

The *Dāyi* ~ *Kārgil* 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* / *Kārgil* 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, Turkmens and several smaller ethnic groups) with additional small, local *Fārsiwān* 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.