



KEŠA'I DIALECT

KEŠA'I DIALECT, the dialect spoken in the village of Keša, near Națanz, in Isfahan province.

Keša village. Keša (endonym Kiša) is located in the Țarqrud district, Națanz sub-province, Isfahan province. Its geographical coordinates are lat 51° 47' N, long 33° 23' E, elev 2,430 m above sea level. Together with Țarq and Țār, Keša is one of the three principal villages of the Țarqrud valley on the southern slopes of Mt. Karkas. Situated at the upper end of the valley, Keša straddles the river Țarqrud longitudinally and is flanked with a long expanse of green fields and orchards. The main farm produce is grains, beans, fruits, walnuts, and almonds. Irrigation water is traditionally drawn from a score of subterranean channels (*kāriz*, q.v.; Razmārā, p. 234; SCI, 1969, p. 48).

There is little record of Keša in historical sources. A notable modern event in the life of Keša was its conversion to **Babism** (q.v.), while the neighboring Țār adopted the **Bahai faith** (q.v.) and Țarq remained faithful to Islam (interviews). In 1891 Keša and its three hamlets, Livān, Liāsān, and Kusa, paid 3,092 *qerāns* in taxes to the central government (Houtum-Schindler, p. 104). The population of Keša has seen a marked drop from circa 1,200 souls in 1950 (Razmārā, p. 234) to 830 (202 families) in 1966, to 675 (242 families) in 2006 (SCI, 1966, 2006). The drop can be attributed to the general migration trend of young people to urban centers, as well as a long chronicle of drought (A'zam-Vāqefi, I, p. 6), not to mention the departure of the Babi population of the village (interviews). There are three operative mosques and one *ħosayniya* (q.v.) in Keša. The absence of caravanserais accords with the



location of Keša off the old caravan routes.

Keša is situated 27 km southwest of Naṭanz and 5 km north of the modern Naṭanz-Isfahan highway, 350 m higher than Ṭarq in elevation. A picturesque village belonging to the cold climate (*sardsir*; see [GARMSIR AND SARDSIR](#) and [CLIMATE](#)) with temperate summers, Keša has attracted vacationers for many years, including hikers, along the northward trails to the Karkas peak (3,895 m). More recently, the natural charm of Keša and its farms have spurred vast real estate development schemes aiming to construct urban-type villas and tourist resorts.

The Keša'i dialect. A Central Plateau dialect (see [CENTRAL DIALECTS](#)), Keša'i shows striking affinities with the neighboring Ṭarqi and Ṭāri, also spoken in the Ṭarqrud valley, and shares much with the dialects spoken in the other districts encircling Mt. Karkas, namely, those of Naṭanz (Naṭanzi, Ṭāma'i), Bādrud ([Bādrudi](#), q.v.), Čimarud (Volugerdi, Čima'i, Tekya'i, Bidhandi, Farizandi), and Barzrud (Hanjani, Yārandi, [Abyāna'i](#) [q.v.]) (see [KASHAN ix. THE MEDIAN DIALECTS OF KASHAN](#)). The speakers of Keša'i call their vernacular *ozmun dahâhi* "village language," an endonym shared by some kindred dialects.

Sources. This study of Keša'i draws from the materials collected by the Russian orientalist Valentin Alekseevich Zhukovskiĭ in the 1880s and by Moḥammad-Mehdi Esmā'ili (2011) and this author (unpublished) in the first decade of the 21st century. Zhukovskiĭ's data, though heavily relying on word-for-word translation from Persian, offer lexemes and grammatical features that have been replaced by those of Persian—a testimony to a contemporary attrition of Keša'i. The time dimension also helps elucidate diachronic sound changes (see historical phonology, below). Zhukovskiĭ's records used here remain distinct by their transcription (the use of the macron and acute diacritical marks); when necessary they are marked "Ž."

SOCIOLINGUISTICS

Keša'i owes its survival to its virtual seclusion in the upper end of the mountainous valley to which it belongs, which lay away from the communication routes for many centuries. The communicational isolation, however, has been breached in modern times through introduction of modern education and mass media and, more recently, by construction of roads and large real estate developments. These effects as well as massive migration of

the villagers to urban centers have led to a gradual language shift and marked decrease in speakers of Keša'i. Those speakers who remain in Keša and its farms are probably no more than 200 (author's field notes). With a rising average age of the speakers and the shrinking domains of use to homes and local businesses, the future of Keša'i is not very promising for those who treasure linguistic and cultural diversity (see, *inter alia*, Campbell and Muntzel; Maffi).

There are various schemes to quantify the scale of language endangerment (Chrystal, pp. 19-21; Austin and Sallabank, pp. 40-43). The scheme suggested by the Catalogue of Endangered Languages (ELCat) is based on the four categories listed in Table 1, each defined for five levels of endangerment (rated 1 to 5). The endangerment levels that best approximate Keša'i are respectively 2, 3, 3, 3 for the four listed categories. Adding them up, with the first category (intergenerational transmission) receiving an importance factor of 2, one arrives at 16 points; this is out of a maximum of 25, or 64 percent, which falls into the (60-80 percent) level of Severely Endangered languages.

Table 1
LEVEL OF ENDANGERMENT OF KEŠA'I

Categories	Level of endangerment (out of 5 points) as defined by ELCat
Intergenerational transmission	2: Most adults in the community are speakers, but children generally are not.
Absolute number of speakers	3: 100-999 speakers
Speaker number trends	3: Only about half of community members speak the language. Speaker numbers are decreasing steadily, but not at an accelerated pace.
Domains of use of the language	3: Used mainly just in the home, but remains the primary language of this domain for many community members.

As in many other parts of the country, linguistic assimilation is taking place with little conscious effort among the speakers to maintain their native tongue as a means to safeguard rural culture. The speakers' perceived self-worth is not high; many feel no harm in abandoning the inherited dialect in favor of spoken Tehrani Persian, which is regarded as having greater prestige and utility. There is, however, one apparent value agreed upon by many speakers, viz., the utilization of their obscure dialect as a secret language outside of the region, especially in the urban centers to which most of the former villagers



have moved. Along similar lines, Keša'i informants stated that wartime “code talkers” put their dialect to use in the [Iran-Iraq War](#) (q.v.) as a means of clandestine communication, assuming that decryption of such messages by the enemy would be highly improbable in the due course of time.

PHONOLOGY

Keša'i consonants are /b č d f g h j k l m n p q/ɣ r s š t v x y z ž/. The vowel inventory includes /i e a u o â/, with a distribution roughly similar to spoken Persian, as well as *ü* and *ö*, of which the phonemic statuses remain questionable. *ü* appears to be in free variation with /i/, as shown under historical phonology, below. /â/ is slightly rounded [ã ɔ], as is the case with many variants of colloquial Persian; this explains Zhukovskii's use of the symbol <ō> for /â/. He also occasionally employs <ā>, denoting a long /a/ [æ:], as in *kā*, a short form of the past stem *kard*. Nevertheless, Keša'i exhibits no phonemic vowel length that could have been inherited from Middle Iranian.

Following the areal trait, for most Keša'i vowels there is a nasalized pair that may appear at the word final position. These nasalized vowels are qualified as phonemes by Pierre Lecoq (2002, pp. 22-23) for the closely related Ṭāri dialect. Nevertheless, as Esmā'ili (p. 45) suggests, they may best be characterized as simple vowels underlain with nasal consonants, with the possibility of elision, e.g., the vocative *Hása* for the proper male name “Ḥasan.” The reduction of the final nasal is particularly apparent in unstressed verbal endings. As an example, the first person singular, shown in Table 2 as *-õ*, may assume the articulations [o], [õ], or [on], depending on the morpho-phonemic context. The following pair illustrates the process *par excellence*: *ošõno ayo* ‘I go and come’ vs. *ayoõno ošo* ‘I come and go’ (Esmā'ili, p. 58).



Table 2

PERSONAL PRONOUNS AND VERB ENDINGS

	Independent pronouns	Enclitic pronouns	Verb endings
sg. 1	<i>mō/mū</i>	-(<i>e</i>) <i>m</i>	- <i>ō</i>
2	<i>to</i>	-(<i>e</i>) <i>d/t</i>	- <i>e</i>
3	<i>e</i>	-(<i>e</i>) <i>š</i>	- <i>a</i> (pres.), - \emptyset (past)
pl. 1	<i>hâmâ</i>	-(<i>e</i>) <i>mū</i>	- <i>im</i>
2	<i>šemâ</i>	-(<i>e</i>) <i>dū</i>	- <i>id</i>
3	<i>edi</i>	-(<i>e</i>) <i>šū</i>	- <i>an(d)</i>

NOUN PHRASE

Nouns. Keša'i nouns are inflected for number and definiteness: *karg* 'hen', *karg(h)ā* 'hens', *kārgi* 'a hen', *kārgé* 'the hen'. As to other Persian-type nominal clitics, Keša'i has incompletely adopted the *ezāfa* but fully resisted the accusative marker *-rā*. Examples: *kārg(e) čāk nāvân* 'cut the throat of the fat hen'; *meráš ī1 düss dōrā* '(her) husband loves her1'; *e1m2 yo3 raz4-de5 bedi6* 'I2 saw6 him1 in3,5 the garden4'.

Pronouns. Personal pronouns are the freestanding sg. *mō/mū*, *to*, *e*, pl. *hâmâ*, *šemâ*, *edi* and the enclitic sg. -(*e*)*m*, -(*e*)*d/t*, -(*e*)*š*, pl. -(*e*)*mū*, -(*e*)*dū*, -(*e*)*šū*. These enclitics may act as the (1) possessive: *beray-em* 'my brother'; (2) object: *īn vačā kōy-eš anīgīd?* 'this child—where are you taking him?' (inserted on the verb: *dé-š-ahmūžnūn* 'I will teach him'); (3) reflexive with the base *xu-/xo-*, e.g., *xoy(e)m* 'myself'; (4) agent in ergative construction, as in *īkzōr gūš-eš ōr-eš-neešnuft* 'his ear didn't hear much' (lit. 'not-much ear-his up-it-not-heard') (see more under Transitivity and ergativity, below).

Possession may otherwise be expressed with *īne* (= Pers. *az ān-e*) succeeded by freestanding pronouns: *hérci īne múnā īne túyā* 'whatever is mine, is yours'.

Deixis. The demonstratives include *me* and *in* 'this'; *e* (Ž. *ī/i*) and *u(n)* 'that'; *medi* and *ihâ* 'these'; *edi* (Ž. *īdī*) and *uhâ* 'those'. Their distribution with respect to number, distance, animacy, and function is shown in Table 3 and the examples that follow. Note that *e* and *edi* are primarily personal pronouns



(Table 3), and that Zhukovskii has the hybrid form *īdīn* ‘those’, which is inanimate. Demonstrative adverbs include *endi* ‘here’ (Ž. *īndy*), *ū* or *i* ‘there’, *ūla* ‘this side’, and *ūla* ‘that side’, e.g., *ūla ebī-š séreš bar amā* ‘its tip came out from its other side’.

Table 3
DEMONSTRATIVES

	<i>me</i>	<i>medi</i>	<i>eli</i>	<i>edi</i>	<i>in</i>	<i>ihā</i>	<i>u(n)</i>	<i>uhā</i>
Proximal	+	+			+	+		
Distal			+	+			+	+
Animate	+	+	+	+	+			
Inanimate					+	+	+	+
Singular	+		+		+		+	
Plural		+		+		+		+
Personal pronoun			+	+				
Demonstrative pronoun	+		+	+	+	+		+
Demonstrative adjective	+		+		+		+	

Examples: personal pronoun: *īm nédiyā* ‘I haven’t seen him’; *diyā ī ez hadd béivašt* ‘her watching took too long (lit. surpassed the limit)’; *mege e neynâsid?* ‘don’t you know him?’; *jōhiltāre īdī péyeš bévōt* ‘the youngest of them told Father’. Demonstrative pronoun: *me béšvōt vo ōrsō* ‘this he said and got up’; *in kiāya* ‘this is a/the house’; *šemā ke in zānid* ‘you who know this’; *īdīneš mú-de hógā* ‘he took these from me’. Demonstrative adjective: *me karg ossā aperā* ‘this hen flies gently’; *me merd kūrā* ‘this man is blind’; *i jin ōvī bu* ‘this woman was pregnant’; *in karg núki tir dōrā* ‘this hen has a pointed beak’; *in merd kiā?* ‘who is this man?’; *ūn jevūn* ‘that young man’.

Adpositions. The postposition *de* is chiefly ablative, as in *kia-d-de* ‘from your house’, *kāde* ‘whence’; it may as well convey abstraction: *to-de atarso* ‘I fear you’. It also accentuates the locative function in circumpositions: *yo raz-de* ‘in the garden’; *dūm zemīn-da hōaniga* ‘she is sitting on the ground’; *meyūné’i īdī-de* ‘among them’; also *ūde* ‘in that place, therein’. Alternatively, the locative may be expressed by a preposition alone, e.g., *yū kardolūneš tuxmō’i esbé hā* ‘in her nest there are white eggs’.

The comitative *xo(y)* (Ž. *hoy*) conveys the meaning “together with, in company with,” e.g., *xo pey-eš* ‘with his father’, *čeqad pil-ed xo xoy-ed bārde?* ‘how much money have you brought with you?’

Other non-Persian prepositions survived in Keša'i are *dim* 'on' and *jer* 'under'. Zhukovskii's documentation in the 1880s includes prepositions which may be forgotten today, e.g., *šūnam dīrōt bēxri* 'I bought (a) comb for you'; *ussuxún sífta uzú seng* 'bones are as hard as stones'. Note also (the adverb) *jénī vūssei bémā* 'a woman came forward'.

VERB PHRASE

Stems. Keša'i verbs are based on the present, past, and perfect stems. Most past stems are "irregular" in the sense of displaying no distinctive derivational relationship with the present stem, e.g., [pres. : past] *hos-* : *hot(t)* 'sleep'. The past stems derivable from the present stem by adding the formant -â (e.g., *râm-* : *râmâ-* 'drive') may be called "regular" to the effect that they govern the causative construction (see below), which is productive in Keša'i. A past stem may truncate when not suffixed, e.g., *xer-* : *xâ(rd)* 'eat'. The perfect stem is the past participle, formed from the past stem and the perfect marker -a or -e; e.g., *hotta*, *xârda/e*, *râmâ(ya)*, for the aforesaid verbs. The past stem also forms the infinitive when suffixed by -mun, e.g., *hengâštmun* 'to talk (to)'.

Preverbs. The lexical prefixes, âr, hâ, der, and vâ, may modify the meaning of the stem, e.g., *xer-* : *xârd-* 'eat' □ *vâ-*~ 'drink'; *mâl-* : *mâlâ-* 'rub' □ *âr-*~ 'flee'; *mer-* : *mard-* 'die' □ *hâ-*~ 'wither'; *hâ-t-* : *-tâ-* 'give' □ *der-*~ 'bite'; *der-band-* : *-bass-* 'close' □ *hâ-*~ 'shut down' (Ž., p. 74).

The preverbs occur in the following verbs as well:

âr-: ~-ger- : *gat-* 'pick up', ~-(ves)s-/hos- : *(ves)sâ-* 'stand up', ~-šenow- : *šenoft-* 'hear'

hâ-: ~-nig- : *čašt-* 'sit', ~-cân- : *čânâ-* 'seat'

der-: ~-ka- : *kat-* 'fall', ~-pič- : *pit-* 'twist', ~-xos- : *xoss-* 'throw'

vâ-: ~-čiš- : *čišâ-* 'taste', ~-darz- : *dašt-* 'sow', ~-gerd- : *gerdâ-* 'return', ~-hal- : *hašt-* 'put', ~-püs- : *püst-* 'decay', ~-škâf- : *škoft-* 'bloom', ~-št- : *-štâ-* 'be standing' (cf. the 3rd sg. stative verb *ešta* 'is standing')

Affixes. The aforesaid preverbs suppress *be-* and precede *a-*, the two prefixes that differentiate the durative and non-durative aspects, respectively; *be-* marks the imperative, subjunctive, preterit, and perfect; *a-* marks the present and imperfect, with the possibility of vocal assimilation (see paradigms in



Table 4). The durative marker assumes the (archaic) form *-at* only in a few vowel-initial verbs, e.g., *at-ema-∅* 'he would come, he used to come, he was coming'.

Table 4
VERB FORMS*

	Intransitive		Transitive	
	no preverb	with preverb	no preverb	with preverb
	go	sit	see	throw
Present	a-š-ō	hâ-â-nig-ō	a-(v)in-ō	der-a-xos-ō
Subjunctive	be-š-ō	hâ-nig-ō	be-(v)in-ō	der-xos-ō
Imperative	be-š-e!	hâ-nig!	be-(v)i!	der-xos!
Preterit	be-šoy-ō	hâ-čašd-ō	be-m-di	der-em-xoss
Imperfect	a-šoy-ō	hâ-â-čašd-ō	a-m-di	der-em-a-xoss
Perfect	be-ši-ō	hâ-čašda-ō	be-m-dia	der-em-xossa
Pluperfect	beši boyō	hâčašda boyō	bemdi(e) bo	dere mxosse bo
Perfect subj.	beši bō	hâčašda bō	bemdi(e) bō	dere mxosse bō

*All forms except the imperative are in the first person singular.

The negative marker *nâ-* suppresses both aspect markers, thereby removes the indicative-subjunctive and durative-perfective distinctions: *na-sâj-e* 'you don't/shouldn't make', *na-pparâ-∅* 'it did/would not fly'. The prohibitive is marked by *mâ-*, as in *hâ-ma-nig-∅* 'don't sit!'

Person endings are sg. 1 *-ō*, 2 *-e*, 3 *-a*, pl. 1 *-im*, 2 *-id*, 3 *-an(d)*; the second singular imperative and third singular past are zero. These suffixes have no use in the transitive past, where the oblique pronouns act as the agent; see Transitivity and ergativity, below.

Transitivity and ergativity. A reduced form of split ergativity governs the past tenses of transitive verbs. Here the agent, or logical subject, is marked with the oblique (enclitic) personal pronouns. The agent may stay on the verb (Table 4) or optionally be fronted to a preceding word in the sentence. It is chiefly taken in by the direct object, regardless of their remoteness within the clause. Examples: *îtā gūčī čokeš1 nō-vondā* 'he1 sacrificed a fat calf' (lit. one calf fat-him throat-cut), *mōli tūš1 hoy jindahó xarj kárdā* 'he1 has spent your wealth on prostitutes', *īš2 be kaštejōri xūyeš3 axrasnō* 'he2 used to send him1 to his3 farm', *čartō-d1em2 kö3 bédī . . .* 'when3 I2 saw your1 curls'.

When the direct object is absent, not in the same clause, or not preceded by the verb, the agent may (1) be suffixed to an indirect object, e.g., *dīli xūyeš1eš2-de3 xiōlī bekā* 'he2 imagined in3 his1 heart', (in quotations) *îtā uimī1 hoy dūssi*

xūyeš2eš3 vōt . . . ‘a person^{1,3} said to his² friend’; (2) be suffixed to an adverb, e.g., *hérčiš xōhíš kâ*, . . . ‘however he requested’; (3) stay on the verb: *bōrdešūnâ* . . . ‘they have brought . . .’; or (4) the agent may join the nominal component of the verb: *tâx-eš-nâ* ‘he opened [the two leaves of the door]’ (the verb is *tâx nâmun* ‘to open’, with *tâx* < *ṭāq* ‘odd, not paired’).

Causative and passive. The causative present stem is formed by suffixing -n- to the present stem of an intransitive verb (past stem -n-â-); as an example, *vez-* : *vašt-* (intr.) □ *vazn-* : *vaznâ* (tr.) ‘run’ conjugate as:

a-vez-a ‘he runs’

be-vašt-∅ ‘he ran’

a-vazn-a ‘he is made to run’

be-š-vaznâ ‘he was made to run’

A morphological passive form is marked by -i- on the present stem (past stem -i-â-), e.g., *be-š-hevard* ‘he ripped [it]’, *be-hvar-i-â* ‘it was ripped’. Inflective passive, however, has given way to the Persian type analytical formation that employs the verb “become” (see below), e.g., *pâra bebo* ‘was ripped’.

The following possibilities deserve attention as well. (1) An ambitransitive verb like *peč-* : *paxt-* ‘cook’ may be either transitive or intransitive. (2) The intransitive set *hâ-nig-* : *-čāšt* ‘sit’ has the transitive counterpart *hâ-čân-* : *-čânâ* ‘seat, set’, which possibly derives from an ancient Iranian causative form. (All these stems are of obscure origin; cf. Cheung, pp. 29-30; Rastorgueva and Èdel’man, III, pp. 305 ff.). (3) The verbs “learn” and “teach” share the etymon **mauč*: *a-hmūs-ūn* ‘I learn’, *bé-m-ehmūxt* ‘I learned’; *a-hmūžn-ūn* ‘I teach’, *dé-š-ahmūžn-ūn* ‘I teach him’, *dé-m-ehmūžnō* ‘I taught’, *dé-m-a-hmūžnō* ‘I used to teach’.

Copulas and stative verbs. The main copula for the present tense is a set of clitics which are in general agreement with the verb endings (Table 2); the subjunctive stem is *b-* and the past stem is *bo(y)-*. The third singular *bo* (past) and *bō* (subjunctive) are used as the invariable elements in the pluperfect and the perfect subjunctive, respectively, of transitive verbs (as exemplified in Table 4). “Become” is based on the present stem *b-* and past stem *bu(d)-*, normally with the prefix *be-* or *vâ-*, e.g., *māh vōbū bū*, *dī-imīyá* ‘it was lost, it is found’.



The notions of existence and location can be expressed by the present stem *h-* or the preverb *der-*. Keša'i also employs other semantically related stative verbs which are found also in the surrounding dialects; these include *vâ* (cf. Nā'ini *va*), *ešta* 'to be standing/lying' (used also in the Čimarud valley), *axa* 'to be lying/sitting' (comparable forms in Meyma'i, Qohrudi, Ardestāni, Abyāna'i, Abuzaydābādi, Nā'ini, Anāraki; cf. Lecoq, 2002, p. 193; see also jowšaqān; kuhpāya; jarquya). Examples: *yū kardolūneš tuxmō'i esbé hā* 'in her nest there are white eggs'; *heyâšev kia derō* 'I will be home tomorrow night'; *hayvun yo âqel vâ* 'the sheep is in the sheepcote'; *čerâ kenâr divâr ešta* 'the light is (standing) by the wall'; *merd-i ke ü axa, diss-e muṇa* 'the man who is (sitting) there is my friend'.

Modal verbs. "Want" is formed by the stems *pia* (pres.) and *piâ* (past), and is conjugated with the enclitic pronouns as agents in both present and past tenses, as in *a-m-pia/piâ* 'I want/wanted', *dīli mu ün jevūneš apeyâ* [æpe'jæ:] 'my heart wants that young man', *vača nášpeyâ bémüja* 'the child doesn't want to suck'.

"Must" is expressed by the invariable *apa/ape/apiâ*, as in *apeyâ šodī bekerīm* 'we must rejoice'; *n-ape ü beše* 'you shouldn't go there'.

"Can, may" is formed on the base *š-*, as in *dúte hamú râheš nášū šū* 'the little girl cannot walk yet', *ášut*

bū 'you could'. This formation however is largely forsaken in favor of an idiomatic phrase that conceptualizes ability as the capability of someone's blade to cut (an areal feature of Țarqrud, also found in Naṭanzi, Meyma'i, Ardestāni; cf. Jowšaqāni), e.g., *šemâ tiq-du(n) navâna in kâr bekerid* (lit. 'your blade does not cut that you do this job') 'you cannot do this thing'.

Keša'i also employs the verb "become" in lieu of the modals: *abū ôhũ bebé* (for Pers. *mitavān āhu šod*) 'it is possible to become a gazelle' (Zhukovskiĭ, p. 95); negative *nabō* (for Pers. *nabāyad, nemišavad*), as in *tâbassun nabō lebâš-e garm vâpiše* 'one shouldn't/can't wear warm clothes in summer'.

LEXICON

Having long been evolved in a Persianate cultural domain, Keša'i lexicon naturally reveals not only an accumulation of loanwords, but also many loan translations in calqued compounds, such as *deran-gar* (Pers. *derow-gar*) 'reaper, harvestman', *bo-tâyi* (Pers. *bu-dâda*) 'roasted', *toxm-e-karg* (Pers. *toḵm-*

e-morġ ‘egg’, *donda-sir* (Pers. *zanbur-e sorx*) ‘hornet’, *müškür* (Pers. *muš-e kur*) ‘bat’, and possibly in *kia-vâda* (Pers. *xâna-vâda*) ‘family’, *paša-gorde* (Pers. *xar-magas*) ‘horse-fly’, and *gâlgü-torna* (Pers. *segin-ġaltân*) ‘dung beetle, tumblebug’. There are yet formations similar to, but not replicating, those in Persian, e.g., *čal-pâ* ‘chilopoda’ (for Pers. *hazâr-pâ* ‘millipede’), *omar-vây* (lit. the wind of Omar) ‘whirlwind’ (Pers. *gerd-bâd*), *kun-ow-banda* ‘mole cricket’ (Pers. *âbdozdak*), *törtöra* ‘woodpecker’ (Pers. *dâr-kub/borr*), and *goltiken* ‘hedgehog’. Moreover, one finds semantic differentiations that are absent in Persian. For instance, as Esmâ’ili demonstrates, Persian *boridan* is expressed by two Keša’i verbs, *brin-* : *brint-* ‘cut (fabrics)’ and *vân-* : *vânt-* ‘chop’; for Persian *bordan* ‘to carry’. Keša’i tells between animate (*nig-* : *ni-*) and inanimate (*ber-* : *bard-*), e.g., Ž. *in vačá kóyeš anġtd?* ‘this child—where are you taking him?’; *hũyó áidā, aberún hidyó’i yōr* ‘tomorrow is holiday, I will take the friend’s gifts’.

HISTORICAL PHONOLOGY

Lineage. Diachronic sound changes typified as Northwest Iranian normally occur in Keša’i. The proto-Indo-European palatals yield sibilants: *kas* ‘small’, *zân-* ‘know’, *zâmây* ‘son-in-law’, *hezze* ‘yesterday’ (but note the Southwest form *bâhi*, Ž. *bōqū* ‘arm’, apparently via **bā’u*); *esbi* ‘white’, *ešbüš* ‘louse’. — Velars yield *j*: *jen* ‘woman’, *janda* ‘alive’, *jin-* : *jind-* ‘hit’; *numóġ* ‘prayer’, *rōja* ‘fast’, *vōjór* ‘market’, *kaštejór* ‘farm’, *jer* ‘below, under’, *vâj* ‘call, voice’, *vij-* ‘extract, pull out’. — Proto-West Iranian **θr* > *r*, *pir* ‘son’, *ovira*, Ž. *ōvīr* ‘pregnant’, *ar* ‘mill’, *dowro* ‘sickle’. — **dw* > *b*, *bar* ‘door’, *ebi* ‘again, other’. — **y* is retained in *yū* ‘yoke’, *ya* ‘barley’, *yây* ‘husband’s brother’s wife’ (< **yād* < **yātā*, **yātar-*), *viâ* ‘separate’ (**vi-vat-*; cf. Hasandust, 2014, no. 1667).

Middle West Iranian **w-* is retained as *v*: *vahtar* ‘better’, *vây* ‘wind’, *vârun* ‘rain’, *varf* ‘snow’, *valg* ‘leaf’, *vâyum* ‘almond’, *viy* ‘willow tree; moth’, *varg* ‘wolf’, *vera* ‘lamb’, *vača* ‘child’, *vašša* ‘hungry’, *-iver-* : *-ivašt-* ‘pass’; hence *bâvar* ‘trust, belief’ (Parth. *wāwar*), *bâhâna* ‘pretext’, *bâhâr* ‘spring’, *behešt* ‘paradise’, *gōrâz* ‘boar’ could be New Persian loanwords.

Lenition. Weakening of Middle West Iranian postvocalic stops holds for (1) bilabials: *ow* ‘water’, *šev* ‘night’, *awr* ‘cloud’, *ču* ‘wood’, *lev* ‘lip’, *tev* ‘fever’, *zewr* ‘rough’, *sowz* ‘green’, *low* ‘fox’, *qawq* ‘partridge’, *aivūne’ī* (of or related to Abyāna) (but not in *âbembâr* ‘cistern’, a concept foreign to the region); (2) coronals: *kia* ‘house’, *kâya* ‘game’, *mâya* ‘female’, *čōvūr* ‘veil’, *biâr* ‘awake’, *ruva*, Ž. *rūva* ‘intestine’, *rōxâna* ‘river’, *viâ* ‘separate’, *sây* ‘hundred’, *dī*, Ž. *dū*



'smoke', *zi* 'quickly', *šuvi* 'dale', *naxo* 'chickpea', *kuhi* 'squash', *uimí(n)* 'person' (cf. Zefra'i *aimí ādamī*), *zâ-* 'give birth', *esbi* 'white'. Due to inclusiveness of the rule, exceptions such as *mâdiun* 'mare' and *pud* 'weft' should be taken as loanwords.

Postvocalic *g is retained (e.g., *tegars* 'hail', *reg* 'vain', *rig* 'sand'), but *ɣ is lost in *dörü* 'lie', *di* 'buttermilk', *tī* (also *tiq*) 'blade', *yū* 'yoke', *qolâ* 'crow', *čündár* 'beetroot'. Consequently, *royan*, Ž. *rūxün*, 'ghee' and *šalyam* 'turnip' expose themselves as loanwords in Keša'i—a supposition confirmed by that fact that these words are pronounced typically without the uvular fricative in other Țarqrudi dialects.

Clusters. *t > št (cf. Pers. *st*) in *râšt* 'right, true' (for Pers. *râst*), (*vâ-*)št- 'be standing', and past stems *vašt-* 'run' and *vošt-* 'find, search' (with present stems *vez-* and *viz*, respectively). An original *šN is reduced in *čem* 'eye', *čehmá* 'source', *pōiná* 'heel', *eynâs-* 'recognize' (< OIr. *xšnā-sa-), but survives in *tašna* 'thirsty', *šnov-* : *šenoft-* 'hear', *ešmâr-* 'count'; note also *pajm* 'wool' (< *pašma-, □pas < *pe).

An important isogloss (no. 21 in Tedesco, 1921) that further separates Keša'i from Southwest Iranian is *sč > š in *paš* 'back, then', for Pers. *pas* (< Old Pers. *pasā*); cf. Parth., Kurd., Bal. *paš*, Av. *pasca* (< *pas-ča < *pos(-ko)).

The dialect also tends to reduce x and f before r and t. *xr has various outcomes: *hrin-* 'buy' (< *xri-), *sir* 'red' (< *suxra-), *tal* 'bitter' (< *taxra-), but *čarx* 'wheel' (< *čaxra-), *xörüs* 'rooster'. — Initial *fr- > h(r) in *heyâ*, Ž. *hüyâ* 'tomorrow', *hrâš-* : *herât-* 'sell'; *hrasn-* (Ž. *xrasn-*) 'send' (< *frēst-ēn-; cf. Stilo, p. 98), and the preverb *hâ-*, while medial *fr persists in *nefrin* 'curse' and *varf* 'snow'. — *xt > t governs *dot* 'daughter' and *dot-* 'milk' and other past stems of this class; an inexplicable exception is *paxt-* 'cook' (< *pekw-to-). Note also -*hmūxt* 'learn' (pres. -*hmūs-*, causative -*hmūžn-*), from the exclusively Iranian root *mauč (Cheung, p. 270). — *ft shows varied outcomes: in past stems, it is reduced in *hot-* 'sleep', *rot-* 'sweep', *der-kat-* 'fall down', *berbat* 'he wept', but remains in *šenoft-* 'hear', *vâ-škoft-* 'unsewn'; note also the areal form *oxdow* 'sun', in accord with *maxdow* 'moonlight'.

Other consonantal changes. Random developments include occasional *x > h, as in *hoša* 'bunch', *hiš* 'plow', *hargiš* 'rabbit', contractions in *tim* 'seed' and *pek* 'sledgehammer', and a favoritism for the nasal in *asm* 'horse', *kâmsorâ* 'caravansary', and *uzmün* 'tongue'; the latter has parallels in other dialects

around Mt. Karkas, and in certain Talysh and Kurdish dialects.

Vowels. The two stages of the fronting of an original back vowel (*u > ü > i) are evident in the data obtained in the 1880s by Zhukovskii vs. the current ones: *ri*, Ž. *rū* 'day'; *di*, Ž. *dū* 'smoke'; *pir*, Ž. *pūr* 'son'; *heyâ*, Ž. *hüyâ* 'tomorrow'; *awri*, Ž. *avrū* 'eyebrow'; *ampiâ*, Ž. *ampüyô* 'I wanted'. The late data further reveals that the process of fronting remains incomplete, in *müş* 'mouse', *ü/i* 'there', *ešbüš/ešbiš*, Ž. *ešpiš* 'louse' (< Old Iranian **tswiša-*), but is concluded in *nir* 'light', *pik* 'hollow', *kih* 'mountain', *bif* 'owl', *libiâ* 'bean', *xârsi* 'mother-in-law', *oris* 'bride', *âmi* 'paternal uncle'. This development has led to the homonymies *dir* 'late' (< *dêr*) vs. *dir* 'far' (< *dūr*), and *šir* 'salty' (cf. Parth. *šwryn*, *šōrēn*) vs. *šir* 'milk' (cf. Parth. *šyft*, *šift*, Mid. Pers. *šīr*) vs. *šir* 'lion' (cf. Parth. *šrg*, Mid. Pers. *šagr*, *šēr*). Note also the raising of the old *majhul* vowel: *miš* 'ewe' (< *mēš*).

A peculiar development in Keša'i is the keeping of *ā before nasals, atypical in other dialects of Ṭarqrud or elsewhere in the Central Plateau, where *ā is raised to u; examples are *zâmây*, Ž. *zômōi* 'son-in-law', *jânaver* 'living creature', *rōxâna*, Ž. *rōxōnâ* 'river', *zân-*, Ž. *zōn-* 'know', *vân-* : *vund-*, Ž. *vōn-* : *vōnt* 'chop', *râm-* : *râmâ-* Ž. *rōm-* 'drive', while counterexamples are as numerous, e.g., *ōlmūn* 'aspiration'. On the other hand, irregular rising of other vowels is found in *mun* 'maund', *mūr/mōr* 'snake' (the latter is also found in Ardestāni, Gabri, Kelāsuri, Keringāni).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Peter Austin and Julia Sallabank, eds., *Cambridge Handbook of Endangered Languages*, Cambridge, 2011.

Ḥosayn A'zam-Vāqefi, *Mirāt-e farhangi-e Naṭanz*, 4 vols., Tehran, 2000-2007.

Habib Borjian, "Median Succumbs to Persian after Three Millennia of Coexistence: Language Shift in the Central Iranian Plateau," *Journal of Persianate Societies* 2/1, pp. 62-87.

Idem, *Ganjina-ye guyešhā-ye irāni: Ostān-e Ešfahān*, Academy of Persian Language and Literature series no. 2, Tehran, 2015.



Lyle Campbell and Martha Muntzel, "The Structural Consequences of Language Death," in Nancy C. Dorian, ed., *Investigating Obsolescence: Studies in Language Contraction and Death*, Cambridge, 1989, pp. 181-96.

Johnny Cheung, *Etymological Dictionary of the Iranian Verb*, Leiden and Boston, 2007.

David Crystal, *Language Death*, Cambridge, 2000.

[ELCat] Catalogue of Endangered Languages, www.endangeredlanguages.com.

Moḥammad-Mehdi Esmā'ili, *Ganjina-ye guyešhā-ye irāni: Ostān-e Ešfahān*, Academy of Persian Language and Literature series no. 1, Tehran, 2011.

Moḥammad Ḥasandust, *Farhang-e taṭbiqi-mawzu'ī-e zabānhā o guyešhā-ye irāni-e now*, Tehran, 2010.

Idem, *Farhang-e rišāšenākti-e zabān-e fārsi*, 5 vols., Tehran, 2014.

Albert Houtum-Schindler, *Eastern Persian Irak*, London, 1897.

Karl Krahnke, "Linguistic Relationships in Central Iran," Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1976.

Pierre Lecoq, "Les dialects du centre de l'Iran," in Rüdiger Schmitt, ed., *Compendium linguarum iranicarum*, Wiesbaden, 1989, pp. 313-26.

Idem, *Recherches sur les dialectes kermaniens (Iran central)*, Acta Iranica 39, Leuven, 2002.

Luisa Maffi, ed., *On Biocultural Diversity: Linking Language, Knowledge, and the Environment*, Washington, D.C., 2001.

Loṭf-Allāh Mofakḵam-Pāyān, *Farhang-e ābādihā-ye Irān*, Tehran, 1960, p. 376.

V. S. Rastorgueva and D. I. Èdel'man, *Ètimologicheskii slovar' iranskikh yazykov*, vols. 1-3, Moscow, 2000-2007.

Ḥosayn-'Ali Razmārā, *Farhang-e joḡrāfiā'ī-e Irān III*, Tehran, 1950.

[SCI] Statistical Center of Iran (Markaz-e āmār-e Irān), *Farhang-e ābādihā-ye kešvar VII: Ostān-e Ešfahān*, Tehran, 1969.

Idem, *National Census*, decennial 1956-2011 for Isfahan Province.

Rüdiger Schmitt, ed., *Compendium linguarum iranicarum*, Wiesbaden, 1989.

Donald Stilo, "Isfahan xxi. Provincial Dialects," in *EIr*. XIV, New York, 2008, pp. 93-112.

Paul Tedesco, "Dialektologie der westiranischen Turfantexte," *Le Monde oriental* 15, 1921, pp. 184-257.

Valentin A. Zhukovskiĭ, *Materialy dlya izucheniya persidskikh' narechiĭ I: Dialekty polosy goroda Kashana: Vonishun', Kokhrud', Keshè, Zèfrè* (Materials for studying Iranian dialects I: The dialects around the city of Kashan: Vānišān, Qohrud, Keša, Zefra), St. Petersburg, 1888.