Introduction

Vafsi is spoken in four villages in west central Iran: Vafs, Chehreqān, Gurchān, and Fark. Table 1 lists the data on the populations, the Greenwich coordinates, and the relative locations of these villages as listed in the Farhang, as well as parallel information in parentheses given in MOQDAM.

The exact linguistic affiliation of Vafsi is under question. While it has been classified as belonging to the Tatic group [STILO, 1981], particularly closely related to the Southern Tati Dialects [YAR-SHATER], other researchers see Vafsi possibly as a Central Plateau dialect [MORGENSTIERNE: 172]; LECOQ [1989: 313] considers Vafsi, and the other dialects of the Tafresh area, to have many grammatical traits in common with the Central Plateau dialects but the vocabulary of this group to be more similar to Tati dialects. In actuality no one has ever defined the Tatic family, delineated the exact extent of this family, or established its exact relationship to other groups of northwest Iranian languages. A formal definition of Tatic and how it relates to, and differs from, Central Plateau must be made before one can assign an exact linguistic affiliation to Vafsi. For the time being, we must content ourselves with seeing Vafsi as having features of both of the mentioned families. While Vafsi seems to differ substantially from the other languages of the Tafresh area in some of its basic traits, all these languages upon closer examination may prove to belong clearly to one family or the other or may possibly serve as a transition between these two subfamilies of Northwest Iranian. Vafsi also has certain features that are typical of Kurdish [ELWELL-SUTTON, MORGENSTIERNE], but the presence of these features has yet to be assessed or explained.

Speakers and Recording

From a note written in Elwell-Sutton's hand at the top of one of the introductory pages of his notes that says "Khannejin Stories," we can assume that the tales were recorded in that town. He also labeled each tale as "Khannejin A1," etc. Khannejin, whose predominant language is a Turkic language — possibly Azeri or Khalaji — is located about 12 kilometers from Gurchan. Two different speakers of G-Vafsi narrated the tales on these tapes:

Table 1

Village	Name in Vafsi	Population	Greenwich Coordinates	Relative Locations
Vafs	vǝws	4214 (4500)	34º51´ N, 49º23´ E	5 km W of Fark
				16 km N of Komijan
Chehreqān	ceræqan[1]	1431 (1200)	34º51´ N, 49º15´ E	12 km W of Vafs
				22 km WNW Gurchan
				18 km NW of Komijan
Gurchān	qurcan	628 (520)[2]	34º49´ N, 49º30´ E	11 km ESE of Vafs
				12 km NW of Khannejin
				20 km NE of Komijan
Fark[3]	pǽrkæ	303 (380)	34º51´ N, 49º27´ E	6 km NW of Gurchan
				16 km NE of Komijan
Khannejin[4]			34º46´ N, 49º32´ E	123 km W of Qom
				74 km W of Saveh
				92 km E of Hamadan
				77 km N of Arak

[1]   MOQDAM lists the Vafsi pronunciation of this village as both *caleqan* and *ceraqan*.

[2]   MOQDAM does not list a separate figure for the population of Gurchān. Since he does, however, list the figures for the other three villages and also lists the total number of speakers of Vafsi at 6600, we can assume that he must have had a figure of about 520 for Gurchān.

[3]   The Farhang lists the name of this village as *Fork*, but the Vafsis pronounced it *færk* when speaking Persian.

[4]   Elwell-Sutton's notes list this town as "Khannejin," i.e., *xænnejin*. MOQDAM gives the pronunciation as *xenejin* (and *xenein* in the local dialect).

- Speaker A, Ghazanfar Mahmudi, age 16

- Speaker B, Mashdi Mahdi, age c. 60

The actual recording covers approximately 228 minutes (12 minutes short of 4 hours) of spoken Vafsi — 118.5 minutes narrated by Mahmudi and 109.5 minutes narrated by Mahdi — for a total of about 15,000 words [ELWELL-SUTTON]. Each tale was told twice by the same speaker, once in Vafsi and once in Persian as an approximate translation. Since the Vafsi and the Persian versions were each told spontaneously, the latter cannot be considered an exact translation of the former. The time of 228 minutes of recording includes only a total for the Vafsi versions, thus bringing actual total recording time to over eight hours for both languages.

It should also be noted that on two occasions in the recordings (B6-52, B7-46), Mahdi refers to his language as "Vafsi" and never as "Gurchani." Mahmudi makes no mention of his language at all. Also of note is that in comparing the two versions of the tales in Vafsi and in Persian, neither Mahmudi or Mahdi can be considered native speakers of Persian. Occasional uncertainty of Persian words, occasional use of Vafsi grammatical patterns in Persian, and other linguistic cues indicate that G-Vafsi is clearly the dominant language of both of these narrators.

Since the two speakers recorded for about four hours each, they naturally took turns narrating. Hence the order of their recording alternated and the transcriptions of their narrations have not been regrouped here so that all the tales from each speaker come together in an unbroken progression. They are presented instead in the original order in which they were recorded on the tape. The following is the order of the tales in this volume and on the accompanying CDs:

CD One	**CD Two**
Tale A1	Tale A9
Tale A2	Tale B7
Tale A3	Tale B8
Tale A4	Tale B9
Tale A5	Tale A10
Tale A6	Tale A11
Tale B1	Tale B10
Tale B2	Tale A12
Tale B3	Tale B11
Tale B4	Tale B12
Tale B5	
Tale A7	
Tale A8	
Tale B6	

A History of the Vafsi Project

After the unfortunate passing of Elwell-Sutton in 1984, his rich collection of valuable materials tape-recorded in Iran over the years was given to Marzolph through the generosity of Elwell-Sutton's widow.

This collection consists predominately of folk tales narrated in Persian, but also includes 24 tales in Vafsi as well as the notebook containing Elwell-Sutton's diligent effort at transcribing these tales. The notebook consists of 181 pages of Vafsi transcribed in Elwell-Sutton's hand, in addition to a typed page before each of the 24 tales giving the title and a brief description in English. I estimate that he managed to transcribe the tales with about 60% accuracy — an amazing feat in itself for someone not familiar with Tati languages as such and transcribing solely from the tapes without having further access to any speakers of the language. He published one brief article [ELWELL-SUTTON 1963] on Vafsi based on materials from these tales, but aside from some basic analysis, the article consisted only of a list of partial sentences from the tales without any translations. Because of the complexity of Vafsi grammar and the difficult process of ferreting out all the unfamiliar words and forms on the tapes, I assume Elwell-Sutton never felt the materials were transcribed

completely and accurately enough for complete publication. As a result, these materials remained unemended and unpublished at the time of his death.

In 1997, Marzolph took advantage of the Internet to announce his interest in finding someone with familiarity with Northwest Iranian languages to work with these spoken Vafsi texts. The announcement sought someone who could 1) transcribe and translate these folk tales and 2) write an accompanying grammar of the language. I responded to this announcement and because of my background in Vafsi including time actually spent in Vafs, I was subsequently invited to Göttingen to work on both of these aspects of the Vafsi project.

A very important factor in the aural comprehension, transcription and translation of the texts was the practical knowledge of Vafsi I had acquired in my work with Seyyed Mohammad Sajjadi, my main informant of Vafsi. That is, during the five years devoted to collecting V-Vafsi materials with him in Tehran, I often had opportunities to listen to spoken Vafsi in the form of spontaneous conversation and occasionally to speak Vafsi both with Mr. Sajjadi or with his relatives visiting from Vafs, as well as during an actual two-week sojourn in Vafs in 1963. This type of practical competence was of invaluable assistance in interpreting the natural flow of speech found on the Elwell-Sutton tapes. Fortunately, the dialectal differences between V-Vafsi and G-Vafsi are only slight — I estimate about 5% — not enough to impede comprehension in any serious way.

Methodology and Procedures:

1. The immediate first task in Göttingen was to begin work on the tales. The handwritten transcriptions of Elwell-Sutton were gradually converted to word-processing documents on a computer directly from his notes, at first without actually simultaneously listening to the recorded materials. One or two tales were typed up at a time, depending on the length of the material. While entering the material into the computer, I corrected certain transcriptions as I went along on the basis of my own knowledge of the language rather than by actually listening to the texts. These corrections consisted of two processes:

    • Elwell-Sutton's transcription was corrected where necessary and his subphonemic transcription was converted to a phonemic transcription, at least as I understood the phonemicization of Vafsi at the time:

Elwell-Sutton:	šaıˌ krævɛs awe u vā̆ ķe (tine) pæt ķɛrɛ həuz. (A1-11)
This volume:	šay qǽr-esˏˌàẉi-o va tine ke pǽrtˏˌkærà hǫwz.
Phonetic value:	šay ɢǽrIsàwi-o va tinI ķI pǽrt kærà həwz.

Elwell-Sutton:	æz ánjaıˌ ķe tíne nænǽs xéıli šúsis ǽrguwá,... (B2-4)
This volume:	æz anjay ke tini nænæs xéyli šus isærgóa,...
Phonetic value:	æz anjáy ķe tiní nænǽs xéyli šus isærgóa,...

- While typing up the handwritten notes, I automatically adjusted or broke up incorrect segmentations of sequences of words that Elwell-Sutton did not understand clearly, transcribing them exactly as he heard them without knowing where word breaks occurred:

Elwell-Sutton:	dıvístuwǽn əddúnde u ín niyæqæliyánuˌjirɛ́nd (B4-93)
This volume:	divisd toæn æddónde-o in niæ-qæliáni -rgirénd
Phonetic value:	divís to(w)ǽn æddóndIo in niæqæliánirgirÍnd

Elwell-Sutton:	šúsis ǽrguwá,... (B2-4)
This volume:	šus isærgóa,...
Phonetic value:	šus isærgóa,...

- Another aspect of this phonemicization included inventing conventions to account for certain sandhi and morphophonemic alterations in Vafsi. The most important and frequent of these conventions is the phonetic realization of the tense/aspect marker *bǽ-* as *b̲ǽ-*, *v̲ǽ-*, *y̲ǽ-*, *w̲ǽ-*, or with the total loss of the initial *b-* (transcribed here as *_ǽ-*). See "Phonetic Symbols and Phonemic Transcription" below for a fuller discussion of this and related phenomena.

2. The next stage consisted of comparing these word-processed transcriptions with the actual recorded material. That is, as a segment of one or two tales was typed up (Stage 1), I then turned to the listening process (Stage 2) to compare the typed version with the tapes. When that segment was completed, I then returned to Stage 1 for the next segment and continued alternating back and forth between Stage 1 and Stage 2 until all 24 tales were completed according to these two stages.

As I progressed through the listening process, my guesses about unclear areas in Elwell-Sutton's transcription were in some cases substantiated; in other cases obvious changes were made. Sometimes only minor changes were necessary. In yet other cases, questions remained and those segments were highlighted for future consideration. In all cases, however, the tales had to be played over and over again, refining the transcription to some extent each time.

3. The first run-though of all the materials thus took almost nine months to complete. During this time, although priority was given to the folk tales, work on the *Grammar* was also progressing, but at a slower rate. This work consisted of transferring my handwritten skeleton grammar, begun in earnest during my 1975-76 sojourn in Iran, to a computer format for word-processing and included further development of certain areas of this grammar as work progressed.

4. After the first run-through of the tales, a second complete run-through of all the materials was conducted. Upon second listening, I found more and more corrections and refinements to make. This phase went rather quickly, about two weeks all in all.

5. When the second run-through of the tales was completed, I did an assessment of the work completed and estimated that at this point the tales had been reworked to about 95% accuracy. After one more run-through of the tapes and several reviews of the typed materials, some refinements were made but the accuracy remained still at about 95%. It was clear that the last 5% would have to be corrected and completed with the help of native speakers of Vafsi.

The 5% in question involved various types of problems:

A. Lacunae: Sections that could not be recognized or analyzed. These lacunae ranged from only one phoneme to a string of several words.

B. Words that were distinctly heard but whose meanings were not clear. Some of these were genuine Vafsi words unfamiliar to me. Others — particularly old-fashioned phrases in Arabic and Persian that are typical of folk tales — could easily be answered by any native speaker of Persian. I would like to express my gratitude especially to Mr. Mostafa Homayounfar for his assistance in this area.

C. Words that were distinctly heard and whose general meanings were known but were not clear in the given context.

D. Minor grammatical points or word forms that needed to be clarified.

E. Words that were understood and made sense but simply needed to be double-checked with a native speaker.

F. Words, word variants, expressions, grammatical forms that may have belonged specifically to the Gurchani subdialect and were different from the Vafsi subdialect.

G. Words, utterances heard that seemed doubtful (mistakes? slips of the tongue?) and needed to be checked with a native speaker. Some of these might have been genuine mistakes on the part of the narrator. This was especially evident as the speakers, particularly Mahmudi, began to tire during the recording (each speaker spoke for over four hours, including two narrations of each tale).

H. Some words were not clear, were not audible or simply did not make sense, possibly even to native speakers. At times, speech was slurred and was not corrected (probably due to fatigue, as mentioned above).

I. Linguistic interference on a low level from Persian was occasionally evident in the Vafsi of both speakers on these tapes. Often Persian words, expressions, partial sentences, false starts are uttered and then corrected to their truer Vafsi form. Sometimes they are left. In one case, Persian was used on purpose and is probably an integral part of the tale (Tale A6).

6. Upon reaching this stage in the transcription and emendation of the tales, since not much more could be done without the help of a speaker of Vafsi, I set the folk tales aside and now turned to concentrating more intensively on the development of the Vafsi grammar, a much more complex aspect of this project. The grammar that had originally been projected was only supposed to be derived from the corpus of the 24 Gurchani folk tales, the sole materials available on Vafsi up to that point (except for MOQDAM). My joining the project, however, also meant including five years of previous field work on Vafsi as well as contributing a rough skeletal draft of a grammar. This extra material was a boon to the project on the one hand, but on the other made for an ultimately much more complicated grammar, requiring more time than originally projected. It also meant that many more questions regarding the language would arise than just those found in the folk tales. In order to have more time to prepare as many questions as possible on both the tales as well as the grammar for resolution in the

field, a decision was made to postpone travel to Iran until the last year of the project, specifically autumn, 1999.

7. By the end of October, 1999 after three separate attempts to obtain a visa, it became clear that the prospects for an American scholar to conduct field work in Iran were not at all promising. Other solutions had to be found. The three most feasible plans seemed at the time to be: (A) try to locate any Vafsi speakers already living abroad, preferably in Europe, (B) meet with a few people from Vafs in a country neighboring Iran, or (C) invite one or two people to Germany. Vafs was now reachable by telephone and calls were made both from Germany and by colleagues in Tehran to friends in the village to see what could be arranged.

    Our budget for this type of expense was quite limited and an additional application for further funding for this unexpected segment of the project would have further delayed the schedule. We therefore decided first to consult with friends in Vafs on Plan (A) which would be most suitable to the budget that was available to us. This plan yielded immediate results. Friends in the village contacted a relative in Germany, Mr. Ali-Reza Darabi, who immediate called directly and invited me to Mainz to see what he could do for me. Unfortunately, Mr. Darabi had been raised predominately in Tehran and could not speak enough Vafsi to help me. The people in Vafs underestimated the depth and breadth of the types of questions I would be asking.

8. The next step was to skip to Plan (C). Since Mr. Darabi was already living in Germany, we felt the easiest and most economical next step would be to bring his relatives to Mainz. While at his house, I managed to speak on the telephone to his younger brother, Mr. Mahmud-Reza Darabi, and to his father, Mr. Abbas-Reza Darabi, both of whom were native in Vafsi. Procedures for bringing these two people from Vafs were initiated in early November, 1999. I explained the nature of the work to them and asked if both father and son (Mahmud-Reza) could spend about two months with me in Mainz to go over questions on both the folk tales and the grammar. The grammar questions, of course, were more complex and would take most of the projected two months.

9. In late May, 2000, over six months after steps were initiated, Darabi arrived alone from Iran to stay with his son in Mainz. Although it was originally planned that he would come with his youngest son, Mahmud-Reza Darabi was unable to accompany his father due to commitments in Tehran. Work with Darabi was begun on the Elwell-Sutton folk tales in Mainz in early June. The procedure of this work consisted of playing the recording of one

tale once all the way through both the Vafsi and the Persian versions and then returning to those areas where I had questions. We proceeded one tale at a time. The tapes were simply played on the family stereo system in the living room. Darabi was able to understand the tales with ease and was able to catch most words with just one or two replays. Occasionally as he helped me resolve my questions, it became clear that a few words on either side of my questions were also incorrect. Adjustments were made and notes were taken on the fuller meaning of words or passages.

10. The first session in Mainz lasted about 3.5 days, but not all this time was devoted to the tales due to Darabi's health considerations (also issues of adaptation to the new climate and cultural surroundings were undoubtedly at play). After this session, I returned to Göttingen to update those tales in the computer with the corrections and new materials that were covered in Mainz. Some new words were also added to the on-going Vafsi lexicon.

11. Respecting Darabi's need for a rest, I waited until he contacted me, about ten days later. Mahmud-Reza Darabi's arrival was open-ended but supposedly immanent. I returned to Mainz again in June to conduct a second session on the tales. This session also lasted about 3.5 days and work was more intense the second time than the first. At the end of this session, I felt the work on the Elwell-Sutton tales was more or less complete. Almost all of the 5% of the tales where questions had remained (see Stage 4 above) was now resolved. I thought I might have an incidental question here or there, but the remainder of the work from this point was to concentrate on the grammar. Darabi was reluctant to help me with the grammar questions and asked me to wait for his son to arrive from Iran to continue that work in further sessions.

For various reasons, further sessions with the Darabis never eventuated and my questions on grammar have remained unresolved. With a few exceptions, most of these questions, while numerous, were minor and could either be omitted or left open in the final publication of the *Grammar*. Since the manuscript at that point consisted of almost 900 pages of grammatical description, I felt that it would not be crucial to answer every single question that remained in my mind regarding the grammar of Vafsi. Even if all these questions had been answered, they would still have raised many more new questions. It would be unrealistic to expect a grammatical description of a language to cover every single aspect of the whole grammar.

Translation of the Tales

There are many ways to translate folkloric texts such as these Gurchani-Vafsi texts into English. It becomes a matter of taste or of external constraints as to the type of translation one should choose. Had these texts been only valuable for their folkloric content and a more palpable flavor were the primary goal in their translation, I probably would have chosen a much more colloquial, fluid style of translation than the one chosen here. In some of the humorous stories, for example, I would like to have used more English idioms and/or humorous equivalents that would elicit laughter from an English speaker in those places where the Vafsis would laugh.

Since I envision that these texts will be just as valuable for their linguistic as their folkloric content, however, I opted for a type of translation that would remain as close as possible to the Vafsi words and structures. In this manner, a linguist or Iranist not familiar with Vafsi could easily locate any words or phrases that s/he might want to check — without sacrificing any of the transmission of the folkloric content. This type of translation still allows those interested in the folkloric issues to have access to the structure of the tale, the goal or moral of the tale, or attitudes towards different issues without being affected by linguistic issues such as the use of direct or indirect speech in Vafsi, the alternation between the past tense and the historical present, or other issues that the English translation also conveys.

Having to make such a choice of styles does automatically entail a sacrifice somewhere and I feel that what has had to be sacrificed to reach both major readerships (linguist and folklorist) is the fluency of the translation. That is to say that while the English appearing in the texts is perfectly readable and intelligible (at least in those areas where the stories are clear), the translation is stilted and in places choppy. The following is a typical example of the style of English I have chosen, a style I would have made more flowing and colloquial if I had wanted to depart somewhat more from the Vafsi sentence than I did:

> (20) va "an vasetæ esdæ šókrⲅærkæ ròm ke ǽgæ condor be, yeki dæ kællæm isætæšgæ æz hurd-a-rbim. mæjbur bime." (A1)

> (20) He said, "For that reason I thank you because if it had been beets, just one of them would have broken my head and I would have been pulverized. I was obliged (to)."

I have striven throughout the translations to retain much of the direct speech used in the tales in order to keep the translation as close as possible to the Vafsi. I have not tried to "pretty up" the narrative or interpret much material

that is not explicitly stated in the texts. In many cases I have had to add some minimal material in square brackets for various reasons:

A. Sometimes the material is genuinely too confusing to leave the reader without some interpretation or clarification of what is meant. In some of these cases I have had to add my own interpretation, which may or may not ultimately be exactly what was intended. I have tried to keep these interpretations to the minimum. For example, in B10:

> (41) He came upon a deer and he hit the deer with an arrow and slaughtered it and came along. On the way as the vizier's son and the deputy's son were about to come [back] to the city, he came and stopped here [in front of them].

B. For grammatical reasons or by way of convention, the Vafsi often omits words or elements from the sentence that English would normally require. In some cases, for example the common direct object "it" in English, which is almost never expressed in Vafsi, has simply been added into the English text without any square brackets. In other cases I decided that a Vafsi "he came" would be made clearer by adding "[back]." Yet other Vafsi conventions that are not specifically grammatical also need an extra word or two in English for the sentence to make sense. There are various ways of introducing direct speech in Vafsi other than using the verbs "say" (*va* or *bísvatt~báwatt* or the present of both, *ærvaze*), but the English did not sound natural unless the verb "say" was added, e.g., "he turned [and said]," instead of the Vafsi "he turned."

As mentioned, there are many false starts, slips of the tongue, and outright mistakes in the narration of some of these stories, especially in the case of Mahmudi. In an effort to remain as faithful as possible to the spoken material on the tape, I have opted to retain these false starts and corrections, both in the Vafsi transcription and in the English. In some cases, these initial words can be the exact opposite of what the speaker intended to say or can be misleading or even completely baffling. I have placed any especially confusing material in italics as a signal to the reader that these sections are intended to be ignored. Italics are also used for occasional Vafsi words that represent cultural items with no direct equivalent in English. Some of the tales are intrinsically complex. Others are complex and presented in a confusing manner (see discussion of A3 below). If false starts that are totally misleading were added to this complexity, without any indication to alert the reader, a difficult task would be made even more difficult.

Phonetic Symbols and Phonemic Transcription; Other Conventions

Other than usual phonetic symbols, such as *æ, x, š, q,* the following symbols and conventions are particular to this text:

- *c* indicates the more common symbol *č*.

- *j* indicates the sound of the English grapheme "j," the voiced version of *c*, not the semivowel *y*.

- The nominal element and the verbal element of compound verbs are connected by "ˬ" to show that the elements are individual words but function grammatically as a unit: *piazæ-s bárˬkærdæ*. This convention is retained even when grammatical elements, particularly the short pronominal endings that indicate agreement with subject, are inserted between these two elements of compound verbs: *bæyanvǽrz-esanˬkærdè*.

- While each word has its own stress, the relationship between the individual segments of compound verbs is shown by indicating primary and secondary stress, i.e.,

     ærvazá "you (pl) say" vs. *duríˬ-rvazà* "you lie, you tell a lie."

- Since the present/imperfect marker — *æt-, ær-, æd-*, etc. — usually loses the initial vowel after a preceding vowel, the loss of this vowel is indicated with a hyphen (see *duríˬ-rvazà*, above).

- Vafsi has two sets of personal endings: Set_1 indicates agreement with the subject for past tenses of intransitive verbs and for all verbs in the present system. Set_2 functions as both pronominal possessive endings when attached to a noun and as a marker of agreement with the subject of transitive verbs in the past system. Set_2 in the latter function can either attach itself to the verb (before the stem) or be fronted to a preceding word, most commonly the direct object. I have distinguished the two major functions of these Set_2 endings attached to nouns by a dot for pronominal possessive endings and a hyphen for subjects of transitive verbs:

Possessive Suffix		Subject of Past Transitive
kænizán•*es* bą́ẉattæ	vs.	kænizan-*es* bą́ẉattæ
"*Her* servant girls said (so)"		"*She* told the servant girls."

These two examples sound exactly the same in speech. Note that agreement with subject is lacking in the first sentence, which is a common phenomenon in Vafsi, cf. *kænizan bą́waṭṭæ* "The servant girls said."

When Set₂ functions as the subject of a transitive verb in the past system that has been fronted to the noun (and, as mentioned, is indicated by a hyphen), no additional overt stress is marked. In these cases, it should be assumed that the stress falls on the syllable just before the Set₂ ending.

- The tense-aspect marker *bǽ-* is used in the present subjunctive (cf. the *bé-* of modern Persian), in the simple past, and in all the perfect tenses. This morpheme has five forms that, while they are often interchangeable, usually depend on the last sound of the previous word: *bǽ-*, *yǽ-* (also *yé-*), *wǽ-*, *vǽ-*, and *ǽ-*. Thus subjunctive forms and the past participle (and by extension the simple past and all the perfect tenses) respectively can have the following five variations, depending on the preceding word:

    bǽvinom, vǽvinom, wǽvinom, yǽvinom, ǽvinom "that I see"

    bǽdiæ, vǽdiæ, wǽdiæ, yǽdiæ, ǽdiæ "seen"

The rules for the distribution of these alternate forms in G-Vafsi are:

yǽ- and *yé-*: *yǽ-* occurs exclusively after *i* and its semivowel counterpart, *y*. Because of the *y* present, the following vowel is occasionally raised from *æ* to *e* yielding the form *yé-* for this morpheme.

wǽ-: occurs almost exclusively after *o, u*, its semivowel counterpart, *w*, and very rarely after *a* as well.

-ǽ-: occurs most commonly after vowels — *a, æ, e, i,* and less commonly after *o* and *u* — but can also occur after dental consonants *d, r, s*. This variant never (almost never?) occurs after nasals and labials.

vǽ-: occurs most commonly after vowels, particularly *a, æ, e,* and *i,* but it occasionally also occurs in initial position or after a consonant.

bǽ-: occurs in most initial positions, that is when speech is first initiated or after a pause. This form may also replace any of the above forms, especially in slower more careful speech, but also occasionally in more rapid speech.

In some cases more than one possibility can occur, allowing for a great deal of overlap. In order to show both the underlying morpheme *bǽ-* as well as the four other alternations of the first consonant, I have created a convention that shows both forms (examples given with *bǽdiæ* "seen" (past participle,

often indicating simple past tense, any person) and *bǽssom* ("that I go," present subjunctive) in order to remind the reader of the underlying morpheme *bǽ-* while at the same time showing its optional surface form:

		Convention
Underlying	Often Pronounced	used in this volume

	yǽdiæ	yǽssom	yǽdiæ	yǽssom
	wǽdiæ	wǽssom	wǽdiæ	wǽssom
bǽdiæ, bǽvinom	ǽdiæ	ǽssom	_ǽdiæ	_ǽssom
	vǽdiæ	vǽssom	vǽdiæ	vǽssom
	bǽdiæ	bǽssom	bǽdiæ	bǽssom

- In another rule also involving the morpheme *bǽ-*, the vowel *æ* is generally lost when followed by a morpheme that begins with a vowel, in which case the stress is transferred from *æ* to the following vowel, i.e.,

    bǽdiæ "seen" ==> bísdiæ "s/he saw" < bǽ- + -is- + -diæ

or: báwe (= [báwI]) "s/he came" < bǽ- + -av "come" + -e "3rd p. sg."

The same five morphophonemic alternations of the initial *b-* as in the previous rule may still occur when it is followed by other morphemes. Thus following the convention used in this volume, the forms *bís-diæ* "s/he saw," and *báwe* "s/he came" can assume the following forms in speech:

realized as:	[bísdiæ]	[vísdiæ]	[wísdiæ]	?[yísdiæ]	[ísdiæ]
transcribed as:	bís-diæ	vís-diæ	wís-diæ	(yís-diæ)	_ís-diæ

realized as:	[báwe]	[váwe]	[wáwe]	[yáwe]	[áwe]
transcribed as:	báwe	váwe	wáwe	yáwe	_áwe

The following is an example of how the transcription in the present volume includes this morphophonemic alternation and how it differs from Elwell-Sutton's transcription:

Elwell-Sutton:	vísti xéire nṓšan væryæve šó _ævi... (B3-22)
This volume:	vís-di, xǽyræ, nošoanvǽri yǽve šo _ǽve
Phonetic value:	vísti xǽyræ nošoanvǽri yǽvI šo ǽvI

• Other conventions include similar reminders of phonetic realization in connection with three areas surrounding the phone *[w]:* (1) the phoneme *v* has the very common allophone *[w]*, (2) the diphthongs *aw* and *æw* are realized *[ew]* and *[ᴂw]* respectively, and (3) any original sequences of *æva, avæ* or *ava* are all always realized as *[awa]*, cf. *dạ̲wa* "fight, argument," *bạ̲war* "belief," and *asiạ̲wạn* "miller," respectively. These sequences may be distinct *in origin*, but in the Vafsi of today, they are all pronounced the same. (The sequence of *ævæ* remains unchanged phonetically, cf. *bǽvæ(r)* "take!, carry!" or *xævær* "news.")

I have chosen the subphonemic transcription for these sounds in these texts (and in the *Grammar*). If I were inventing a Latin-based writing system for purposes of Vafsi literacy — a highly unlikely eventuality — I would certainly choose a phonemic (phonological) transcription for the language. Since the majority of readers of these tales and the grammar of Vafsi will be non-native speakers of Vafsi, however, I have opted for the subphonemic (phonetic) transcription to remind the reader of the pronunciation.

Vafsi speakers are very aware that *[w]*, and the sequences *[ew]* and *[ᴂw]*, which are so common in Vafsi, are very unusual in contrast to Persian. When they have occasion to write their language in Persian script, they are always at a loss to represent these sounds so they sound like Vafsi and not like Persian. Persian speakers would tend to pronounce *[-w-]*, *[ew]* and *[ᴂw]* as *[-v-]*, *[av]* and *[ow]* respectively. Consequently, I felt that a full phonemic transcription of these sounds for the present volume and the Grammar would also cause similar confusion.

For the reasons spelled out here, I have decided to use an allophonic transcription but with a dotted underline as a convention for these three cases. Thus, whenever a sequence with dotted underlines occurs, the reader is reminded that the phonemic realization is slightly different:

Transcription Used in this Volume	Phonetic Realization	Phonemic Transcription	Meaning
bá̲w̲e	[báwI]	báve	s/he came
họ̲wz	[həwz]	hæwz	pool
vọ̲ws	[vəws]	væws	Vafs
ẹ̲wdani	[ewdaní]	awdani	village, town
dạ̲wan	[dawán]	dævan	skirt
bá̲w̲az	[báwaz]	bǽvaz	Say!

The disadvantage of this system is that the original shape of a morpheme is not retained for comparison with the same morpheme in other contexts. The subphonemic transcription of *[báwattæ]* "said," used in this volume, for example, would look more similar both to other forms of "say" and to other past tense forms if it were transcribed phonemically as *[bǽvattæ]*, as shown here:

Present Transcription	Morphophonemic Transcription	Other Similar Form	Common Element
[bá̱w̱a̱ṯṯæ] "said"	bǽv̱a̱ṯṯæ	bív̱a̱ṯṯæ "you said"	-vatt-
[bá̱-watt-æ] "said"	bǽ̱vattæ	bǽvættæ "woven"	bǽ-

Another disadvantage, extending from the previous comment, is that related verb forms or paradigms do not always look similar (but it must be kept in mind that they do not *sound* identical either):

in this Volume	Meaning
ærvazom	I say
bá̱w̱azom	that I say; let me say
bímvattæ	I said
án-om bá̱w̱attæ	that I said that
pir ve	s/he was old
pír-a˰w̱è	s/he got old
pir víme	I was old
pír-e̱˰w̱ìme	I got old
pìr-a˰n ė̱̱w̱ìme	I didn't get old
bé̱w̱im	I came
bé̱w̱i	you came
bá̱w̱e	s/he came
bé̱w̱iam	we came
bé̱w̱ia	you came
bá̱w̱ende	they came

While the solution is not ideal, it must also be taken into account that a case of *[-e]* as in *pír-e̦ ̱wìm*, instead of the usual *-a*, only occurs once in the whole of these narratives and its negative form is not encountered at all. Further discussion of this problem can be found in the *Grammar*.

- Words with an original *w* after *u* or *o*, e.g., **mæ:luw*, are transcribed without the *w*. Even though historical developments clearly indicate that original **m* became *v*, i.e., *[v] ~ [w]*. Because *mæ:lu-e* and *mæ:luw-e* would be identical phonologically, the *v ~ w* has become superfluous after *u* and *o* in synchronic Vafsi phonology. The same process happens with other historical medial or final labials lost before or after back vowels:

*mæ:lum		> mæ:luw	= mæ:lu	"clear, evident"
*tomæn		> towæn	= toæn	"toman (unit of money)"
*kumæ		> kuwæ	= kuæ	"pile"
*adæmi	> **adæwi*	> **aduwi*	= adui	"person"
*tuxm	> ** tum*	> tuw	= tu	"seed"
*šoman	> **soman*	> sowan	= soan	"you (pl)"
*sæbay	> **sobay*	> soway	= soay	"tomorrow"
*nowbæt	> **nubæt*	> nuwæt	= nuæt	"turn"

- The phoneme *e* (except in the diphthong *ey*, which is actually an alternate of *æy*) is always realized as [I] in all contexts in Vafsi, e.g., *ben* "bottom; root" or *hénde* "they are; they exist" are always realized as [bIn] and [hÍndI] respectively. [I] is the equivalent of English or German "short i" as in "bin."

- In the glossary, verb stems are listed with the present stem listed first, separated by a slash from the following past stem, e.g., *vin/di* "to see." If the past stem is formed simply by adding a past formant to the present stem, then only the past formant is indicated but the latter is preceded by a hyphen. That is, listings such as *kær/-d* "to do, make" *zan/-a* "to know," and *gir/-ætt* "to take" indicate that the past stems are *kærd, zana,* and *girætt* respectively. The only exceptions to this style of listing the verb stems are *ar/ard* "to bring" and *a/av* "to come" whose present and past stems are so short, the full forms are listed for both.

Occasionally a verb stem may be further broken down into constituent parts but the basic stem does not exist alone. In these cases, the constituent morphemes are separated by a hyphen but still listed with the verb stem in the glossary. The two verbs *æšg-u/æšg-ia* "to break (intransitive)" and *æšg-en/æšgesd* "to break (transitive)," for example, are listed with morpheme breaks to show that *-u, -ia* and *-en* have grammatical functions, but that there is never an occurrence of the stem *æšg-* without one of these morphemes.

Punctuation

Essentially all punctuation used in the Vafsi transcriptions below are based on intonational patterns, rather than on grammatical structures as in European punctuation conventions. Of course, it is quite usual for both of these types to coincide. That is, grammatical structures that include breaks where structural units begin and end often have accompanying intonational patterns that actually mark these grammatical boundaries in speech. Such is the case with most subordinate clauses. In these cases, the punctuation of the Vafsi text is very similar to straightforward English punctuation, which is for the most part grammar-based.

In other situations, however, punctuation marks indicate intonational patterns where English does not, either because the grammatical patterns of Vafsi and English are structurally quite different or their intonational patterns are used in different ways. Two outstanding examples of cases in which Vafsi intonation is indicated by sustained intonation — represented in this text by a single comma — but in which English does not use equivalent commas are:

(1) Sequences or series of words connected by the coordinating conjunction -*ò* "and." This conjunction is always (almost always?) accompanied by sustained intonation. In the transcription of these tales, therefore, -*ò* is generally followed by a comma. I have omitted the comma in cases where the narrator speaks so fast that there is hardly time for a sustained intonation, although in effect I think it is still present, even if only very briefly. The following is an example of both the use and the omission of commas to show sustained intonation with coordinated words or phrases:

> ǽngosdésan bísan-zǽ in xun-o dǽr-esan-mala dǽ sǽr-bazári-o sǽr-dǽrvazey-o, sǽr-kucey-o, bǽle, dǽr-esan-mala-ve.

> "They stuck [lit: hit] their fingers in this blood *and* smeared it all around the bazaar *and* doorways *and* street corners, in short, they smeared it [everywhere]."-(A3-16)

(2) There is often a sustained intonation after the subject of a sentence in Vafsi. Even though the subject is an integral part of its own clause, it is often separated intonationally from the rest of the clause and is shown here by the use of a comma, e.g.,:

> yey vǽxdi hæzrǽt-e musay, vǽsse ku-i təwri-dæ ǽrz-esˬkærdè

> "Once Moses went to Mt. Sinai and asked, ..." (B7-1)

It should be noted that while the use of a comma after the subject of a sentence is not a convention of English punctuation, it is a common practice in written Persian, obviously for similar reasons of representing intonational patterns.

There are five levels of pitch involved in Vafsi intonational patterns: *high, mid-high, mid, mid-low* and *low*, of which the last four actually demonstrate grammatical contrasts. The first of these pitches, high, is reserved for the one syllable in any given clause that usually takes what is called the sentence stress. A brief description of each contour is given here but I will ask the reader to see the *Grammar* for a fuller description of the intonational contours of Vafsi and their integral role in the grammar of the language.

.   Statement intonation 1: This intonational contour starts out with a flat contour on the mid level and then usually rises to a *high* pitch on the syllable with sentence stress and then finishes out at a *low* pitch.

.-   Statement intonation 2: This intonational contour starts out with a flat contour on the mid level and then usually rises to a *high* pitch on the syllable with sentence stress in the clause and falls to a *mid-low* pitch until the end of the sentence. This pattern seems to be reserved predominately for use in narratives — not only folk tales, but personal narratives and the like as well. Even in these contexts, however, it is still relatively uncommon. Its use is clearly optional and a matter of personal choice. In the tales below, Mahmudi (Statement intonation 1: approximately 631 times vs. Statement intonation 2: 88 times, or 12.2 % of the time) clearly relies on it more than Mahdi (Statement intonation 1: approximately 825 times vs. Statement intonation 2: 11 times, or 1.2 % of the time).

?   Question intonation: This intonational contour starts out with a flat contour on the mid level and then usually rises to a *high* pitch on the syllable with sentence stress in the clause and falls to a *mid* pitch until the end of the sentence.

.?   Question word intonation: The intonation of questions that contain overt question words is usually the same as the statement intonation. A similar situation occurs in English, Persian and many other languages, cf. "Are you going home?" vs. "Where are you going.?" For these situations, I have combined both the period/full stop and the question mark to indicate both that the sentence is a question and that it has a statement intonational contour. Note: there is no initial or final question particle in Vafsi, i.e., the equivalent of a formal written Persian *aya* (or a similar particle in Arabic, Turkish, Russian, etc.) which introduces a question without a question word.

, Sustained intonation: This intonation starts out with a flat contour on the mid level and then usually rises to a *high* pitch on the syllable with sentence stress in the clause and falls to a *mid-high* pitch until the end of the sentence. Aside from its use in the two situations described above with the coordinating conjunction -*ò* and occasionally after the subject of a sentence, it has various other uses and is found quite commonly throughout any extended segment of speech.

,, Subordinate intonation: This intonational contour is quite different from all other patterns introduced above. It usually, but not exclusively, occurs on sentence-initial subordinate clauses. It also occurs quite commonly on relative clauses. Instead of having the usual *high* pitch on one particular syllable in the clause, all word-level pitches are neutralized on stressed syllables to *mid* pitch in the subordinate clauses that have this intonational pattern. In place of the pitches that have been neutralized to accompany the usual word stress, including the one clause-level stressed word, the subordinate intonational pattern also includes two changes in pitch and stress at both the beginning and the end of the clause: (1) the usually stressed syllable of the initial subordinate conjunction[1] receives the high pitch, and (2) the very last syllable of the subordinate clause gradually rises from the *mid* pitch to a high pitch with a decided lengthening of this syllable. This contour is especially conspicuous in the case of very long subordinate clauses where multiple syllables after the first word of the clause are neutralized in pitch and contour until the last syllable of the clause.   The following clause is a good example of a long initial subordinate clause with this intonational contour. Note that the word stresses are indicated here, but it should be kept in mind that they are neutralized in this clause and the last syllable, which is normally unstressed, receives both stress and a pitch gradually rising to high because of the subordinate intonational contour:

hǽnike -ttánde ænnešinénde ke edrárˏkærènde dæ tini sær-qǽbri edrar bǽrizende tini sær-qǽbriˏ,,

"...when they come to squat down to urinate on his grave, to pour urine on his grave,..." (B4-116)

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[1]   Stress on the subordinate conjunction does not hold true for /ke/ which I consider to be a subordinating particle with a grammatical function only, as opposed to a subordinate conjunction which has both grammatical function and semantic content. In any case, *ke* does not occur in sentence initial position.

This intonation, while not obligatory on subordinate clauses, is very common in the language. On the other hand, it is also not uncommon to find a second variant intonational pattern on the subordinate clause. This variant seems to be similar to — or the same as — the sustained intonation and with this pattern any syllable in the clause may receive sentence stress, as seen in sentence B6-4, where sentence stress is placed on the second word in the clause (and the last syllable of the clause does not rise):

vǽxdike <u>zer</u> _áw̥e,...   "When it landed,...

! Exclamation point: This is the only punctuation mark from standard punctuation practices that does not represent a particular intonational contour of its own in these texts. It usually occurs in the same contour of the statement intonation. It may also be the case that, in expressing the emotional content of an exclamation, the usual high syllable may be even higher and optionally longer than usual.

Numbering and Sentence Breaks

Because we are dealing with oral texts from an unwritten language that does not have the usual norms of a written language, we naturally find many examples of very long sentences. Some sentences are short and form an easy break in the text for numbering. Other sentences may have several main and subordinate clauses as well as false starts thus creating a sentence that goes on for several lines — in effect, a paragraph. See, for example, the contrast in the amount of material in two consecutive sentences from Tale B11, sentence B11-12 (over 80 words) and sentence B11-13 (only 12 words). I have generally tried to avoid breaking up long sentences such as B11-12 by inserting a number in the middle of them.

Hesitation Fillers

Mahdi very commonly uses *dær-mæ:na* and *dær-mæ:na mæsælæn* as fillers that act as a hesitation convention in his narrations. They mean approximately "that is to say" or "I mean" and "that is to say, for example" or "I mean, for example," respectively. Such filler expressions give the narrator some time to form the next thought or to figure out how to present it without a long silent pause in the narration. Mahdi sometimes uses them as frequently as two or three times in a sentence:

B12:   (2) *dær-mæ:na mæsælæm* in hatæm ór-eysdæ b̲áw̲e xatǽmi mambær
          dær-mæ:na mæsælæn v̲ís-di ke *dær-mæ:na mæsælæn* in xatæm doazdæ
          dærvazæ dire.

B11:   (31) ... *dær-mæ:na* soay ke -rbúæ *dær-mæ:na mæsælæn* væzíri kelle
          æteyzi-o bæná̭-rkærè siæn, vǽxdike bæná̭-rkærè væzíri kelle siæn,
          an váxdi *dær-mæ:na* an xákæs deresd lebáses ærpuši-o

Since these fillers are so frequent in Mahdi's speech and don't really contribute
to the meaning of the sentence or the tale, they have mostly been ignored in
the translation.

Conventions found only in the English translation section:

[__??]   Double question marks inside square brackets indicate a segment that
          is unclear to me. Sometimes even when the words are known, the
          intention of the speaker or the implications of the words are not
          completely clear.

[___]   Other material in square brackets indicates that words have been
          added in the English translation either to fill in a word that the Vafsi
          version does not need to include or to complement the English
          translation and make it flow more evenly and have it sound more
          intelligible or natural.

Other Abbreviations and Conventions

(12)   A double underline indicates a note on something in the sentence to be
          found under "Annotations" at the end of the texts. These notes
          include either some linguistic comment (grammar, vocabulary, etc.),
          found only in the Vafsi version, or comments pertaining to the
          interpretation of the sentence or other clarification of the content
          (found in both Vafsi and English versions).

{___}   Segments spoken in Persian, whether planned or unintentional, are
          included within curly brackets.