



KASHAN IX. THE MEDIAN DIALECTS OF KASHAN (2) URBAN JEWISH DIALECT

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ix. The Median Dialects of Kashan

(2) Urban Jewish Dialect

Kashan may be characterized as exclusively Persian speaking and Muslim from the time when the city was abandoned by its Jewry, who spoke a variety of [Central dialects](#). The Jewish population of Kashan dropped dramatically from the scale of thousands before the midtwentieth century (Razmārā, p. 223; Yeroushalmi, pp. 68, 72, 82) to just a few families in the 1970s (Yarshater, pp. 466; see also [kashan viii\(1\)](#)). The Judeo-Kashani dialect survives only among the older generation of Jewish immigrant communities in Israel and North America.

As is the case with other urban Jewish dialects of central Persia, Judeo-Kashani is an indicator of the earlier native dialect long forced out of the gentile population by Persian. This assumption is supported by the existence of the rural dialects in Kashan district (see [part 1](#)) and by the old *fahlawiyāt* (q.v.) literature from Kashan. The process of language shift was probably completed



among the Muslim residents of the city during Safavid rule, when Kashan saw substantial socioeconomic development (see [kashan ii](#)). On the other hand, the Jewish community of the city, due to its closed and isolated nature, preserved the native speech. Oddly enough, the extant Judeo-Persian literature from Kashan, namely the works of the seventeenth century Bābā'i ben Lotf and the eighteenth-century Bābā'i ben Farhād, have no trace of Judeo-Kashani.

Although Judeo-Kashani shows the closest affinity with the adjoining Median dialects spoken by Muslim villagers, its ethnically bounded urban character may be seen in two ways. First, like other Jewish dialects spoken in an urban milieu, Judeo-Kashani shows more Persian influence in vocabulary and morpho-syntax than do the dialects spoken in the villages. Second, Judeo-Kashani shows striking similarities to the Jewish dialects of some other cities, especially Isfahan; two notable examples are *xuzā* “God,” which reflects the phonological development $d > \delta > z$ not found in any other Kashan dialects, and the third person singular verb ending *-u*, which contrasts sharply with the *-e* or *-a* common among the Kashan dialects but agrees with the ending in the Jewish dialects of Isfahan and Hamadān (see [isfahan xix](#); [hamadān ix](#)). This may be explained by the strong historical ties among the Jewish communities of central Persia, with the evidence of significant migration among the towns in the past few centuries (cf. Yeroushalmi, pp. 63 ff., 327).

The Jewish dialect of Kashan is mainly known through the documentation of Valentin Zhukovskii (pp. 390-432) in the mid-1880s. Other published materials include a short text by Ya'qub Ṭabari, a few sentences by Ehsan Yarshater, and some verb forms by Haideh Sahim.

Phonology. The phonemes are no different from those of modern Persian. Historical phonology shows Judeo-Kashani as Northwest Iranian, e.g., *zun* “know,” *zumād* “son-in-law” ($z < *ḡ(h)$), *esbe* “dog” ($sb < *ku$), *pur* “son,” *āvīr* “pregnant” ($r < *θr$), *ber* “door,” *abē* “again, other” ($b < *dw$), *yedā* “separate” *yā* “place,” *vā-yuz-* “search” ($y < *y, *wy$), *jan* “woman,” *jande* “alive” ($j < *g(h)$), *ruj* “day,” *suj-* “burn,” *pej-* “cook,” *vāj-* “say,” *vājār* “market” ($j < *k(u)$).

Noun phrase. In terms of number, definition, and case the dialect is similar to Persian. Personal pronouns are the freestanding *mu(n)*, *tu*, *ovi/evi*, *hāmā*, *šemā/šumā*, *iāhā/ (u)yāhā* and the enclitic *m*, *d*, *š*, *mun*, *dun*, *šun*. The two forms of the third singular probably carry gender differentiation, e.g., *jan-i evi kar-u* “his wife is deaf,” *der āšyune ovi tuxmhā-i espid hu* “in her nest there are white eggs.” Demonstratives are *i* “this,” *u* “that,” *yāhā/iāhā* “these,” *uyāhā* “those,”



itā “this very,” *utā* “that very,” *inde/énde* “here,” *uyā* “there.” The reflexive *xu-/xo-* takes pronominal suffixes to function as (1) an emphatic: *eger xu-dun pīl nedārid* “if you have no money yourself”; (2) object of prepositions: *vā xu-šun šuneber* “they were taking with them”; (3) possessive: *dim-e xu-mun* “our face.” Prepositions are *ber* “on,” *der* “in,” *dim* “on,” *pali* “by, near,” *ru* “in,” *vā/bā* “with,” *vase* “for,” *ver(-e)* “at, by, near,” *xode* “with.”

Verb phrase. Past stems are either irregular (e.g., [pres. : past] *vāj-* : *vāt-* “say”) or derivable from the present stem by addition of the formant *-ā(d)* (e.g., *pej-* : *pejād-* “cook”). Some verbs have both past stems, e.g., *gir-* : *giret-/girā-* “seize.” A causative stem is formed by suffixing *-en-* to an intransitive present stem: intransitive *juš-om* “I boil,” *be-jušād-om* “I boiled,” transitive *jušen-om* “I boil,” *ba-mjušenād* “I boiled.” An inflectional passive is formed with the formant *-i-*: *āssin-um viar-i-ad-e* “my sleeve is torn.” The past stem forms the bases for the infinitive (e.g., *herutan* “to sell,” *da-it-an* “to seize”) and the past participle (*be-šod-e* “gone,” *vā-gardād-e* “returned”).

The preverbs (*der-/da:-*, *vā-*, *ver-*, *ber-*) suppress *be-* and precede *-e*, which differentiate the durative and non-durative aspects, respectively. The durative marker is present (1) when the verb has a preverb or nominal complement: *der-e-ker-om* “I was falling,” *bāng_e-bāg-om* “I shout”; (2) in the imperfect transitive: *šun-e-ker* “they would do,” *ver-m-e-girā* “I used to pick up.” The marker is omitted when the verb is freestanding (*tanju* “he drinks”) or before and after vowels: *vāpersom* “I ask,” *ez kiā vāje* “how do you say [that]?” *akse keru* “he is sneezing.” The presence of the durative marker in the negative depends on the configuration of the morphemes: *ni-mer-u* “it dies not,” *vel_eni-ker-u* “he doesn’t let go”; *dun-ni-xu* “you (pl.) were not eating,” *ni-d-e-xu* “you (sg.) were not eating.”

Personal endings consist of two sets. (1) *-om*, *-e*, *-u*, *-im*, *-id*, *-en(d)* (the 1st sg. is *-ān* in Yarshater’s data) are used in the present tenses and the intransitive past: *be-jeg-om* “(that) I jump,” *der-e-ni-u* “he sits,” *vā-gardād-om* “I returned.” The third person singular ending is zero in the past: *ba-vedašt-∅* “it passed.” (2) The enclitic pronouns (see above) are employed as agent markers in the transitive past. In the imperfect, the agent is always prefixed to the durative marker: *šun-e-ber* “they were carrying.” In the preterit and perfect, the agent usually follows the modal prefix (*ba-š-bāgā* “he hit,” *der-em-vāzāde* “I have lost”), but occasionally is word-initial (*šun-be-vāt* “they said,” *šun-b-ārde* “they have brought.” The agent may move off the verb to the preceding word: *dumen-eš-ā niā-š dāde* “he has held on to his skirt.” *pur-eš bezā(nā)de* “she has



given birth to a boy.”

Periphrastic tenses. (1) The future is formed with the present conjugation of the stem *kem-* followed by the past stem of the main verb: *kemu vāt* “he will say.” (2) The perfect tenses employ the past participle with the present and past copula: *vā-gardāde hom/budom* “I have/had returned,” *ba-m-pejāde ø/bu* “I have/had cooked.” (3) Progressive forms employ the auxiliary “have”: *dāru ez veški meru* “he is dying of hunger,” *dādān šodān vājār* “I was going to the market.”

Some verbs. (1) The substantive verb consists of the present stem *h-* or zero, the subjunctive stem *b-*, and the past stem *bu(d)-*. (2) The locative verb may be expressed with the preverb *dar-*, as in *der-an* “they are in,” *dar-n-e* “you are not in.” (3) “Become” is based on the present stem *b-* and past stem *bu(d)-*, normally with the preverb *vā-*. (4) The modal pres. *gu*, past *gā* “want; must” is conjugated with the enclitic pronouns as agents in all tenses: *veče ne-š-e-gu bemoku* “the child doesn’t want to suck,” *mun-be-gu bekerim* “we must do,” *ba-m-gā ovi-rā aziyet kerom* “I wanted to upset him,” *šegā biu bar* “he wanted to come out.”

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