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What Is Judeo-Median—and How Does it Differ from Judeo-Persian?

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Abstract

The Iranian languages spoken by the Jews are often lumped under the term "Judeo-Persian." Yet properly construed, the latter term refers to forms of Persian written with the Hebrew script. The corpus of Judeo-Persian texts is significant for both linguistic and literary reasons, because it includes some of the earliest documents of New Persian, and because it constitutes a sizable literature written by Persian Jews. However, there are also several spoken languages, different from Judeo-Persian, that also belong to the Iranian stock and are associated with Jewish populations in Iran. What we refer to here as "Judeo-Median" are a number of languages that have their core in central Iran and are/were spoken by the Jewry of Isfahan, Kashan, Yazd, and outlying western towns. All of these varieties are on the verge of extinction, both in their original homeland and in diaspora. Belonging to the Northwest group of Iranian languages, Judeo-Median differs from Persian (a Southwest language) not only in pedigree but also in its vocabulary and grammar—rendering it unintelligible to Persian monolinguals. This article studies the Judeo-Median dialects collectively, exhibiting their major similarities and differences, and attempting to enumerate and arrive at a tentative classification.

1 The idea of this article was conceived when I first met Ross Perlin, after his presentation entitled "The Jewish Languages Spoken in New York City" in the New York Public Library on 29 September 2012. That presentation was one of the many events sponsored by the Endangered Language Alliance (ELA), an organization which aims at identifying, documenting, revitalizing, and raising public awareness about the hundreds of endangered minority languages spoken in the Greater New York area. It has now been well over a year that, under the auspices of the ELA, Ross Perlin and I, together with ELA director Daniel Kaufman, have been conducting fieldwork on the languages spoken by the immigrant communities from Iran, the Caucasus, and Central Asia. I am indebted to Ross Perlin for his careful editing of this paper, pinpointing its ambiguities, and making many insightful suggestions, with the effect of making the arguments more intelligible to non-Iranists. I am also grateful to the two anonymous reviewers and the editors of *JJL*, Dr. Sarah Bunin Benor and Dr. Ofra Tirosh-Becker, for their insightful comments and valuable suggestions.

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Keywords

Iranian languages – Jewish dialects – Central Plateau dialects – Fars dialects – Judeo-Hamadani – Judeo-Shirazi – taxonomy – endangered languages

Introduction

Judeo-Persian is the Persian language as spoken by the Jews on the territory of present-day Iran and Afghanistan, with documents dated as far back as the 8th century C.E. The earliest texts are private letters and contracts from various places on the Iranian Plateau, as well as numerous translations and Bible commentaries which continued to be written throughout medieval times. This corpus of documents provides invaluable material for studying the evolution of New Persian during its earliest stages, as the language was in a course of standardization during the 10th to 12th centuries (Lazard 1996; Paul 2013). Moreover, a sizable body of Judeo-Persian literature has survived from the 14th century onwards, principally in verse. The most notable of these works are the epics of Šāhin of Shiraz and ʿEmrāni of Isfahan (or Kashan), as well as the versified chronicles of Bābāī ben Loṭf and Bābāī ben Farhād from Kashan. All of these works use standard Persian, some with minor local dialectal features affected by geography. Therefore, from a purely dialectological standpoint, Judeo-Persian is not a distinct language so much as a literary tradition, a substantial corpus of materials written over the span of a millennium in various forms of Persian (Lazard 1996). What makes Judeo-Persian specifically Jewish is the Hebrew script that was invariably used by the Iranian Jews, the use of Hebraisms for religious vocabulary, and the Jewish content of its literature. Subsequently, from a socio-historical perspective Judeo-Persian can be considered as a language in its own right.

Beyond Judeo-Persian, there are the spoken Iranian languages used by various Jewish communities. These Judeo-Iranian languages can be classified into two groups, each belonging to a different branch within the Iranian stock.

One group belongs to the Southwest branch, as does Persian, and consists of Bukhari, Juhuri, and Judeo-Shirazi.[2] The first of these is the vernacular spoken by the Jewish population of Central Asia, sometimes referred to as Judeo-Tajik, a variety of Tajik Persian spoken in Bukharan Emirate—present-day Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. A Bukhari literature written in the Hebrew script, began to emerge from the late 17th century in Bukhara, and was continued in

2 Judeo-Shirazi is treated below, under a separate subheading.

earnest by Bukhari-speaking immigrants to Jerusalem in the next centuries. In Central Asia itself, the Jews of Fergana began publishing a newspaper in Bukhari in 1910. In the 1920s, subsequent to Soviet nationalities policy, Bukhari gained official status as a separate language, and continued to be recognized as distinct from Tajik even after both were forced to switch to a Latin orthography around 1930. A large body of Bukhari literature was published for the Persophonic Jews who lived throughout Central Asia until around 1940, when Bukhari lost its official status and practically merged with Tajik (Rzehak 2008).

Across the Caspian Sea, in the eastern Caucasus, another Southwest Iranian dialect is spoken by a Jewish population: Juhuri, also called Judeo-Tat, which is a variety of the Tat language spoken by a co-territorial Muslim population in the Republic of Azerbaijan and in the Republic of Dagestan within the Russian Federation, and today in Israel and North America. Tat seems to have branched off from Persian at an early enough date that it has now evolved into a language mutually unintelligible with Persian (Grjunberg 1963:5–8).

The other group of Iranian languages spoken by the Jews belongs to the Northwest Iranian branch. From a dialectological point of view, these vernaculars are part of a group loosely classified under the general designation of Central Plateau dialects (CPDs), but for comparative reasons we can designate them as Median, owing to their location within the ancient province of Media.[3] The CPDs are native to a region in central Iran that extends roughly from Kashan in the north to Isfahan in the south (see Fig. 1), thus falling mostly within the modern province of Isfahan (Borjian 2007). These dialects comprise dozens of vernaculars, with various degrees of mutual intelligibility, and are spoken in individual villages and small towns. In larger towns, Median long ago gave way to Persian, with the exception of the Jewish residents, who had preserved the native vernaculars until the recent past.

Prior to the mass emigration of Jews from this region to Tehran and later to Israel, almost every town in central Iran had a sizable Jewish population, each of which spoke one form or another of the Median dialects native to the region. Among these towns, Isfahan is not only the largest but also has the longest documented history, a history that reveals how deeply-rooted the Jewish quarters in the urban centers of central Iran are. Early Muslim geographers

3 Median languages form a subset of the Northwest Iranian group that includes the CPDs and Tatic dialects but excludes Kurdish and Baluchi. The designation "Median" not only conforms to the theories on the historical development of Iranian languages but also calls for the geographical notion of Media, which, together with Persis/Fārs and Parthia/Khorasan, formed the three Iranian super-provinces over a period of two and a half millennia, from antiquity to the early 20th century. For more, see Yarshater 1974, 1988; Borjian 2009.

FIGURE 1 *Major Iranian cities with local Jewish dialects* (*Tehran is added for reference*)

(e.g. Iṣṭaxrī 1967: 198; Iṣṭaxrī 1961: 164; *Ḥudūd al-ʿĀlam* 1983: 140) inform us that in the 10th century the alternative name for Isfahan was al-Yahūdiyya in Arabic and Juhūdistān (or Juhūdān) in Persian (meaning "place of the Jews"), owing to the large population of Jews native to Isfahan. In the heart of that old city stands the quarter of Jūbāra, which until recently was mainly populated by Jews, with some twenty synagogues. Only the onset of modernization breached the seclusion of Jūbāra. Most of the Jewish residents moved out of the old ghetto to live in wealthier neighborhoods of the city among Muslims, while many others soon moved to Tehran and Israel—as a result, the Jewish population of Isfahan dwindled from an estimated 10–12,000 prior to 1948 (Fischel 1953), to approximately 2,000 at the turn of this century (as my local informants told me). These changes have brought about the virtual extinction of the Median dialect of Judeo-Isfahani, at least for the second generation of immigrants, who have grown up in societies that do not encourage the use of their mother tongue. The story of the Isfahani Jews by and large holds true for the other Jewish communities of Iran.

Judeo-Median versus Persian

While the non-Persian provenance of the Jewish languages designated here as Judeo-Median has been a well-known fact to the scholars of Iranian languages (i.e., Yarshater 1974, Lazard 1996, Shaked 2009, Stilo 2003, 2007a, Gindin 2003a, 2003b), there has long been confusion between Judeo-Median and Judeo-Persian on the part of the linguist community in general. The invincible

language database Ethnologue uses the designation "Dzhidi" (i.e., Jidi) for all Iranian dialects spoken by the Iranian Jews. Having given the alternative name Judeo-Persian, with the identifier [jpr], the Ethnologue classifies Dzhidi under "Indo-European, Indo-Iranian, Iranian, Western, Southwestern, Persian," and further describes it as being "similar" to Bukharic [bhh] and Iranian Persian [pes], noting that Dzhidi employs the Hebrew script for writing (Ethnologue, s.v. "Dzhidi"). This data could not be more inaccurate. First, Jidi is a designation used by the speakers of the Jewish dialect of Isfahan (Judeo-Isfahani), and does not necessarily apply to the Jewish dialects native to other towns. Secondly, as we shall see below, the native Jewish dialects spoken in various towns are very far from constituting a homogeneous whole and therefore cannot be lumped together collectively as a single language. Thirdly, these dialects or languages, which we refer to here as Judeo-Median, are from the Northwest branch of Iranian family, genealogically distinct from Persian, a Southwest Iranian language, and also from Bukhari (and Juhuri). Finally, in contrast to Judeo-Persian, with its long written tradition, Judeo-Median has survived in spoken form only.[4]

Now let us turn to the question of how different Judeo-Median and Persian are from one another. The following comparison merely aims at exemplifying some major lexical and grammatical differences that render Judeo-Median dialects quite unintelligible to Persian monolinguals. For this purpose I will use Jidi (Judeo-Isfahani) data from my personal field notes, collected in the early 2000s in Isfahan.

In terms of the lexicon, both languages derive their basic vocabulary from the historical Iranian stock. There are words in both languages which share the same root, and there are words which are not cognate at all. Even when there are pairs of cognates to compare, we can further differentiate four distinct situations: (1) identical cognates in both languages, as is *pâ* "foot"; (2) cognates with minor phonological variance, e.g. Jidi *ϑar* and Persian *sar* "head"; (3) cognates with some transparency, such as Jidi *miš*, Persian *muš* "mouse" (note that *miš* in Persian means "ewe"); (4) cognates affected by deep-rooted sound shifts that go well beyond speakers' synchronic recognition, as in Jidi *dar*, Persian *bar* "door," both from Old Iranian **dwar-*, complying with the isoglottic split of Old Iranian cluster **dw-* into Northwest *b-* and Southwest *d-*. The number of Jidi glosses where the roots are completely different from those of Persian is probably fewer, yet they constitute a meaningful share of Jidi's basic vocabulary.

4 There is a single piece of evidence of a Northwest Iranian language written in the Hebrew alphabet. It is a short religious fragment, whose language is conjectured by Shaul Shaked (1988) to plausibly belong to a wide range of languages from Gurgāni in the north to CPDs in the south.

Some examples are (Jidi/Persian) *meli/gorbe* "cat," *kuδe/sag* "dog," *keδe/xâne* "house."

In order to make a more systematic treatment of the lexical differences between Jidi and Persian, let us examine kinship terms. Table 1 lists the words that share roots, but with phonological and morphological developments that result in low if any intelligibility between the two languages. The first four kinship terms listed are different in that the Persian types carry the historical oblique suffix *-ar*, while the Jidi terms are derived from the direct case in Middle West Iranian. These words have also undergone diachronic sound changes, and that holds true for the rest of the words on the list as well. In the words *jan, zumâδ*, and *veče*, Jidi has preserved the Old Iranian initial consonants, as other Northwest Iranian languages do, whereas Persian has changed them in accord with a set of phonological rules governing the Southwest Iranian languages. The *pir/pesar* dichotomy can be explained by the sound change from Old Iranian **-ϑr-* to Northwest (*h*)*r* and Southwest *s*, in addition to the fronting of the close back vowel in Jidi, also found in *âriϑ*, which also demonstrates the development of dental sibilants into non-sibilants in Jidi.

Table 2 lists kinship terms in Jidi and Persian that are etymologically unrelated. In this table a column is added for the Persian variety spoken in Isfahan (some of the listed words have lost currency), usually by Muslim Isfahanis. Among the words listed, Jidi shares with Isfahani Persian *bâxâje,* (*h*)*amriš*, and *yâd*, which are also used in some other localities in central Iran. As for the gloss "father," *buvâ* is the principal word in Jidi, whereas *bâbâ* is informal in Persian. For "husband," Jidi *mere* is foreign to Persian but is common in CPDS;

TABLE 1 *Kinship terms from the same root*

Gloss	Jidi	Persian	Root
mother	*mâδ*	*mâdar*	Old Ir. **mātar-*
sister	*xox*	*xâhar*	Old Ir. **xwahar-*
brother	*beδâr*	*barâdar*	Old Ir. **brātar-*
daughter	*dot*	*doxtar*	Old Ir. **duxtar-*
son	*pir*	*pesar*	Old Ir. **puϑra-*
child	*veče*	*bačče*	Mid. West Ir. *wačča*
wife	*jan*	*zan*	Old Ir. **jani-*
son-in-law	*zumâδ*	*dâmâd*	Old Ir. **zāmātar-*
daughter-in-law	*âriϑ*	*arus*	Arabic *ʿarūs*

TABLE 2 *Kinship terms from different roots*

Gloss	Jidi	Isfahani Persian	Standard Persian
husband	*mere*	*šuver*	*šowhar*
father	*buvâ*	*peder, bâbâ*	*pedar*
grandfather	*baxâje*	*bâxâdze*	*pedar-bozorg*
father-in-law	*bowϑire*	*bowsure*	*pedar-zan, pedar-šowhar*
mother-in-law	*xorϑi*	*xârsu*	*mâdar-zan, mâdar-šowhar*
husband's brother's wife	*yâd*	*yâd*	*jâri*
wife's sister's husband	*amriš*	*hamriš*	*bâjenâq*
family	*kievâde*	*xunevâde*	*xânevâde*

so is *kievâde* "family" (from *kie*, a shortened form of *keδe* "house"). The most noticeable items on the list are the archaisms used for in-laws in Jidi (*xorϑi, bowϑire*), which are entirely lost in standard Persian in favor of compounds. The striking similarities in kinship terms with Isfahani Persian point to Jidi's deeply embedded position in Isfahan; but this alone does not make the two language varieties mutually intelligible, as the differences in lexicon and grammar are substantial.

The disparity between Jidi and Persian reveals itself most profoundly in grammar. Since it is beyond the scope of this paper to conduct a full comparative analysis of morphology and syntax, we will limit ourselves to analyzing a single sentence in order to demonstrate some major similarities and differences.

EXAMPLE 1

Jidi

vir-od	*y-u-e*	*ke*	*eδeri*
memory-2sg.OBL	come.PRS-3sg-DUR	which	yesterday

čiči=d	*piš-e*	*mun*	*b-uâ?*
what=erg:2 sg	to	I	PST-say.PST

Persian

yâd-at	*mi-ây-ad*	*ke*	*diruz*
memory-2sg.OBL	DUR-come.PRS-3sg	which	yesterday
če	*be*	*man*	*goft-i?*
what	to	I	said.PST-2sg

Do you remember what you told me yesterday?

The comparative observations we can draw from Example 1 include the following:

Similarities:
- In both languages "you remember" is phrased as "memory come to you."
- The enclitic pronoun for second person singular (Jidi *-od*, Persian *-at*) is attached to the base noun "memory" (*vir, yâd*).
- The subordinate marker is an optional *ke*.

Differences:
- Lexis: nouns (*vir* ≠ *yâd; eδeri* ≠ *diruz*), prepositions (*píše* ≠ *be*), verb stems (*y-* ≠ *ây-*; *-wâ*(*t*)*-* ≠ *goft-*), etc.
- Morphology: imperfective marker succeeds the verb in Jidi (*-e*) but precedes the verb in Persian (*mi-*). Preterit has prefix (*b-*) in Jidi. Personal suffixes are different (third singular *-u-* ≠ *-ad*).
- Syntax: the transitive past is formed ergatively in Jidi (employing oblique pronoun *=d*), but accusatively in Persian.[5]

Judeo-Median Varieties

Jewish vernaculars like Jidi are spoken in a dozen towns in central, western, and southern Iran. Major Persian cities such as Isfahan, Kashan, Hamadan, Yazd, Kerman, and Shiraz (Fig. 1) are known for their historic Jewish communities, each with its own native vernacular generally surrounded by Persian-speaking Muslims. In addition, there are smaller towns and townships which also had old Jewish communities before the migrations of the 20th century. Among these, Khansar, Golpayegan, Khomeyn, Mahallat, and Delijan are located along the northwestern frontier of the CPD-speaking area. Further

5 On ergativity, see more below under Judeo-Shirazi.

west in Hamadan Province, in addition to Hamadan city, Nehavand, Malayer, and Tuyserkan all appear to have had their varieties of Judeo-Median, as did Borujerd, in Lorestan Province, which is dominated by Lori speakers. As will be discussed below, some dialects such as Judeo-Isfahani and Judeo-Kashani must have stemmed from the co-territorial varieties shared by the population at large at one point in history, whereas Judeo-Hamadani, Judeo-Borujerdi, and Judeo-Kermani show no such provenance.

A comparative study of all these dialects is yet to be published. The main obstacle in achieving this goal is the unevenness of our data on the Jewish dialects and the paucity of material for some of the localities.[6] Only the dialects of Hamadan, Isfahan, and Kashan have received proper scholarly attention, owing to the availability of (barely) sufficient data. On Jewish Yazdi, Kermani, and Shirazi, only short articles and wordlists have been published. Up to now our knowledge of the western dialects, Borujerd and the three townships in Hamadan Province remains poor as well. As regards the Jewish dialects of Khansar, Golpayegan, Khomeyn, and Delijan, there is virtually no reliable data. This was the context in which the Endangered Language Alliance launched its Judeo-Median Project in 2012, aimed at collecting texts from immigrant speakers of these dialects who now reside in the New York metropolitan area.[7]

Comparative studies of the CPDs of the Isfahan and Kashan areas (Stilo 2007b; Borjian 2011a) show how well the Jewish dialect of each city fits into the continuum of the CPDs in its geographical context. Nevertheless, there are cross-areal isoglosses shared by Judeo-Kashani and Judeo-Isfahani that could only be explained by direct historical contacts between the two Jewish communities (Borjian 2012). Some distinctive similarities between the aforementioned dialects and Judeo-Hamadani have also been identified (Stilo 2003).

The question of historical migrations and contacts among and between the Jewish communities in the urban centers of Iran remains to be answered. Unlike the Muslim speakers of CPDs, who live in rural settings within a well-defined geographic zone, the Jewish speakers of these dialects live in urban

6 Major documentations and studies are as follows. Isfahani: Abrahamian 1936; Kiā 2011; Kalbāsi 1994; Ebrāhimi 2006; Stilo 2007a. Kashani: Žukovskij 1922; Borjian 2012. Yazdi: Gindin 2003a, 2003b; Kiā 2011. Kermani: Lazar 1981. Hamadani: Abrahamian 1936; Kiā 2011; Sahim 1994; Stilo 2003. Nehavandi: Yarshater 1974. Borujerdi: Yarshater 1989; Kiā 2011. Shirazi: Ivanow 1935; Morgenstierne 1960, pp. 129–132; Yarshater 1974. In addition to these, I have also used in this study my own unpublished collection of Isfahani, Kashani, Nehavandi, Borujerdi, Kermani, and Shirazi.

7 ELA's Jewish Languages Project, and some of the work on Judeo-Median, can be found at http://elalliance.org/projects/jewish-languages/.

settings with possibility of movement between cities. We need to look at Judeo-Median within each geographic zone. Table 4 that appears further on in this article, provides a selective isoglottic reference to major dialects.

Kashan and Isfahan

These two old cities of central Iran (113 miles apart) are now Persophonic but are surrounded by a mixture of Persian- and Median-speaking villages. Historical evidence substantiates the idea that Kashan and Isfahan themselves were home to a population that once spoke Median (Borjian 2011b), but that the original vernaculars survived only in conservative Jewish quarters and among Muslims in the countryside. The Judeo-Median dialects of these cities are clearly an older survival, while Persian has moved in more recently.

The Jewish dialects of Kashan and Isfahan are quite similar to the rural Median dialects spoken by Muslims,[8] that surround each, notwithstanding the higher level of Persianism in the Jewish urban varieties. Some typical areal isoglosses of these two speech areas are reflected in Kashani/Isfahani *gurd/bele* "big," *esbe/kuδe* "dog," *indi/yun* "here," as listed in Table 4. Mutual intelligibility is further suppressed by grammatical disparities. A morpheme of high frequency is the imperfective marker *e* which precedes the verb stem in Kashani but follows it in Isfahani; the paradigms listed in Table 3 for the modal verb "want" are intended to demonstrate how morphological configurations can vary between the dialects, even if the same root (*gu-*) and aspectual marker (*e*) are employed in both. Other notable Kashani structures missing in Isfahani include the inflectional passive in *-i-* and future tense with *kəm-*.

There exist also a few features that bind the two Jewish dialects together vis-à-vis their areal association, such as *tanj-* "drink" and the third singular verb ending *-u* (otherwise atypical to Kashan area), in addition to shared Hebraisms, as we will see below. Nevertheless, neither of the two vernaculars demonstrates the level of idiosyncrasy that may qualify it as a language on its own. Indeed, Judeo-Kashani can be considered as a dialect of the Median language group of the Kashan area (also known as Rāji dialects), and Judeo-Isfahani falls squarely within the areal continuum of Median around the city of Isfahan—the dialects known locally as Velāyati or Provincial. Some rural speakers of Provincial dialects, especially in Gaz and Sedeh, which are nearest to the city of Isfahan, have developed the notion of having a Hebraic lineage because of the proximity of their vernaculars to Judeo-Isfahani (personal field notes).

8 All these dialects, whether spoken by Muslims or Jews, are on the verge of disappearing.

TABLE 3 *Conjugation of the verb "want"*

		Kashani	Isfahani	Hamadani
Pres.	1st sg.	*m-e-gu*	*gu-m-e*	*gu-m*
	2nd sg.	*d-e-gu*	*gu-d-e*	*gu-d*
	3rd sg.	*š-e-gu*	*gu-š-e*	*gu-š*
Past	1st sg.	*m-e-ga*	*gum-am-e*	*gâ-m*
	2nd sg.	*d-e-ga*	*gum-ad-e*	*gâ-d*
	3rd sg.	*š-e-ga*	*gum-aš-e*	*gâ-š*

Yazd and Kerman

These two major cities of central and southeastern Iran are administrative centers of provinces that have been known as Persian-speaking throughout the documented past. However, both cities had sizable quarters occupied by Jewish and Zoroastrian[9] religious minorities who spoke Median dialects of the Central-Plateau type. Yazdi and Kermani Zoroastrian (also known as Gabri or Behdinān dialect) are quite close to one another, while, according to Gindin (2003a), the Jewish dialects of the two cities are almost identical. Historical records suggest that population flow was from Yazd to Kerman (Yeroushalmi 2009: 200; English 1966: 42), with the implication that the Median dialects followed the same path. Some profound similarities exist between the Zoroastrian and Jewish dialects of these cities, but this matter has yet to receive scholarly attention.

My Jewish informants from Kashan and Isfahan believe that the Yazdi-Kermani vernacular of their coreligionists is largely unintelligible to them. This perception of unrelatedness may be explained not only by lexical differences (Table 4) but also by others as well. A defining phonological isogloss is rhoticization of original dentals, e.g., Kermani *kero* (< kada) "house," *xorâ* (< xudā) "God," *ber-* (< būd-) "was," *šer-* (< šud-) "went." Another nearly systematic sound change, *w- > b-, as in *bin-* (< win-) "see," appears at first to be a Southwest Iranian trait, but more likely should be considered an independent development in Yazdi-Kermani that occurs also in characteristically Median words such as *bâ-* "say" (< *wāxt-; cf. Pers. *goft-* < *gaub-). The Median pedigree of Yazdi-Kermani is found in *bar* "door," *bi* "other," *jen* "woman," etc., whose Northwest Iranian phonological character is impeccable.

9 For the Zoroastrian dialect of Yazd, see Vahman & Asatrian 2002.

As for grammar, a comprehensive study of the complex interrelationship that exists between Yazdi-Kermani and other Jewish dialects is beyond the scope of this paper. A few points however are worth mentioning. In the nominal morphology, the position of stress in CPDs is normally on the terminal stem syllable, but penultimate in Yazdi, and probably in Kermani as well. The verb system of Judeo-Kermani has characteristics unique unto itself. The perfective aspect marker *be-* is absent—compare, for instance, Kerm. *rasâr-in* to Kashani *be-rasâd-om* "I arrived." The high-frequency third singular copula is the clitic *en* (common in Lori and Fārs dialects, Judeo-Shirazi included), e.g. Kerm. *bis sâl=en ke te madreso dir-âm dars a-t-âm* "it is twenty years now that I have been teaching in school." Yazdi-Kermani modal verbs are idiosyncratic as well; for example, compare Yazdi *m-a-yvâ-ve-šin* "I wanted to go" with the conjugations given in Table 3 for Kashani, Isfahani, and Hamadani. The morphosyntax of Yazdi-Kermani in ergative construction shows a complexity of its own, in that the agent (oblique enclitic pronoun) can be prefixed or even stand alone, as in *š$_1$-a-šnáxt-eš$_2$* "he$_1$ recognized him$_2$"; *šum memáni-š ka* "they hosted him" (lit. "he was hosted by them").[10]

Hamadan Province and Borujerd

In western Iran, the districts of Hamadan, Tuyserkan, Malayer, Nehavand (all in Hamadan Province), and Borujerd (further south, in Lorestan Province) form a geographic cluster that was inhabited by sizable Jewish communities until those communities emigrated to Tehran, Israel, and North America. They spoke various Median varieties of CPD stock in pockets within a language continuum that gradually shifts from Persian in the north (Hamadan) to Lori in the south (Borujerd).

This language situation raises the question of whether Median at some point in history predominated in the whole region, or else whether immigrant Jews carried it with them from central Iran. On balance, it seems that Hamadan, ancient Ecbatana, was once the capital of Media (then extending from Azerbaijan to Isfahan), and that a form of Median must have been spoken here before the arrival of Persian. While ancient documents are missing, a certain amount of medieval poetry from Hamadan and Nehavand has survived, composed in each town's local Median dialect (Tafazzoli 1999). However, these now-extinct dialects show closest resemblance to the Tatic-type dialects spoken in the provinces of Qazvin and Zanjan, both north of Hamadan, and further northwest in Azerbaijan. In contrast, the Jewish dialects of Hamadan area belong to the southern group of Median (i.e. the CPDs), which are, as

10 Gindin 2003a.

stated above, native only to central Iran. This historical arrangement might lead us to the inference that only population movements from central Iran could have occasioned the presence of the Jewish dialects in the Hamadan area.[11]

With this another question must be addressed: why did the original Median language of Hamadan not continue to be spoken by its Jewish population, considering the fact that the Jewish community of Hamadan is one of the oldest in Iran? The longstanding status of Hamadani Jewry is implied by Biblical reference to the city (as Ahmehta, in Ezra 6:2) and the popular belief that attributes the founding of its Jewish community to Esther (Yeroushalmi 2009:256). The same traditions locate the burial place of Esther and Mordecai in Hamadan, whose shared shrine has been a major pilgrimage site for all Iranian Jews throughout the centuries. More recent and concrete testimony comes from the 12th-century Jewish traveler Benjamin of Tedula, who states that "Hamadan is the great city of Media, where there are 30,000 Israelites" (cited in Yeroushalmi 2009:258). Notwithstanding his questionable population figure, Benjamin's statement indicates a strong presence of Jewry in Hamadan. This status continued, as suggested by sporadic historical records in the ensuing centuries, at least until the rise of the Safavid dynasty in 1501, which brought about a long period of suppression of religious minorities.[12] Hardship and local persecution forced many Jews to move from one town to another, and it is not unlikely that during this period the Jewish community of Hamadan saw major displacements, resulting in the ousting of its original language. While concrete facts are missing, collective memory points to a demographic flow of Jews from central Iran. As Stilo states:

> the Jewish community of Hamadān claims to have mostly migrated there from Yazd in the 18th century. Members of the Jewish community of Tuyserkān also spoke of their derivation as from Yazd, but they also claim a portion of them came from Isfahan, which is most likely true for Hamadān as well (Stilo 2003:626).

11 This conclusion is in agreement with Stilo's conjecture that Hamadani Jewish "is probably not original to Hamadān area and will most likely prove to stem from different CPD areas…" (Stilo 2003:628). On the other hand, in his study of the Jewish dialect of Borujerd, Yarshater (1989:1030) finds it more likely that the Borujerd area had originally been inhabited by the speakers of Median before it was taken over by the Lors.

12 On persecutions and forced conversions under the Safavids, see Fischel 1953; Moreen 1987:101–102.

Moreover, economic opportunity could very well have been a reason that Jews were attracted to Hamadan, at least in the modern era. Already in 1701, Paul Lucas (cited by De Planhol 2003) wrote that Jews were more numerous in Hamadan than elsewhere in Persia. But the long-term paucity of data on the Jewish community of Hamadan continues until the 19th century, when ample administrative records and diplomatic reports become available. The estimated population of Hamadani Jewry in these reports fluctuates between 2,000 and 5,000, with significant variation among sources, but with an indication that the Jewish residents were on the rise over the course of the century.[13] We also learn from the records that Hamadan not only had the largest Jewish community in the country, but also the most prosperous one. In contrast to other cities, Hamadani Jewry had come out of ghettos and built houses in various quarters of the town among Muslims. The Jews then controlled much of the trade in the city, which had grown to become a commercial hub in which merchandise from Baghdad and Tehran was exchanged (Sarshar 2003). As a result, many Jews from Iraq and western Iran came to settle in Hamadan. In 1920, Hamadan had around 13,000 Jewish residents, about half of which originated from the Jewish communities of Malayer and Tuyserkan, and from various points in Kurdistan[14] (Sahim 1994; Stilo 2003).

This remarkable history of migrations is borne out by the mixed isoglottic nature of Hamadani. Taking Hamadani-Borujerdi as a single group, we find it (Table 4) united with Yazdi (in glosses "big" and "small"), with Kashani (passive and imperfective markers), with Isfahani and Kashani ("throw," "want," "cat"), and with Isfahani ("dog"). Within the same short lexical list we find Hamadani and Borujerdi further share the gloss "sparrow," while Borujerdi distinguishes itself with *pešga* "sneeze," borrowed from local Lori. In terms of morphosyntax categories, although Hamadani is close to Kashani and Isfahani, the differences are sufficient to make mutual intelligibility quite low. On the other hand, within the Hamadan area itself the dialects show a great deal of similarity. Tentative studies reveal that Tuyserkani agrees with Hamadani in all major grammatical points and lexical items (Stilo 2003), and that the dialects

13 Here are the estimates collected from various sources: 200 families (1807), 600 families (1818), 400 families (1824), 500 families (1850), 2,000 souls (1868), 450 families ~ 2,700 souls (1824), 800 families ~ 5,000 souls (1885), 2,000 souls (1889), 3,000 souls (1889), 1,500 to 2,000 souls (1890), 3,500 souls (1894), 5,000 souls (1903). For the sources, see Yeroushalmi 2009: 63–75; De Planhol 2003; Sarshar 2003.

14 The Jews of Kurdistan speak an Aramaic dialect; see Hopkins 1999.

TABLE 4 *Selective isoglosses across Jewish dialects*

	Kashani	**Isfahani**	**Hamadani**	**Borujerdi**	**Yazdi**	**Kermani**	**Shirazi**
big	*gurd*	*bele*	*mas(s)ar*	*masar*	*gondo*	*mas*	*gonde*
small	*vijik*	*kučuli*	*kas(s)ar*	*kasar*	*kasok*	*kasok*	*kučikak*
dog	*esbe*	*kuδe*	*kuye*	*kuya*	*esbo*	*espo*	*keleb*
cat	*meli*	*meli*	*meli*	*meli*	*gorbo*	*gorbo*	*gorbe*
hen	*kerk*	*morq*	*kark*	*morq*	*morv*	*morv*	*morq*
sparrow	*oranji*	*čiri(či)*	*melič*	*meliča*	*čoqur*	*čoqur*	*bijišk*
arm	*bâzi*	*bâu/ bây(i)*	*des*	*bâzu*		*bâi*	
shirt	*ševi*	*perhan*	*parhan*	*pirhan*	*perano*	*perāno*	*piran*
sneeze	*akse*	*ošnije*	*erčene*	*pešga*		*serro*	*voše*
brother	*berâr*	*beδâr*	*berâ*	*berâr*	*kâkâ*	*kâkâ*	*kâkâ*
want	*gu-*	*gu-*	*gu-*	*gu-*	*-yvâ-*	*-ybâ-*	*-yōt-*
sell	*ruš-*	*ferâš-*	*ferâš-*	*ferâš-*		*reš-*	*reš-*
throw	*xus-*	*xuϑ-*	*xus-*	*xus-*	*ven-*	*pân-*	*ba-*
passive marker	*-i-*	—	*-i-*	*-i-*	—	—	—
Imperfective marker	(*e-*)	*-e*	(*e-*)	(*e-*)	a-	*a-*	*mi-*

of Borujerd and Nehavand[15] are close (Yarshater 1989). Notwithstanding this, thorough studies are lacking on how the relatedness of these dialects is perceived by their speakers.

Dialectology of Judeo-Shirazi

As the provincial capital of Fars in southern Iran, Shiraz has had a large Jewish community for centuries. According to the 12th century travelogue of Benjamin of Tudela, there were 10,000 Jews in the city. It was in Shiraz that Šāhin, the most prominent poet of Judeo-Persian literature, flourished in the

15 An elicitation of the items of Table 4 from a Nehavandi speaker bore only *pešmə* "sneeze" different from Hamadani.

late 13th century. Historical sources from subsequent centuries reveal that the city's Jewish community, with all its ebb and flow, remained one of the strongest and most stable in Persia, with a population of nearly 9,000 in the 1960s (Yarshater 1974).

The most remarkable fact pertinent to this study about the Jewish dialect of Shiraz, or Judeo-Shirazi, is its non-Median pedigree. Contrary to the Iranian Jewish dialects stated above, which belong to the Northwest Iranian family, comparative-historical phonology places Judeo-Shirazi squarely within the Southwest Iranian group (Yarshater 1974), of which Persian is the most prominent member. For a case in point the following examples should suffice: *pos* "son" (Old Iranian *θr- > s), *dīkne* "yesterday" (*dz- > d), *dar* "door" (*dw- > d), *jo* "barley" (*y- > j), *rez* "day" (*-č- > z), *badom* "almond" (*w- > b). Moreover, Judeo-Shirazi employs lexical isoglosses of a Southwest Iranian character, such as *go-* "say" and *geyra* "weeping."

Notwithstanding its Southwest Iranian affiliation, Judeo-Shirazi is grammatically distinct from Persian (and from Judeo-Persian for that matter). For instance, Judeo-Shirazi morphosyntax employs a kind of split ergativity—which is lost in Persian—in the past tenses of transitive verbs. This is illustrated in Example 2 below. Note that Persian verbs conjugate using personal endings (in this example, 1st plural *-im*, 3rd plural *-and*) invariably in all tenses. In Judeo-Shirazi, while a similar set of personal suffixes[16] are used in the present and the past intransitive, the past transitive marks person by a proclitic that otherwise functions as an oblique pronominal suffix.[17] Thus, in the Judeo-Shirazi sentence below, the third person plural *ešu* functions as the oblique pronoun "them" in the first word, but in the second word it plays the role of the agent in "they said." Similarly, in the last word, the oblique pronoun *emu* "us" acts as the agent that precedes the past stem *ded-* "see." The example should support the fact that Judeo-Shirazi's mutual intelligibility vis-à-vis Persian is quite low despite the shared lexemes.

EXAMPLE 2

Judeo-Shirazi[18]

har-kodom-ešu	*ešu=go,*	*dišna*
each-3pl.OBL	3pl.OBL=say.PST	last.night

16 These are singular 1 *-em*, 2 *-e*, 3 *-et*/zero, plural 1 *-im*, 2 *-id*, 3 *-en*.

17 The set of oblique pronominal suffixes is: singular 1 *-em*, 2 *-et*, 3 *-eš*, plural 1 *-(e)mu*, 2 *-(e)tu*, 3 *-(e)šu*.

18 From Yarshater 1974:465. Apparently, intra-dental fricative ð is transcribed as *d*.

xow-e	*bad*	*emu=ded-en*
sleep-EZAFE	bad	1pl.OBL=see.PST be.3sg[19]

Persian

har-kodâm-ešân	*goft-and,*	*dišab*
each-3pl.OBL	say.PST-3pl	last.night
xâb-e	*bad*	*dide-im*
sleep-EZAFE	bad	see.PP-1pl

Both (lit. each) of them said, "Last night we dreamed a bad dream."

As Judeo-Shirazi has received very little scholarly attention, it is hard to draw solid conclusions about its position among the Southwest Iranian languages. Nevertheless, the published material, scant though it is, reveals clear resemblances between Judeo-Shirazi and the rural vernaculars spoken to the west and north of Shiraz—a group of dialects known as the Fars dialects (Davāni, Sorxi, etc.). These are remnants of the original language of the region, from which a substantial amount of literature has survived since medieval times from Shiraz and Kazerun. Besides the aforementioned ergative construction, which is shared by most of the Fars dialects, the following are among the most eye-catching features.[20]

- The preposition *a*, derived from Middle Persian *ō* (lost in New Persian), with a primary ablative function in Judeo-Shirazi, e.g., *Isof-râ . . . a Mesr-eš mibren* "they take Joseph to Egypt."
- Past participle marker *-eϑ-* (< -est-), used in perfective forms: Judeo-Shirazi *vâgešteϑâ bodom* "I had returned," cf. Davāni *amesse beδe* "I had come."
- *teš* "louse" is also found in a few Fars dialects (Sorxi, Zarqāni, Sarvestāni, Jahromi) as well as old Shirazi.[21] "Louse" is among the most stable words in Iranian languages, hence of utmost relevance in dialectology. Judeo-Shirazi *teš*, along with a few other isoglosses, indicates the existence of an ancient dialect of Fars in which a merger took place between the original unvoiced palatals into *ϑ*, and further into *t* in Shirazi, whereas other

19 The third singular copula marks the present perfect for all persons.

20 The data from Fars dialects are from Salāmi 2004–2011.

21 Salāmi 2004–2011; Ḥasandust 2010:254.

Southwest Iranian languages, including Old Persian, kept *s* and *θ* apart.[22] (See Table 5 for a broad view of the process in Iranian languages.) Thus *teš* alone makes a strong case that Judeo-Shirazi is rooted in the old dialect of Shiraz and its environs.

Another feature worth mentioning in Judeo-Shirazi is the intra-dental articulation (θ ð) of original sibilants (s z). Judeo-Isfahani also has these sounds, and they are heard in the speech of older Jews when they speak Persian. As the dental fricatives are quite noticeable because of their absence in Persian, their existence in the speech of Jews was explained as a stutter inherited from Moses, who reputedly burned his tongue by putting an ember into his mouth.[23] Although only observed by this author for the Jewish dialects of Isfahan and Shiraz, the dental fricatives are characterized as being common in all Jewish dialects (Yarshater 1974:460). However, the "Jewish" character of these sounds becomes questionable as we find similar trends in Fars dialects such as Davāni [ð], even if only postvocalically. The systematic replacement of /s z/ by /θ ð/ in Judeo-Shirazi can be a merger of two processes: the postvocalic fricativazation found in Davāni, etc., and the original phoneme /θ/ in proto-Shirazi (Table 5).

Though not as distinctive, there are other common features that unite Judeo-Shirazi and rural Fars dialects. For instance the imperfective maker *mi-*[24] (also used in Persian) and the third person singular copula *-en* (also in Lori dialects and, somewhat surprisingly, in the Jewish dialects of Yazd and Kerman,

TABLE 5 *Development of original palatals in Iranian languages*

Proto-Indo-European	Proto-Iranian	Avestan, Median	Old Pers. >	Southwest Iranian Mid./ New Pers.	Proto-Shirazi >	Shirazi
*ḱ	*ts	s	θ >	h	θ >	θ, t
*ḱu̯	*tsw	sp	s >	s		

22 Morgenstierne 1960:130–131.

23 Author's personal recollection from Isfahan.

24 Cf. Davāni *mē-*.

treated above under Judeo-Median). Judeo-Shirazi *mera* "husband" is shared by Fars dialects, but its domain stretches as far north as CPD area, therefore used by some of the Jewish Median dialects, and, as such, this word should not be taken as a defining feature of the dialects spoken by the Jews. We indeed find low levels of similarity between Shirazi and other Jewish dialects in the features listed in Table 4. Hebraism is another matter though, as we shall see below.

Hebraism and Secret Jargons

None of the Iranian Jewish dialects discussed above shows any Semitic trace in its morphology or syntax. In lexicon there is a common fund of Hebrew words, but probably far less in proportion than that seen in Yiddish or Ladino, and certainly not to an extent that would make Judeo-Median dialects unintelligible to those non-Jews who speak the same Median language or closely related dialects. Haideh Sahim (1994) notes that the Hebrew elements in Judeo-Hamadani (known by its speakers as *ʿebri* "Hebrew") constitute less than one percent of the language's vocabulary, and these are by and large religious terms. Similar inference can be drawn when one examines the published vocabularies of Kashani (Žukovskij 1920), Isfahani (Kalbāsi 1994), and the Kermani wordlist of Lazard (1981).[25] A selected list of common Hebrew words in Judeo-Isfahani is shown in Table 6.

The Hebrew words employed in Judeo-Median (and surely in Judeo-Shirazi and Judeo-Persian as well) should not be confused with the secret jargons known as Lotera'i. This term is used by Iranian Jews "for speech characterized by local Judeo-Iranian grammar with a special exotic substitutive vocabulary which is employed in the presence of gentiles to prevent them from understanding" (Schwartz 2012). Lotera'i vocabulary is a mixture of Iranian and Semitic elements. The pronouns, adjectives, nouns, and verbal bases can be Semitic, whereas verbal endings, modal prefixes, suffix pronouns, most of the particles, as well as sentence structure are Iranian (Yarshater 1977). Example 3 below shows this blend in the Jewish dialect of Golpayegan, a town located

25 In contrast, Ebrāhimi's lexicon has a heavier dose of non-Iranian words. A number of the entries however appear to be of the Lotera'i type (explained below); for instance, *parisidan* "to eat" is "probably from Aram. ptc. *pārīs* (f. *pərīsā*) 'broken (bread) for distribution or blessing' " (Schwartz 2012).

TABLE 6 *Common Hebrew words in Judeo-Isfahani*

Transcription	Meaning	Hebrew
ʿâni	poor	עני
ʿarvit	nightly prayer	ערבית
ʿâwn, Kash., Ham. *âvun*	sin	עָוון
ʿâwnkâr	sinner	
âssir	forbidden	אסור
axsâr	oppressor	אכזר[26]
Kash. *barâxâ*	blessing	ברכה
bet-e ḥaim	cemetery (lit. the house of life)	בית חים
dârâš	sermon	דרשה
dât	religion	דת
guym	gentile(s)	גויים
ḥâxâm	rabbi	חכם
ḥelifi	sacrifice	חליפה[27]
ḥoxmâ	wisdom	חכמה
malâx	angel	מלאך
massâ	matzoth	מצה
mazliqim	jinn, fairy	מזיקים
maʿʿz, Kash. *mued*	feast	מועד
nâvi	prophet	נביא
Kerm. *râv*	rabbi	רב
sâtân	Satan	שטן
sedâqâ	charity	צדקה
seliḥut	Selichot	סליחות
šabât	Sabbath	שבת
šaḥrit	morning prayer	שחרית
šeḥitâ	slaughter	שחיטה
ševʿâ	oath	שבועה
šezim, Kash. *šedim*	jinni	שדים
tâme	unclean	טמא
taʿnit	fasting	תענית
tefilâ, Kerm. *tafilâ*	prayer	תפלה
Ham. *xezi*	brat, ruffian	חזיר(?)
yâyn	wine	יין

26 See Maman 2013:60–61.

27 See Maman 2013:238.

between Kashan and Hamadan. The first line of the example is expressed in the local Median of Golpayegan, which used to be shared between its Jews and Gentiles alike. The sentence in the second line, the Lotera'i equivalent used by Golpayegani Jews in their secret idiom, employs the same grammar bound to three Lotera'i lexemes: *anni* "I" (from Hebrew *ani*), *bāy* "want" (from Aramaic *beʿa*), and *ez* "go" (from Aramaic or Hebrew *ʾzl*). Various layers of both Hebrew and Aramaic origins form the Semitic superstratum in Lotera'i, the origins of which have been traced back as far as the Achaemenid dynasty (c. 550–330 B.C.E.), when the bulk of Jewish immigration to the Iranian Plateau is surmised to have taken place (see Yarshater 1977:5; Schwartz 2012).

EXAMPLE 3

mon	*gu-n*	*be-š-on*	*xiābān,*
anni	*bāy-un*	*b-ez-on*	*xiābān,*
I	want.PRS-1SG	SUBJ-go.PRS-1SG	street

š-on	*vare-gard-on*
š-on	*vā-ez-on*
go.PRS-1SG	Preverb-turn/go.PRS-1SG

I want to go to the street; I shall go [and] return.[28]

Lotera'i is now extinct. Ehsan Yarshater documented its last traces during his field trips to various Persian towns in the 1960s. The Lotera'i idioms may have begun to diminish as they lost their function as a private means of communication, that is, when Persian gradually replaced the local dialects among the non-Jews, such that Judeo-Median (and Judeo-Shirazi for that matter) could largely serve this purpose of privacy for the Jews. Interestingly, a late development, observed by Yarshater (1977:3), was the usage of a "modicum of Lotera'i" in Tehran among the Jewish immigrants who came from various Iranian towns. By then, this mixed language had clearly reached a precarious status.

Conclusion: How Many Jewish Languages?

In this study we have tried to disambiguate the inaccurate classification that bundles together all Iranian languages spoken by the Jews under the single

28 Yarshater 1977: 2.

epithet of Judeo-Persian. The latter is not a language in itself, but rather encompasses those varieties of the Persian language that have survived in documents written in the Hebrew alphabet. On the other hand, Iranian Jewry has preserved several local languages, all unwritten, which were once spoken by local communities at large, non-Jews included. These speech varieties, spoken in the central towns of Iran, belong to the Median subset of the Northwest Iranian family, with the exception of Judeo-Shirazi, which is Southwest Iranian. None of these Jewish languages has a mutually intelligible relationship with Persian.

We have also briefly examined the relationships among the Jewish dialects through certain lexemes and grammatical traits and observed significant isoglosses that separate them, an indication that the Median as spoken in Kashan, Isfahan, Hamadan, Yazd, etc., cannot be classified as varieties of the same language. Apart from formal distinctions, mutual intelligibility should be taken as a primary criterion to arrive at a more objective taxonomy. In this regard, my inquiries with my Kashani, Isfahani, and Hamadani informants indicate that they understand each other only to some degree, but their comprehension of Shirazi is generally low and of Yazdi and Kermani even less, merely a little. Obviously, more rigorous research with much methodological input is needed on the speakers' impressions of other Jewish dialects. Be that as it may, there is yet another criterion that plays into an objective classification of the Jewish dialects: the affinity which each shows with the local Median as spoken by Muslims in rural areas. Considering all this, we arrive at the following tentative classification.

Judeo-Isfahani (*or Jidi*)
The Jewish dialect of Isfahan is a variety within the Provincial (Velāyati) subgroup of the CPDs (Central Plateau dialects) spoken in the immediate vicinity of Isfahan. Although spoken in an urban setting, Jidi shows close affinity to Gazi and Sedehi, among which mutual intelligibility is high enough to have led to the illusion that Gaz and Sedeh were originally Jewish villages.

Judeo-Kashani
The Jewish dialect of Kashan can be classified as a dialect of the Rāji language group surrounding Kashan. As an urban variety, Judeo-Kashani shares grammar and basic vocabulary with other Rāji varieties, but is much more affected by Persian.[29]

29 For a recent sociolinguistic inquiry, see Mansour 2013.

Judeo-Yazdi
The Jewish residents of Yazd and Kerman speak two varieties of essentially the same language. This language may preferably be called, for brevity, Judeo-Yazdi, as the Kermani variety has its roots in Yazd. Judeo-Yazdi shows close affinity with the dialects spoken by the Zoroastrian communities of Yazd and Kerman, but probably with low mutual intelligibility, given the small degree of historical contact between the two religious minorities as well as other sociolinguistic factors.

Judeo-Hamadani
This can be considered by itself a language group consisting of the dialects spoken by the Jewry of Hamadan, Malayer, Nehavand, Tuyserkan (in Hamadan Province), and probably Borujerd. No local communities other than Jews speak this language.

Judeo-Borujerdi
The dialect of Borujerd in Lorestan is probably a variety of Judeo-Hamadani, although data is lacking to prove their degree of relatedness.

Judeo-Shirazi
The Jewish speech variety of Shiraz is likely to be a language by itself, unless its mutual intelligibility with Fars dialects, with which it shares major features, is substantiated. Unlike the Jewish languages stated above, which are of the Median type, Judeo-Shirazi is a Southwest Iranian language, hence genealogically proximate to Persian.

As regards אם other Jewish dialects that were spoken in Delijan, Mahallat, Khomeyn, Golpayegan, Khansar, and probably other townships, the available data is too meager to allow any informed judgment. This makes documentation of these dialects an urgent task, hoping that at least some speakers still survive, far from the areas where they were once spoken.

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