish" was very limited. After the earlier dominance of German, Russian became the main medium of communication outside of the village. The obligatory Russian military service, which could last up to eight years, also gave the men of the village full practical knowledge of Russian. Contacts with Sweden and Swedish-speaking Finland – through letters and visitors – were rare during the 19th century, but helped to preserve the villagers' Swedish identity. At the beginning of the 20th century, the situation improved considerably. In the years before the Russian revolution, Swedish books and even newspapers reached the village, and children of some of the most well-to-do families were sent to Swedish schools in St. Petersburg. However, this comparatively prosperous period ended abruptly with the outbreak of the First World War and the Russian revolution, which brought tragedy upon tragedy to the village. Finally, in 1929, the entire village succeeded in leaving Ukraine to move to Sweden.[1]

I have dwelt on the more general circumstances of this tiny island of Swedish speakers as background for understanding the multilingualism that characterized their daily lives. How they handled this mixture of languages and dialects is demonstrated in a quite remarkable work by my father, Jan Utas. He was trained at a teachers college in Sweden in the 1930s and worked all his life as a village schoolteacher in northern and central Sweden. He wrote a number of books about his native village, and after retiring he set out to inventory the vocabulary of the Swedish dialect of his youth "as it was spoken just before the Russian revolution". The results of his work are found in a manuscript of some 4,000 neatly handwritten pages. In the present context it is especially interesting to see that a very great number of loan-words appear there, either as separate entries or as synonyms of Swedish dialect words. Thus, we find numerous loans from standard Swedish, Russian, Ukrainian, German, Estonian, Yiddish, Tatar, Georgian, Armenian and Circassian – languages and dialects that reflect the history of this minority.[2]

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[1] See Bo Utas, "Gammalsvenskbybor", in Ingvar Svanberg & Harald Runblom, eds., *Det mångkulturella Sverige. En handbook om etniska grupper och minoriteter*, Stockholm 1989, pp. 138–140.

[2] See Bo Utas, "Jan Utas och Gammalsvenskby-ordboken", in *Gammalsvenskbyborna 50 år i Sverige, 1929–1979*, Visby 1979, pp. 89–94.

Naturally, these loan-words belong to contexts in which they can be expected to appear: German in church and school matters, Russian in administrative and military contexts, Russian and Ukrainian in agricultural matters, Yiddish in trade, etc. My father argues that all these loan-words were an integral part of his native dialect, though this is not something his fellow villagers would generally admit. What we can learn from this more generally, I believe, is that spoken dialects of this kind are of a quite fluid character. Both their grammar and vocabulary depend very much on the context. The dialect appears in many different registers. For the Swedes in the Ukrainian village their dialect was, indeed, an important part of their identity. It was used in everyday social interaction, but when it came to culturally marked uses, they tried to use "High Swedish" as best as they could. Christian hymns, sermons and ceremonies, as well as folk songs and traditional rites, were performed in this prestigious form of Swedish, but at times German and Russian could also be used, especially in folk songs. The dialect was never written. Depending on the purpose, the villagers wrote in "High Swedish", German or Russian.

Multilingualism in Iran

If we transfer these observations to the language situation in Iran up until early modern times, before the rapid development of communications, education and media so drastically changed the linguistic scene, we can find close parallels. Compare, for instance, my ancestral village with a Christian (e.g., Assyrian) village in Iranian Azerbaijan surrounded by Azeri Turkish-speaking Muslims. For both groups, religion and language were important elements of their distinct identity. As for the Ukrainian Swedes, I assume that the Aramaic dialect spoken by the Assyrians differed considerably from their church language, and that their Azeri neighbours also had their own specific linguistic and religious situation, while Persian was the main means of education and written communication for both these groups.

The technique of writing one language in order to communicate in another has been practised in this region for something like 4,500 years – since people began writing Akkadian with Sumerian signs. In the 1960s one could still see scribes sitting on the big stairs in front of the central post office, the P.T.T., in Tehran writing letters in Persian for those unable to do so themselves – or when necessary reading out Persian letters in languages understood by their customers. As an example of how this works, I can relate an experience I had in the 1960s, when I was travelling by bus in the countryside of Azerbaijan. I was sitting next to a young Azeri soldier and asked him about his native language. He replied "Azeri, of course". I continued: "Now, when you are away in the army, do you write to your mother sometimes?" "Yes, I do", he said. I continued: "And in what language do you write?" "Persian, of course", he replied. Then I asked "Can your mother read it then?" "No", he said, "but they read it out to her in Azeri." It should always be emphasized that writing is NOT language. The leading Swedish poet of the 20th century, Gunnar Ekelöf, has given an apt description of this: "A text, of any kind, (…) is nothing but a sort of musical score of ideograms combined with phonetic instructions".[3]

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[3] *En självbiografi. Efterlämnade brev och anteckningar*, Stockholm 1971, p. 240.

The kind of functional multilingualism that I am describing here has clearly been characteristic of Iranian lands since time immemorial. This means that when investigating various forms of oral communication, we must take into account what "registers" we are describing. The form that direct social interaction takes depends on the people interacting, and the use of higher formal registers depends on what kind of message the speaker wants to communicate. Folk songs, folklore and traditional storytelling are formalized in ways that make the "text" (if we may call it so) memorizable – either verbatim, as with songs, poetry and proverbs, or more loosely, as with traditional stories. Since such texts are generally seen as embodying the cultural heritage, and thus identity, of the group using the language or dialect in question, they are probably formulated in a high or prestigious register that differs from everyday multilingual usage.

The case of the quatrain

Iranian languages and dialects have many kinds of stories, lyrics and epics in common. This opens up possibilities for comparing the ways such texts are treated in the various languages/dialects. A genre that is especially interesting in this context is the short epigrammatic poem known as *rubâʿî*, *du-baitî*, *ch(ah)âr-baitî* etc. I have not made a thorough study of this poetic complex, and I will here present only a general picture of how these forms are used.

This kind of quatrain lies halfway between the prestigious forms of art poetry and folk poetry. It was originally an extemporaneous poem rather than a calculated form of artistic expression. On the art poetry side, we find the philosophical *rubâʿî*, which has a specific thematic structure, the first two half-verses setting the theme (x, x), the third (generally non-rhymed) introducing an unexpected new element (y), and the final half-verse (with the rhyme returning) resolving the tension with a clever *pointe* ($z>x$). As late as in the 1970s I heard this practised very elegantly by Afghan literati, in what I believe was called a *mushâʿara*. One person begins by improvising the first two half-verses and someone else comes up with the final lines. A successful *pointe* is rewarded with applause.

This structure is reminiscent of what can be found in early Chinese poetry from the Tang period (618–907 AD) and even earlier, and also in the modern English limerick.[4] There might be some connections between the three, but it might also be a more general form of human creativity, since a similar structure is also found in musical forms like the sonata in Western music ("exposition > development > recapitulation"). Here is an early Chinese example:

> Green grass is spreading afield like slender silk,
> And red blossoms on all the trees in full bloom.
> Whether you are coming back or not,
> Flowers will all be gone when you are home.
> (Xie Tiao 464–499 AD, transl. Zhang Longxi)

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[4] Cf. G. Doerfer, "Gedanken zur Entstehung des *rubâʿî*," in L. Johanson and B. Utas, eds., *Arabic Prosody*, Stockholm 1994, pp. 45–59; A. Bausani, "La quatrina", in A. Pagliaro and A. Bausani, eds., *Storia della letteratura persiana,* Milan 1960, pp. 527–578.

The *rubâ'î* is characterized by a seemingly Arabic structure, using the *qasîda* type of rhyme, but only in two verses: *a,a; b,a*. Its metre is theoretically adapted to the Arabic metrical system through a number of possible but rather abstruse mutations of the *hazaj,* namely *maf'ûlu mafâ'îlu mafâ'îlu fa'al* (- -v/v- -v/v- -v/v-) freely alternating within the same poem with *maf'ûlu mafâ'ilun mafâ'îlu fa'al* (- -v/v-v-/v- -v/v-) – in both cases with thirteen syllables or, rather, twenty *morae*, to the line. This seems to be an arabicized form of an earlier poetic structure. There are interesting earlier, pre-Islamic parallels, such as in this so-called *surûd-i khusruvânî* (royal song):

> *Qaisar mâh mânad u khâqân khvarshêd*
> *Ân-i man khvadây abr mânad kâmghârân*
> *Ka khvâhad mâh pôshad ka khvâhad khvarshêd*
> The Qeisar (of Rum) is like the moon and the Khâqân (of China) the sun.
> My lord is like the cloud all-powerful:
> At will he veils the moon, at will the sun.

These verses are attributed by the historian Ibn Khurdâdhbih to the legendary minstrel Bârbad at the court of the Sasanian Khosrou Parviz. They were brought to light by Shafi'i Kadkani.[5] Note that each verse line contains eleven syllables.

Extemporaneous quatrains are probably the background of the so-called "wandering quatrains of 'Umar Khayyâm". Of course such *rubâ'îyât* appear under the name of numerous authors, for instance the Sufi Shaikh Auhad ud-din Kirmâni. An interesting case of an early Sufi adaptation of such oral poetry is found in a story about the Shaikh Abu Sa'id b. Abi'l-Khair of Nishapur (d. 1049). It is told that one day a singer (*qavvâl*) recited this verse (*bait*) before the Shaikh:

> *Andar ghazal-i khvîsh nihân khvâham gashtan*
> *tâ bar lab-i tô bûsa diham chûn-sh bi-khvânî*
> I shall hide myself in my ghazal
> So that I will kiss your lip when you recite it.

Although this is presented as a verse from a *ghazal*, it is composed almost exactly in the *rubâ'î* metre. This episode is reported by the great-great-grandson of the Shaikh, Ibn ul-Munavvar, in his *Asrâr ut-tauhîd* written in 1157.[6] According to Ibn ul-Munavvar's report, the Shaikh then promptly asked: "Whose *bait* is this?" The singer replied: "It was composed (*gufta*) by 'Ammâra." The Shaikh rose to his feet and together with all the Sufis went on a pilgrimage to the poet's tomb in Marv – a couple of weeks away by caravan.

There are more popular and less erudite types of quatrains, often called *du-baitî* or *châr-baitî*, that consist of four half verses with the rhyme scheme *a,a; b,a* or *a,a; a,a* and are composed in the simple *hazaj* metre *mafâ'îlun mafâ'îlun fa'ûlun* (v- - -/v- - -/v- -), i.e. lines of eleven syllables each. They tend to celebrate the ephemeral joys of life, especially wine and love. Such poems are found across a wide range of dialects. In historical sources they are often referred to as *fahlaviyât*. Many are associated with the nebulous figure Bâbâ Tâhir 'Uryân, who is supposed to have lived in Luristan or Hamadan in the 11ᵗʰ century.

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[5] "Kuhantarîn namûna-yi shi'r-i fârsî: yakî az khusruvânîhây-i Bârbad", *Ârash* 1342/1963, pp. 18–28.
[6] Ed. Safâ, Tehran 1348, p. 280.

However, the original northwest Iranian characteristics of the poems ascribed to him have mostly been Persianized, due to their broad popularity. Similar *du-baitî*s have also been collected outside of Iran proper, in Afghanistan, Tajikistan and adjacent parts of Central Asia. In modern times they are generally not sung to musical accompaniment, but rather are chanted in a peculiar style. We have no means of ascertaining what such folk-poems might have been like in earlier centuries, but it is possible that this way of singing them is quite old.

In some dialects, however, popular verses appear that do not follow Arabic types of quantitative metrical patterns. Thus, Lorimer describes popular verses of the Bakhtiaris as having "a line of 12 syllables in rhymed couplets, with normally perhaps 4 stresses to the line", but adds "in practice the number of syllables varies from as little as 9 to as much as 14 or even more".[7] Other types have fewer syllables and only two or three stresses to the line. This very much resembles what seems to have been characteristic of Middle Persian and Parthian poetry.

Conclusion

These quatrains and their closeness to oral practices demonstrate how the language used depends on the literary form. Poetry, even if composed and performed orally, must be formulated in a normalized language that allows it to be remembered, repeated and transmitted. This should be observable in all kinds of popular verse found in the various dialects of Iran, including epic (narrative) poetry. Using a term introduced above, this can be called the highest register of a language/dialect, that is, language formalized enough to make a text memorizable verbatim. Narration in prose – storytelling – would in turn require somewhat less formalized language but still follow strict conventions. In this context it is interesting to mention the notebooks that traditional professional Persian storytellers are reported to use, called *tûmâr*, *kitâbcha* or the like.[8] It is my impression that such notebooks contain texts of two types: summary descriptions of events that are meant to be expanded in the actual performance, and carefully formulated passages, often containing verses, that are meant to be repeated verbatim at crucial points in the stories. However, my main point is that both of these "registers" are made up of a language that is clearly different from the everyday interactive practices of the language in question. Here the role of loan-words also comes into play. As I tried to show at the beginning, a dialect used by a small minority surrounded by a great number of other dialects and languages is likely to include a great number of loan-words – depending very much on the context – but for literary purposes, both in verse and prose, the dialect or language will be rather puristic. Thus, my ancestors in the Ukrainian village sang the folk-songs that they loved so much in the purest possible High Swedish.

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[7] See D.L.R. Lorimer, "The popular verses of the Bakhtiâri of S.W. Persia", BSOAS 16/1954/, pp. 550–551.
[8] See M.E. Page, "Professional storytelling in Iran: transmission and practice", *Iranian Studies* 12/1979/:3–4, pp. 195–215. See also Yamamoto in this volume.

The Study of Oral Narratives in Iran:
An Assessment of Recent Activities and Trends

Ulrich Marzolph

Introduction

Almost thirty years ago, at the eleventh congress of the International Society for Folk Narrative Research in Mysore, India, January 6–12, 1995, I presented a short discussion of the status of folk narrative research in post-revolutionary Iran (Marzolph 1999).[1] Assessing a field that before the revolution of 1979 had been thriving, my presentation aimed to discuss the state of the art against the backdrop of the developments after the revolution. In 1995, a mere fifteen years had elapsed since the revolution, and both the current status of the field of folk narrative research and its future were far from being certain. In the meantime, the fortieth anniversary of the revolution has passed, and there are no indications of radical political or cultural changes in the country. Since 1995, when Iran's president was Akbar Hāshemi Rafsanjāni (d. 2017), the country witnessed a period of relative freedom of expression under president Moḥammad Khātami (1997–2005) and a period of severe restrictions under president Maḥmud Aḥmadinezhād (2005–13). It experienced another comparatively liberal period under president Ḥasan Rowḥāni (2013–21), although exterior political and economic pressure appears to work in favor of conservative trends in the country. It remains to be seen how the situation will develop under the leadership of the recently installed ultraconservative president Ebrāhim Raʾisi (since 2021).

Disputed twenty years ago for its relative merits or implied dangers, the discipline of folk narrative research has since acquired the position of an acknowledged discipline in the humanities. Considering the status of Iran as an Islamic Republic, various "red lines" that should not be challenged or transgressed do exist, to a certain extent channeling research activities and publications in the field. At present, these publications and research activities have become so numerous and diversified that, following my short survey published some years ago (Marzolph 2013), it appears to be time for a new and updated assessment. The following survey draws on my personal experience as a researcher and observer in the field for almost forty years, during most of which I have stayed in close contact with Iranian colleagues active in the country. As some of my publications had a considerable impact in the field, my remarks are to a certain extent self-referential. Although my survey focuses on Persian folk narrative, it will occasionally include remarks pertinent to the status of other Iranian languages or ethnic groups, particularly Tajik and Kurdish. The following remarks survey the field according to five aspects, taking into account (1) monograph publications, (2) reference works, (3) journals, and (4) institutions and archives. Being relatively short and focused, the present survey is not able to do justice to each and every activity in the field, as it is necessarily selective. All the same, I have made an effort to present and discuss those activities that to my notion constitute major contributions to the field.

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[1] For a fairly recent comprehensive assessment of oral literature in Iran and the Persianate world see the contributions in Kreyenbroek and Marzolph (eds.) 2010.

Monograph Publications

As my Iranian colleagues have repeatedly remarked in conversation, the publication of the Persian edition of the tales of Mashdi Galin Khānom in 1995 (Marzolph, Amirḥoseini-Nithāmer and Vakiliyān 1995) marks a clear divide, as it once more opened up the market for collections and studies of folktales that after the revolution had been dormant for many years. The tales of the talented female storyteller Mashdi Galin were initially collected by L. P. Elwell-Sutton (1912–84) in the second half of the 1940s. Following this, the collector himself had only used the tales for the preparation of a short volume of selected and adapted tales in English translation (Mashdi Galeen Khanom 1950). When I was preparing my Ph.D. dissertation in 1980 (Marzolph 1984), Elwell-Sutton had kindly allowed me to use and classify his unpublished collections of Persian tales, in addition to tales recorded on audio tapes comprising those he had collected in his own handwriting from Mashdi Galin's oral performance. When some years later I suggested to him to publish a selection of the tales in German translation (Marzolph 1985), Elwell-Sutton most graciously mailed me the original texts, and they still remained with me when he passed away in September 1984. Several years later I edited Mashdi Galin's tales in a German edition, comprising a total of 118 items in Persian, in the course of a project funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemein-schaft and conducted under my supervision by Iranian collaborator Āẕar Amirḥoseini-Nithammer (Marzolph and Amirhosseini-Nithammer 1994). Even while the German edition was being prepared, my Iranian colleague Aḥmad Vakiliyān strove to edit the texts in view of their publication in Iran. Having been submitted to the Iranian Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance for approval in 1994, the Iranian edition was published in 1995, only after we had accepted a number of amendments anonymously suggested by the ministry's collaborators. These included the change of specific words or phrases in about twenty instances and the abandoning of a total of eight tales that had been evaluated as unsuitable for the Iranian public. The book's first Iranian edition of some 3,000 copies sold so quickly that a second edition of 8,000 copies followed two years later, with an additional foreword and the storyteller's image. Since then, the book has remained on the market, more than twenty-five years later now selling in its thirteenth edition, published in 2021. It should not go unmentioned that the book stirred some dispute, as Farid Javāher-Kalām, the son of the journalist who had introduced the storyteller to Elwell-Sutton, contested the narrative of how the collection came into being, in particular criticizing the lack of a proper acknowledgment of his own contribution during the performance of the tales (Marzolph 2012, 9–12).

The publication of Mashdi Galin's tales was influential in several ways. It is the first ever Iranian publication whose text is rendered only in the colloquial, transcribed as faithfully as possible to the way the collector had written it down from the storyteller's performance. Until then, collections of tales might have been based on colloquial texts from oral tradition. But virtually all of them would have been transformed to or retold in modern standard Persian and edited so as to comply with the presumed expectations of a general audience in Iran. Use of the colloquial would at best have been restricted to short quotations of direct speech. Here now was a long text, of almost 500 pages, that demonstrated the beauty of the Persian colloquial, at the same time arguing for the permissibility, and even more: the necessity, to publish tales collected from oral tradition in a written format as

close as possible to the actual performance. The impact of this method became visible in the long run, as years later Aḥmad Vakiliyān and his wife Zohre Zangene edited a collection of folktales collected by Elwell-Sutton in the 1970s (Vakiliyān and Zangene 2007). While the tales of Mashdi Galin had been written down during the performance, the tales they edited had been recorded on audio tapes. Diligently transcribing the taped performances, the editors strove to edit the texts as faithfully as possible to the actual performance, even including the mention of additional noise or occasional comments from the audience. Their edition, prepared under my supervision and funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, is the first ever edition of Persian "folkloric" texts corresponding to international ethnographic standards. Even more than the tales of Mashdi Galin, their edition had a lasting impact on the younger generation of Iranian folklorists, as the editors of an edition of folktales from Sirjān explicitly refer to the volume as their model (Shul Afshārzāde and Nurmandipur 2015).

Another aspect to which the publication of the tales of Mashdi Galin contributed is the growing awareness for individual storytellers. Tales never exist as part of an anonymous tradition, and the fact that researchers often regard tradition as anonymous mainly results from their lack of attention to the individual. In addition, storytellers in oral tradition never tell one and the same tale. Instead, they will modify and adapt a tale's actual performance according to a variety of influences, including, but not restricted to, their personal inclination, contextual factors, and the interaction with their audience. In this manner, each and every tale performed is unique, bespeaking both the backdrop of tradition and the storyteller's talent and creativity. Although there are only few studies concerned with Mashdi Galin's performances (see, e.g., Marzolph 2000; Reżāʾi 2010), their scarcity is probably due to the fact that the storyteller had already passed away when her tales were published. To date, only a single recent publication in Persian is known to me that similarly focuses on the documentation of the repertoire of an individual storyteller. The tales were recorded by Lesānol-Ḥaqq Ṭabāṭabāʾi between 2006 and 2010 in the city of Jandaq from the performance of the blind man Ostād ("Teacher") ʿAli Gerāmi Jandaqi, born in 1942 (Ṭabāṭabāʾi 2011). Another attempt to record the complete repertoire of an Iranian storyteller is ʿEbdullāh Ṣemedī's publication of the 101 tales recorded in 1986 from the performance of female storyteller Āskol Nānvāzāde (b. 1934) in the Kurdish dialect of Mahābād (Ṣemedī 2013).

Numerous recent publications award considerable attention to the tellers of the tales they publish. Awareness for both storytellers and their individual performances or "versions" of tales had already been created by the great old master of Persian folk narrative studies, Abol-Qāsem Enjavi Shirāzi, nicknamed "Najvā." Even before the revolution, Enjavi had published a series of three volumes of Persian folktales, based on the texts collected in the archives of the state broadcast institution Ṣedā va simā-ye Jomhuri-ye eslāmi-ye Irān and the radio program he conducted (Enjavi Shirāzi 1973–6). The information Enjavi would supply was a first step towards creating awareness for a given storyteller's importance, although it was minimal, usually confined to mentioning the storytellers' name, origin, profession, age, and the date of recording. A similar amount of basic information is included in a number of publications that also draw on the texts preserved in the archive of the state broadcast institution, such as those by Enjavi's former collaborator Aḥmad

Vakiliyān (2004) or by Moḥammad Jaʿfari Qanavāti (2007). The most recent publication including basic information on the storytellers is Bahrām Farevashi's comprehensive collection of tales from the Iranian province of Lorestan (Farevashi 2018). Even more awareness for the storyteller's crucial role in transmitting narratives in oral tradition is demonstrated by publications that include the storyteller's photographic portrait (Ṭabāṭabāʾi 2008), that group the tales according to storytellers (Tākehārā and Vakiliyān 2002), or that even supply details about an individual storyteller's life and how the collector came to know him or her, such as achieved in the commendable publication of Baloch tales in Persian translation by Afsāne Eftekhārzāde (2009) and of tales from Sirjān by Mojtabā Shul Afshārzāde and Najme Nurmandipur (2015). Going together with the growing awareness for storytellers is an increasing attention to the fact that tales always exist in specific versions. A single version probably conveys more information on a given storyteller's individual predilections than on a tale's position in tradition. Accordingly, if we aim to understand tradition on a more general scale, we need to read and publish at least several versions of a given tales, such as achieved in a recent publication by Nāhid Jahāzi (2013).

A third aspect the tales of Mashdi Galin introduced to the Iranian public is the classification of tales according to the international system practiced by historical and comparative folk narrative research. First proposed by Finnish researcher Antti Aarne, translated into English and considerably enlarged by American folklorist Stith Thompson, and most recently edited in 2004 in a revised third edition by Hans-Jörg Uther, long-term member of the editorial team of the German *Enzyklopädie des Märchens* (Encyclopedia of Folk and Fairy Tales), the system has been applied to Persian folk narratives in my German PhD dissertation (Marzolph 1984). Translated into Persian in 1992 and published in a second edition in 1997, the typology's Persian translation remained unavailable for many years until the publishers could finally be convinced to publish a third edition (without any editorial changes) in 2013. Although recent publications sometimes list the corresponding tale types for the tales they publish, Iranian researchers have repeatedly told me that they are not convinced of the value of this information. Whether this low appreciation of international scholarly standards is due to an implicit nationalist agenda or to limited exposure to international scholarship remains to be studied. Needless to say, the listing of tale-type numbers is only a first step to assess Persian folktales in an international context. Probably the most wide-reaching application of international folkloristic research methods is Ḥasan ʿĀdelkhāni's study of folktales from Āmere, a village in the central Iranian province of Qom (ʿĀdelkhāni 2018). Comparative studies of Persian folktales on an international scale written by Iranian researchers residing in Iran are virtually inexistent, and it might still need considerable effort to convince them to which end these studies are useful.

Already some 20 years ago, Tajik folklorist Roushan Raḥmāni (Rahmonī) published a highly informed comparative assessment of research on Persian-language folk narratives, discussing the history of the collection, publication, and study of tales in Iran, Tajikistan, and Afghanistan (2001). But the tradition of Persian folk narratives is neither restricted to the country of Iran nor to the Persianate world that comprises large parts of Middle and South Asia. Partaking in a worldwide web of traditions, the full importance of Persian folk narratives will only come to light once their relative position in international tradition is duly acknowledged. It remains to be seen to which extent recent studies such as those on