



# ISFAHAN XX. GEOGRAPHY OF THE MEDIAN DIALECTS OF ISFAHAN

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### xx. GEOGRAPHY OF THE MEDIAN DIALECTS OF ISFAHAN

The continuum of Central Plateau Dialects appears along a northwest-southeast axis traversing the modern provinces of Hamadān, Markazi, Isfahan, and Yazd, that is, the area of Ancient Media Major. The lion's share goes to Isfahan, where Median is spoken in many villages scattered throughout the province as well as by Jewish communities in larger towns. Detailed geographical survey is available for only certain parts of Isfahan province; a recent study for the district of Isfahan (Borjian, 2005b) tallies well over a hundred Median-speaking villages, only a fraction whereof had previously been identified. The present article focuses on Isfahan district, but it compiles also all accessible information on the entire province. The following classification of Median dialects is mainly areal, which generally correlates with linguistic classification, except for a few cases that will be mentioned.

*Geography.* The current border of Isfahan province embraces the bulk of Central Dialects (q.v.; South Median or simply Median), save for Komeyn, Maḥallāt, and Delijān just across the northwestern provincial border (yet



included in this study) and a few communities, chiefly Zoroastrian, but also Muslim and Jewish, in Yazd province. To achieve a relevant division within the province modern administrative boundaries have been overlooked, for they have been subjected to several major rearrangements in recent decades. Alternatively, resorting to historical divisions together with topographical-communicational attributes will keep the geographical grouping in rather close accord with the linguistic classification.

This linguistic region is clearly bounded by the Central Desert in the east and the massive Central Zagros range in the west. On the foothills of the latter lie, from south, K̄vānsār, Golpāyegān, K̄omeyn, and Maḥallāt, historically secluded valleys away from major highways. Salient within the province is the Karkas range, an offshoot of the Zagros, beginning just east of Maḥallāt and stretching southeast for some 200 miles. On the west of the Karkas, along the Qom-Isfahan highway, lie Delijān and Meyma-Jowšaqān districts, both connected to the districts of Kāšān and Naṭanz across the Karkas by a network of trails and roads leading to many secluded Median villages. Running along the edge of the desert, the Qom-Kāšān-Yazd highway traverses the Median-speaking districts of Ardestān and Nā'in. These thinly inhabited steppe-deserts are separated from Isfahan by a break-off in the Karkas range which is sometimes called, after its highest peak, Māršnān (Sāzmān-e joḡrāfiā'i, p. 167). This short range is dotted on both flanks with villages speaking closely-related dialects, including those of Kuḥpāya, a sizeable sub-district of Isfahan. Finally, the riverine plane of Isfahan, irrigated by the Zāyandarud River, constitutes the southern boundary of the Median-speaking province. The grouping of Median dialects in Isfahan proper is best achieved within the well-defined economic units traditionally called *boluks* (for a list, see Houtum-Schindler, 1896, pp. 125-29). Lori and Turkic surround the Median core in the south and southwest of Isfahan province.

The users of the dialects live in more than 200 villages and in a few towns where Persian is the primary means of communication. These speech communities range in size from a few to hundreds of families, but almost never more than 10,000 speakers; Sedeh, Varzana, and Sagzi are among the largest Median-speaking localities. In larger towns, Median has been limited to less affluent quarters (e.g., Nā'in and Ardestān) or the fading Jewish communities (e.g., Isfahan; see Yarshater, 1974). The domain of use varies. In the south, where Persianization seems less advanced, the native dialects are used for all in-group communication among the residents, while Persian or the



local dialect may be used for inter-village communication, depending on the degree of intelligibility (Krahnke, p. 58). In the north and in larger towns, there is a high degree of use of Persian in all but the most intimate communication (Majidi, *passim*).

Median in Isfahan province has long been declining in favor of Persian. In certain communities the language shift is well attested by contrasting reports prepared over the past century and a half. Persianization seems to have been more advanced in the Kāšān-Maḥallāt area on the north than in the Isfahan-Nā'in-Ardestān area (Majidi, *passim*; Krahnke, p. 59; see also below, under each region). The trend of language loss has been accelerating parallel with the enormous social and economic changes the province has undergone in the last forty years. In many villages where Median is not yet abandoned, the shift seems imminent as the language is becoming increasingly limited to the elders. Consequently, it would be unrealistic to quantify the individuals or even the communities that speak South Median. Nonetheless, some generalizations can be made.

In terms of the number of settlements the center of gravity is east of Isfahan in Rudašt-Kuḥpāya area. The most resilient of all appears to be Rudašt, with an uninterrupted continuum of nearly 50 Median-speaking villages. On the southern foothills of Māršnān, in the Kuḥpāya-Zefra-Sagzi area, more than three quarters of the total 137 settlements have maintained their native dialects, while in Jarqūya, south of Rudašt, only about half of its 23 villages have resisted Persian. Outside of Isfahan district, the Meyma-Jowšaqān area yields the highest ratio, specifically 19 Median-speaking localities out of the total 23. The ratio in the rest of Kāšān district is no more than a quarter of the 73 settlements. (The quantities are calculated from the data published in *ŠGI*.) In the northern and western parts of the province, Median survives in a few isolated communities only. Thus, the Persianization is far more advanced along the northwestern periphery of the province from Kāšān to K̄vānsār.

*Isfahan proper.* Two distinct Median-speaking areas are noticeable within the Isfahan district: the eastern area, with dozens of Median settlements, in the *boluks* of Jarqūya, Rudašt, and Kuḥpāya; and the western area, with only five Median communities in and around the city. This distribution is easily explained if we assume that the entire district was once Median-speaking, and Persian was rooted in the city first and then radiated outward in all directions, overlaying Median. The city has given way to Persian, save for its Jewish residents, who formed a closed community in the quarter of Jubāra until



recently. The neighboring villages have also switched to Persian, except (1) Sedeh, or more specifically one of its three parts, namely Varnusfāderān (locally called Benesfōn), in the *boluk* traditionally called Mārbin, west of Isfahan; and (2) in the *boluk* of Borḳvār north of the city, the three oasis villages of Gaz, Ḳorzuḡ, and Komešča/Komšača. Farther north in Murčaḡort, only elders could speak the native dialect in 1973 (Majidi, p. 13; cf. *ŠGI* II, p. 36, that reports the village as wholly Persophone).

Jarquya (q.v.; locally Garkuya) is a barren *boluk* stretching from the Šāhkuh range, southeast of Isfahan, to the desert separating it from Abarqu. It is naturally and administratively divided into upper (*‘olyā*) and lower (*soflā*) halves, each having both Median and Persian-speaking oasis villages. In Upper Jarquya the villages of Dastgerd, Kamālābād, Ḥasanābād, Ḳārā, and Yaḡčāl (Allāhābād) are still largely speaking Median, whereas Mālvājerd and the cluster of six villages to its southwest, including Rāmša(n) and Esfandārān, have lost their vernaculars to Persian. The arrangement in Lower (northwest) Jarquya is somewhat mixed; Median-speaking villages are Ganjābād, Siān, Yangābād (now Nikābād), Peykān, Mazra‘a-‘Arab, and Ḥaydarābād (Šafi‘i Nikābādi, pp. 12-15); the dialect was still alive in Āḡarḡavārān (lately renamed Ḥabībābād) as late as 1977 (*ŠGI* II, pp. 50, 55), but is now almost extinct there, as it is in Sa‘ādatābād and Ḥosaynābād, probably due to the educational careers of their inhabitants. Other causes suggested for language shift are population replacement in Mālvājerd, following the Afghan invasion of Isfahan, and relocation of tribes from Fārs under the Zand dynastic rule; these tribes still have a semi-nomadic life near Naršābād (locally Givān; cf. Šafi‘i Nikābādi, pp. 150, 202, 446). The Median dialects of Jarquya may clearly be divided into the upper and lower groups of subdialects.

Up to 50 km east and southeast of Isfahan, there stand the thickly populated *boluks* of Barzrud, Karārej, and Barā‘ān, with dozens of Persophone villages, including such old ones as Dašti, Ziār, Gār, and Bersiān, with extant Saljuḡ monuments. A 1977 survey, however, marks seven settlements as having Median as the idiom of the smaller part of their residents: Bāča/Bāja, Ozvār, Borkān, Espinā, Andelān, Raḥimābād, and Lajanāba (*ŠGI* II, pp. 139-53; cf. Mehryār, 2003, pp. 98, 102, 163, 178, 200). This may throw light on the former language of the area if the Median speakers are not simply recent settlers from Jarquya or Rudašt.

Farther east rests the vast plain of Rudašt with rural settlements arranged roughly linearly around the lower course of the Zāyandarud River toward the



Gāvḵuni lagoon. In Lower (west) Rudašt, the Persian-Median border seems to have been shifting since the report of 1977 (ŠGI II, pp. 117-21) eastward; in the villages of Mā(de)rkān, Sokān/Sekān, Jombeza, Māči, Qal'a 'Abd-Allāh, Kelišād, Siči, and Ḳorram(i) many inhabitants spoke Persian when I visited the area in 2004. The contiguous Median-speaking villages that continue on from there are Ḳorjān/Ḳaračōn, Helārta, Sonuči, Pājikābād, Kamandān, Siryān/Seryon, Qal'a-sārebān, Sidān/Sudon; Šātur (now Emāmzāda 'Abd-Allāh, whereto the inhabitants of the nearby Sorušan have migrated), Šarifābād, Fayzābād, Kelil, Hāšemābād, Qomšān, Giši, Siān and Qal'a-bālā, and lastly Ežia/Ži that marks the end of Lower Rudašt. In Upper Rudašt the Median oases appear in clusters: Tāljerd/Dālgerd (now abandoned), Rangī(n)deh; Ṭa(h)mursā(t) and Abu'l-Ḳayr (two contiguous villages), Kafrun, Fārfān, Jondān/Gondun, Kafrud/Kafarved; Baz(a)m, Sohrān, Bahlān, Qurtān/Gurtun, Aškohrān/Šogron, Yasnā (now Qal'a-Emām), and Varzana, the administrative center and the last settlement of Upper Rudašt (cf. ŠGI II, pp. 110, 117-18). The south-north road connecting Ežia to Kuhpāya crosses the oasis villages of Harand and Qehi, the latter having a distinct dialect.

Kuhpāya is a large piedmont *boluk* north of Rudašt. Its administrative center Kupā (local Vir) used to be the second caravan station on the Isfahan-Yazd route and a medium of commerce between Isfahan and more than a hundred hamlets along several valleys to its north and east. An overwhelming majority of these locales speak Median; among them are several Persian-speaking settlements, but without any clear pattern. The central part of Kuhpāya is Jabal (Kuki in the local usage), resting on the southern slopes of Māršnān, with some forty villages, including Ḳvāja, Pāza, Keriči, Jaza, Mandābād, Daḳrābād, Kerdābād and 'Olunābād (Allevā in the local dialect; Eilers, 1990, p. 220; ŠGI II, pp. 93-94; Wezārat-e jehād-e sāzandagi). In the eastern Kuhpāya, along the road to Nā'in, lie the village districts of Mašgenān, Tudešk, and Ješuqān/Ješveqān/Gašgun (ŠGI II, pp. 68-69, 102), with dialects closely related to those of Nā'in. The western confines of Jabal consist of Fešārk and its hamlets, with transitional dialects approaching those of Zefra.

In its more general sense Kuhpāya embraces Sagzi and Zefra. Sagzi, now a township, which was the first caravan station on the Isfahan-Yazd road, has a distinct dialect, spoken also in the nearby Mazra'a-šur (cf. ŠGI II, p. 86). Ten kilometers north, approaching Zefra, is Vartun, with a transitional dialect toward Zefra. Zefra is located on the mountainous road to Ardestān. It has more than thirty hamlets, from Āb-gonješk on the south to Bāḡ-gol on the



north, apparently with little dialect variation (Borjian, 2005b; cf. Zhukovskii, I, p. viii).

*Outskirts of the Kavir.* Nā'in district is situated to the northeast of Isfahan across the Māršnān range, and extends northeastward well into the Dašt-e Kavir. In the town of Nā'in, now partly deserted, Median was restricted to the older and lower-class residents in the early 1970s (Krahnke, p. 58). The immediate villages of Moḥammadiya, Bāfrān, and Benvid on the road to Ardakān, are reported Median-speaking (Sotuda, pp. ix-xvi). Likewise for Anārak (with the local name Nārestānak), which lies in a basin 50 miles northeast of Nā'in. Proceeding some 70 miles farther on, one arrives at several oases, among which Ḳur, Farroḳi, and Mehrajān have vernaculars constituting a sub-group of Central Dialects.

Ardestān is chiefly a Median-speaking district. The southern rural sub-district of Barāzvand (north of Zefra) has the Median villages of Ke(y)jān, Nohuj, Mārbin, Neysiān, Nārin, Kesār (Qehsāra), He, Žöugand (current Zafarqand?), and Mārču(b)a, among others (Zhukovskii, I, p. viii; ŠGI I, pp. 39-40). The town of Ardestān has sub-dialectal variations in various quarters (Lecoq, 2002, p. 3); the surrounding villages, dozens in number, are generally Median (ŠGI I, pp. 63-67). The villages in the north of the district bordering the desert are predominantly Persian, including Zavāra (ŠGI I; see also Mehryār, pp. 313, 819 and passim).

*Karkas region.* Northwest of Ardestān on the Isfahan-Kāšān highway rests the district of Naṭanz on the eastern foothills of the Karkas range. The town of Naṭanz was already becoming rapidly Persianized in the early 1930s and had lost many of its Median characteristics by the 1970s (Krahnke, pp. 77, 112). Median is still alive in Bād(rud), a large village abutting the desert to the northeast of Naṭanz, and in its satellite hamlets 'Abbāsābād, Ḳāledābād, Dehābād, Fami, Matinābād, and Sarāsiā (see BĀDRUDI). Northeast of Naṭanz there are two fairly long and verdant valleys joining at the Median village of Hanjan; the valley of Barzrud traverses the Median villages of Yārand, Komjān/Konjun, Ṭer(r)a, and Abyāna (Joneidi-Ja'fari), while Barz has become persophone since Zhukovskii's report (I, p. viii). The valley heading south from Hanjan is the seat of Volugerd, Čima, Takia-Sādāt, Bidhand (Vyend), and Fariz(h)and, all Median villages. On a valley (Tarqrud?) south of the Karkas peak (3,900 m) lie the Median villages Ṭāma, Ṭarq, Ṭār, Keša, Mazda/Maz(z)a (Krahnke, pp. 77, 112; Lecoq, 2000, p. 3), and perhaps Bargerun (Zhukovskii, I, p. viii). Further west, on the piedmont of the Karkas, there are the Median



villages of So(h), and the nearby Bidešk and Kelahrud (ibid.).

On the west of the Karkas range is the Meyma-Jowšaqān area (Lambton, pp. 1-5), where most villages are Median-speaking. They include Meyma, on the Isfahan-Qom highway, and its satellite villages Vazvān, Ziādābād, Āzān/Azun, Vandāda/Vendāda, as well as Čeqāda/Čegā and Robāt to its east, and Muta in the northeast (Majidi, pp. 13, 60; cf. *ŠGI* II, p. 185), while *Ḳosr(ow)ābād* was no longer reported Median after Zhukovskii (I, p. viii). The sub-district of Jowšaqān (q.v.) has the Median villages Jowšaqān (more specifically Jowšaqān-e qāli), Kāmu, Čugān/Čowqān, Elzag/Alizaq, and Koluḳ, and the cluster on the northeast of Jowšaqān: Varkān, Pandās, Taj(a)ra, Eranjin/Ārenjan, Āzerān (Majidi, pp. 7, 12, 60; *ŠGI* IV, p. 194). Moreover, the villages of Vāžgun/Vājgun (Majidi, p. 12; Krahnke, p. 54; Zhukovskii, I, p. viii) and Gašgun, Qazmābād, Baluḳ, Vāšar, Vadmunā, Tavā (reported to Gernot Windfuhr in 1968 by residents of Kāmu; apud Krahnke, p. 54) are reported as Median-speaking, but they could not be found on the most detailed maps available to me. Jowšaqān borders Kāšān on the northeast and, therefore, may be grouped geographically with Qohrud or Niāsar group, as shown below.

*Kāšān district.* In the town of Kāšān, Median survived only among its Jewish population, which was on the verge of disappearing in the 1960s (Yarshater, 1974). Immediate neighboring localities are Persianized, most lately Ārān and Bidgol (q.v.), 10 km north of Kāšān (united into the single town temporarily named Golārā in 1977). In the desert east of Kāšān, there is a group of Median oases centered at Abuzaydābād (q.v.), with the hamlets Rijan, Yazdelān, Kāgazi, Faḳra, ‘Aliābād, Qāsemābād, Moḥammadābād, Ḥosaynābād-e Šaybāni (*ŠGI* IV, p. 262). Among Kāšān’s nearby southern villages only *Ḳonb* is reported to be Median (*ŠGI* IV, p. 238).

South of Kāšān along the road crossing the Karkas toward Meyma lies Qamšar, itself Persian-speaking, but most of the villages to its south and east (in Qohrud *dehestān*) were Median: Bonrud, Javinān, Qohrud, Jahaq, Tetmāj/Totmāj, and Zanjānbar/Zangunbar (Majidi, pp. 12, 60); Zanjānbar and Jahaq were reported Persophone in a 1977 survey (*ŠGI* IV, pp. 205-12). In the late Qajar period, the inhabitants of Javinān told Edward Browne that their dialect was spoken in “about a dozen or fifteen villages round about,” extending on the one end to Naṭanz and on the other Qamšar (Browne, 1927, p. 203), implying that Qamšar was not then Persianized yet. This data may be compared with the nineteen villages the inhabitants of Kāmu (see above) had identified in 1968 as having vernaculars similar to their own (Windfuhr, apud Krahnke, p. 54).



Northwest of Kāšān, in Jowšaqān-e Estark *dehestān*, Estark and Fathābād spoke Median (Majidi, p. 60), but both were reported as Persophone only a few years later (ŠGI IV, p. 250). Farther up into the valleys, Barz(ābād), Kal(l)a, Armak, Rahak/Rahaq, and the unidentified village of Hesanj used to be Median-speaking (Zhukovskiĭ, I, viii; cf. ŠGI IV, p. 220).

West of Kāšān, around a break in the Karkas range, an array of Median villages are identified in the Niāsar *dehestān*: Niāsar, Nešalj, Sādiān, Mar(a)q, Vidjā, Viduj, Azvār, and Barzok/Borzok/Balzoq (Majidi, pp. 46-47). In the early 1970s Median was disappearing in Nešalj and Sādiān (Majidi, pp. 12, 35, 47), both of which, as well as Marq, were reported Persophone a few years later (ŠGI IV, pp. 220-21).

*Northwestern frontier.* Along the crescent-shaped region on the northeast periphery of Isfahan province lie the historically Median-speaking districts of Delijān, Maḥallāt, Komeyn, Golpāyagān, and K̄vānsār.

On the Qom-Isfahan highway, we find the Median-speaking Delijān and the nearby village Nešastābād (Majidi, p. 48). Along a narrow valley of Jāsb running northeast from Delijān lies Bijagān, the Median dialect whereof could only be remembered by seniors in 1973 (Majidi, p. 32); At the head of the valley are located Zor and Vārān (Majidi, pp. 11, 48, 56, 58). In Narāq, east of Delijān, on the way to Kāšān, the dialect was ousted by Persian by 1973; only a few elders could recall that Median had been spoken in two quarters of the village some sixty years earlier (Majidi, p. 24). Median was also being abandoned in Qālhar, an isolated mountain village southeast of Delijān (Majidi, pp. 12, 40).

Maḥallāt, Komeyn, and Golpāyagān are now Persophone. The dialect of Maḥallāt, reported by Oskar Mann in 1907, was extinct by 1973, save for several senior residents who could remember a few words (Majidi, p. 11). The towns of Komeyn and Golpāyegān had retained their dialects only within their Jewish communities (Yarshater, 1974). A 1989 report (ŠGI IV, pp. 275-343) maintains that no locality in the Golpāya-gān district spoke a Median dialect, except Vānešān/Vānišān (ŠGI IV, p. 312), halfway along the road to K̄vānsār. Nonetheless, questionnaires filled out in 2000 indicate that the Median vernaculars were still alive in various degrees in the northern villages of Vedāg, Konjedjān, Dom-āsemān, and Šeydābād (Wezārat-e jehād-e sāzandagi).

Farther south, approaching K̄vānsār, lie the Median-speaking villages of



Ti(d)jān, Qu(d)jān, Bābā-ṣoḷtān, Bi(dh)and, Sunaqān, Vādašt, Horestāna, Arasur/Eresil (Zhukovskiĭ, I, p. vi; Mann and Hadank, pp. lxi-lxii; Eilers and Schapka, I, p. 2). Of these only the town of K̄vānsār was reported as having retained the dialect in certain quarters in 1988; Tidjān, Qudjān, Bidhand, Horestāna, and Bābā-ṣoḷtān had already lost their native dialects; the last three localities are reported as having been integrated into the town of K̄vānsār (ŠGI III, pp. 64-65). Median was also spoken by the fading Jewish community of K̄vānsār (Yarshater, 1974).

## SOURCES

*Documentation and study of the dialects.* There is a fairly long history of notes and reports prepared by scholars and collectors on many localities speaking a South Median dialect. It begins as early as mid-19th century (Polak on Naṭanzi), but more systematically during 1880-1940, and then, after the politically-troubled years that followed World War II, during the 1960s-70s. Since the revolution of 1979 foreigners have been denied of fieldwork, but collections by the local enthusiasts and students have been booming.

The earlier documentations include Friedrich Carl Andreas (1939, q.v.) of Sohi in 1880, whose work was edited by Arthur Christensen and Kay Barr; Albert Houtum-Schindler (1884) of Sohi and Qohrudi; Edward Browne (1893, pp. 188-93; 1927, pp. 203-8) of Qohrudi during his 1887-88 travel to Persia; and Amedée Querry (1896) of Nā'ini. The major contribution of the 19th century is that of Valentin Aleksevich Zhukovskiĭ (*Materialy* I-II), which is based on his 1880s field notes, embracing the dialects of Vānišān, Qohrud, Keša, Zefra, Gaz, Sedeh, Kafrān (or Kafrud?), and the Jewish community of Kāšān. This extensive and high-quality work has ever since been the backbone of South Median dialect studies. Oskar Mann carried out fieldwork in two trips during 1901-07 to much of the region, collecting data from Maḥallāt, K̄vānsār, Naṭanz, Soh, and, particularly extensively, from Nā'in (as well as from Sivand and Semnān). His work was edited and published posthumously by Karl Hadank (Mann and Hadank, 1926; for a critical assessment, see Krahnke, pp. 85-88). Vladimir Ivanow's (1926, 1927) reports on Anāraki and the dialects of K̄ur and Mehrajān (as well as Yazd), from trips made by him more than ten years earlier, make him a primary source on the Central Dialects spoken along the edge of the desert. Arthur Christensen's fieldwork (I, pp. 124-294), covering Naṭanzi, Farizandi, and Yārāndi, remains unique for the latter two vernaculars. Then there are valuable collections by Ruben Abrahamian (1930) of Isfahani Jewish (but also Judeo-Hamadāni), Harold Bailey (1935a) of Ardestāni, and



Ann K. S. Lambton (1938) of Meyma'i and Jowša-qāni. Wilhelm Eilers' (q.v.) extensive texts from Gaz, K̄vānsār, and Sivand, collected from 1936-40 and then in the 1960s (Eilers and Schapka) renders these dialects the most comprehensively documented of all Central Dialects. His short article on Kupāya (Eilers, 1990) remains the major published source of this dialect to this date.

The next generation includes Kanus-Credé (1971), another contributor to Anāraki, and MacKenzie (1968), who investigated a contemporary text in Isfahani Jewish dialect published by Pažand (1966). Donald Stilo collected field notes in 1963-65 on Isfahani Jewish, Sedehi, Naṭanzi, and Ārāni, (personal communication). Ehsan Yarshater's collected data from various parts of the province remain partly unpublished (Yarshater, 1974, 1985, 1989; see also below, studies by locality). Pierre Locoq's publications (1974, 1975, 2002) are based on his 1969-74 fieldwork on Qohrudi, Abuzaydābādi, Abyāna'i, Tāri, Bādrudi, Nā'ini, Anāraki, Ardestāni, and Varzana'i. Karl John Krahnke carried out fieldwork in 1970-72 in sixteen villages from Naṭanz to Nā'in to Isfahan, more extensively in Nohuj, Nā'in, Naṭanz, and Ardestān. His collection, however, has not been published, save for the relevant data used in his comparative study (Krahnke, 1976) of the dialects of Bādrud, Ṭarq, Keyjān, Nohuj, Kupā, Ābčuya, and Sagzi, none of which had been studied before. The fieldwork by foreign scholars was interrupted by the Revolution of 1979; in 2005, however, an expedition from the Department of Iranian Studies of Yerevan State University visited the Kāšān-Karkas region.

Persian publications have been on the rise since the 1970s. A very useful one is Majidi's short survey, sponsored by the second Farhangestān, with sample glosses from the last generation of Median speakers in the Kāšān-Maḥallāt-Meyma area. Several informed locals have published on their home villages, for instance, Moḥammad-Ḥasan Rajā'i Zefra'i's dozens of short articles on the material culture of Zefra (q.v.), with ample linguistic data, and 'Ali Šafi'i Nikābādi's monograph on Jarquya, as well as glossaries by Ḥosayn Šafari for Delijāni, 'Abbās Mazra'ati et al. for Abuzaydābādi, etc. The published dialectal poems include, but are not limited to, those of Darviš 'Abbās in Gazi (see xxii, below), Yusof Baḳši (1955, 1997) in K̄vānsāri, Ġafurzāda (1975) and Kāsta (2000, 2004) in Sedehi, and Režā Darviš in Kupāyi (Borjian, 2004). Another source of information on Median dialects can be university theses which have been growing exponentially in the last two decades. Many of these studies suffer from inaccuracies and methodological problems, and most detailed parts of



their treatment are limited to the trivial features the dialects share with standard Persian, thus restricting their scholarly merits. One may also occasionally find short notices on individual dialects in literary periodicals such as *Āyanda*.

There still remains a good deal of research and study to be pursued concerning the Central Dialects. The vernaculars of Sedeh and Zefra, for instance, have been virtually ignored after Zhukovskiĭ's introductory survey (1880s). Likewise, the reliable data on the Jewish dialect of Isfahan is confined to the brief study of Abrahamian (1930). The piedmonts and steppes east of Isfahan are only scantily explored; Kuhpāya with dozens of Median villages and several distinct dialects remain largely untouched; and the idioms of Sagzi, Lower Rudašt, and Jarquya are known but poorly.

*Identification of the dialects.* Some of the studies on individual dialects mention neighboring Median settlements. Persian gazetteers and censuses seldom provide accurate information on the language of various localities, as they often fail to make distinction between Persian and other Iranian languages. Moreover, a serious problem with post-revolutionary atlases is their attempt to Islamicize the 'pagan' toponyms on a broad scale.

Two nationwide projects have been conceived with the goal of generating a linguistic atlas for Persia based on audio-recorded data. The first one began in 1974 under the acronym *Farhangsāz*, standing for Farhangestān (q.v.) and Sāzmān-e joġrāfiā'i-e arteš (Geographical department of the military), which formed a joint venture to identify dialects nationwide based on a questionnaire consisting of 150 glosses and 20 sentences (Ṭamara). As the Revolution interrupted the project, the amassed data were transferred to Sāzmān-e mirāt-e farhangī (Cultural Heritage Organization), which has published at least four volumes, all on Isfahan province (*ŠGI*, covering the districts of Ardestān, Isfahan, K̄vānsār, Kāšān, and Golpāyegān, among other districts where Median is not spoken). Although only a fraction of the collected data is published (19 glosses and two short sentences for two representative dialects in each rural district) in an unmethodical fashion, these volumes are still useful in identifying Median-speaking localities. The second project, sponsored by the Wezārat-e jehād-e sāzandagi, active since 1998, is by and large a duplication of the former project: similar strategy, techniques, and questionnaires are being used, except the number of sentences is now doubled. The greater part of this survey had been completed when the present author visited their Tehran office in 2005; however, the poor quality of



workmanship and audio-recordings limit their merits to the mere identification of the language in each surveyed locality, when the audio cassettes are not lost or field notes are legible.

*Comparative studies.* The main thrust of scholarly interest in the South Median dialects has been comparative, with the intention of clarifying areal or genetic relationships. The following studies include such dialects, often as parts of broader discussions of Iranian dialectology: Zhukovskiĭ, I; Geiger; Mann and Hadank; Tedesco 1921; Ivanow, 1934; Bailey, 1934 and 1936; Morgenstierne; Yarshater, 1974 and 1985; Krahnke; Lecoq, 1989; Windfuhr, 1989, pp. 246-62, 294-95; idem, “Cases” and “Central Dialects” in *EIr.*; Rastorgueva and Moshkalo; and Stilo, “Gazi,” “Jewish Dialect,” and “Isfahan Dialects” in *EIr.*, under “Isfahan.”

*Historical evidence.* The following references, direct or indirect, are available in scattered literary sources on the former dialect of Isfahan. (1) Ḥamza Eṣfahāni in his *Ketāb al-tanbih* (pp. 82-84) describes Persian phonology, apparently that of his hometown Isfahan (cf. Kānlari, II, pp. 180-88; Šādeqi, 1978, pp. 110, 123-24). He also cites the dialect word *asba* “dog” as the etymon of “Isfahan” (quoted by Yāqut, s.v. “Eṣbahān”); it is now replaced by *ku(y)a* in all Median dialects of Isfahan proper but is retained in many other Central Dialects. (2) Moqaddasi/Maqdesi (p. 398) has a short statement on the dialect of Isfahan. (3) Māfarruḳi’s *Ketāb maḥāsen Eṣfahān* (comp. during 465-85/1072-92) records several words and sentences in the dialect of Isfahan; its Persian translation of 729/1329 by Ḥosayn Āvi adds even more dialect materials to the original Arabic work (Tafaẓzoli, 1971). (4) The 11th-century *Ḥekāyah Abu’l-Qāsem al-Baḡdādi* preserves two Isfahani sentences and several words (Tafaẓzoli, 1971). (5) Moḥammad Rāvandi quotes a fragment of a song in an account on the Isma‘ili insurgency in Isfahan in 508/1114 (see *Bahār*, pp. 840-41). (6) Awḥadi Marāḡa‘i (1274-1338; q.v.) composed three lyrics (*ghazal*, q.v.) in the *fahlavi* of Isfahan (Adib Ṭusi; Awḥadi, *Divān*, pp. 431-32). (7) ‘Obayd Zākāni quotes an Isfahani sentence in his 14th-century treatise *Aḳlāq al-aṣrāf* (apud Šādeqi, 1996). (8) More materials are available on the Central Dialects other than those of Isfahan proper; see, Shaked on the old texts located among the Cairo Geniza manuscripts; Mo-ḥaqqueq; Šādeqi, 2002; Jaḍwa.

In the late 19th century, Sayyed ‘Ali Janāb (p. 128) describes the distribution of the *welā(ya)ti* (provincial, i.e., Median) dialects within Isfahan district, which agrees closely with the existing geographical arrangement. Another contemporary report refers to K.linā’i and K.nināni, a tribe who had settled in



the quarter of Bidābād of Isfahan, as speaking a distinct variety of Persian (*zabān-e fārsi-e maḵṣusá*; Taḥwildār, pp. 91-92). From the same time survives the *divān* of Darviš ‘Abbās Jazi (q.v.).

The study of Isfahani Median can be further aided by the study the Persian variant of Isfahan. Various Persian dictionaries include such lexemes, and European travelers to the Safavid capital have quoted many. An important source from the late 17th century, Angelus a Sancto Iosepho, listed phrases and sentences in the contemporary Persian of Isfahan in his extensive vocabulary of Persian (Windfuhr, 1979, p. 159). The current Persian of Isfahan has preserved a considerable number of old words and morphological features, only a few of which are studied, by the late Aḥmad Tafazzoli (1991; see also Oḵrawi).

Studies and materials on the dialects by locality:

Ābčuya (east of Kuhpāya): Krahnke.

Abuzaydābād: Lecoq, 1975 and 2002; Yarshater, in *EIr*. I, pp. 401-2; Sarafrāzi; Mazra‘ati et al.

Abyāna: Lecoq, 1974 and 2002; Yarshater, in *EIr*. I, pp. 404-5; Bolukbāši; Āhani; Amini; Joneidi-Ja‘fari.

Anārak: Ivanow, 1926 and 1927, pp. 57-59; Kanus-Credé; Lecoq, 2002; Windfuhr, in *EIr*. II, pp. 2-3; Sohrābi; Ebrāhimi Anāraki.

Ārān and Bidgol: Dokā‘i, 1972; Yarshater, in *EIr*. IV, pp. 247-49, idem, 1989; ‘Alijānzāda; Maḥbubi.

Ardestān: Bailey, 1935a; Yarshater, 1985; Lecoq, 2002, idem, in *EIr*. II, pp. 387-88; ŠGI I.

Bād(rud): Lecoq, 2002; Krahnke; Yarshater, in *EIr*. III, pp. 383-85.

Bāg-gol (north of Zefra): Ṭabā‘izāda.

Bidgol: see Ārān and Bidgol, above.

Bijgān (in Jāsb, NE of Delijān): Majidi, pp. 33-34.



Borkvār: Kān-Aḥmadi; see also Gaz, Kvorzuq, Komešča.

Delijān: Majidi, pp. 49-55; Yarshater, 1985; Şafari; Madani; Peyvandi.

Farizand: Christensen, I.

Gaz: Zhukovskiĭ, II; Bailey, 1935b; Eilers and Schapka, 1979; Moḥammadi et al., 1992; Esmā'ili; Fāzel; Borjian, 2005a.

Golpāyegān: Yarshater (Jewish, unpub.); ŠGI IV, pp. 275-343.

Isfahan district: Mehryār, 1977; ŠGI II; Sepantā, 1996 and 1997; Borjian, 2005b.

Isfahan Jewish community: Abrahamian; Pažand; MacKenzie; Kalbāsi; Netzer; Sahim; Borjian, forthcoming.

Jarquya: Kān-Aḥmadi; Salimi; Šafi'i pp. 439-568; Ebrāhimi Faḳkāri; Borjian, forthcoming.

Jowšaqān: Lambton, pp. 43-78; Yarshater, 1985; Zargari.

Kvānsār: Zhukovskiĭ, I; Mann and Hadank, pp. 3-67; Eilers and Schapka, 1976; Baḳši, 1955 and 1997; Yarshater (Jewery; unpub.); Tasbiḥi; ŠGI III, pp. 43-80; Ašraf-al-Kottābi; Tawakkoli; Banihāšemi; Amiri, 2000, 2002a, and 2002b; Ašrafi Kvānsāri.

Kamandān (in Lower Rudašt): Borjian, forthcoming.

Karfud/Kafrān (two distinct villages in the Upper Rudašt, which are confused in the literature): Kāšān district: Zhukovskiĭ, II. ŠGI IV, pp. 167-270.

Kāšān Jewish community: Zhukovskiĭ, II; Yarshater, 1974; Ṭabari.

Keša (Naṭanz): Zhukovskiĭ, I.

Keyjān: Krahnke.

Komešča: Baḥr-al-'Olumi.

Kvorzuq: Mir'alā'i; Borjian, forthcoming.

Kuḥpāya: Kān-Aḥmadi; Krahnke; Eilers; Almāsi; Borjian, 2004, idem, forthcoming; see also Mašgenān, Ābčuya.



Ḳur and adjoining villages: see CENTRAL DIALECTS.

Maḥallāt: Mann and Hadank, pp. 68-105; Yarshater (Jewery; unpubl.); Majidi, pp. 15-24.

Mašgenān (Kuhpāya): Şadri.

Meyma: Lambton, pp. 5-43; Mo'iniān,; Majidi, pp. 61-64; Waṭankvāh; see also Vazvān.

Nā'in: Querry; Mann and Hadank, pp. 117-93; Ivanow, 1929; Hadank; Lecoq, 2002; Sotuda; Āqābābā'i; Pur'ābedi.

Narāq: Majidi, pp. 25-32.

Naṭanz: Polak, pp. 264 ff.; Zhukovskiĭ, I; Mann and Hadank, pp. 106-16; Christensen, I.

Neşalj (Kaşān): Majidi, pp. 36-39; Yarshater, 1985.

Nohuj: Krahnke.

Qālhar (SE of Delijān): Majidi, pp. 41-46.

Qehi (north of Rudašt): Borjian, forthcoming.

Qohrud: Houtum-Schindler, 1884; Zhukovskiĭ, I; Browne, 1893, pp. 188-93, 1927, pp. 203-8; Mann and Hadank, pp. 265-67; Lecoq, 2002; Yarshater, 1985; Şādeqi Qohrudi.

Rudašt: see Kamandān, Kafrud/Kafrān, Qehi, Varzana.

Sagzi: Krahnke; Borjian, forthcoming.

Sedeh: Zhukovskiĭ, II; Farahvaşi; Ġafurzāda (a poem); Ḳāsta, 2000 (poems) and 2004, pp. 71-87 (poems); Aşrafī Varnusfāderāni; Ḳātunābādi (idioms); Esmā'ili, 2001 and 2002; Şarrāmi, pp. 128-43; Borjian, forthcoming. Soh: Andreas, I, pp. 50-110; Houtum-Schindler, 1884; Mann and Hadank; Bailey, 1935b.

Ṭār: Lecoq, 2002; Āhur.

Ṭarq: Krahnke.



Vānešān (near K̄vānsār): Zhukovskiĭ, I; Jalāli; Kefāyati.

Vārān (in Jāsb, NE of Delijān): Majidi, pp. 57-58; Nilipur and Ṭayyeb.

Varzana: Lecoq, 2002.

Vazvān (near Meyma): Ḥosayni-nežād; Sami'iniā.

Yārand: Christensen, I.

Zefra: Zhukovskiĭ, I; Rajā'i (and many more articles); Borjian, forthcoming; see also Bāḡ-gol.

Zor (in Jāsb, NE of Delijān): Majidi, p. 59.

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