

The Scholarly Contribution of  
**ILYA GERSHEVITCH**  
to the Development of Iranian Studies

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## ILYA GERSHEVITCH AND NEW WESTERN IRANIAN

During a stay in Tehran in winter 1956, Ilya Gershevitch succeeded, through the efforts of Seyyed Hasan Taqizadeh and Ehsan Yarshater, to obtain the permission to visit Bašākerd, the Persian name of a wild, rugged area in South Eastern Iran, called Baškard by local people<sup>1</sup>. Equipped with a tape-recorder, as well as a plenty of paper and pencils, he went there together with his wife Lisbeth for a reconnaissance of a dialectal area "of which nothing was known" (G, 1959b: 213). In order to clearly distinguish the two local references of the term Baškard, the comprehensive and the restricted one, which in fact only applies to the inland region to the south of the Marz range, Ilya himself coined the classicising name of Bashkardia to refer to the whole area (G, 1959b: 214). They spent in that region of Western Makrān almost four months, from March 26 to July 19. "Le Pr. Ilya Gershevitch, de la Cambridge University, avait eu une grande chance de fair son voyage en 1956", commented François Balsan (1969: 251), the famous French explorer and journalist, who had to wait from 1957 till 1966 to set foot in Bašākerd. And in fact, just in 1957, a resurgence of armed conflicts between the central Iranian administration and local bands headed by the famous tribal chief Dadšāh made that wild, far South-Eastern province absolutely inaccessible to any visitor for long. In *Étrange Baluchistan*, the travel book Balsan published in 1969, he mentions in more than one occasion Ilya, Lisbeth and their adventurous trip.

Due to the difficulties encountered in travelling in such a rugged country, the Gershevitches were able to visit only a part of Bašākerd (one fifth of the whole area, according to Balsan, 1969: 251); nevertheless, the number of the localities visited by them, dispersed across barren mountains and reachable only riding horses and occasional camels, is by far much more than those visited by the few European explorers who had adventured into that far place before them. Lisbeth was not a mere escort; she took part in collecting material, particularly interested in local craft, such as traditional stitch-work, and the typical embroidered Bashkardi masks, of which she still keeps very nice specimens. Details on this journey, geographical and geo-morphological annotations, cultural and linguistic notes were the subject of some lectures delivered by Ilya on different occasions. The report of

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<sup>1</sup> According to Skjærvø (1988: 846), it was Georg Morgenstierne who suggested to Ilya to undertake this adventurous travel.

the lecture held in London, at the Royal Central Asian Society on Wednesday, April 8, 1959, was published in The Journal of that Society in the same year (G 1959b; most of the photos enclosed are by Lisbeth); however, similar reports had been held even before, as for example at the 24<sup>th</sup> Congress of Orientalists held in Munich in 1957, where a preliminary report on the dialect of Bashkardi was read in a session chaired by Émile Benveniste (neither the text nor a résumé was included in the relevant *Proceedings*). On that occasion Ilya had the opportunity to compare notes on Bashkardi items with other scholars. In G, 1959: 322-23, for example, we read that the connection of Av. *āfant-* with the Bashkardi toponyms *Āhven* and *Garāhven* has occurred simultaneously to Ilya and Émile Benveniste as they were looking through some of Ilya's Bashkardi material during the Munich Congress.

Modern Iranian dialectology was entering at that time in a new, particularly promising phase: at the Munich Congress, an International Committee was appointed with the task of planning a Linguistic Atlas of Iran (ALI). In the subsequent Congress of Orientalists, held in Moscow in 1960, Georges Redard, the Committee Secretary, summed up the activities carried out from 1957 till 1960 and communicated the names of the members of the Executive Committee, which had no more than George Morgenstierne as President. Among these, with the formal title of councillor, we also find Ilya Gershevitch, who probably owed his appointment as a member of the Committee to his personal experience in dialectal field-work in Bašakerd. Unfortunately, as is well known, the project of the Linguistic Atlas of Iran, successively enlarged in order to include the Iranian languages of Afghanistan, was doomed to remain unaccomplished.

From the end of the Fifties on, the name Bashkardi and that of Ilya Gershevitch will be indissolubly tied. If today, remembering Ilya Gershevitch as an extraordinary, multi-faced scholar, we could not disregard how he contributed to the development of modern Iranian studies, one of the reasons lies in the invaluable remarks he was able to produce on the basis of his Bashkardi material. One of the reasons, I mean, not the only reason. As a worthy pupil of Walter Bruno Henning, who was an advocate of "the principle of the indivisibility of Iranian" (G, 1970a: xxi), Gershevitch developed different interests in the field of modern Iranian, producing truly original contributions. In particular, as for Eastern Iranian, Ossetic had a special prominence among his interests, as we may read in Paolo Ognibene's contribution to this volume; as for Western Iranian, besides Bashkardi, Gershevitch often concentrated his efforts on Balochi and greatly contributed to the improvement of several Persian etymologies<sup>2</sup>. He was also pleased when he was able to introduce new words, personally collected among native speakers, ignored at the time in the relevant current literature, such as Sangesari *čaft* "enclosure for animals", which he related to Sgd. *prc'βt* "enclosure" (G, 1970c: 305) or Birjandi *parana* "the

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2 Ilya Gershevitch rightly considered himself "privileged" to have counted among his teachers in Persian a great scholar as Hasan Taqizadeh (G, 1962: 76).

day before yesterday”, *pīš-parana* “three days ago”, *dīna* “yesterday”, *dūšana* “last night”, etc. (G, 1964a: 79 n. 6).

With the term “Bashkardi” we mean a group of dialects whose speakers live in an inland area in South-East Iran, surrounded, except to the north, by Balochi speakers. These dialects are very close to those spoken in the adjacent areas of Rudbār (main centre, Kahnuj) and Rudān, in the next coastal area of Mināb, Bandar Abbās and the isle of Hormoz. They also share several affinities with the dialects spoken in Lārestān and in the surrounding Balochi area. The dialectological classification still in use is that formulated by Gershevitch immediately after his journey, just in time to be quoted in the section *Neu-iranische Sprachen* written by Morgenstierne for the *Handbuch der Orientalistik* (1958: 170). Ilya recognised two main groups, the northern (NBšk) and the southern (SBšk), greatly differing from each other<sup>3</sup>. Each of the two groups, according to Ilya is “historically most interesting, and occupies a unique position among the Iranian languages” (G, 1959b: 222). As belonging to the Southern Bashkardi, which has been explicitly said to be a conservative Persic type<sup>4</sup>, Gershevitch also mentions

3 Among the relevant isoglosses typical of Northern Bashkardi, there are the regular rhotacism of a original dental *t* (NBšk *espīr* : SBšk. *espī* “white”), and the development of *g(w)* from an older *w-* (NBšk *gwav-* : SBšk *vahv-* “to weave”; NBšk *gīn-* : SBšk *bīn-* “to see”).

4 G, 1964b: 12. It is interesting to see how Ilya enters (even if marginally) the debate over the classification of Western Iranian. Apart from G 1956, basically an article by Minorsky, revised by Ilya, with a mention of a southern group (Persian; the dialects of Fārs, Luristān, Khorāsān and Kermān) and of “the remains of former northwestern idioms” (dialects of the Caspian provinces, the languages of the Kurds, the Baloch and other isolated groups), worth noting in particular is the hinted suggestions in G, 1964a: 83 fn. 17, where a so called Eastern Iranian variant *zī* is contrasted with Prs. *dī* “yesterday”. To better understand Ilya’s thought, we should perhaps refer to Elfenbein, 1960: 1006: “Within the main division of Iranian languages, based on the treatment of the simple I(ndo)-E(uropean) palatals \*k’ and \*g’ into a Western, Persic, and an Eastern group, Bal(ūčī) belongs to the latter [...] One therefore looks for orientation [...] to the two of the Middle Iranian languages which are nearest to that area, viz. M(iddle) P(ersian) (belonging to the Western group) and P(arthian) (belonging to the Eastern group), whose meeting point lay to the South of the Central Caspian region. [...] For a different classification of Iranian dialects, using different criteria, see now W. B. Henning, *Mitteliranisch* [...] 89 ff.”. Thereafter Elfenbein conformed with a more current view, asserting that “Baluchi is in all essentials a ‘northwestern’ Iranian language [...] (see MacKenzie on the dialectology of ‘southwestern’ and ‘northwestern’ Iranian)” (1988: 635), even blaming himself (1991: 60 fn. 2) for having been “guilty” of the “deplorable usage” of calling “all non-Persic Iranian languages ‘Eastern’”, as Gershevitch did; on this occasion Elfenbein referred to Henning (1954: 157-58), with his list of modern northwestern Iranian languages (where, however, Balochi was not mentioned). In G 1992, Ilya does not have any hesitation in speaking of “dialectologically Western Iranian” languages, as Kurdish (p. 169) or even of north-west Iranian dialects (cf. p. 168 fn. 9); however, the impression one receives in reading this paper is that he still remains more cautious than other scholars to resort to strict classificatory assumptions, on which there is a more or less general agreement. For example, according to him, on Balochi and Bashkardi, “two Iranian languages that differ from each other no more, but also not much less, than Spanish for example differs from Italian, [...] all one can say is that the two languages belong classificationwise to the Western, and not to the Eastern group of Iranian languages” (p. 174). In fact, others would have added with no hesitation that Balochi “belongs” to the northwestern, while Bashkardi to the southwestern group. It is clear that Ilya perceived this bipartition as inadequate and weak.

a Pizgi group, including the dialects spoken in Šāhbāvek and Pārmōnt, to the south-west and south-east of Angohran, the main city of Bašākerd, one of the peculiar features of which has been individuated in the development of the OIr. intervocalic *f* into *hv* (cf. *vahv*- “to weave”; G, 1959a: 323).

Gershevitch has never produced a sketch, even preliminary, of the Bashkardi language, though he had announced a linguistic report in G, 1962: 76 fn. 1; instead he sprinkled new information over many of his publications along the course of time, starting from G 1957, where he revealed the connection between OPrs. *yaka*- and the *ĵag* tree (*Dalbergia sissoo*) he became acquainted with, during his visit to Western Makrān, and ending with one of his two contributions to the *Festschrift* Abaev, published (with much delay) in 1998. Little by little Gershevitch enlarged our knowledge of Bashkardi, “gifting” us here and there with authentic “pearls”. I think that no term other than “pearl” befits the results of Ilya’s work (and not only as a homage to his paper on *Margarites, the pearl* [G 1989], a work of which he was very proud, and I remember he confidentially used to call it, speaking to Italian friends, “la mia margherita”): inside the indiscriminate mass of linguistic documentation he was always hunting round for precious, hidden pearls, getting thrilled when he could find and disclose them. So it is not possible to mention bibliographic references of works where he specifically dealt with Bashkardi, unless one does not want to quote most of his articles devoted to Iranian linguistics; suffice here to mention a few essays where speculations on Bashkardi are particularly numerous, such as his outstanding work on the chronological adverbs in Iranian (G 1964a); his article on a special syntactic Bashkardi construction in the past tense, according to which the verb does not agree with the patient, but with the beneficiary, with the object of a preposition or even with a possessor, which Ilya interprets as a bahuvrīc construction (G 1987)<sup>5</sup>; his study on the endings of particular Western Iranian verbs (G 1970b).

Who is interested to know the extent of Gershevitch’ contribution to our present knowledge of Bashkardi, may conveniently make use of the article *Bashkardi* in the *Encyclopædia Iranica*, where Prods O. Skjærvø assembled all the Bashkardi words produced in the literature at the time when the article was written (1988). He took into account the few words provided by Floyer (1882), which Morgenstierne called attention to, and briefly commented on (1946-48: 253-54), the data provided by Gershevitch<sup>6</sup>, and by Skjærvø himself (1975), as far as Minābi and Hormozi dialects are concerned, which he describes together with the Bashkardi group proper. A

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5 Bashkardi shares this feature with Kurdish and Middle Persian (and partially with other dialects of Fārs and Lārestān).

6 Among the words pertaining to material culture, there is Bšk. *renz* “a stone heap placed on a mountain pass”, known to be an instrument of lynch-law (G, 1959b: 23). Ilya acutely refers the word to Arab. *rajm* “stoning” but is wrong in saying that the significance of such a thing “seems to have escaped previous travellers”. A famous Italian traveller of 17<sup>th</sup> century, Pietro della Valle, had already noticed in the surroundings of Lār “pilastretti rotondi” thought to contain “murati e mezzo sotterrati uomini vivi”, and left us an accurate description of their shape and function (see Filippone, in print).

few words have been missed by Skjærvø, and I add them here just for the sake of completeness: *lūt* “desert” (G, 1959b: 219)<sup>7</sup>, the very interesting *kam* “mountain” (G, 1974: 68) and *sehr* “ploughshare” (also Rudbāri; G, 1960: 293); *har čī* “everyone”, *kalak* “chin”, *tak* “strand” and *tīn* “maiden” (Elfenbein, 1961: 92, 94 fn. 2 and 95 fn. 16; presumably suggested by Gershevitch [see *ibid.* 86 fn. 1]); a much disputable list of 32 Bashkardi items with their Balochi equivalents in an appendix to Balsan 1969 (p. 362). Subsequently to Skjærvø’s article, one may quote: *šöš* “louse” in Elfenbein, 1988: 635 and *pīmū*, *pīwāz* “onion” (with the interesting development *w < m*) quoted in the *Glossary* of Elfenbein 1990<sup>8</sup>, as well as the Bashkardi, or, better, the Northern Bashkardi word for “wild-rue” mentioned as *sepaxt* in Flattery – Schwartz, 1989: 144, where it has been connected to MPrs. *spixt* “sprouting, blooming”. The form *sepaxt* had been communicated to Schwartz during the 1973 International Congress of Orientalists (G, 1992: 179 fn. 20) by Gershevitch himself, who, however, in a recent publication emended *sepaxt* into *espaht*, admitting that the misform might be due to his having quoted it from memory (G, 1992: 178 ss.)<sup>9</sup>, also introducing the Rāmeški variant *espahk* (*ibid.* 179 fn. 20). In one of his last articles, Gershevitch (G 1998) provides us with the complete Bashkardi series of present and past stems of the verb “to see”, respectively *gīn-* (or *dīn-*) and *dīr-* (or *dīst*) for Northern Bashkardi, and *bīn-* (or *bēnj-*) and *dīt* for the Southern dialects (p. 116, p. 134 n. 22, p. 136 n. 31), but also with the word for “breath”, *gīn* and *bīn*, respectively the Northern and Southern variant (p. 123), as well as the NBšk adjective *gīnī* “recovered (from illness)”, lit. “(re)endowed with breath, life” (p. 123-24). To these published words, I will add a couple of unpublished ones from a manuscript by Ilya containing a draft of a lexical study I am going to mention below; in particular the NBšk. verb *kah-* “to fall”, obviously related to Bal. *kap-*, Parth. *kaf-*, etc. and SBšk *tav-* “to fall”, with a secondary (but common) semantic shift “to sleep”<sup>10</sup>; on the latter Ilya remarked: “this base *tav-*, of which the OIran.

7 This is the famous word the local communities use to name the gray gravel plains of southeastern Iran, between Birjand and Kermān. In fact, the meaning of “desert, barren land” of Prs. *lut* (related to *loxt*) “naked, bare” seems to be more common in Eastern Persian (Xorāsāni [Birjandi], Sistāni; cf. Rezāyi 1994 and Mohammadi Xomak 2000, where the meaning “thirst” is also recorded). It is also found in Western Balochi (Barker-Mengal 1969, Elfenbein 1963) and in the Semnāni – Sorxei – Lāsgerdi – Shahmirzādi area (Sotude 1963).

8 Unlike Elfenbein 1963, where it is explicitly said (Preliminary notes, p. 9) that all the Bashkardi words were due to Gershevitch, there is no reference to sources in Elfenbein 1990.

9 On that occasion Gershevitch extends Schwartz’ etymological derivation for Bšk. *sepaxt* (recte *espaht*) to Prs. *sepand* and cognates, disconnecting the latter from Av. *spanta* “holy”.

10 The just mentioned base *kap-*, for example, has been recorded as “to sleep” (mostly, as a derogatory word) in Fārs; cf. Širāzi *kapidan* (Behruzi 1969), Sarvestāni *kapidan* (Homāyuni 1992); Davāni *kapīdan* (Salāmi 2002); see also Esfāhāni *kapidan* “to sleep” (impolite word; Dādmān). In all Lārestāni dialects (cf. *kata* in Eqtedāri 1955), the meaning “to fall” is preserved, like in Bashkardi, in Balochi (where secondarily also means “to lie down”), in Kurdish, in the dialects of Central Iran, etc. It is not useless to emphasize here the presence of this verb in an area larger than it was thought

causative was \**tāwa(ya)*-, is otherwise attested only with preverbs, cf. *Šγ. pit(t)älāw-* ‘to throw, make fall’ (see Morgenstierne EVŠG 63), *Yaγ. partāw-* ‘to throw’, Inscr. Parth. *wi’wny* ‘shooting-range’ (which Nyberg, *Manual* ii: 217 unconvincingly links with *tuvān* ‘mighty’)”<sup>11</sup>.

Leaving aside the Minābi and Hormozi items, which do not belong to Bashkardi proper, the known Bashkardi lexical items add up to less than 200 words (variants included), and almost all of them are mentioned in works of Ilya Gershevitch or come from his suggestions to other scholars. A quick look to the material suffices to make clear that the Bashkardi lexicon available at present is quite unbalanced. With a little practice, for example, all of us could be in a position to reel off complex temporal expressions corresponding to “three night after the last” or “four years ago”, being also aware of the history of these words, but as far as the knowledge of the basic lexicon is concerned, we are still groping for clues.

In Skjærvø 1988 all the Bashkardi morphological and syntactic features known at that time are also listed, as well as all the sentences which have occurred in print. The same fact that Skjærvø could think to do that, and the fact that all the Bashkardi sentences could be gathered in a half a column of the *Encyclopædia Iranica* format is in itself an indication of the scantiness of the data presently at our disposal. Of course, there is no doubt that Gershevitch recorded much more material during his field-work and used to check it, when necessary<sup>12</sup>.

For one who wants to have an overview of the Bashkardi language, all that is very few. But this obvious remark must not lead to an underestimation of Ilya’s contribution to the Bashkardi studies. Ilya never had it in mind to describe Bashkardi or any of its single features. Describing a phenomenon was an activity which was simply out of his interests. What really intrigued him was explaining the origins of a linguistic construction, penetrating into its deep causes, tearing the veil from the unexplained or the poorly explained. Accordingly, words and constructs of any modern language, in our case Bashkardi, may be classified into “interesting” and “uninteresting”. I remember that at my first meeting with him in Cambridge in 1991, when I had the opportunity to spend with him the whole day at Jesus College, I asked him if he still had unedited lexical Bashkardi material. “Shit, only shit”, he answered, accompanying his words with a grimace

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in the past (cf. Tedesco, 1921: 236-37, where it is opposed, as a typical north-western base, to its southern counterpart *pat-*). In fact, *kaftan* is not unknown in Middle Persian as well, both Manichean and Pahlavi; even *kaft* in Dk VII.2.26 translated by Molé (1993: 19) as “ils [...] interrompirent (leur coït)” may be an instance of “falling”.

11 Ilya’s ms., p. 33. Ilya Gershevitch strongly disapproved of posthumous, unauthorised publication and expressed this with clear and unambiguous words in his *In Memoriam* of Henning (1970a: xxiii-xxiv). If I am quoting here one of his suggestions from his work-notes, it is only because I am sure that it would pass all “the tests” mentioned by Ilya himself and that Ilya “would have positively wanted one to publish” it (*ibid.* xxiv).

12 Cf. e.g. G, 1992: 179 n. 20, where commenting the unavailability of a Southern Bashkardi word for “wild rue” other than Prs. *sepand*, he admits that “in actual fact I can find no mention of the plant in any SBŠ sentence recorded by me”.

of disgust, and looking at my perplexity he explained to me that the words that he did not already treat in his articles, were Persian or (even worse) original Arabic words, *absolutely useless*. “Interesting” words are obviously those which one, having a keen eye (and he absolutely had it), may recognise as cognates of ancient words, as the result of an ancient process or as occasional survival of common OIr. words, which later have become almost extinct, and the former are used to throw light on the latter. “Today we can see that matters stand otherwise”, says Ilya proudly (G, 1964b: 21), brandishing the SBšk. present stem *tehr-* “to fear”, which he derived from an older stem *\*tṛha-* < *\*tṛθa-*, as evidence of the coexistence in Old Persian of that reconstructed stem side by side with the attested one, OPrs. *tṛsa-*. These two stems are offered as an instance of the optional realisation of the dental fricative *s* as an interdental *θ* in Old Persian at the beginning of the Achaemenian period, which is just what he wanted to demonstrate in G 1964b. Similarly, Bšk. *gīdā(h)* “grass”, interpreted as a loan from a Balochi word (a reconstructed Balochi word; in Balochi only *giyāh* is recorded) permits him to connect Prs. *giyāh*, unetymologized till that time, to Av. *gaodāyu-*, lit. “cattle-nourisher” (G, 1962: 80-81; 1992: 173-76); SBšk. *bahr*, together with Bal. *bard*, is conveniently used to better explain the Iranian set of words for “spade” belonging to Prs. *bil* as deriving from \*OIr. *badra-*, IE *\*bhedh-* (G, 1962: 78-79); SBšk. *dārāyén* “hail” gives him the opportunity to reconstruct an OPrs. and Av. *\*drādunī-*, directly comparable with Ved. *hrādúni* “hail”, to which Sgd. *zyōn* “hail” would also belong (G, 1962: 81-82); Bšk. *narauk* would assure the existence of a (reconstructed) *\*nabābuhr* (< *\*nabādbuhr*) in some Middle Parthian dialect (G, 1973: 73); SBšk. *šen*, Bal. *šīnik*, *šanik* “kid” allow him to reformulate the etymology proposed by Hoffmann for Av. *sčāēniš* and to postulate an OIr. *\*sčani-* (G, 1971: 267-69); the fact that Bšk. *xāk* is also used in the sense of “ground on which one walks or sits” substantiates a new etymological proposal for Prs. *xāk*, referred to Av. *āi* (Vd. III; G, 1962: 77); NBšk. *nox* (also *nūög*), denoting hollowed-out tree-trunks used for irrigation purposes, supports the assumption that IE *nāu-* “ship” originally meant “a hollowed-out tree-trunk”, even if, admits Gershevitch, a deeper analysis of the Old Iranian texts (cf. OPrs. *nāviya-*, Av. *nāvaya-* “navigable”, also “running in channels [said of water]”) should lead alone to the same conclusion (G, 1962: 79-80); the meaning “estate” attributed to him to Av. *xšaθra-* may be confirmed by the meaning of the word *šahr* in Bashkardi (G, 1959a: 208 fol.). And we might go on for long.

An effect of this attitude towards modern languages, which is typical of the historical linguistics tradition, is the disappearance, after a fleeting appearance, of the word *sehr* “ploughshare” from the lexical Bashkardi repertoire at our disposal. Gershevitch introduced it in the Moscow Congress in 1960, together with other words successively commented also in G 1962. The text read at the Congress was summarised in a note entitled *Agricultural terms in Iranian*, published in the relevant *Proceedings* in 1963. Ilya Gershevitch suggested on that occasion to derive Bšk. *sehr* “ploughshare” from OIr. *\*sufṛā-* and to relate it to Av. *suwrā-*, *sufṛā-*, a tool with the help of which Yima is said (Vd. II) to have enlarged the earth. The inspired guess of Duchesne-Guillemin, who recognised in Av. *suwrā* the



name of the “horn” was still a long way off (1980). It is possible that Ilya for reasons I am not able to recover, but probably on the basis of phonetic constraints, spontaneously discarded his former proposal already before 1962 (i.e., before the publication of *Outdoor terms in Iranian*). Being no more able to explain an ancient word, the poor *sehr* sank into oblivion, even slipping through the net of the scrupulous survey of Skjærvø. I started some years ago a collection of Iranian terms denoting the “plough” and its component parts, and being at first unaware of Duchesne-Guillemin’s proposal, I also had related Av. *suwrā* to other Iranian words meaning “plough” or “ploughshare”. From my repertoire Av. *suwrā*- has now disappeared, nevertheless Bšk. *sehr* still finds his honourable place beside other Iranian words<sup>13</sup>.

Though what we know on Bashkardi is still very little (and for this reason the recent publications on the dialects of Rudān [Mota’amadi 2001] and Jiroft and Kahnuj [Dehqāni 1998], as well as the new linguistic recognition of the dialect of Mināb by Gerardo Barbera, a doctoral student at the Orientale, Naples, are particularly welcomed), we owe to the pioneering work of Ilya the partial dissipation of the pitch darkness in which Bashkardi was concealed. If we integrate the Bashkardi data provided by him, with those produced more recently, we are in a position to situate some phenomena in an areal linguistics perspective. When relating Bashkardi to Balochi, I mean, one has to take into account the Balochi variety spoken in the area adjacent to Bašākerd, and not an indiscriminate aggregate called Balochi. Some of the Bashkardi words also indirectly provided by Ilya are paradigmatic in this regard: see, for instance, Bšk *dulāx* “dust”, paralleled in Elfenbein 1963 with Bal. *dūlaxt*, which occurs in the Marv texts published by Zarubin, a word of areal diffusion, widespread in Sistāni and Xorāsāni<sup>14</sup> and absent in most of the other Balochi varieties<sup>15</sup>, or Bšk. *dehāde* “continually”, related to Marv (Elfenbein 1963) and Afghāni (Elfenbein, 1979: 43) Bal. *dede*. This latter, however, has undergone a grammaticalization process, becoming a durative particle for continuous action (see also Elfenbein 1990). The meaning “continually” of Bšk. *dehāde* finds a strict parallel in that (“pošte sar ham”) recorded for Sarāwāni Bal. *dede* in a long, very useful list of (Ir.) Balochi words<sup>16</sup> (a copy of the manuscript containing the letters *alef* – *kaf* is kept at Orientale Archive);

13 I postpone to another occasion the introduction and discussion of these terms belonging to the Iranian agricultural lexicon.

14 In fact, this form seems to be well attested in Sistāni (*dulāxt*; Xomak 2000), Xorāsāni (Birjandi *dulāx*, Herat *dūlaxt*, Mašhadi, Qāyini *dūllax*, Šālči 1991) and Central dialects as well (cf. references to Zoroastr. Kermāni and Nāyini in Xomak, 2000: 203 fn. 3, Yazdi *dulax* in Afšār 1989 and Sirjāni *dulax* in Saryazdi 2001, where Balochi is also mentioned).

15 In Eastern Balochi one finds *dhūr* and *dhūliyā* “dust” (cf. for example Dames 1891), probably borrowed from Indo-Aryan (cf. Ūr. *dhūl*, *dhūr* “id.”; for Indo-Aryan see Mayrhofer KEWA II, 110; EWA III. 279. For Prs. *dula* “whirlpool” in classical lexicography see Dehxodā, s.v.

16 The author, Abdul Hamid, a school teacher, is a native of Sarawān living in Chābahār. He collected words from different Irani Balochi dialects.

there the meaning of “quickly (bā ‘aǰalle)” is also recorded, the same as *dehdeh* in Persian of Afghanistan (Afghāni Nevis 1956).

The inclination of Ilya Gershevitch towards Balochi may have been favoured by the fair amount of published, easily available items: long texts in transcription, often equipped with a translation in an European language, grammars, glossaries and dictionaries. But what mostly appealed to Ilya, is with no doubt the so called conservative nature of this language. It was Ilya who prompted in the Fifties the young Joseph Elfenbein to devote himself to Balochi studies<sup>17</sup>.

A quick check in the Archive of the *Etymological-comparative Balochi Dictionary* at the Orientale, Naples, makes it clear how many are the etymological speculations on Balochi words scattered here and there along his scientific production, always characterised by his typical philological rigour which took into account the semantic and contextual cogency, not less than the phonetic constitution. Due to his generosity, many suggestions of him are also found in publications of other scholars. A couple of Balochi words have been first introduced to scholars by Ilya Gershevitch. I would like to mention in particular *šāfag*<sup>18</sup>, a Balochi verb, with a Bashkardi counterpart, which did not occur at the time in any published material. Gershevitch (G, 1977: 64 foll.) tentatively suggested a derivation of its alleged meaning “to cover (a ewe by a ram)” from an original “to scrape” or similar, in accordance with the well known semantic shift which leads verbs connected with the notion of friction to be charged with sexual implications. Fresh lexicographical material and a summary *ad hoc* enquiry with a Balochi speaker, even if not resolving the whole question raised by Ilya, provide new arguments which he would surely appreciate and put to a good use. The (Ir.) Balochi couple *šapten* “to peel off (of skin)”: *šāpten* “to plough the land with the hoe” recorded in the lexical collection by Abdul Hamid mentioned above, may be paralleled to the Ossetian couple (Iron) *sæfyn* / (Dig.) *isæfun* “to perish”: (Iron) *safyn* / (Dig.) *isafun* “to destroy” and corroborate Ilya’s proposal of an OIr. base \**saf-*. The fact that (Ir.) Bal. *šapten* is also “to drop (of fruit)” justifies the active meaning “to beat the leaves of a tree with a club to make them drop” and by extension, “to beat someone with a club” of (Southern) Bal. *šāpag*, *šahpag* (Sayad Hāšmī 2000), Eastern Bal. *šāfay* (Miṭhā Xān Marī - Sū-rat Xān 1970). The notion of scratching implied by the action of “ploughing the land” of (Ir.) Bal. *šāpten* is still found in the meaning “to make slight, vertical incisions on the face with the razor in order to let the blood burst out of pimples” recorded in Sayad Hāšmī 2000 for Bal. *šāpag*, *šahpag*. A Balochi speaker of Pakistani Makrān (Turbat) confirmed the existence of the verb *šāpag* in his dialect; nevertheless, he excluded to have ever used it (or heard it used) in the senses provided in Sayad Hāšmī 2000. He gave me a few examples, such as *gwāt ančo trund būt ki manā šāpt-ī u manā dowr-e dā* “the wind was so strong that overthrew me and threw me away”, or *to manā šāpt*

17 The two had come into contact with, through the Italian school of Antonino Pagliaro.

18 Past stem *šābt-* (*šabt-*, according to Ilya’s informants).

*nakane* “you can’t knock me down”, an expression commonly used by children. According to him, *šāpag* is mainly used in his area to describe the unpleasant sensation in the throat caused by eating, for example, unripe fruit, such as a green date (*papukā manī guṭṭ šāpt* “the green date made my throat prickle”), which we may still consider a case of “scraping”. My informant had never heard *šāpag* used with sexual implications. On the contrary, Minābi *šāfidan* means “to fuck”; it has been recently recorded by Gerardo Barbera in a folktale<sup>19</sup>. We may also tentatively surmise that Prs. *šāfidan*, presumably a dialectal word recorded in Dehxodā<sup>20</sup>, has been considered as a taboo word and euphemistically explained (“to slip, to make a mistake [layzidan, sahv kardan, xatā kardan]”). In the dialects of Jiroft and Kahnuj (Dehqāni 1998) one finds the intransitive form *šapīdan* “to crack from cold and dryness (said of skin)”. Badaxšāni *šapīdan* “to beat, to thrash [zadan, kotak zadan]” (Šālči 1991) is, however, more problematic.

Even though the semantic range of Bal. *šāpif-* and their cognates still needs a deeper investigation, the results of this preliminary examination seem to fit Gershevitch’ hypothesis and confirm once again his extraordinary instinct. And it is a fact that Ilya’s suggestions turn out to be constant sources of inspiration. For these reasons, I find regrettable that no mention of any Gershevitch’ contributions to the history of single Balochi words (like, for example, G 1964a) has been made in the bibliographies at the end of the section *Baluchi Language and Literature* in the article *Baluchistan* of the *Encyclopædia Iranica* (Elfenbein 1988), nor in the chapter dedicated to Balochi in the *Compendium* (Elfenbein 1989), both conceived as comprehensive; this does not do justice to Ilya’s interests in Balochi nor meets the requests of people interested to know who contributed in different way to the development of the Balochi studies.

I do not intend to enter here into details of his more relevant suggestions; suffice it to remember that one of his last works (G 1998), full of very intriguing suggestions, has been devoted to reconsider on one side Bal. *uškanag* “to hear”, for which he reconstructed Middle Bal. *\*uš-gīn-/gīt-*, the second element continuing OIran. *waina-* “to perceive”, and on the other side, to match Bal. *gīn* “breath” and Prs. *bini* “nose” (both < *\*wi(y)-ana-* “to breathe”), reasserting in this way Geiger’s intuition (but scissoring Kurdish *bēn* “nose, smell” out of the “breathing” group). I would spend just two words to remind my personal, most stimulating experience of work with Ilya. Almost ten years ago we planned to carry out together a research in order to analyse in detail the semantic range of the Balochi verb *pirrenag* (also *prenag*, mostly in Sarhadd and Sarāwān), poorly recorded by the current lexicography with the meaning of “to throw, to cast”. Unfortunately this work, a semantic analysis mainly based on an array of material assembled by myself, purposive to an etymological section of which Ilya was the

19 In fact, one meets there the odd expression: *šāfidan tu-sar-e-ye*, which I am not able to analyse in detail; the whole text of this tale will be included by Gerardo Barbera in his doctoral dissertation.

20 It is explicitly remarked s.v. that, apart from the quoted sources, the word is found nowhere else [“ammā dar jāye digar dide našod”].

exclusive responsible, was not completed, even if the written draft (including a manuscript by Ilya) shows that it was in an advanced stage of elaboration. I feel somehow guilty of this, since I left time passing, always postponing to plan a new staying in Cambridge, which I think would have induced him to complete the part he had attributed to himself in the division of labour.

Ilya Gershevitch's scientific rigour was beyond compare. At my arrival at Cambridge, I was impressed for how he had been able to accomplish the list containing all the textual occurrences of *pirrenag* (and they were hundreds in all the published Balochi texts) that I had mailed him before leaving Italy. The relevant missed passages were listed in a welcome card I found at Jesus College, which ended with the following words: "Ma questi sono solo pettegolezzi. Il loro computer è un tesoro". In fact, my list had been prepared with the aid of a textual data base belonging to the *Balochi Dictionary Project*, nevertheless I had missed passages that he did not fail to find. In any case, having a data base at our disposal proved very useful and he was particularly enthusiastic about it. Working with him, I realised that his knowledge of the literature on Balochi was remarkable; he could manage with Balochi texts with fair confidence, except for difficult passages, mainly in Eastern Balochi. He used to cross-talk with the texts asking them questions and receiving answers, even if sometimes, one should admit, his interpretations of the alleged answers might result a little forced.

The strong feel of respect and admiration which Ilya Gershevitch held towards the great scholars of Iranian studies (first of all Henning, but also Bartholomae, Morgenstierne, Benveniste, Minorsky etc.) is well known. In the field of Balochi studies, he much appreciated the work and the competence of M. Longworth Dames, a scholar who rightly deserves the utmost respect and reliance. He is the author of a Balochi text book, a collection of popular texts, introduced by a short grammar and followed by a vocabulary, published without translation in 1891. The first two parts of this book were successively translated by Jamiat Rai and published in Lahore in 1904. Gershevitch had a copy of this translation and used to use it. I still remember a somehow nerve-racking discussion which extended for a few days, on the interpretation of a passage, which according to me should mean something quite different from that proposed by Jamiat Rai. On that occasion Ilya shut the door with obstinacy on the evidence which I tried to put forward him, and that not on account of linguistic or cultural grounds but only on the base of what was written in the Preface, where Jamiat Rai (1904: iii) informs us that the Panjabi government had sent a copy of the translation to Dames and that "Mr. Dames very kindly went through it, and, after making some valuable suggestions, was pleased to remark that, on the whole, the translation was very good and accurate". This alleged remark by Dames was enough for Ilya to make him accept without reserve the translation of Jamiat Rai, translation which in fact should be considered correct "on the whole", but that would require here and there some emendations.

During the three weeks I spent in Cambridge, working side by side with Ilya Gershevitch in Elm Street, I enjoyed of his warm, friendly company, I had the opportunity to experience his extraordinary brilliance and inexhaustible curiosity, I started to become fond of him. Perhaps, on account of

our being onomastically linked, as he used to point out with one of his typical pun, by the Balochi variation *ila-lela-* of the present stem of the verb *ištag*, to become fond of him was for me inevitable. Or, perhaps, to become fond of him was inevitable for everybody who had the chance to know him, with his sparkling eyes, involving smiles and friendly attitude. What I know for certain, is that the great mark he left on Iranian studies, as well as the great mark he left on our hearths, will never fade.

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[G stands for Gershevitch; *Phil.Ir.* stands for Gershevitch 1985]

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