

The *Dāy* ~ *Kārg* / of Andkhoy: Language, History and Typical Professions. Discourses on Local Identity

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Summary

On Turkological ground, the existence of “small groups of Khorassanian Turkic speakers along the Amu Darya” had been postulated years ago. Field research in Andkhoy, the northwestern most town of Afghanistan, seems to have yielded proof of this assumption: The *Dayi* / *Kārgi* of the Andkhoy oasis in fact speak a dialect that comes close to Khorassanian Turkic. This paper introduces local knowledge about their historical background, religious and linguistic affiliation, and social and professional attribution, all of which are important elements in the shaping of personal and collective identities.

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The Andkhoy oasis, located in the far northwestern corner of Afghanistan, is home to a mixed population dominated by speakers of Turkic languages (Uzbeks, Turkmen and several smaller ethnic groups) with additional small, local *Farsi* and Pashtun communities. Due to its geographical situation – close to the crossroads of transregional warfare and trade between Iran, Mawarā'unnahr and South Asia, but isolated from them by arid belts – the historical *Andkhudh* enjoyed a contested but relatively independent status until its late incorporation into the empire of the amirs of Kabul in 1869.² Today Andkhoy is a regional administrative and economic centre of some importance, although continuous desertification, a shortage of arable and irrigated land, war, and the decay of local agriculture, stockbreeding and crafts through regional and imbalanced global economic competition have all dealt severe

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² Cf. B. A. Axmedov: *Istoriia Balxa* (XVI-pervaia polovina XVIII v.), Tashkent 1982: 32ff.; J. L. Lee: 'The 'Ancient Supremacy'. Bukhara, Afghanistan and the Battle for Balkh, 1731-1901, Leiden/New York/ Cologne 1996: 338.

blows to its prosperity in recent decades. Regardless of their economic difficulties, the people of Andkhoy have managed to retain their rich tradition in primary and secondary state and private education. Andkhoy's poets, musicians and learned men are not only important on a regional scale, but have made it into the high – and even the very highest – ranks and positions on the national level.

Many societal issues of relevance to the whole of Afghanistan might be studied in the microcosm of Andkhoy, as can readily be seen from this brief outline. This paper has to confine itself to just one of them: I will attempt to describe the preservation, reification, and creative re-shaping of identities by members of one small ethnic group living in present-day Andkhoy. In these processes, pre-modern and modernist categories and conceptualisations coexist and blend in interesting and sometimes surprising ways. The group under consideration is known as *D ʔı* or *K rgıl*. The study is based upon material I collected during a short field research stay at Andkhoy in the autumn of 2004. My colleague from Andkhoy, Professor M. Sālih Rāsikh, made further inquiries after considering my first draft and he provided some important additional information, for which I am deeply grateful.³

Andkhoy is home to many small ethnic groups (*qawm*⁴) that are said to speak Turkic languages, at least as a second language. These include *Kiyik i*, *Arab* and *Aym q*, *Dä:yäk i*–*Dähyäk i* and *Qızıl b š*, *Šıx* and *Urganji*, *J gi*, *L li* and *Jat*. In 2004 I was actually searching for native speakers of the *kiyik i* language when one day a gentleman asked if I was also interested in the *D ʔı* and their language, which I was. Mr Tinmas, who runs a chemist's shop and is a teacher at Andkhoy Teacher Training College as well, then said that he was a *D ʔı* himself but could not really speak *D ʔı* any more. He proposed to arrange a meeting with a colleague of his who was also a *D ʔı* and much more knowledgeable about that ethnic group than he was, and who was probably still an active speaker of the language. That meeting and two further encounters the day after took place at the assembly hall of Andkhoy town authority. Officials, clerks, visitors to the offices, and quite a few passers-by and people from the nearby bazaar who had got wind of our meetings participated for anything from a few minutes to several hours. Many of them actively contributed to what soon turned from a typical interview situation into a discussion and at times a chat about linguistic, ethnographic and historical matters pertaining to the *D ʔı* of Andkhoy.⁵

³ I should also like to express my gratitude to my generous host Anuš Sāhib (town authority of Andkhoy), to all the gentlemen from Andkhoy who actively contributed to my work as will be explained below, and particularly to Ustād Hamidullāh, an expert in the ethnography and folklore of his home town, without whose help regarding many practical and scholarly matters this piece of work would not have been possible. Needless to say, no one but myself is responsible for scholarly errors and shortcomings of this paper.

⁴ Unless otherwise stated, the single terms mentioned in brackets are rendered in local majority Uzbek (hereafter cited as U).

⁵ Large parts of the sessions have been recorded on DAT cassettes. These are kept in the Phonogrammarchiv (Archive of Audio Recordings) of the Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna (4 / 14-09-2004)

At our first session – on the evening of 14 September 2004 – Tinmas Sāhib was the only Dāyī present while about thirty local Uzbek and a few local Turkmen gentlemen had assembled. Since no one really spoke the *D yī* language, the discussion did not yield much language material. However, from an ethnographic point of view, the discussion was extremely rich; everyone present seemed to enjoy reasoning about language and matters of historical and local belonging. The discussion focused upon *D yī* matters, but also yielded a wealth of information and opinions concerning the Uzbeks and Turkmens and their respective languages, customs and so on. The participants appeared versatile in this type of discourse on identity, inclusion/exclusion and delimitation. I did some elicitation of verb forms and word-list-like questioning on semantic domains (parts of the body, animals and further subjects) and tried to inquire about thematic domains that male participants of discussion groups normally enjoy a lot such as popular sports and games, actually more in order to keep conversation going than out of a desire for systematic questioning.⁶ In any case, Mr Tinmas tended to direct the conversation more than I did. The meeting turned into the kind of cultivated social reunion (*maylis*) with a good deal of conversation (*s hbat*), the type of event at which men in Afghanistan spend much of their time exchanging their thoughts and passing on information while socialising.

We continued the interviews early the following morning. Tinmas Sāhib opened the session and presented us with brief ethnographic and historical notes on the *D yī*, which he had recollected overnight in preparation for our meeting. Uzbeks and Turkmens in the group soon joined in and the discussion got underway. Then Mīrzā Bāzār arrived, whom Tinmas Sāhib had invited as an expert in matters of their shared mother tongue and who was an active speaker of the dialect. Bāzārkhān, however, almost immediately said that his language was "a bit changed"⁷, which was to say that he did not feel capable of speaking it well enough. He proposed to bring along a better expert "whose language is still the same"⁸. We agreed to have a short session together before this other person joined us. Bāzārkhān gave a short account of his life – reporting most of it in the Uzbek majority dialect of Andkhoy interspersed with occasional *D yī* elements – and after some discussion about *D yī* matters with

and are accessible there. I am preparing a complete transcription for a dialectological study to be published later.

⁶ Although I am aware of the "observer's paradox", I speak Uzbek when doing research because this is the only local language I can use with sufficient ease. My idiolect is a mixture of Northern Afghan Uzbek dialects with "more Andkhoy and Shibirghān" in it than anything else, and additional standard Uzbekistan-Uzbek vocabulary, quite similar to the language of native Afghan Uzbeks who have had extensive contact with Afghan Uzbeks from other regions and watch Uzbekistani TV or have spent some time across the border. (Women usually keep closer to their local dialects, so my idiolect is perhaps a rather "male" one.) In order to keep the echo effect low, I prefer methods of indirect inquiry and observation with as little verbal input on my part as possible.

⁷ U: bizlāni lāhjamīz bīr andāzā āylanyān

⁸ U: lāhjasī ōšā lahja

everyone present we engaged in eliciting *D yı* vocabulary by semantic order. After that, Bāzārxān went to fetch his aged *D yı* friend.

The third session was the most fruitful one because a "really good *D yı* speaker" had finally joined us, namely, Mr. Mammad Ismāyil, whom everyone called Ismāyil Dāyī, an 81-year-old gentleman who was very much aware of his ethnic and linguistic identity. In about an hour and a half of intensive work he told the group about his life, his family, his military service in pre-revolution times, about typical *D yı* professional work and social life, and about the way life had changed in Andkhoy in the course of his lifetime. Only occasionally did someone from the audience join in with a remark. In a coda to the session, Ismāyil Dāyī summarised his central arguments about language, meaning and identity. Essentially, these three sessions provided the basis for the following observations.

1 Who are the *Dāy* and where do they live today?

D yı / (pl.) *D yıla(r)* denominates a small ethnic group of people living in and around Andkhoy who are well-known for their specific language and way of life. The word is especially used by non-*D yı* people and by *D yı* who do not regularly speak the dialect or who live in a predominantly non-*D yı* environment. In the *D yı* dialect, the appellative *D yı* is the reference and address term for Ego's maternal uncle and is also a term of address for unrelated male elders. The word is used by both members and non-members of the group as a term of address for male persons of *D yı* affiliation⁹. "This gentleman is also a Dāyī,"¹⁰ said Tinmas Sāhib when he introduced Mīrzā Bāzār, and later on he asked him: "Where were you born, Dāyī?"¹¹. In fact, I failed to inquire about this point, but I believe that as an ethnonym, the word *D yı* applies to male and female persons alike (although I cannot imagine it might work as a term of address for women). The question, however, as to whether the actual ethnonym *D yı* is derived from the appellative *D yı* – as local opinion has it – or vice versa, or whether they have nothing at all to do with each other and are connected by popular etymology only, must remain unanswered for the time being.¹²

⁹ In the Turkmen dialect of Andkhoy (hereafter cited as T), *dā:yı* also means 'maternal uncle'. However, nobody would think of calling a local Turkmen "Dāyī" in a quasi-ethnic sense of the word.

¹⁰ U: bu_kşı_am_bır_Dāyī

¹¹ D: nērdan_duy_lan_Dāyī_siz?

¹² Dzhikiev renders the name of one sub-group (tribe?) of the 19th century Teke Turkmen as "Dagilār" (Дагиляр), however, the pronunciation of the word remains obscure and there is no additional information given (А. Джикиев: Очерк этнической истории и формирования населения Южного Туркменистана (По этнографическим данным), Ашхабад 1977: 160).

According to Tinmas Sāhib, the *D yī* are subdivided into *K rgillā*, *Nis ylä ~ Nisailā*, *Qaradaha* and "a few more *t yfa*".¹³ Mīrzā Bāzār added several other "tribes of the *D yī*": *S rqamiš ~ S rıqamiš*¹⁴, *T qsaw yli*¹⁵, *Gārxur*, *Sābātfuriūš* and *Urgānj*¹⁶. He also mentioned the *Š llä*, whom he considered to be a "tribe (*t ra*) of the *Nis ylä*". Someone else ventured that the *Š l* were "part of the *D yila*" and mentioned yet another group (*t ra*), the *T qum rı*. Bāzārkhān was hesitant to confirm the existence of a sub-group called *Qaradaha* and doubted the existence of the *Kurradaha*, whose name was put forward by a member of the audience. Ismāyil Dāyī, in his turn, called the group to which he attributes himself nothing else but *K :rgār ~ K rgällä ~ K :rgıl ~ K rgıl*¹⁷. As for the term *D yī*, or any of the above-named denominations of sub-groups, he never mentioned them at all.

If the assumption is correct that *D yī* denotes the ethnic group as such and all the others are primary or secondary sub-groups of it, then the *K rgār ~ K rgıl* are certainly the most important primary sub-group.¹⁸ Kārgılkhāna, a neighbourhood of Andkhoy, is named after them. "And the *K rgillār* make up a large number in Andkhoy. Some of them are in [the neighbourhoods of] Bāyibustān, Qurān and Lāfī, others live in [the southern district of] Qaramqul and in the [south-eastern] village of Āltibölak, and some are out there in the district (*ulusw li*) of Arabgul," said Tinmas Sāhib. Someone else added Töqquzdaray, which lies between Andkhoy and Qaramqul. Tavāci, a quarter located east-southeast of the city centre, was also repeatedly mentioned as being home to many *K rgıl / D yī* families. Ismāyil Dāyī lives there. Bāzārkhān is a native of Qaramqul and now lives in Kārgılkhāna.

As an ethnonym, *D yī* is also known in Khoja Dukku, a district and small town off the road from Andkhoy to Shibirghān, where a clan (*x naw da*) lives whose members are referred to as *D yih yi Kh jadükkü*. Apparently, they do not share the linguistic or other peculiarities of the *D yī* of Andkhoy. These *D yī* must be left out of consideration here.

¹³ The element -lä represents the plural suffix (in U, -r in final position is almost regularly dropped). – The Kārgıl, Nisāy, etc. were characterised as *tāyfa* or *tēra* 'tribe' and also as 'branch', *šāxa*. Dāyī, in turn, is understood as "the general name of (the group)" (*umu:m āti*).

¹⁴ A Turkmen gentleman from the audience remarked that *Sārqamiš* live at Chorju, too.

¹⁵ Other forms proposed: *Töxsawāi*, *Töxtawāy*.

¹⁶ Someone else mentioned the *Urganji* (sic!) as a group independent of the Dāyī. They were said to live in the neighbourhood of *Urganjikhāna* and "have a special language, just like the *Kiyikči*".

¹⁷ Kārgıl is the most widely used variant. However, people stress that this is only a colloquial form (U: *kārgildi istilāhan āytadıla*), while the correct form should be *kārgār* 'worker'. The shift of the suffix -gār > -gıl does not occur in analogous derivatives. Thus the explanation of *kārgıl* as a "corrupted form" of *kārgār* may just be a case of *lectio faciliior*, so to speak, with *kārgıl* being the original term. The Oghuz nominal collective suffix -gil comes to mind – but what, then, is *Kār*? – Dzhikiev (op. cit.) mentioned the *Karagel*' (*Капарель*) as a Teke tribe of the 19th century.

¹⁸ Perhaps Kārgıl ~ Kārgār and Dāyī even denote the same thing. Explanations related to this point were not very clear and sometimes gave me the impression that the terms were interchangeable.

2 The *Dāy* / *Kārg* / dialect of Andkhoy

One can be a *D yī* without regularly speaking the *D yī* language and without even knowing more than a few words and phrases in it. The same phenomenon has often been described with regard to Afghan Pashtuns and Pashto, and in both cases, Pashto as well as *D yī*, language is nevertheless rated extremely highly as a marker of ethnic identity in public discourse and personal self-identification. At the very end of our meeting, Ismāyil Dāyī used a most impressive metaphor to illustrate the interdependence of one's mother tongue and identity:

Everyone's language has changed, but I won't allow mine to change! My mother cared for me; she had a hard time. If I now dumped her language in a pit and picked up something else somewhere, then (...) it wouldn't fit. If a man leaves his own clothes at home and puts on another man's clothes, he won't be handsome; they won't suit him.¹⁹

In fact, Ismāyil Dāyī's occasional switching from his mother tongue to Andkhoy Uzbek for the sake of smoother communication – in this case primarily with me, I assume – is not the same thing as Tinmas Sāhib and Mīrzā Bāzār's habitual transition to Andkhoy Uzbek with some occasional switching back to *D yī*. Judging from Ismāyil Dāyī's remark, the latter seems to be the dominant linguistic behaviour of Dāyī people today. Since living conditions in Andkhoy necessitate constant interaction on the part of the *D yī* with a non-*D yī*-speaking majority in different communities of practice, accommodation within or outside one's diglossic situation is the tool of choice, as Mīrzā Bāzār put it:

Dialects (always) change to some degree. If you have a lot of contact with other people, dialects will change. We have some old men who have still not abandoned their former dialect. They can't go anywhere else... But as for us, if we sit together with you, for example, then we can speak your [Uzbek] language. And if we sit together with a *F rsiw n*, we can speak the way the *F rsiw n* speaks.

Bāzārkhān and Tinmas Sāhib are very much aware of their deficient command of *D yī*. "If I speak *D yī*, it is not the real thing because I spoke (it only) in my childhood. As a young child, of course, I learnt *D yī*", said Tinmas Sāhib²⁰, and Bāzārkhān admitted, "I can't speak the *D yī* dialect very (well)"²¹. There seems to be an overtone of regret in statements of this kind, and an element of pride resounds in something Tinmas Sāhib said while exemplifying the correct use of the word *dil* or 'language':

¹⁹ D: hammasi- zuwāna aynaldı. man āylantırmā:mā! ānam_manı bāqtı! adā(w) gördı. endı unı zubān'nı yēna bır yēra t'ıqsam bır çuqura, bır yēda yena bır nērsan' ālsam so:ra ...(...) yāqmā(y)dı... bır ādam özını kālātını qōysada öy'ya, yēna bır ādamı kālasını giyib_gitsa, ö xōşray bōlmāydı. ödia öxşamāydı. – The last sentence can be interpreted as either "(these clothes) won't suit him" or "(he) won't look like himself", given the double meaning of öxša= 'resemble; suit'.

²⁰ U: man Dāyı_gapırsam lapjap kē:māydı munāçün-, çun māydalıgımdā gapırımman. māyda_baçalıyımdā Dāyı_ki örgänımmän...

²¹ U: dā:da lahjan_am_unča gaflāālmāymän.

In Uzbek you pronounce [the word] 'language' as *til* – in *D* *yı* it is *dil*. [The *D* *yı*] pronounce the *t* as a *d* – *dil*. (...) If anyone laughs at them, they say hey, that's my language! Why are you laughing at my language!²²

Even at the expense of being ridiculed by speakers of Uzbek, who hold a higher rank on Andkhoy's scale of sociolinguistic prestige, one ought to preserve one's mother tongue – at least theoretically, if not in everyday practice. For Ismāyil Dāyī, giving up his language would have been tantamount to betraying his mother, as he quite forthrightly stated. He did not use terms like *D* *yı* or *K* :*gil(lä) tili* to denominate his language, but would only refer to it as "mother tongue" and "father tongue",²³ and also "the mother tongue of our forefathers"²⁴, thus stressing the interdependence of genealogical and linguistic belonging.

Mīrzā Bāzār put forward some very practical and unemotional arguments in favour of habitual language shift. However, in the back of his mind there was also a kind of a reserve, although in his case it was not unease about "treacherous behaviour" but the discourse of language shift as a loss of authentic culture. At the end of our second session, for example, Tinmas Sāhib asked Bāzārkhān not to forget to bring Ismāyil Dāyī along for our next meeting. Bāzārkhān responded:

OK, we'll be back. As far as I know, he can't speak any other language as well as this one [i.e. *D* *yı*]! I used to have a few books – they were kept in a big chest, but some animals worked their way in and ate them all up.²⁵

The story caused a great deal of laughter since the gentlemen imagined monstrous mice capable of gnawing away at an iron-coated chest and feeding on Bāzārkhān's *Temurn ma* and other heroic epics. But why did he bring this story up at all, out of the blue? A story which was actually meant to be a sad one, but which was compensated with humour by a well-intentioned group of listeners headed by Tinmas Sāhib, who had also experienced language loss like Bāzārkhān? The story contains a widely known apologetic narrative motif: "Look, this is why we have no authentic culture any more." I think this is what came to Mīrzā Bāzār's mind while he praised Ismāyil Dāyī's sound command of his mother tongue, a piece of cultural capital he himself had given away, to his silent regret.

"Everyone's language has changed", said Ismāyil Dāyī with concern, and Bāzārkhān seemed embarrassed when he admitted that his language had "changed to some degree". Those people who participated in our sessions repeatedly engaged in dis-

²² U/D: *til* dēysiz ku özbāg dıldı, dā:yda dıl. te:nı dāl äytadı, dıl(...) birānta kulsa, öz dilim-ā! nē gulasan dılmā dē:di.

²³ D?: ānatılı ātatılı 'mother tongue – father tongue'. When Bāzārkhān talked about Ismāyil Dāyī, interestingly enough he used similar terms (U: āta tıl āna tıldān başqa tıldā gaplāyālmāydı "He cannot speak another language than (his) father tongue – mother tongue"), while otherwise he would say Dāyī, kārgıl tili, etc.

²⁴ D: ā:ta_bō:am ānatılı'd, actually 'our mother tongue of the forefathers', a rather unusual possessive construction.

²⁵ U: hā bir bārb kēlāyli:, awwāldān āxir(g)āčā šu-, āāā..., šu_tıldān başqa tillā gāpla'ālmāyk'ān. manı bir_ādrāq, k'tāblarım bārēd. bi kättā sanduydēydi, bu sanduyıni_bōysa tēşibdi qurt kēlibti_iptı.

cussions on whether there was such a thing as "pure [*D yɪ*] language" any longer, and if so, where it could be found. I was advised to consult women who were mothers and grandmothers, and to go to distant villages and remote neighbourhoods where the language might still be "pure" (*sii ä*)

Many of the interlocutors seemed to agree that *D yī* is a "language between Uzbek and Turkmen", as Tinmas Sāhib put it.

In the following samples, most attention has been paid to the phonological character of the language, although phenomena are realised in quite a selective manner: compare voiced *g* and *d* in initial position, for instance, as opposed to voiceless *k* and *t* in Uzbek (*gelaman* : *k laman* 'I come'; *dar* : *tar* 'comb'), which seem to be on everybody's mind²⁹. In non-initial position, however, it passes unnoticed and was not even correctly rendered in every case when Tinmas Sāhib produced "*D yī*" samples.³⁰ Uzbeks and Turkmen do not comment on vowel length either, which appears to be preserved (although not systematically). As for verbal morphology, this does not seem to warrant much attention. Tinmas Sāhib presented one very subtle observation concerning the use of the auxiliary verb (in *g tirj tım* : *k tirj _ dım* 'I intended to bring'), while other, no less striking peculiarities of the auxiliary remained unmentioned (*bilmä:tım* : *bilmäydım* 'I wouldn't have known'; *b :(r)tı* : *b r dı* 'it existed'). The morphology of the noun was not commented upon at all, although some of its features might seem very "strange" from an Uzbek point of view and still others unconventional from a Turkmen one. As far as the *D yī* lexicon is concerned, only a few lexemes were mentioned as being "typically *D yī*", but everybody seemed to know about them. Afghan Uzbeks do a lot of stereotyping of dialects and dialect speakers through flag words, and this seems to be applied to the *D yī*, too: "We [i.e., the Uzbeks] say *q'sqır* 'shout!', they say *aqır*"; "We [i.e. the *D yī*] say *dugma* 'button' instead of *tuyma* or *sadaf*, and then *dugma* also means *iyin* or *t tma* 'bundle', which is *gereh* in Persian...", and so on. The more bizarre the lexeme, the greater interest the local experts took in discussing it. Emotions rose highest when deliberating about the 'knot in the thread of a sewing machine', which is called *lum-lum* in *D yī* while in Uzbek it is *kulula* or *salla a* and in Turkmen, *salla*. Mīrzā Bāzār's most emphatic remark, to complete the discussion, referred to the linguistic code of politeness. He stressed that, even when talking to persons low in the social hierarchy, i.e. young female cognates, in *D yī* "everyone uses the plural form of polite address; everyone speaks with honour and respect"³¹, by which he evidently claimed difference and superiority for his mother tongue as opposed to local Uzbek and, even more clearly, Turkmen.

After completion of the first draft of this paper, I received an important piece of information from Professor Rāsikh, which shows that at least one sub-group of the *D yī* of Andkhoy does not share linguistic proximity to the Uzbeks, but is much closer to the local Turkmen:

²⁹ One Turkmen man was thrilled when this phenomenon was discussed, and he exclaimed (T) a fē:lan turkmāniā yau:γ ākāni! "Say, that's close to Turkmen!"

³⁰ Correct renderings were *düşdım* : *tüşdım* 'I have understood'; *sājā āydaman* : *sājā aytaman* 'I tell you'; incorrect ones: *gitāmān* instead of *gidāmān* : *kétaman* 'I go'.

³¹ U: hamması sıssızlab gaplaşadı, izzad_bêradı hurmat bêrad.

As a remarkable matter of fact, those members of that (*K rgıl*) *qawm* who live in Ältibölak speak Turkmen. They give their daughters to the Turkmen and take (brides) from these and their dress is also Turkmen. Those who live elsewhere speak Uzbek, but it's a different dialect from the [majority of] Uzbeks. They give their daughters to the Turkmen, but the Turkmen do not give their girls to these *K rgıl*.³²

This remark primarily emphasises that language may be the most obvious marker of *D yı* identity, but it is not an indispensable one – the *D yı* of Ältibölak are recognised as a distinct *qawm* even though they have linguistically merged into the Turkmen majority population.³³

Secondly, the remark quoted above points out a whole set of features which, along with language, mark *D yı* and other *qawm* identities according to local observers: ethnographic features such as dress (and food, housing, tools and modes of production, crafts and trade...), and genetic and social reproduction. We shall return to the latter features a little later; these play a central role in local discourses, yet, interestingly enough, have no place in modernist conceptualisations of identity. Right now we shall briefly touch upon notions of and opinions on historical belonging, which participants of our meetings considered as highly relevant to the delineation of the *D yı*'s identity.

3 Historical traditions

Our elders used to say that many years ago, two or three hundred years ago, our people came as migrants from Iran to Afghanistan..., (but) I cannot say (more) precisely.³⁴

This information provided by Tinmas Sāhib is supported, although in a slightly different version, by a piece of information given by Ustād Hamidullā, a very knowledgeable Uzbek amateur folklorist and ethnographer from Andkhoy. He related that the *D : lar*, as he called them, claimed a place called Sariyāyāč in Iran to be their original home. Written sources do not yield much information on Iranian immigrants to Andkhoy. According to the *Fihris at-Tav r kh* of Rizā Qulı Khān, Shāh 'Abbās had "transplanted" Afshārs from Khorāsān into Andkhoy. Local nobility, at least partly, was Afshār as late as the early 19th century.³⁵ Sufijān Āyā, an influential mid-20th century *D yı* scholar from Andkhoy, used to claim descent from "the Afshār or Awshār *t yfa* (tribe) of the Turkmen", as he called it;³⁶ unfortunately, we do not know which sources his opinion was based on. Linguistic evidence

³² Written communication, 10 April 2007.

³³ The above-mentioned "Dāyı of Khoja Dukku", who share the language of their surrounding Uzbek majority *qawm*, may be another case in point.

³⁴ U: bizlāni şı yaşırılarımız äytë:dılāki, köp_il āldın, ikki_uçız_il āldın, bizlāni qawmlarıwuz êrandān afyānesdāñā muājir bölë-kelyān_ekān, dëw äytë:dılā. man daqi:q aytālmëymān.

³⁵ Cf. Histoire de l'Asie Centrale (Afghanistan, Boukhara, Khiva, Khoqand) depuis les dernières années du règne de Nadir Chāh (1153), jusqu'en 1233 de l'Hégire (1740-1818) par Mir Abdoul Kerim Boukhary, publ., trad. et annotée par Charles Schefer, Paris 1876: 261; 249.

³⁶ Written communication by Prof. Rāsikh, 10 April 2007.

does not suggest any particular affinity of the *D yī* language, for example, to the dialect of the Afshārs of Kabul.³⁷ Thus, the vague local historical tradition pointing to Iran remains to be confirmed, especially with regard to the question of how the *K rgıl/D yī* as a group were related to the upper-class Afshār immigrants.

A Turkmen participant at the second meeting expressed the opinion that the *D yīlā* had actually been part of the Qara Turkmen before they came to Andkhoy. After their immigration, their language underwent significant changes and only a few features of pronunciation still resemble Turkmen today.³⁸ The main pasture grounds of the Qara Turkmen during the 19th century were, indeed, located west of Andkhoy, just across the British-Russian demarcation line of 1884.³⁹ However, neither linguistic evidence nor any further narrative tradition confirms this view.

Although it is not actually a historical tradition, another piece of information also deserves to be quoted here. Ustād Hamidullā proposed that the original name of the *K rgillā* was *Karkililār*, 'people from Karki'. Karki is located about 120 kilometres to the north-northwest on the Amu Darya in what is now Turkmenistan. Andkhoy is home to many migrants (*muh jir*) from across the border, but such people are normally aware of their special status, know about their recent migration background and maintain all this as constitutive elements of their ethnic identity.⁴⁰ The *D yī*, in turn, do not seem to have any such traditions. If they really had come from Karki – which is not supported by linguistic evidence anyway – their postulated migration must have taken place well before the 20th century.

4 Genealogy and kinship

When some men from our group of respondents encouraged Mīrzā Bāzār to tell his life-story, he opened his narration as follows:

My name is Bāzār and my father's name is Ešānqul.⁴¹ Hmmm... my grandfather's name was Awazmurāt, the name of his father was Khōjamurāt, the name of Khōjamurāt's father was Šā: murād, the name of Šā: murād's father was Šaydmurād. I know them by heart as far as this, but that's all I can recall. How many are there? Was it six?

In fact, it was only five, but this is still more of a genealogy than most Afghan Uzbeks – including those from the northeast who have basically kept tribal traditions

³⁷ Cf. the chapter on "Afšār-e Nānakčī" in Gerhard Doerfer & Wolfram Hesse: *Südghusische Materialien aus Afghanistan und Iran*, Wiesbaden 1989, 71-123.

³⁸ T/U: *Da: yīlā aslan qara turkmanlardan. (...) tillāri aylanşib qālyān. "The Dāyī are originally (part) of the Qara Turkman. (...) Their language has undergone changes."*

³⁹ Cf. the map in Hermann Roskoschny: *Afghanistan und seine Nachbarländer. Der Schauplatz des letzten russisch-englischen Konflikts in Zentral-Asien*, Leipzig s.a.

⁴⁰ Compare also Audrey Shalinsky: "Uzbek Ethnicity in Northern Afghanistan", in: *Die ethnischen Gruppen Afghanistans. Fallstudien zu Gruppenidentität und Intergruppenbeziehungen*, ed. Erwin Orywal, Wiesbaden 1986, 290-303: 290sq. et al.

⁴¹ D/U: *ātum bā:zār, ā:tamni ā:dī ešānqul.* – The fact that Bāzār, while otherwise speaking regular Andkhoy Uzbek, spontaneously switched to the Dāyī form *ā:dī* 'his name' rather than using *U āti* or *T ā:dī* was warmly welcomed by the assembly.

until today – can come up with. Bāzārxān's parents were cousins (FaBrSo/FaBrDa) and so were the parents of his parents.⁴² Such a tight pattern of cousin-marriage is exceptional even in northern Afghanistan, where close relatives are preferred primary marriage partners anyway.

Knowing one's genealogical roots seems to be more important for *D* *y* people than for Turkmens, let alone Uzbeks from Andkhoy. Like Bāzārxān, Ismāyil Dāyī introduced himself by means of a short genealogy without having been specifically asked to do so. Among Uzbeks and Turkmens from Andkhoy, I have never come across a person who chose that way of introducing himself or herself on their own initiative:

My name is Mammad Ismāyil. My father's name is Muhammadqul. My grandfather's name was Qā:r'atal.

At the audience's request, he added the name of his great-grandfather, Hā:šim, but then admitted that he did not know any more, although he felt he ought to have done. However, there were other facts related to Ismāyil Dāyī's origin which he readily mentioned:

I am from Andkhoy. A *K* *rgār*, in other words. I'm a *K* *rgār* and my forefathers lived as *K* *rgār*, and I haven't forgotten [our] mother tongue! I [still] speak [my] mother tongue and *father tongue!⁴³

Along with genealogy, the essential components of personal identity, it seems, are local belonging, attribution to a particular estate (class? profession?), and language.

With regard to kinship terminology – agnates as well as cognates – *D* *y* seems to differ from all the surrounding languages in quite striking ways. I can give only one example here. The *D* *y* use the lexeme *ena* 'mother' – which is otherwise used only by Qypchaq Uzbek speakers far outside the Andkhoy oasis – as the most emphatic flag word of their linguistic identity. When resuming his explications at the end of our session, Ismāyil Dāyī dwelled upon the conveyance of true meaning as the reason for keeping up a given language, and he underpinned that theory by the example of "mother":

na doesn't mean anything! If (on the other hand) we say *na*, then meaning can be found from that (word) *na*. *na* won't work. (...) My girl, if we talk to each other, then the only point is that [our] words should mean something! If one talks nonsense, it just won't do.⁴⁴

Ismāyil Dāyī has two wives. He talks about the elder one as "my own/real wife" and refers to her son and daughter as "my son" and "my daughter". When asked if there

⁴² D/U: ātam minan enam ikkısı amakibača, ikki amakibačanı awlādı. "My father and my mother are cousins and the children of cousins." – Here again Bāzārxān pleased the audience by using D *ena* 'mother' rather than U *āna* or T *ejā*.

⁴³ D: man özüm şu anxöydan! kargär_a! özüm kargärman. āta_böwam kargär ök'än, ānatılını hāniz_mā qöywüryänim_yöy! ānatılı ātatılı manda_bā!

⁴⁴ D: ā:nadan ma:nı çıqmā:dı! ēna dēsay ēnadan ma:nı tāpıladı. āna bölmäydı. (...) bır, qızım, bır_maxsat, bır_gapırsāy, şu gapdan bır_nērsa ma:nā tāpılsa. šāyad. bē:ma:nā gapı- gapırsa önnan, bölmäydı.

were any children from his second marriage as well, he referred to them as "her sons" and "her daughters",⁴⁵ which probably means that this was a levirate marriage. Levirate, which would be indicative of an imperative on endogamy and clan structure, is practised among the Turkmens (albeit irregularly). It is rather exceptional among the Uzbeks of northwestern Afghanistan. Polygamy due to reasons other than lack of progeny occurs almost exclusively among the *nouveaux riches* of the region. For men of modest means such as Ismāyil Dāyī, a second wife is normally out of reach and a second marriage would not be approved by the community anyway. (However, I do not know if these standards observed by Uzbeks generally apply to *D yī* / *K rgīl* as well.)

As was mentioned above, the "Turkmen" *D yī* of Āltūbōlak exchange brides with the local Turkmens, while *D yī* from elsewhere are only accepted by the Turkmens as bride-givers. I failed to inquire about marital relations between *D yī* and local Uzbeks. With only fragmentary information on matters of genealogy, kinship and marriage at hand, there is no point in discussing group identity issues in more detail from that angle. On the other hand, our sessions yielded some rich material on aspects of individuals' construction of identity.

5 What does it mean to be a *Kārg I* ~ *Kārgār*?

Ismāyil Dāyī, who was the person in the group of respondents most deeply conscious about and faithful to what he understood as its traditions, exclusively used *K rgār* ~ *K rgārlār* ~ *K rgīl(lār)* to denominate himself and his kin; he did not use the term *D yī* at all. Bāzārxān did not explicitly apply the term *K rgār* to himself. Interestingly, though, the way he explained both names gives us reason to assume that *K rgār* might actually be the emic term for the group under consideration, while *D yī* might originally be an etic one. According to Mīrzā Bāzār, *K rgār* is a *taxallus*, that is, a self-given name. In opposition to that, *D yī* is understood to be a *laqab*, a name bestowed by elders or outsiders. This is what Mīrzā Bāzār said:

D yī is what they say in Persian. They call us *D yī*... Now the *taxallus K :gār*, I should say, is the following..., a servant or a worker, a craftsman, [or something] like that...⁴⁶

When I asked Ismāyil Dāyī what he had in mind when he called himself and his kin *K rgār*, he explained the term as follows:

K :rgār means – ehm – that he is a man who is committed. He is committed, and from that..., the meaning of *k :rgīl* has remained from that, from the word 'committed'. (...) If we decide to carry out a piece of work, (as a real *k :rgār* we) will see it through.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ D: öz ayālumnāmanı bir öylm bir qıdım bā! – [U: ikkilānçı ayālīzdān nēčta awlād-?] – D: ikkilānçı ayālumnān uē öylı bā ikki qıyzi bā.

⁴⁶ U: dā:yı dēb pārsıda āytadı. bīdlānı dā:yı āytād-, ēndı kā:gār dēyman taxallusı şundāy bır bā: gē: bır xīdmādgār: bır kārgār hunarmānn ana şunnāy... .

Commitment and dedication recurred as central notions in Ismāyil Dāyī's account of his life. The way he embedded these terms in his narration suggests that he did not just claim them as individual characteristics of his own, but also understood them as typical features of all his fellow *K rgillā* of both sexes. This idea of commitment is not confined to the realm of professional labour, but seems to be a sort of philosophy of life that extends to whatever one does. Ismāyil Dāyī remembered his military service as follows:

All those troop commanders and stuff, they all appreciated me: 'Bravo! You haven't had any hospital [leave] or illness or absences [on your record]! How did you manage to get by? Did you live on [supplies from] your own household?', they said. 'Well, no,' I said, 'Since I've come here to restore the reign of Islam, I've been working with dedication!'⁴⁸

"Working with dedication" and similar phrases which Ismāyil Dāyī used over and over again echo the element *k r* 'work' of the ethnonym *K rgil*. Ismāyil Dāyī's self-identification seems most directly and closely associated with labour, craft and professionalism. His account suggests that there exists a specific kind of labour which is even more indicative of "*k rgar*-ness" than others: sometime after being discharged from the army, Ismāyil Dāyī found the ideal job, namely, he was employed in the processing of sheep guts and karakul skins. Ismāyil Dāyī did not explicitly say that "all the *K rgärlä*" earned their living that way, but his craft seems to have been typical of the *K rgärlä* at that time. Belonging to a social group that is characterised by a very specific kind of labour, and holding a positive, affirmative attitude towards that type of work appears to play a decisive role in the shaping of *K rgil* individuals' and the *K rgil* group's identity, perhaps even more than notions of descent, locality, or shared historical memory and socio-political goals.⁴⁹

At least at the climax of Ismāyil Dāyī's working life in the 1960s and 1970s, *K rgär* work was a cross-breeding of dependent labour and personal entrepreneurship. The men would purchase sheep intestines and skins from butchers or directly from the stockbreeders at their own risk⁵⁰; if they knew little or nothing about quality, the

⁴⁷ D: *kā:rgär ma:n(ā)sı bır ma:tä köp_bır, bā:yäyrat ādamak'an. bā:yäyratak'an, äazu-šünmān, kā:rgil ma:nāt šünnan qā:yan- bā:yäyrätli: qu:lidan qā:yan. (...)bır wadapāyi i:wā:rgidäg böytaG' šu_wadıpanı, dındırä'ık'ān.* – There is no *tindir= / *dindir= 'to take care of sth., to settle sth.' in U or T; the non-Dāyī participants of the meeting noticed the exotic word with approval and admiration.

⁴⁸ D: *mayı tamā:m-bır öša yēwar pēwar pırqa, riyāsat arkān, hamması tambardı. ā:parın tandan nē šapāxānayn_bā, nē sanda ma:ridin_bā. nē sand(a)_yāyr' ā:zirin_bā. sän qandāy öttēy? öyi(ñ)da guzarān ātti'y'ñ dedi. yā-u mān äytümman dīn_islām dawlatın burda_kı etmaya gēldim, ixlās_minam_man kā:r_ādaman!*

⁴⁹ While socialist ideology had quite a few followers in Andkhoy prior to 1978 and during the PNDP era, Ismāyil Dāyī did not appear to have been influenced by the kind of class and labour discourse this would be likely to have promoted.

⁵⁰ D: *ru:damı ödini, qastāwlanān ālattēy. qastawda yā maynānnan. ana ölan'-, bāyla, ālu_gelattı_ana öšalanı, xandārley_ēdättēy.* "As for the guts, we would purchase them from the butchers. At the butchers', or from out of town. Out there (from) the pastures, the stockbreeders would bring them along and we would buy them."

material would go to waste during the curing process and the loss was all theirs. They would clean, cure, fashion and bundle the guts – again, this whole working procedure was called *k r* by Ismāyil Dāyī – and the master would ship the products to Germany and Poland via Kabul⁵¹. Karakul skins were finished and traded the same way. Although the workers bore the entire business risk themselves, they were not free to organise the work process. If they wanted to attend feasts, for example, they had to get their master's consent first.⁵² Their wage was ten Afghani a day, which would easily have fed a small family in those days. Then times changed, brokers started buying up the raw material and taking it away, and there was no more manufacturing on the spot. Ismāyil Dāyī's sons are no longer in their father's semi-dependent business, but earn a modest living as day-labourers.

Ismāyil Dāyī may have led a typical *K rgär* life in pre-revolution times, keeping to low-capital and low-income semi-dependent entrepreneurship due to a shortage of land and water or even because of total landlessness. By and large, people with his status seem to be confined to day-to-day job opportunities, even today. However, this does not mean that all *D yı* were toilers or remained excluded from social mobility during the 20th century. Bāzārxān, who also comes from a modest background, worked his way up from petty farming to the positions of a village teacher and clerk working for the town administration of Andkhoy. All of his daughters and sons have received higher education and are in teaching or other white-collar professions. Tinmas Sāhib lectures at the Teacher Training College, runs a chemist's shop and belongs to the leading intellectual and political circles of the city. The reputation of members of the *D yı* community in teaching, law, theology and the verbal arts extends well beyond the borders of the province and *K rgär* and *D yı* are personal *taxallus* names that occur among *loya jirga* members and high-ranking regional politicians. The highest position a *D yı* is remembered for would have been *q i'lu t*. Qāzi Bābā Murād, father of Sufijān Āyā, who was mentioned above, and a member of a dynasty of learned men, was Supreme Judge of Afghanistan during the reign of Amir Abdurrahmān Khān.

6 Rumours

The fact that a *D yı* was *q i'lu t*, which is a supreme function in state administration and orthodox religious learning, testifies to the fact that this person's identity as a Sunni Muslim is beyond any doubt, and most probably the same would hold true for his fellow *K rgıllar* as such. However, things do not seem to be quite as straightforward as that. I have repeatedly heard non-*D yı* from Andkhoy say that the

⁵¹ D: muni bāylass kā:bul_yewāratēy. bō:y'wıt. bıllā kār adāttēy. "We would tie them into bundles and send them to Kabul. [Or actually,] our master would. We [only] did the basic work."

⁵² D: bir jašn bōl'sa, yā bir tōy bōlsa, uja, bāy'wud, bıdłanı qōywurattı. bırruz-yarımruz, āzād bōlattēy. "If there was a public or private feast, then our master would allow us to go. We would get time off work for a day or half a day."

D yī are "Sunni today, but who knows what they may have been a few centuries ago". Suspicion of a Shiite past was not substantiated or specified in my presence, but the rumour was clearly in the air. Evidence of strict endogamy and an originally low rank in the social hierarchy seems to fit in with such rumours. In this context it is worth recalling Mir Abdulkarim Bukhārī's account of the situation of Andkhoy in the 1810s, when the oasis was "governed by Rahmatullāh Khān Afshār. Previously people there had followed the Shia, but under Afghan domination the inhabitants became Sunnites"⁵³.

A piece of oral tradition somewhere between mockery and ethnic slander states that the *K rgīl* have inherited the sword that cut off the head of Imām Husayn and that the sword is kept by the richest and most influential *K rgīl* family. People like to make fun of *D yī* by asking them, "Whose home is the sword in?", to which the *D yī* respond by giving the name of a wealthy family of their *qawm*. Of all the markers of ethnic difference at work in Afghanistan, confessional denomination seems to be the one that leads to strictest delimitation in matters of everyday life and symbolic as well as actual reproduction. In the case of the *D yī*, sincere segregation in historical times – if it ever existed for denominational reasons – has been played down to the level of a joke in which both sides can participate on equal terms. Serious surface discourse does acknowledge a difference, but does not trespass into discrimination.

7 Who are "the others" in the eyes of the *Dāy* ~ *Kārgār*?

The fact that I was particularly interested in *D yī* matters may have temporarily granted *D yī* identity some extra glamour which it does not enjoy at all times. However, the general attitude of non-*D yī* people towards "the *D yī*", regardless of residual clouds, seems to be thoroughly positive (which is remarkable in Andkhoy because there is a lot of mutual reserve among some of the ethnic groups there). It seems to me as if *D yī* could pass for Uzbeks in everyday life unless they insisted on being different; drawing borders around the group today seems to depend on *D yī* initiative more than on the will of others.

Our *D yī* ~ *K rgār* speakers had various criteria of delimitation in mind when they mentioned "the others" and would call "the others" by different names in accordance with the respective criteria. The most apparent and important marker of identity is language. When Tinmas Sāhib and Mīrzā Bāzār discussed *D yī* matters from the point of view of language, they would quite unsurprisingly talk about the *D yī* as opposed to "the Uzbeks" and their language *zbaki*, or speak of "the Turkmens" and *turkmāni*, just as anyone else present at the meetings would have done. An occasional reference to "the people of Andkhoy" (as opposed to the *D yī*, that is), meaning the local Uzbeks – just as if an inhabitant of Andkhoy were automatically

⁵³ Schefer, *Histoire...*: 249 (my own translation).

an Uzbek – may have been echoing the Uzbeks' claim to primacy in the town. The way in which Tinmas Sāhib, who is almost totally "Uzbekised" in terms of language usage, positioned himself in the course of our sessions is particularly interesting since it demonstrates how flexible personal identities can be. He started using the oppositional pair "the *D* yī say – we say", in which he adopted the position of an Uzbek, but later he shifted to an equidistant "the Uzbeks say – the *D* yī say", and occasionally talked about the *D* yī as "us", fully identifying himself with the group as opposed to anyone non-*D* yī. Variability in self-identification has repeatedly been observed and described in Uzbek and, more generally, Turkic-speaking societies.⁵⁴ Our example proves that a person who lives in a diglossic situation – albeit with a clear personal preference for the "superior" variety – is likely to switch identities back and forth along with language varieties.

When talking about major lexical differences between his language and Uzbek, Ismāyīl Dāyī used two particularly interesting names to denote the "other":

The *a* :lā say *na* 'mother' – we say *na*!

and

My forefathers would have said *enam* 'my mother', (while) the *lam* (*n*)lā now say :*na*.⁵⁵

Now, one typical feature of inter-ethnic behaviour in Andkhoy is to refer to each other with derogatory ethnonyms – half in mockery, half-seriously. The local Uzbeks call the Turkmen *Turman*, while the latter call the Uzbeks *T t*. Surprisingly, Ismāyīl Dāyī, when mentioning the Uzbeks⁵⁶ with disdain, preferred to use the name *lam n*, which is well-known from historical sources. It denotes, among other things, 16th-19th century raiders or irregular troops associated with Uzbek khans in the region south of the Amu Darya⁵⁷, but is not used in northern Afghanistan today. The other name Ismāyīl Dāyī applied to those who use the wrong word for 'mother' can be interpreted as *A r* or *Az r*, again with a plural suffix. Is this name possibly the same as the one contained in the *Burj-i Azar n* of Balkh?⁵⁸ I have no plausible explanation for this at the moment.

Whenever Ismāyīl Dāyī put himself and his kin in opposition to others, he would allude to yet another oppositional relation, namely, the oasis-steppe or agriculturalist-pastoralist divide:

⁵⁴ Cf. for example Shalinsky, op. cit., 295ff.

⁵⁵ D: manī āta_bōšam, enam, ālamā(n)lā šupilā böyta ā:na dēadi.

⁵⁶ Out of the local people, only the Uzbeks use āna 'mother'; the Turkmen equivalent would be ejā.

⁵⁷ Audrey Burton: "Who were the Almān?", *Bamberger Zentralasienstudien*, eds. Ingeborg Baldauf & Michael Friederich, Berlin 1994: 257-61.

⁵⁸ South-easternmost tower of the old wall of Balkh, cf. city map in Major C.E. Yate: *Northern Afghanistan or Letters from the Afghan Boundary Commission*, Edinburgh/London 1888: 257.

From the barren land, from out there on the pastures, the stockbreeders would bring [the sheep guts and skins] and we would purchase them.⁵⁹

It does not matter whether these pastoralists are Turkmens or Uzbeks, or even Pashtun Kuchis. The *K rgär* craftsman and citizen of Andkhoy use the ethnically indifferent term *b yla(r)*, which applies to any pastoralist and/or nomadic population, thus falling back on a major mode of social delimitation from pre-modern times.

8 Conclusion

The *D yl ~ K rgil* seem to identify themselves and be identified by others primarily through linguistic difference. Their language is different from the local Uzbek as well as Turkmen dialects in a significant way, and this is what sets them apart from both major ethnic groups living in the Andkhoy oasis. Many though not all the features of their language suggest a close connection to North Khorassani (Uzbek-Oghuz), which coincides with a vague local historical tradition pointing to Iran and actually suggests that originally an upper- and a lower-class element of the group may have existed. This tradition would contradict another – again, very vague – piece of historical tradition that points to today's Turkmenistan.

Language is the only criterion with which everyone seems to be concerned. Other "modernist" criteria of ethnicity, such as historical belonging and territoriality, are intensely discussed by intellectuals. Along with these identity-making criteria, we have been able to observe a number of "non-modernist" ones as well, including self-attribution to, and pride in, a socio-professional category ("labourer") and way of life (one's own lifestyle as an oasis-dweller as opposed to the pastoralist nomads). Oral tradition remembers confessional differences, albeit as an issue that has become historical and can be treated with humour by group members as well as outsiders. Discussion can even bring residual categories to the surface (*lam n, A r*), which may refer to historical oppositions that have otherwise completely fallen into oblivion.

⁵⁹ D: maynānān, ana ölännān bāyla, ālu_gelattı_ana öşälari, xaridārley_ädatteý.