



KASHAN IX. THE MEDIAN DIALECTS OF KASHAN

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ix. The Median Dialects of Kashan

This sub-entry is divided into two sections:

- (1) Rural Rāji dialects.
- (2) Urban Jewish dialect.

(1) Rural Rāji Dialects

Although the city of Kashan itself is now entirely Persophonic (see [part 2](#)), many of the settlements in its proximity have preserved their native [Central dialects](#). The Central dialects of Kashan, which we call here the Kashan dialects as a whole, are often called Rā(ye)ji or Dei (Dehi) by their speakers (Yarshater, 1985; idem, 1989). The Rāji-speaking villages and townships associated historically with Kashan extend as far as Delijān in the west, Meyma in the southwest, and Naʔanz in the south, although these mentioned localities now form administrative districts independent from Kashan within the province of Isfahan. In fact, the current administrative divisions serve no good frame of



reference for delineating dialects of what has been called the Kashani subgroup of the Central dialects (see also [isfahan xxi](#)). One of the aims of this article is to improve isoglottic definition of the Kashani group.

In the past few decades, rural Kashan has rapidly been shifting to Persian. Most villages have already been partly or entirely persianized, and practically all Rāji speakers are bilingual (see Borjian, 2009). A distribution of the Rāji-speaking places is known from a survey conducted in the 1970s (Purriāhi et al.) for individual rural districts of Isfahan Province. The data pertaining to Kashan, calculated and summarized in [Table 1](#), shows that 38 of the total 96, or 40 percent, of the settlements had native Rāji speakers. In Kavirāt, a *garmsir* sub-district centered at Abuzaydābād, all nine settlements spoke Rāji, whereas among the eight settlements of Ārān Sub-district only two, namely Ārān and Bidgol, preserved, if only partly, their dialects. On the *sardsir* or mountainous south and west of Kashan District, [Qohrud](#) and Niāsar show substantial language shift, while [Jowšaqān](#) and [Meyma](#) have been conservative. The survey excludes the Naṭanz district south of Kashan, with several Rājispeaking villages around the Karkas peak, such as Hanjan, Yārand, Abyāna, Bidhand, Fariz(h)and, So(h), Ṭarq, Ṭār, Keša, as well as the *garmsir* sub-district of Bād(rud) (q.v.; see also [isfahan xx](#)).

In spite of the random distribution of the Rāji- and Persian-speaking settlements, and the profound influence of Persian on the Rāji dialects, there is no language continuum between the two, in the way that, for instance, Caspian blends into Persian as one moves south from central Alborz onto the plateau. The dialect discontinuity becomes evident when we compare adjoining villages, such as Rāji-speaking Kōnb and Persian-speaking Laṭhor (south of Kashan city) and Rāji-speaking Vandāda and Persian-speaking Kōsravābād (south of Meyma), respectively in the north and the south of Kashan linguistic province.

The following comparative data (from Purriāhi et al., IV, 245-46; idem, II, pp. 189-90) demonstrates the point at hand. For “snow,” “boy,” “dog” we have Laṭhori and Kōsravābādi *barf*, *pesar*, *sag*, Kōnbi *vāfr*, *pirā*, *espa*, and Vandāda’i *varf*, *pūr*, *kuve*; sentences: Laṭhori, Kōsr. *to-rā did-am*, Kōnbi *to-m be-di*, Vandāda’i *to-m bi-di* “I saw you”; Laṭhori *u rafte bu nū bexarra*, Kōsr. *un rafte bud nun bexere*, Kōnbi *nā bošta bu nū bereyin*, Vandāda’i *un bišta bo nun birinu* “he had gone to buy bread.” Accordingly, we may make the following observations. (1) The two Persian varieties, though from comparatively remote villages, are practically identical with one another and to the colloquial



Persian of Tehran. This suggests a fairly recent language shift to Persian. (2) The Persian varieties contrast sharply with the Rāji dialects in vocabulary, morphosyntax, and historical phonology. (3) The Rāji dialects are essentially similar in morphology and syntax; for instance, past transitive verbs show ergative construction (*-m bedi*), and the past participle has a modal prefix (*bo /bi-šta*). (4) They differ in major lexical items (*espa ~ kuve* “dog,” *u ~ nā* “he”). As also shown in Isogloss no. 2, below, geographical proximity does not guarantee the isoglottic identity or likeness among the Kashan Rāji dialects.

Abbreviations. Abu (Abuzaydābādi), Aby (Abyāna’i), Ārā (Ārāni), Ard (Ardestāni), Bād (Bādrudi), Bdg (Bidgoli), Bid (Bidhandi), Bij (Bijgāni), Del (Delijāni), Far (Farizandi), Han (Hanjani), Jow (Jowšaqāni), JKāš (Jewish Kashani), Kān (Kvānsāri), Keš (Keša’i), Mah (Maḥallāti), Mey (Meyma’i), Nat (Naṭanzi), Nar (Narāqi), Naš (Nešalji), Nāy (Nā’ini), Qāl (Qālhari), Qoh (Qohrudi), Soh (Sohi/So’i), Tār (Tāri), Trq (Ṭarqi), Vān (Vānešāni), Vār (Vārāni), Vrk (Varkāni), Yār (Yārāndi), Zef (Zefra’i), Zor (Zori). No abbreviations are used for the poorly documented dialects of Konb in Markazi district, Kāgazi in Kavirāt rural district, Niāsar, Azvār, Borzok, Vidjā, and Viduj in Niāsar rural district, and Totmāj and Javinān in Qohrud rural district.

Comparative studies. For well over a century, the scholars of Iranian dialectology have made several attempts to classify Central dialects into meaningful groups, aside from geographical contiguity. These comparative studies became more refined as more dialects have been made known. Major studies are summarized in chronological order as follows. (1) In his vanguard study, Valentin Zhukovskii (1888), one of the most prolific collectors of Central dialects, divided them into two groups: Kashani, consisting of Qoh, Keš, Vān, and Zef, and Isfahani, consisting of Gazi, Sedehi, and Kafrāni. (2) At the turn of the century, when sufficient information was available for a broad investigation of Iranian languages, Wilhelm Geiger defined Central dialects as a distinct group within West Iranian languages, and he further classified them into the subgroups of Kashani (Qoh, Nat, Vān, Mah, and Nāy), Keš–Zef, and Yazdi Zoroastrian. His criteria were fourteen linguistic features as well as geographical contiguity. (3) Karl Hadank (in Mann and Hadank) embarked on a detailed comparative analysis of Central dialects, but numerous overlaps of isoglosses prevented him from arriving at any concrete classification. (4) W. Ivanow’s classification is devoid of explicit linguistic analysis, though he seemingly considered sociolinguistics, which he introduced into Iranian dialectology, in defining a Kashan subgroup that consisted of JKāš, Qoh, Far,



Yār, Keš, and Soh, while Nat is placed in Yazd subgroup and Kān, Vān, and Mah in Isfahan subgroup. (5) In an encyclopedia article, Harold Bailey (p. 1055) made a general survey of modern Iranian languages, and assigned Central dialects into five subgroups, which correspond closely to subsequent classifications, though his comparative principles are not explicit. Two of these subgroups include the dialects of Kashan: Yār, Far, and Nat versus Qoh, Mey, Soh, Keš, and Zef. (6) The next major classification of Iranian languages belongs to Georg Morgenstierne (1958, pp. 71 ff.), who founded his study on historical phonology and, to a lesser degree, morphology. He classifies more than eighty Iranian languages and dialects into twenty-three groups, eight of which concern Central dialects. Like Bailey, Morgenstierne assigns the Kashan dialects into two distinct groups, namely Yār, Far, Nat, and Ard versus Qoh, Keš, Soh, and Mey, while Zef is grouped with the dialects of Isfahan. (7) A significant step forward in the study of Central dialects was Karl Krahnke's doctoral dissertation "Linguistic Relationships in Central Iran." Of the twentyeight dialects he brought together in his study, twelve belong to the Kashan area: Abu, Qoh, Jow, Mey, Aby, Yār, Far, Soh, Bād, Nat, Keš, and Trq. His thirty-nine isoglottic maps are based on phonological and morphological-lexical features. The present comparative study owes much to Krahnke's findings, but it refines and expands the latter by including more localities (JKāš, Ārā, Bdg, Del, Naš, Tār) and presenting new isoglosses that are chosen purposely to be relevant to the Kashan area. (8) A well-received classification of the Central dialects belongs to Pierre Lecoq (1989), who marks out the Kashan-Naṭanz area as forming the northeast group, while Ardestāni and Zefra'i are placed in the southeast group together with Yazdi. (9) In an authoritative study, Gernot Windfuhr (1992; see [central dialects](#)) defines a large northern-central group in the area of Kashan and Naṭanz, which excludes Ardestāni and Zefra'i, both assigned to the southern group. (10) Rastorgueva and Moshkalo conducted an extensive analysis of Central dialects, but without any explicit classification. (11) Donald Stilo (2007; see [isfahan xx](#)) groups the Central dialects areally into four geographical quadrants and defines the Isfahan dialects by drawing the bundles of eleven isoglosses (idem, fig. 5). His approach is taken as a model in our isoglottic analysis below.

The data. The linguistic data used in the present study are obtained from the following sources: Zhukovskiĭ (JKāš, Qoh, Keš, Nat, Vān, Zef), Mann and Hadank (Nat, Soh, Mah, Nāy), Christensen (Far, Yār, Nat), Andreas (Soh), Lambton (Jow, Mey), Eilers (Kān), Krahnke (Bād, Trq), Lecoq, 2002 (Qoh, Abu,



Aby, Tār, Bād), Yarshater, 1989 (Ārā, Bdg), idem, 1985 (grammatical gender in all dialects), Majidi (Mey, Vār, Bij, Nar, Naš, Qāl, Zor), Zargari (Jow), Şafari (Del), Āqā-Rabī' (Han), author's field notes (Far, Kān, Keš, Nat, Trq, Zef), and the *EIr.* entries: abuzaydābādi; abyāna'i; bādrudi; bidgol and bidgoli dialect; isfahan xxi. provincial dialects; jowšaqān ii; meyma ii (online); qohrud ii (forthcoming online).

GRAMMATICAL SKETCH

Phonology. The consonant inventory of the Rāji dialects is essentially similar to Persian. Some dialects have the pharyngeal fricative /ħ/ [ħ] and stop /ʕ/ [ʕ], but neither is phonemic. These sounds appear predominantly in Arabic words, hence are clearly influenced by Arabic; but no compelling explanation has been put forward as to how the dialects have adopted them. In their vocalic system, the dialects show little similarity; they range from as few as eight phonemes in Ārāni to fourteen in Abuzaydābādi. The highly developed vocalic system of Tāri is one of the richest in the world with twenty distinct vowels, if we include the five nasal vowel sounds for which Lecoq (2002, p. 22) establishes minimal pairs. Most dialects have the fronted *ö* and *ü*; the phonemic status of neither is easy to establish. Similarly, the vowel length recorded by the earlier collectors is seldom justified when examined at the phonemic level in the more fine-tuned, later studies.

Nouns. Nominals are inflected primarily with *-a* and/or *-e*, which play several roles in each Rāji dialect. (1) Feminine marker is *-a* and *-e* (see Isogloss no. 2, below). (2) The indefinite is marked with an unstressed *-e* or *-i*: Abu (*ī*) *pūr-ē* “a boy,” Aby (*ya*) *rū-e* “one day,” Mey *jan-e* “a woman.” (3) The definite marker is *-a* or *-e* (stressed, as in colloquial Persian): Qoh *yene-y-a/e* “the woman,” Abu *pe-y-a* “the father” (with epenthesis *-y-*), Aby *kāši-a* “the Kashani.” (4) The *ežāfa* marker (*-e* or *-i*), probably not genuine to the Kashan area, occurs occasionally, either explicitly (Mey *bar-ē raz* “garden’s door”) or by altering the final vowel: Qoh *keye man* “my house” (cf. *keya* “house”), Abu *kēye ma* “my house” (*kēya* “house”). In Abyāna'i, the *ežāfa* may mark a modified feminine noun: *dót-a man* “my daughter,” *sāl-a dövvömji* “the second year” (Lecoq, 2002, pp. 60, 71). (5) The definite object marker is sometimes reduced to *-a* or *-e* (= Pers. *-rā*). (6) An unstressed *-a* or *-e* occurs occasionally on the nominal complement of verbs or direct objects in Bidgoli: *kār-e xeyli dāro* “I have much work [to do],” *dars-a axune* “she studies” (Yarshater, 1989, p. 381); a similar suffix in Abyāna'i is interpreted as the optional feminine marker, e.g., *zendegāni-a akerān* “I live” (Lecoq, 2002, p. 60). (7) An optional unstressed



particle, with no semantic value, exists in various dialects, e.g., Qoh *mer/méra/mére* “man” (Lecoq, 2002, pp. 76-77). (8) The plural marker is *-a* in Abyāna’i (e.g., *meša* “ewes”), *-e* in Bādrudi (*bāle* “spades”); other dialects employ *-(h)ā* or *-un*.

In fact, the defining line between these functions is sometimes blurred, and their interference makes the morphology of the dialects difficult to understand. It may look even more complicated if we consider the role of the same suffixes in lexical distinction (Abu *dōt* “daughter” ~ *doča* “girl,” Aby *doté* “girl” ~ *doĀŅ ta* “daughter”). Moreover, a whole class of words in each dialect carries the ending vowels */-a/*, */-e/*, or both, derived from the Old Iranian suffix **-aka* (see meyma ii, for instance). This complex aspect in morphology calls for a more detailed study of individual dialects.

Pronouns. Concerning the freestanding first singular pronoun, the historical direct/oblique binary is preserved only in Aby *az/man*, Bād *a/men* (see [bādrudi](#); cf. Bād *axo / min* in Lecoq, 2002, pp. 83, 278); other Central dialects have adopted the undifferentiated Persian form. The third singular personal and demonstrative pronouns with nasal initial are characteristically Kashani (see Isogloss no. 3, below). Some dialects show distinct forms for gender (masc./fem.): remote Abu *na/nōn*, Aby *nūn/nūna*, Jow *nun/núna*, Naš *nu/nemun*, Del *on/ona*; proximate Abu *nē/ nēm*, Aby *nēn/nēna*, Jow *nen/néna*, Naš *na/nuhun*, Del *in/ ina* (see also Isogloss no. 2).

Enclitic pronouns (Table 2) are generally similar to those of Persian, but note these phonological changes: (1) The original consonant */š/* in the third person singular and plural is */y/* in Ārāni, Abuzaydābādi, and Qohrudi. (Sedehi and Sagzavi too have 3rd sg. *-y*, while other provincial dialects of Isfahan have either *-ž* or *-š*.) The arbitrary distribution of the types in */š/*, */ž/*, and */y/* among the Central dialects suggests the historical line of change *š > ž > y*, in which the original *š* is first voiced into *ž*, and the letter is lateralized to become *y*. This author has observed this diachronic development as being currently active among different generations of the speakers of K̲orzuqi and Gazi (see [jazi](#)). A similar trend may be seen in *šm > žm > ym*, as shown below, under Isogloss no. 1, as well as in *j > ž > y* in “woman.” (For an alternative explanation, which assumes that the third singular *-y* and *-š* are derived respectively from OIran. **hai* and **šai*, etc., see Windfuhr, 1975, 1992.) (2) An original */t/* or */d/* in the second person singular and plural is softened to */y/* in Farizandi and Yārāndi. Interestingly, Abyāna’i, located in a buffer zone between these two groups, shows one aspect of each: 3rd sg. *-y* and 2nd pl. *-yi* (< *yü* < *yū* < *yun*).



Subsequently, *ketāb-ey* means “his book” in Abyāna’i but “your book” in Yārāndi; the two neighboring vernaculars are just a few kilometers apart in the Barzrud mountain valley.

Verbs. The significant role of transitivity, combined with the secondary construction of most past stems (by suffixing *-ā* to the present stem), has led Lecoq (2002, p. 119) to divide the past stems into four classes; examples of present : past stems in Qohrudi are: (i) transitive, ending in a consonant, *ger-* : *gera(t)-* “seize”; (ii) transitive, ending in a vowel, *geln-* : *gelnā-* “rotate”; (iii) intransitive, ending in a consonant, *k-* : *kat-* “fall”; and (iv) intransitive, ending in a vowel, *gīn-* : *gīnā-* “rotate.” Some of the dialects are capable of forming an inflectional passive (see Isogloss no. 5, below), and all form causative stems by suffixing *-(V) n* to the present stem, e.g., Ārā *bə-m-tej-ən-ād-a* “I have caused to run.”

Personal endings (Table 3). The first person singular verb ending is *-on*, *-ō*, *-o*, or *-un* in all Kashani dialects, except JKāš *-om*, Jow *-am*, which are seemingly formed under Persian influence. The third singular is typically *-a* or *-e*; the clearly different *-u* in the Jewish dialect of Kashan suggests influence from Isfahan provincial dialects. Some dialects show a different ending for the feminine third singular: Abu, Aby *-a*, Qoh *-e*, Del *-ae*, Jow *-ea*. The ending is zero in the preterit, but Jow has also *-e*. See also Isoglosses nos. 2, 4, 6, 8, below.

ISOGLOSSSES

The fourteen features that follow are chosen to define the Kashan area within the entire region of Central dialects. Selection of the isoglosses is based on the availability of data for most dialects as well as their specificity to the Kashan area; scarcity of data and overlap of isoglosses prevented us from including some of the features identified in previous studies. Our isoglosses can be divided into phonological (1), morphological (2-6), and lexical (7-14) features.

For succinctness, when a word is given in small-capital letters, this indicates that a range of forms occur in different dialects. Some of the isoglosses are shown in Table 5.

1. “Eye.” The gloss “eye” (cf. Av. *čašman-*, MPers. and NPers. *čašm*, colloquial Pers. *češ*) is represented by two forms in Central dialects: the ca(y)m type (e.g., Borzoki, Vrk *čaym*, Han *čam*, Yār *čem*) prevails among the Kashan and other northern dialects versus caš in the south; the bisecting line passes through



Zefra, for which both forms are reported: *čem* (Zhukovskiĭ) and *češ* (my data; see also Krahnke, no. 4). A parallel reduction of the original *–šN* cluster is found in more words: Qoh *paym*, Jow *paim*, Nat *poime* (cf. Tār *pežm*, Keš *pajm*, Aby *pāzm*) “wool”; Aby *tena*, Jow *taina* “thirsty”; Mey *powna*, Keš *pōina* “heel”; Aby *enoyñ-*, Jow *einās-* “hear, recognize” (< OIr. **xšnā-sa-*). Although sufficient data is lacking in other dialects for a wide-ranging comparison, the accessible data suggest the line of sound change *–šm-* > *žm* > (y)m (cf. Windfuhr, 1975). For a related development, see above, under Pronouns.

2. Gender distinguished. Several Kashan dialects have grammatical gender in various domains, as shown in Table 4 (summarized from Yarshater, 1985, with addition of Farizandi). The feminine marker for nouns, as well as for pronouns and adjectives, is an unstressed *–a*, e.g., Del, Aby *bā la* “spade,” Del *béza*, Naš *bóz(a)* “goat,” while Jowšaqāni has the feminine in *–e* and the masculine in *–a*, as in *boze* “goat” ~ *varzāa* “ox”; *varge* “she-wolf” ~ *varga* “he-wolf.” In the dialects which show no formal gender marker in nouns, the distinction is revealed by accord of adjectives and verb. Examples: (adjectives) Abu *böz esbíde* “white goat,” Aby *sūra goĀN la* “red flower”; (indefinite articles or numerical adjectives) Del *ajey pür* “a son” ~ *ija dete* “a daughter,” Aby *e dāde* “a brother” ~ *ya dādā* “a sister”; (demonstrative adjectives) Del *on purā* “that boy” ~ *óna zenčo* “that woman”; for demonstrative and personal pronouns, see Pronouns, above.

Gender is better preserved in the verb phrase as an integral part of the inflectional system. Examples are: Naš *pür/ dot-am nāsāz-e/a* “my son/daughter is ill”; Qoh *mer bömö* “the man went” ~ *yan bömöde* “the woman went”; Del *berā-m vāgardā be* “my brother had returned” ~ *fāka-m vāgardo-wda* “my sister had returned,” Naš *berā/xāka Hasan-am bedi bö/be* “I had seen Hasan’s brother/sister” (for constraints, see Yarshater, 1985; Lecoq, 2002, pp. 58 ff.; see also central dialects). Farizandi seems to mark gender only in some third person verb agreements when the subject is naturally feminine, e.g., *pür/dot-ām ko-šo / štā?* “where did my son/daughter go?” As demonstrated by Yarshater (1985, pp. 741-43), Meyma’i and Ardestāni also show vestigial remnants of gender in the verb phrase.

A closer examination of the Kashan dialects without the category of gender reveals that some of their nouns carry the unstressed ending *–a* or *–e* that can be traced back to the Old Iranian feminine marker **-ā* (rather than **-aka*, the source of *–a/–e* in Qoh *espá*, JKāš *esbé* < **spaka-* “dog,” and most other nouns in West Iranian that end in these vowels). Morgenstierne surveyed this category



of nouns in Tati and Central dialects; his examples from Kashan area include (expanded here): Soh *búzä*, Bij, Vār *beza* “goat” (cf. Del, Naš, Abu, above); Soh *kaĀŋ rge*, Qoh *kárg(e)*, Nat *kárga*, Bij, Vār *kerge* (cf. Naš and Aby fem. *kárga*) “hen”; Qāl *bara* (cf. Abu fem. *bar*) “door”; Mey *düme* “picture” (cf. Aby fem. *díma* “face”); Nat *dúta*, Qoh, Keš, Zef *dúte*, Vān *déte* “daughter.” Morgenstierne’s investigation suggests that gender distinction, at least in the nominals, is an archaic feature which once existed in all Kashan dialects as well as in Tati in the north.

This notion accords well with the findings in an areal study of Donald Stilo (unpublished paper). He shows that, in terms of grammatical gender, the Kashan dialects form the southern end of a larger language continuum that extends with little interruption northward to Āmora’i, Vafsi, and Alviri, then to Southern Tati of Qazvin and Upper Tārom, and farther north up to Kajali. Moreover, Stilo puts forward the idea that certain Tati dialects have not only been conservative in retaining an older gender distinction but have expanded it into new domains through cross-referencing the gender of the noun in different loci within the noun or verb phrase. Focusing on the neighboring Tati dialects of Kafteji and Kelasi in eastern Tārom, Stilo then explains how these two closest genealogical relatives have taken opposite direction: the latter having lost gender completely, while the former is one of the richest among Tati dialects in terms of gender. Stilo’s findings can be applied to similar situations in the Kashan area, namely Jowšaqāni and Kāmu’i, Qohrudi and Javināni, and Ārāni and Bidgoli—three pairs of contiguous dialects that have taken opposite paths in gender.

3. Third singular pronoun. The third singular personal and demonstrative pronouns in the Kashan dialects is the nasal initial *no(n)*, *nu(n)*, or the like (Krahnke, no. 21), which contrasts with most other Central dialects in the west and south which share the vowel initial forms also found in Persian. Although without established etymology, the Kashani pronominal forms must be old in that they differentiate gender in the dialects with gender distinction.

4. Durative marker. To mark the present indicative and the imperfect, four major strategies are employed in Central dialects: the prefix *et-/at-* in the western area from Maḥallāt to Kṽānsār, the prefix *e-/a-* in the Kashan area, the suffix *-e* in the Isfahan area, and no marker in the rest of the dialects, including Naṭanzi (see Krahnke, pp. 182-87; Lecoq, 2002, pp. 110 ff.; Windfuhr, 1992, pp. 249-50). In a recent study Stilo (2007, pp. 106 f.) has established that the Kashani durative marker *e-/a-* originated from an older *et-/at-* (as in the



dialects to its west), on the ground that the latter forms appear before the stems that begin with vowels, e.g., Aby *e-kar-ān* “I do” ~ *et-özmar-ān* “I count.” It should be added here that (1) the use of the *t-* variants is not consistent before vowelinitial stems; it is rather limited by and large to two verbs “bring” and “come”: Abu *at-ār-ō* “I bring,” *ma-t-avar* “I would bring,” *a-t-ō* “I come,” *at-amd-ō* “I would come”; Qoh *at-ār-ūn* “I bring,” *at-ömöd-ūn* “I come”; Aby *et-orān* “I bring,” *me-tt-ārd* “I would bring”; Tār *at-ār-ō* “I bring,” *am-t-ā* “I would bring,” *at-ōmo-yō* “I would come”; Mey *at-ema-iy-ən* “I would come.” (2) For these verbs, the historical *t-* has become the frozen part of the stems in Meyma’i and Jowšaqāni, as they appear in non-durative forms: Jow *na-t-ār* “don’t bring!” *ba-t-am* “(that) I come” (subjunctive); Mey *betā* “bring!” *be-tor-e* “that he bring,” *be-šun-tā* “they brought,” *eidī-aš be-torde* “he has brought presents.” These lexicalized forms with the initial *t-* have misled Cheung (p. 9) in proposing the root *tar “to cross over” for Jow, Mey *tār-* : *tārd-* “bring.” This verb is indeed derived from Old Iranian *ā-bara- “bring,” which, like *āy- : *ā-gmata- “come,” had the long initial vowel ā, and this may have acted as the catalyst in preserving the full form of the later prefix *at-.

5. Inflectional passive. Most Kashani dialects build a passive/intransitive form with the infix *-i-* (< Mid. Ir. *-ī(h)-*), placed after the present stem. This infix is usually realized as *-iy-* (with the connecting glide *y*) when an ending or the past-stem marker *-ā(d)-* is added. Qohrudi and Abyāna’i employ the infix *-(e)g-*, probably the palatalized form of an original *-y-*, and K̲vānsāri has *-k-*. Examples: JKāš *āssin-um viar-i-ad-e* “my sleeve is torn,” Han *a-rij-i-a* “it pours,” *a-rij-i-ā* “it was pouring,” Bidhandi *rij-i-ā* “it poured,” Trq *be-hmir-i-ā* “it broke,” Mey *pā-š behmeriyo* (i.e., *be-hmer-i-ā*) “his foot got broken, broke,” Aby *ba-hmar-g-ā* “it broke,” Qoh *a-kod-eg-ūn* “I get hit,” *ba-rij-ig-ād-e* “it was poured,” K̲ān *ba-xor-k-ā* “it was eaten.” Bidgoli shows the sole example *bahmeyrā* “it broke,” seemingly from **ba-hmar-i-ā*. The passive and causative infixes may coexist; e.g., Jowšaqāni stems *voz-* : *vašt-* “run” yield *ba-vašt-ø* “he ran,” *ba-š-voz-n-ā* “he made [it] run,” *ba-voz-n-i-ā-ø* “it was made run.”

6. Future with *kam-*. An important feature that defines the Kashan area from the rest of the Central dialects is the periphrastic future tense auxiliary: JKāš, Qoh, Han, Abu *kem-*, Ārā *kām-*, Far, Soh *kam-*, Aby *kām-/köm-*, Yār, Bād *kom-* (cf. Mid. Pers. *kām-* “wish”). This auxiliary is followed by the past stem, i.e., the “short” infinitive: Ārā *kām-o /-e/-e šu* “I/you/he will go,” Bād *kom-ūn/i/ā kard* “I, you, he will do,” Han *kem-un yošd* “I shall find,” *kem-a gā* “he will want,” *kem-a vijiā* (passive) “it will be said.” The same structure is found in the



Persian variety of Kashan with the auxiliary verb *k^vāstan* (e.g., *xā-m xarid* “I will buy”; cf. formal Pers. *k^vāh-am karid*) but is absent in colloquial Tehrani and Isfahani Persian. In Jowšaqāni and Meyma’i a future is formed by the invariable *komi* preceding conjugated forms of the main verb, e.g., Jow *komirāst-ima* “we will weave,” *dar-komi-pušt-inda* “they will put on” (cf. Aby *dar-kām-im-ka* “we shall fall”).

7. “Now.” The form *hat* spreads all over northern area of Central dialects, sharply contrasting with the forms *zonon*, *zogon*, and *osme* in the south. This isogloss is often used in delineation of Central dialects. See Krahnke, no. 30; Stilo, 2007, fig. 3.

8. “Sit.” This feature is well discussed by Stilo, who shows the distribution of two distinctive forms in Central dialects: *hā-čīn-* : *hā-čēšt* in the northwest, including Kashan, and *hā-ni(n)(g/k)-* : *hā-ništ* in the southeast, with Naṭanz and its villages Ṭār and Keša forming a buffer zone where the two isoglosses meet (Stilo, 2007, fig. 6). Yet a third set of stems can be identified in Central dialects for “be seated, remain”: Mey *āh-* : *āhast-/āhāst-*, Qoh *āh-* : *āhā(d)-*, Tār *ax-* : *axā(y)-*, Ard *ax-* : *āxo-*, Aby *ay-* : *ayā(y)-*, Abu *av-* : *avad-*, Nāy, Anāraki *aš-* : *āšes(s)-* (Lecoq, 2002, p. 194). Cheung (pp. 126, 154) assumes that these stems have derived from the root **had* (prefixed with **ā-*).

9. “Such.” For the gloss “such, like this,” corresponding to Pers. *čōnin*, three types prevail in the Central dialect area: in most of the northern part *nezan* (e.g., Han *nezen*, Jow *nizan*, Mey *ezina*) and to its south and east *issin* and *sige* (see Stilo, 2007, fig. 4). But note also Del *isin*, JKāš *engi* (< *ēn gōna?*).

10. “Big.” This isogloss dissects the Central dialects neatly into four geographical quadrants, with Kashani (northeast) *gord*, southwest *bela*, southeast and northwest *mas(sa)*. Interestingly, the Persian variety of Kashan has retained (or borrowed) this gloss as *gurd*. See Krahnke, no. 28; Stilo, 2007, Tab. 2, Fig. 7, and p. 108.

11. “Small.” Contrary to the prevailing form *kas* “small, little” in the rest of Central dialect area (Stilo, 2007, table 2), a group of contiguous locations in Kashan area employ a variety of forms, like *vūjūj*, that seem to have derived from a common ideophonic origin.

12. “Wall.” Three distinct lexical forms exist for wall: *kal* in Kashan area, *čina* to its immediate southeast, and *dezār* and *divāl* elsewhere (cf. Krahnke, no. 3).



13. “Sister.” The prevailing forms for “sister” and “brother” in the Kashan area are *dādā* and *dāde*, respectively, contrasting with the south and southeast Central dialects, which carry forms cognate with Pers. *k̄vāhar* and *barādar* (Krahnke, no. 34). The lexical pair *dādā* and *dāde* seems to provide an ideal pattern of gender distinction in an earlier stage of these dialects, with a remnant of the Old Iranian feminine ending **-ā* (see Isogloss no. 2). There is yet another form for “sister” in the dialects to the west of Kashan: Nar, Bij *fāk*, Del *fā ke*, Mah, Vār *xāk*. The change of the initial **hw-* to *f* is also found in more words, such as Del *fās-* : *fāšt-* “ask in marriage,” *Farang* (toponym near Komeyn; < *Xwarnaq*; Yarshater, 1985), an isogloss that unites the area with Kuri (q.v.) and Sivandi (see [central dialects](#)).

14. “Tomorrow.” This is a rather broad isogloss with predominantly two major forms among Central dialects: *haya* and *sobā*. The first form (from **fradā* < **fratāka-*), found only in Kashan area, represent two significant sound changes: *fr-* > *h(r)* and *-d-* > *y* (cf. Krahnke, no. 9).

Isogloss bundles. [Table 6](#) and [Figure 1](#) bring together the fourteen isoglosses presented above. The list includes twenty-three localities for which sufficient evidence is on hand. These belong to Kashan proper and its neighbors; Delijān, Maḥallāt, Vānešān, and K̄vānsār on the west, Gaz and Zefra on the south, and Ardestān and Nā’in on the east of the Kashan area are included for the sake of comparison. Paucity of data did not allow putting some important localities, such as Nešāl, Qālhar, Varkān (between Kashan and Delijān), and Ārān on the map.

As seen in [Table 6](#), Abyāna’i ranks first by meeting all the fourteen isoglosses that set the Kashan linguistic area apart from its neighbors. At the bottom of the table, we find Nā’ini, which shows zero isoglottic agreement. When a feature is unknown in a dialect, the isogloss number is placed in parentheses with a question mark. For instance, Farizandi is obscure in Isogloss no. 9; it has therefore only thirteen known features to examine. Of these, twelve features meet the criteria set for the Kashan area. The feature that fails to pass is no. 11, glossing “small,” for which Farizandi *kasl* does not show affinity to the isoglottic form *vūjūj*. Having matched twelve out of thirteen of the known isoglosses, a ratio that yields 92 percent, Farizandi ranks fifth among the dialects included in the table. In [Figure 1](#), therefore, Farizand falls within the bundle of 80-100 percent of the isoglosses. As we move away from this core bundle and cross over successive contour lines, the relatedness of the dialects to those in the core decreases increasingly.



Figure 1 shows the core isogloss bundle as a triangle centered at the inner Kargas settlements of Qohrud, Abyāna, Farizand, Yārand, and Jowšaqān, with a corner reaching the *garmsir* Abuzaydābād on the edge of the desert. This implies that climate variation plays no essential role in defining the Kashan linguistic zone. Interestingly, however, Kashan itself, represented by its Jewish dialect, and its neighbor Bidgol, both on the *garmsir* plain, find their place on the map *two* bundles away from the core. Within the same bundle lies the relatively far-off Delijān as well as Vānešān in the valley of K̄vānsār (q.v.), pointing to the fact that the Kashan area ranges itself more closely with its western neighbors than with Isfahan in the south. On the other hand, Națanz and its villages yield somewhat low isogloss ratios in view of them often being grouped together with the Kashan dialects (see Comparative studies, above).

Lastly, Gazi and Zefra'i in the south and Nā'ini, beyond the frame of Figure 1, in the east have low degrees of relatedness to the Kashan dialects by showing little isoglottic agreement, and we should expect other Central dialects to be within the same weakest bundle on the map. It appears that the zone within the bundle of 40 percent or more in Figure 1 accords well with the region where the Esbandi festival is celebrated (see above, vi). Another sociolinguistic link can be between the position of Jowšaqāni within the core bundle of the Kashan dialects and the strong sense of belonging that the residents of Jowšaqān show toward Kashan rather than Isfahan.

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