

## Foreword

The present volume is based on 24 folk tales collected by British Iranist, L. P. Elwell-Sutton, in Iran in August, 1958. Narrated in the Gurchani dialect of Vafsi, a northwestern Iranian language, by two speakers from the village of Gurchan, some 89 kilometers north of Arak, the tales were recorded on a reel-to-reel tape recorder, standard equipment of the time.

The research for and preparation of the present volume was funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft through a grant awarded to U. Marzolph at the Enzyklopädie des Märchens at the Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen. D. L. Stilo (henceforth Stilo or first person), who had conducted five years of linguistic field work on Vafsi extended over a period from 1963 to 1976, was then invited to join the project in 1997. We would like to express our gratitude to the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft for having funded this project from 1997 to 2000. We would also like to thank the same institution for their additional funding to cover the expenses for the publication of the present volume.

We are also deeply grateful to the ILEX Foundation for its generous funding of the digitization of the original Elwell-Sutton materials and the preparation of the two compact discs accompanying this volume.

In addition to the above institutions, special thanks are due to Mrs. Alison Elwell-Sutton, who kindly presented U. Marzolph with the complete set of materials taped by her late husband, together with his field notes and other unpublished data. Without her generosity, we would not even have been able to conceive of this project.

The present volume of Vafsi folk tales is the first of a series of volumes that have been planned on this language. Future publications I envision for my work devoted to Vafsi consist of the following:

*A Grammar of Vafsi* (henceforth, the *Grammar*), presently close to completion, consists of a comprehensive grammatical description of Vafsi, with special attention given to the syntax of the language. The *Grammar* is based primarily on the dialect of Vafs and secondarily on that of Gurchan (henceforth V-Vafsi and G-Vafsi, respectively). The difference in precedence given to the two dialects for the *Grammar* stems from a much deeper and broader familiarity with the former dialect based on five years of direct field work I conducted

with various native speakers from the village of Vafs. No direct access to native speakers of Gurchani was available to me and materials on this dialect are restricted only to the four hours of recorded materials described below.

Publication of the *Grammar* has been delayed primarily due to difficulties I encountered either in trying to travel to Iran or in inviting speakers of Vafsi to Germany in order to resolve and finalize various questions I had on grammatical issues before publication. Ultimately permission to travel to Iran was denied on three separate occasions and bringing one native speaker from Vafs — Mr. Abbas-Reza Darabi (henceforth Darabi and ARD in the glossary references) — was a process that took about seven months, only to eventuate that Darabi was only willing to help with questions relating to the Elwell-Sutton folk tales, but preferred not work on issues outside the folk tales. As a result, my work on the grammar was slowed down significantly waiting to explore the remaining grammatical points in depth, but this wait was ultimately for naught. Darabi was of great assistance to me, however, in resolving questions in the Gurchani folk tales, thus enabling us to prepare the present volume for print.

Additional projected publications include the following materials on Vafsi either separately or in combined volumes:

- additional Vafsi texts collected by Stilo including both folk tales and conversational texts in the Vafsi dialect,
- a full lexicon of Vafsi including all glosses collected in both V-Vafsi and G-Vafsi dialects,
- a fuller description of the historical origins and linguistic affiliations of Vafsi.
- a separate volume on the Tatic language family, presently in preparation, will also include historical-comparative materials on Vafsi

In addition to the above, an article including material on Vafsi [STILO, 2004] can be found in a recent work on the typology of coordinating constructions in a cross-linguistic perspective.