



LOTERĀ'I

LOTERĀ'I (Lutrā'i, and phonic variants thereof), term used by Iranian Jews for speech characterized by local Judeo-Iranian grammar with a special exotic substitutive vocabulary which is employed in the presence of gentiles to prevent them from understanding. I will try here to show the early Achaemenid origin of Loterā'i and to demonstrate how Loterā'i became a chief source for a medieval Muslim Persian underworld argot, whose vocabulary in turn entered argots of Gypsies of Iran and Central Asia, still richly attested at least in Tajikistan.

Yarshater's study and the issues it raises. Yarshater's pioneering scientific study of Loterā'i (Yarshater, 1977; see also [JUDEO-PERSIAN COMMUNITIES OF IRAN x. Judeo-Persian Jargon](#)), based on fieldwork in various Jewish communities of Iran, in effect entails the following questions: (1) Is the term Loterā'i (etc.) indeed, as believed by Iranian Jews, etymologically from Hebrew "Non-Toraic"? (2) What would be the precise feature to which the latter etymology, if correct, refers? (3) How can the Jewish etymology be reconciled with the fact that (a) the earliest allusion to Loterā'i (lwtr') in the 10th-century *Hodud al-Ālam*, stating that lwtr' is one of the two languages of Astarābād, does not mention Jews; and (b) allusions to this speech in early Persian lexis and poetry of the 12th century cite words not known from Jewish Loterā'i (henceforth JLtr) and, again, do not mention Jews? Note also that the use of the term *lotar(ā)/lutar(ā)* for an exclusionary language, found in the old dictionaries of Classical Persian (as detailed by Yarshater), and the present-day use of the term outside of Jewish communities, is used generically, without



reference to Jews. (4) What is the relative chronology of the heavily predominant Hebrew component and the smaller Aramaic component, of JLtr, and (how) is this relevant to the foregoing questions? (5) What of the verbs (etc.) of hitherto unidentified origin?

The non-Jewish data. The medieval Muslim (Shi'i) Persian argot is attested by the *Ketāb-e sāsiān ba-kamāl* (q.v.; henceforth KS) "The Book of Accomplished Grifters," extant *inter alia* (as a probably late copy) in a 14th-century anonymous Persian manuscript in Tashkent, within five pages of marginalia, of which I have obtained photo scans. A series of argot words, with Persian glosses, is given in the opening section of *Ketāb-e sāsiān* in nine thematic chapters. Many of the words reoccur at the end of KS in verses with some Persian annotations. Previously a brief list of some of the words was given (with occasional misreading) by Ivanow (1922), and another brief list was given by Troitskaya, this almost exclusively for comparison with words from her Uzbek argot data. It should be noted that there are no Indic words in the KS, although Indic material abounds in the Gypsy, mendicant, and musician argots of Iran and Central Asia.

Linguistic sources and relevant abbreviations. Jewish Loterā'i (JLtr.) of regions in Iran: Bor(ujerd) (Yarshater, 1989); Isf(ahan), Gol(pāyagān), Kash(an), Kerm(ān), Khom(eyn), Mash(had), Shir(az), Teh(ran), and Yazd (Yarshater, 1977). Some JLtr words and phrases from Iran are given without provenience in Mizrahi, pp. 121-23. **Her(at)** argot (found in Zarubin) is a form of JLtr (see Lazard, p. 252). In this article, all JLtr words from Iranian are from Yarshater's two articles, unless otherwise indicated.

20th-century non-Jewish argots:

PG = Gypsies of Eastern Iran (Ivanow, 1914; idem, 1920), and

PD = mendicant dervishes of Eastern Iran (Ivanow, 1927).

Djougi (i.e. Jugi), the term used by de Morgan, pp. 304-6, for the speech of Gypsies of Astarābād.

AG = Ġorbati of Arāk, a Gypsy argot whose word-formation and lexicon shares features with PG, Djougi, and the Jugi of Tajikistan (Moġdam, pp. 142-52).

Mus = Argot of traditional musicians of Iran, specified as to performance (Sāzanda, Mehtar), Gypsy provenience (Luti, Tošmāl), or locality (Čāli, Torbat-e

Jām) (Amanolahi and Norbeck, pp. 283-286).

LG = Argot of Gypsies of various localities of Iran (Fārs, Kermān, Osof) (Amanolahi and Norbeck, pp. 283-86).

Abd(oltili) “language of itinerants” designates the argots of Uzbek-speaking artisans and musicians, preachers and *qalandars* (Troitskaya).

Argots of Tajik-speaking Gypsies of the Ḥeṣār Valley are: Ar(abča) = Tashkent (Luli), Chist(oni), Ju(gi), Kav(oli), Sam(arkand) L(uli), and Sogut(arosh) (Oranskiī), Mag(ati), an argot of Persian-speaking Gypsies (Pstrusińska, pp. 71-73, cf. pp. 105-7 for comparisons of Mag with other Gypsy argots of Central Asia.

AD = argot in the 10th-century *Qaṣida Sāsāniya* of Abu Dolaf Yanbu‘i (Ḳazraji) (edition and commentaries in Bosworth, 1976).

SD = argot in the 14th century *Qaṣida Sāsāniya* of Ṣafi-al-Din Ḥelli (edition and commentaries in Bosworth, 1976).

LuJ = Luter-e (lwtr) Jāberi, argot (with some lexical affinities to Gypsy argots of Iran and Central Asia) of itinerant Kurdish-speaking traders of the Jāber community in the village of Badra, Ilām province, southwestern Persia (Karimi). Cf. Paul.

Other abbreviations: Aram = Babylonian Jewish Aramaic; Heb = Hebrew; OIr = Old Iranian; J = Jewish; Pers = Persian.

The Aramaic component and Achaemenid origins of the jargon. I begin with Question (4) above. JLtr nouns and adjectives of Aramaic origin in Yarshater’s data are Bor *yumā* “day”; Gol *libbā* “heart”; Khom *rešā* “head”; Shir *rakka* “thin”; Gol *pasilā* “gentile” < *pāsīl* “unqualified” (also “idol”); and, integrated with conspicuous phonological change, Shir *yārtak* “boy” < *yaldā*, and a few other words noted below. More significant are the JLtr verbs of Aramaic origin. Clear examples are: Gol *nazq-un-* Kash *nask-en-* “to kill, hit” (Aram *nazq-* “to injure”); Shir *za(w)n-*, Teh *dev-*, Isf *dam-* “to sell” < *zabben*, Shir *deyl-* “to fear,” denominative from *deḥel* “fear, fright”; and Mash *meštā-*, Her *meštō-* “to say” < Aram *mešta* “ē” “saying,” whose agreement is chronologically noteworthy. Other verbs of Aramaic origin will be noted below.

Particularly in view of “fear” and “sell,” Yarshater wondered whether, at the



time of the inception of Loterā'i, the Jews of Persia were not Aramaic-speaking and if only later in the course of time increasing Hebrew elements were imported (Yarshater, 1977, pp. 4-5). The latter situation is confirmed by (1) evidence I shall present that JLtr originated in the Achaemenid period; (2) the Aramaic origin of words cited as *lwtr'y* in a 12th-century poem by Suzani of Samarkand; and (3) data of the KS and later argots of Iran and Central Asia.

We may start with the fact that Shir *bika* “egg” must go back to Old Aramaic form of the early Achaemenid period in which the antecedent of later Aramaic and Syriac *bē(y)‘ā*, Heb *bēšāh*, and Arabic *bayḍa(t-)* “egg” had for the second consonant a sound which is spelled as *qōf* in other words which show the same correspondences—e.g., Old Aram 'rḳ' (cf. Pahl. Aramaeogram ALKA), later Aram and Syriac 'ar'ā, Heb 'ereš, Arabic 'arḍ, the change to the sound/letter 'ayin taking place in the late 6th century BCE.

Another Mash-Her agreement, *nund-* “to give,” is also found in KS, *nwndydn* “to give” (Pers gloss *dādan*), *bnwnd* “give!” (Pers *be-deh*), cf. Her *be-nond* “id.” (stem *nund-*), which I take as denominative from Old Aram **nudn-* “(dowry-)gift” from Late Babylonia (9th century BCE) *nudnū*, *nudni* “dowry,” cf. Neo-Assyrian (9th-7th century) *nundunnū* > *nudannu* > Aram *nādunyā* “dowry,” all < Akkad *n-d-n* “to give.” For semantics, cf. English *endow* < Old French *endouer*, Lat *dotāre* “give dowry” < *dōs dōtis* “dowry” = **“gift par excellence,”* Latin *dō* “give.”

Matching *bika* and *nund-* as early Achaemenid residue in JLtr are what I explain as fossils from Old Iranian. Some examples:

(1) Shir *āj-* = Her *huj-* (**hoj-*) “to come” < OIr **hāčaya-* mid. **“to lead oneself,”* cf. Avestan *hācaia-* (Y. 5.18, etc.) “to lead, direct, persuade” (*contra* Lazard, p. 253, Her *huj-* is not related to Neh *hez-*, etc., for which see s.v. KS *hzyδn*, below).

(2) Neh *viāj-* “sell, finish with” < OIr **abi-hāčaya-* or **api-hāčaya-*, cf. Avestan *upaṅhācaia-* (< **upa-hāčaya-*) “to come to agreement with someone” (Mash *velāj-* = Neh *viāj-*, or < OIr. **upari-hāčaya-*?).

(3) Shir *čed-* “know, understand”; Kash *če(-V)-*, *čā(-C)-* “know, see”; Isf, Yazd, Kerm *čer-* “see, know, understand, recognize”; KS *jhstn* “to see” (Pers *didan*), *bjh* “see!” (Pers *be-bin*), < OIr *č(a)it/θ-* “recognize, perceive” (Old Avestan *cōiθat*, *acistā*, *čikōitərəš*). The KS forms (with past stem like that of Pers

dānestan “to know”) represent *č(a)iθ- > čVH- > Kash čā-/če-, whereas OIr *č(a)it- > čēd, with West Iranian development, and Isf etc. čer, with “Tatic” development; cf. Judeo-Yazdi *šerin* “I went,” with šer- < šuta-.

(4) Bor *ča:n* “good, pretty,” KS *jhn* = *čahn “good, beautiful” (Pers *niku*) < OIr *čaxnuwāh perfect participle “delighting”; cf. Old Avestan *cāxnārē* “they delight” (-xn- > -hn-, cf. OIr *tauxmā* > Middle Pers *tōhm* > -tōm “family” in Pahl mltwm = Man. Middle Pers *mrdwhm* “mankind.”

(5) Mash *z(ə)vā-* “to say” < OIr *zvā-* (Old Avestan *zbā-* = */zuā-/ “to call, invoke.” KS *bwzf* (with *f* representing *β, a bilabial fricative fully written as the Arabic letter *f* with three dots instead of one superscript dot) “say!” (Pers *be-guy*), *wzf[?]ydn* “to say” (Pers *goftan*) < OIr (*abi-*)*zvā-* “to call” (cf. Pahl *āzbāy-*); the JLtr may have labial dissimilation.

Other JLtr/argot words of Iranian origin cannot be certainly dated to Old Iranian: Mash and Her *ruj-*, Gol *rej-* etc. “see, know” < root *rauč-* “(be) illumine(d)”; Shir *kelows-* “to laugh” < root *xraus-* “to shout”; Shir and Teh *margun-* “to hit” < “make dead”; cf. Shir. *kod* “hit, kill” < Aram *q-t-l* or *q-ṭ-l* “to kill.” KS *mlk* “man, male” (Pers *mard*) (scribal error, probably based on KS *mlk* “ruler” [Pers *amir*] < Aram *malkā* “king”) may be an error for **m’k*, and early spelling for /mak(k)/; cf. Ju, Chist, AG *mak(k)*, Mus Čāli *makak*, LG Osof *makk* “man, male.” JLtr has the comparable form *mak(k)eyhū* = Modern Heb *ha-iš* “the man” (Mizrahi, p. 123; -*eyhū* < Aram demonstrative?). I take *mak(k)* from **martk* < **martaka-* “man.”

Aramaic material in the non-Jewish sources. Expectably, early JLtr had Aramaic forms which have disappeared from modern JLtr; thus may be explained the designation *lwtr’y* for and in Suzani’s poem. I take these from Aram *daxyā*, *daxē* “clear, pure, (ritually) correct” and *zayif* “false.” KS collocates *dx* (Pers *nik* “good”) and *zyf* (Pers *bad* “bad”). Not only is *dax* found for “good” in PG, PD, Djougi, and all the argots of Central Asia, but PD, Abd, Ju, Chist, and Ar keep the original Aram meanings “clean, pure, right, correct” in addition. Remarkably, AG has *dax* “good, right” and *daxiyā* “pure.”

As shall be seen, the KS and related sources show a clear predominance of Aramaic over Hebrew etyma, and many of these words have correlations in 20th-century JLtr. Accordingly, for Loterā’i, indeed < *Lo’-Tōrā’i “Non-Toraic,” the reference was “having a vocabulary not from Hebrew, but from Aramaic.” Indeed, our materials cover the span of Aramaic spoken by Iranian Jews, from



the early Achaemenid period (see *bika* and *nund-*, above) to forms paralleling Jewish Neo-Aramaic of Iraq: KS n'šy “common people” (Pers *avām*), cf. Turkish Yürük nomads *naš* “people,” Abd *noši* “a copper coin” (Troitskaya, p. 264), all reflecting late Aram *nāšē* (as in JNeo-Aram) < *ʾnāšē* “people” (the Abd form refers to the coin’s bearing the image of a human face; similarly SD *mard* “dirham” < Pers *mard* “man,” Bosworth, 1976, II, p. 303). Similarly, KS 'm' “a hundred” (Pers *šad*) < late Aram *ʾammā* (as in Neo-Aram) < Aram *māʾā* “a hundred.”

Early preponderance of Aramaic over Hebrew in KS. The preponderance of Aramaic over Hebrew in the earlier phase of JLtr is evidenced by the fact that the verbs in KS which are of Semitic origin are from Aramaic. The following correspond to JLtr verbs:

(1) k'lydn = *g'lydn (Pers *raftan*) “to go.” Shir *gāl-* “go,” past stem *gāled-* < Aram *g-l-y*, ptc. *galy-* “to go out.”

(2) hzyδn “to go” (Pers *mesloho* “like that” [i.e., like the preceding word, = Pers *raftan* “to go”]), bhz “go!” (Pers *borow*), kh hznd “that they go.” The synonymy of k'lydn and hzyδn is also indicated by Pers *va* “and” before hzyδn. Neh *hez-* “go,” *behez-* “go!”; cf. Gol. etc. *ez-* “id.” < Aram. 'z-l.

(3) tknydn “to make, to do” (Pers *kardan*), ntkn “don’t make/do!” (Pers *makon*), also aux. tkyn-, tykyn-. Mash *teken* (not *tek-en-*), Her *tikin-* “to fix, make,” Aram *taqqen*, “to establish, fix” (also > Shir *ta:n-* “id.”).

(4) h'lm̄dn “to sleep” (Pers *kospidan*), h'lm̄wth “asleep” (Pers *kofta*), Aram *h-l-m*, ptc. *halm-* “to dream.” The same semantic relationship in Ham etc. *dar halum-* “to go to sleep”: Heb *halōm* “a dream” points to a replacement (probably widespread) within JLtr of Aramaic by the Hebrew cognate. Cf., e.g., 'x'lydn below. The rendering of Aram and Heb *ḥ* by *h* is consistent throughout JLtr, from whose medieval form KS and thence the argots of Iran and Central Asia also have *h*; this contrasts with *ḥ* > *x* in Neo-Aramaic.

(5) KS dhlydn “to fear” (Pers *tarsidan*), mydhlm “I fear” (Pers *mitarsam*), *midahlad* “he fears,” *ne bedahl* “don’t be afraid” (Mizrāhi, p. 123). Isf *dalan* = *tarsan* “to fear” (both words are given together with *čandan* and glossed by Pers *tarsidan* in a general [i.e., non-Loterā'i] vocabulary of Judeo-Isfahani; Ebrāhimi, p. 15). Ju *medahlum* “I fear,” Chist *dal-* “to fear,” PG *mīdella* “fears,” and PG *dōl(iden)* “to fear” < Aram *d-ḥ-l* “to fear,” ptc. (participle) *daḥl-*. Cf. Shir

deyl- “to fear” *dehel* “fear.”

(6) KS *x'lydn* “to eat” (Pers *kʷordan*), cf. Ju *oxolīdan* “id.,” KS *by'x'l* “eat!” (Pers *beḳʷor*), cf. Chist *bioxol* “id.,” PG *okhōl-* “to eat” (*sic* Ivanow, 1920, p. 291: not *okyōl*); < Aram *āxal* “ate.” Abd *axlamoq* “to eat” may derive via medieval JLtr from Aram ptc. *'axl-*, cf. Shir *ōxel-* “to eat” < Heb ptc. *'ōxel-*.

Other Aramaic verbs shared by KS and the JLtr and gentile argots of the 20th century are:

KS *br kym* “get up! arise!” (Pers *bar-ḳiz-*). PG, Kav, Ju *kim-* “get up”; Ar *barkim*; Ju *bur kim*, *dar kim* “get going.” Gol *kām-* “stand up, exist”; Neh causative *kāmun-* “put in a state, cause”; Her *kem-*, Neh *dar kām-* “sit down”; Mus Luti *kemeed*, Mus Tošmāl *keemed*, LG Osof, LG Fars *kemeed* “went” < Aram *q-w-m*, with forms *qām* and *qīm* “to arise, put in place.” (Lazard’s [p. 254] speculative derivation of *kām-* from the Indic Gypsy word seen in Ju *kam* “work” [< Sanskrit *karman-*] must now be discarded.)

KS **brsydn* (unpointed) for *prsydn* “to eat” (Pers *kʷordan*). Ham, Gol, Isf *peris-*, *piris-*, *pris-* “to eat.” In the Kurdish argot LuJ, *pirūs* “food, eating” (= Pers *kʷoreš*, Kurd *xwârešt*), notably a noun like the etymon, Aram ptc. *pārīs* (f. *pārīsā*) “broken (bread) for distribution or blessing.” LuJ words found in Gypsy argots of northern Iran and Central Asia also have *düywen* “ghee” (Pers *rowḡan/ruḡan*, Kurd *řun*) < **dūhan* < Aram *dōḡan* “oil (other than olive oil),” and *zâyra* “barley” (Pers *jow*, Kurd *jüywa*), cf. KS *s'ry'*... (last letters illegible), < Aram *sə'āryā* (*śā'āryā*) “barley” (cf. Gol *sa'ur*, Khom *sa'uri* < Heb *śā'ōrā*, pl. *śā'ōrīm* “barley”), PG *zabul*, *zaul* “barley” may have *u* for *ō* < *ā*, cf. PG *mezül* below.

Other traces of Aramaic not evidenced in later JLtr are:

KS *h'zydn* “to show” (Pers *nemudan*) < Aram *ḡazzey* “to make see, to show.” From the Aram root *ḡ-z-y*; Mag has *mi-azi* “you see,” *bi-az* “look!” (Pstrusińska, p. 71). For the loss of **h-*, cf. Sheikh Momedī (Mag) *ādur* “begging” below.

KS *hr'šydn* “play a flute” (Pers *ney zadan*) < Aram *ḡ-r-š* “to enchant, hypnotize,” in reference to snake-charming, or < Aram *ḡ-r-š*, in view of the following *brklh* *ṭrwšydn* “to play (lit. “strike”) a lute” (Pers *barbaṭ zadan*, see below), *bṭrwš* “beat! strike!” (Pers *bezan*) < Aram *ṭ-r-š* “to batter” (KS <ṭ-> probably via Arabic *ṭ-r-š* “to deafen,” which also occurs in Aramaic).



Jewish culture in the gentile argot vocabulary. The Jewish cultural background of the Aramaic components of the KS is dramatically clear from the outset of the latter, the first line of which, beginning the chapter on names pertinent to Islam, has rhm'n' "God" (Pers *koḏā*) < Aram *rahmānā* "The Merciful One," usual for "God" in Jewish Aramaic texts; km'r "John the Baptist" (Pers *Yaḥyā*) < Aram *kāmārā* "priest of a pagan temple"; and hwy'k'r (Pers *Musā*), lit. "snake-handler" from Aram *ḥiwyā* "snake" + Pers *-kār* (see below) in allusion to Moses' curative brazen/copper serpent and/or the contest with Pharaoh's sorcerers.

Talmudic Aramaic usage is reflected in KS *nhwr* "eye" (Pers *čašm*) and separately *nhwr* "blind" (Pers *kur*). Ju *nuhur* and SamL *nuḥūr* are again both "eye" and "blind"; in PG and PD *nuhur* (AG *nhūr*), Mus Luti, Mus Tošmāl, LG Osof, LG Fars, LG Kermān, *nāhur* means "eye," versus Ar, Mag, Sogut, and Abd *nuhur* "blind." From argot came Pers *nohur* and Tajik dialectal *nuḥūr* "sight, eye." The Talmud has *nəḥōrā* "light (of the eyes)," and, as euphemism for "blind," *saggī nəḥōrā* "having much 'light'" (Syriac *saggī nuhrā*, with phonological differences). The Talmudic phrase survives in Yeshiva Yiddish. KS also has *nhwr tykynh* "victory," lit. "(day)light-making," a kind of etymological calque for the additional glosses Arabic *fajr al-maṣṣur*, Pers *piruzi* "the victor's dawn, victory." Earlier explanations of the argot word as from Arab *nūr* "light" are wrong.

Aram *gālūt* "(the Jewish) Exile" > Gol *gālūt* "(in) misery, miserable" (*gālūt-and* "the are in misery") point to KS k'lwt as **gālūt* (still a noun, obj. of *nwnd-* "give" in an unglossed verse) as confirmed by Djougi *galout* "bad" (see below), SamL *gohlut*, Abd *gaulud*, *golud*, Ju and Ar *gohlud* "ill, sick."

The aforementioned KS hwy'k'r "Moses" separately reoccurs glossed as Pers *mārān-gir* "grasper of snakes" in the section on professions, the first of which is **kn'w* (ms. *ky'w*) = **gn'w* "thief" (Pers *dozd*), cf. Chist *ganav*, Ju *ginop*, Abd *genou*, Ar *ginau*, *ginop*, PG *genew* < Aram (and Heb) *gannāḅ* "thief," whence Gol *qannō* "id."

Our hwy'k'r represents a compound of *ḥiwyā* "snake" plus Pers *-kār* "doer"; cf. the rhyming Pers *daryākār* "seaman"; cf. with *-kard* "made, done," another Aramaeo-Persian compound, dm'krd "red" (Pers *sork*) < "made of blood" (Aram *dammā* = Heb *dam* "blood," whence Bor *dam* "red"). The uncompounded hwy' "snake" occurs in the section on animal names, after another Aramaeo-Persian form, dhb'b' "scorpion" (Pers *gazdom*) *"golden-

legged,” with *dhb'* from Aram *dəhaβā* “gold” and *-b' = -pā* “foot, leg”; this describes Iran’s most conspicuous scorpion, *Orthobuthus doriae*.

KS *mylh* (Pers *harza* “idle talk, gossip”) < Aram *milleh* in Talmudic usage both “his word”; cf. *millē* “words” and “gossip.” For *-h = -ēh* *‘his,’ see below.

Other words with Aramaic background in the KS section on animals are *klb'* and *tn'γwl*. The first, *klb'* “dog” (Pers *sag*), cf. Ju *kalpak*, PG *kalpik* etc. “id.,” is equatable with Aram *kalbā* “dog,” which, via comparison with Arabic *kalb* “dog,” gave rise to an argotic *-ā* attached to Arabic words: KS *qlb'* “heart,” *bṭn'* “belly,” etc.; thus KS forms like *yd'* “hand” are ambiguous in origin.

KS *tn'γwl* (γ unpointed) “hen, chicken” (Pers *morḡ*), cf. Abd and Ar *tanoyul*, *tanayul* “id.” < Aram. *tarnəḡōl* [tarnəḡōl] “rooster,” whence Bor *tarnegul* “id.”; the notable **tanā-* of the KS and Gypsy forms vs. Aram *tarnə-* will be discussed below.

For “lion” (Pers *šir*) KS has *klb' mlk'n* “dog-render,” and for “hawk” (Pers *bāz*) KS has *tn'γwl mlk'n* “chicken decapitator,” structurally Persian participles, i.e., Persian compound participles based on Aram *m-l-q*, ptc. *malq-* “to lop the head off a bird, tear apart with the claws”; see further, below.

Other early Aramaisms preserved in gentile argot. KS has many other nouns from Aramaic which must have been extant in medieval JLtr, although few survive in modern JLtr. Examples are:

KS **s'wth* (ms. *s'wnh*) “old (man)” (Pers *pir*), cf. Ju *sovut*, PG *sobut*, Ar *sout* “old man” < Aram **sāβūt* replacing *sēβūt* “old age” via *sāβā*, *sāβtā* “old woman”; for *-ūt-* Bor *hevalut* “bad” < Heb *hevalūt* “vanity.”

KS *rhm'* “lover” (Pers *āšeq*) < Aram *raḥamā* “id.”

KS *šyd'* “insane” (Pers *divāna*, from *div* “demon”) > Pers *šeydā* “crazy” < Aram *šēdā* “demon”; cf. Shir *šed(d)-* “to catch disease.”

KS *škr'* “lie” (Pers *doruḡ*) < Aram *šiqrā* “id.” Cf. Heb *šeqer* “lie,” which entered various Jewish languages, e.g., Judeo-Isfahani and Yiddish.

KS *m'hwz* “city” (Pers *šahr*), cf. SamL *muhūz*, Ju *muγuz* “town” < Aram *māḥōzā* “city.”

KS also uses *m'hwz* in a series of argot terms for various cities of Iran and



Central Asia. Very interestingly, Herat (hryw) appears to be called m'hwz hr[?]t ls'nk “the city of Herat speech”; *ls'n' elsewhere < Arabic *lisān* “tongue” (Pers *zabān*). Assuming the apparent hrt *ls'nk has -k = diminutive -ak, then “Herat *argot.” Alternatively, the -k could be a copyist’s error for ' of ls'n'. In either event, the phrase thus refers to the (*Jewish?) argot of Herat or that city’s distinctive Persian dialect.

KSdkh (*sic* twice; not dlh = Ju *dela*, below) “house” (Pers *kāna*). Cf. Ju *dak* “locality, community,” cf. Ju *dak-i mo* “one of our people”; Ju *indak* *“(this place; here); *undak* “that place; there.” Cf. also Ju *gdok* “where?” < **kudok* “what place?”; Shir *dāqim* “place” (*“(my place,” cf. Shir *qutim* “myself” [below], or conceivably *“(this place,” cf. Mid. Pers *im* “this”), *idāqim* “here.” In addition, Kav and Mag have *duka* “house.” Toward an etymological solution, note further Her *indof* “here,” Mash *kondāf* “where” (< *kudōf* via **indāf*). These may derive from Aram *daf* “framing plank, column on page” > *“(locus” (cf. German *Rahmen* “frame, milieu, scope”). With Ju and Mag *duka* < early JLTR **dūq* < Aram *dūx* “place,” one can see contaminations **daf*/**dāf* and *dūx* (> **dūq*) giving rise to **dax* > **daq* > **dak*, and **dāx* > **dāq* > **dāk* (> *dāq*). The phonetic affinity between *x* and *f* would have had a role; cf. German *Luft* < **luxt*; Pers *joft* “paired” < *yuxta-*.

The change of /x/ to early JLTR /q/ to KS k is also reflected by Pers *k'od* “oneself,” Shir *qutim* “myself,” *qutit* “thysself,” *qutiš* “himself,” cf. KS *kwd'wndm* “myself” (Pers *man* “I”), **kwd'wndt* “thysself” (Pers *to* “thou”), and *kwd'wndš* “himself.” Pers *kođāvand* “lord, possessor, authority,” suggests the possibility that “self” in “thysself, himself” underwent an argot expansion to “thy lordship, his lordship,” whence “myself” = “milordship,” giving inflated forms for “I, thou, he.” For */x/ > */q/, see also below on KS 'byk, Shir *abeq* < Heb 'aβīx(ā).

Forms from Aramaic possessive nouns. Like the still-extant JLTR, KS reflects Aramaic nouns taken over independently (like Middle Iranian Aramaeograms) as non-possessive forms with what were originally various personal possessive endings. This applies in KS particularly to body parts (cf. Khom *ragle* “foot”) < Aram *ragleh* “his foot,” like Pahlavi LGLH = “foot”). Along forms with additional -h < Aram -eh “his” are KS *hrh* “rump, behind” (Pers *kun*) < Aram *ħor*; *lkth* “finger” (Pers *angošt*), cf. Aram *l-q-ṭ* “pick up”; and (reflecting Aram -ī “my”) KS *dkny* “beard” (Pers *riš*), cf. PG *dagnā*, *degño* “mouth, beard, lips, teeth,” AG *daqnā* “mouth.”

Without reflection of Aram possessive suffix, KS *h'r* (Pers *gu* [*sic* for *guh*]),

Central Asiatic argots *hor* < Aram *ḥārē* “feces”; and *k'k'* “tooth” (Pers *dandān*), cf. Ju *kokon* “face,” PG *kōkīdan* “to laugh” < Aram *kākkā* “(molar) tooth.” (Troitskaya, p. 254, wrongly cites a Syriac “kokha,” which led others to attribute Syriac as a component of our Gypsy argot vocabulary.)

KS *rjy'jh* “nose” (Pers *bini*) is probably < Aram *rēḥā* “breath” plus Persian suffix *-ča*. Cf. *ryh'ny* “fragrance, odor” (Pers *bu*) < Aram *rēḥānē* “fragrance.” KS *hwtr'* < Aram *ḥuṭrā* “stick” glossed Pers *dār-e vey* “its beam,” referring to the preceding entry *my'n tnk* (?) probably = Pers *miān-tang* “having a narrow middle” (glossed Pers *sollam* “ladder”).

As Ivanow (1922, p. 378) suspected, KS *br* is both associative and privative. The associative meaning is found in Aram *bar* “son, someone or something exemplifying a part/implement.” KS *brk'l'* “lute” (Pers *barbaṭ* or *barboṭ*), spelled *brk'lh* before *ṭrwš-* “beat, play” (see above). Probably < Aram *bar qālā* “(implement) having a voice”; for formation, cf. Aram *bar ṭawāy* “utensil under a roast,” *bar lō'ā* “board securing an animal’s jaw,” and for the meaning, cf. Flamenco Caló argot *sonanta* “guitar.” The next entry has *brk'l' dyj'* “false (or Turkish) lute,” glossed as Pers *jnk*, i.e., *čang* “harp.”

KS *br* < Aram *bar* “without” (cf. Pahlavi Aramaeogram BRH = *bē* “without”) is found with yet another Aram noun in *brmy'* “thirsty” (Pers *tešna*, miscopied as *fetna* “sedition”), where *-my'* compares with PG, PD *moi*, Ju *mayō*, *mayob*, etc., Chist *mai* “water,” cf. PG *mionew*, AG *mianu* “water,” Mus Luti, Tošmāl *meyow*, Mus Čāli *meyab*, LG Fars *meyow*, all from Aram *mayyā* “water.” Preceding *brmy'* is *br hrsyt* “hungry” (Pers *gorosna*), with KS *hrsyt* “bread” (Pers *nān*) = Central Asiatic Gypsy argots *harsīt* (< Arab *harīsa*?).

A rare instance of a correspondence of a KS and JLtr noun: *KSkl'h* “stone” for **gl'lh* correlates with JLtr *gl'lh* (= Heb *even*, Mizrahi, p. 123) “stone, rock” < Aram *gālālā*, *gālāltā* “stone, rock.” Despite the gloss, the KS copyist may have read *kolāh* “hat” under influence of words for headdresses and garments some lines earlier.

The Gypsy etc. argots of Iran and Central Asia also preserve traces of Aramaic verbs not in KS, some of which have equivalents in JLtr: for “give,” Ju *hob-/how-* and SamL *hob-/hov-* straightforwardly correlate with Shir *av-* and Bor *ab-* (with *h*-loss) from Aram (also Heb) *hav* “give.”

In the same semantic field, Kav *zamon-* “to give” compares with Shir *za(w)n-*,



Isf *dam-*, Teh *dev-* < Aram *zabben* (caus. of *zəvan* “buy”), all “to sell.” Formally the comparison is enhanced by the possibility (noted by Yarshater, 1977) that the JLtr final merged with the Iranian causative marker (-*ān-* > -*on-/un-*). For semantics, cf. Russian *davat* “to give”: *pro-davat* “to sell,” and English “I’ll give it to you for five dollars.”

Ju *ošin-* “to take (up)” is closest to Her *ošin-*, cf. Gol (*dar*) *ašun-* “to take,” Kash *der ašan-*, Gol *dar ašne* “take!” Neh *be-m-āš-i* “I brought, took.” Gol *mi-āšun-am* (stem *āšun-*) “I put right, set, fix, prepare, make, render” from *āš-un* “to put right, set, fix, prepare, make, render” points to the stem *āš-* < Aram ʾš-š: ʾiššeš “founded, made firm,” cf. *nit’ošēš* “was confirmed”; *uššā* “fortification.” Here note Ju *ošīšt-*, past stem to *ošin-* (*ošīšt-* assimilated < *āš-ist-*, past stem *-ist-*?).

Words of Aramaic origin not in KSor JLtr still preserved in the Pers argots are PG *tub-*, Chist *tup-*, Ju *tuvok* “to sit,” *tavol-* “to seat” from Aram *tūβ* “sit!”

To PG *sak-*, *seg-*, *sig-*, Ju *sak-* “to observe” < Aram *sakkē* “observing” may be added *be-sok* “observe (carefully)” in the mainstream general colloquial of Isfahan (datum from Habib Borjjan), a trace of the earlier Isfahani Loterā’i.

PG *tubur-* “to break,” Ju *tarb-*, *tarv-* “to beat” (influence of Arabic *ḍ-r-b* “beat”?) < Aram *tabber* “to smash” find correlation in Abu Dolaf’s Arabic *tatbīr* (< Aram) (cf. Bosworth, 1976, II, p. 308).

Ju *umor-*, *umošt-* (SamL *ūmor-*, *ūmošt-*) “to say” (constructed like Tajik *gumor-*, *gumošt-* “arrange”) < **omor-*; AG *bī-āmār* “say” < Aram *ʾamar* “said” (vocalism like Ju *oxol-* “eat” from Aram *āxal*; cf. below Ju *otor* < *otar* “bazaar”).

Alongside the above verbs are attested nouns of ultimate JLtr Aram provenance; some interesting for their semantic development from Talmudic usage are Chist *parzal* “knife” < Aram *parzel* “iron, iron implement of tool,” Ju *givor* = Tajik *bosmačī* (Russian *basmač* “guerilla brigand fighter against early Russian Soviets in Central Asia”) < Aram *gibbārā* “hero.” Cf. Mus Mehtar *geevar* (= **givār*) “man,” which would be a cross of the Aram word for “hero” with the word seen in Ju *γavrik*, *havrik* “man” < Aram *gaβrā* “man”; cf. Mus Sāzanda *gaveh* “man.” Ju *havrik*, variant of *γavrik*, may be due to the influence of the word represented by Aram/Heb *ḥaβer* “friend, associate.”

For PG “*mezūl(?)*” “fortune-telling” < **mezōl* (Ivanow, 1914, p. 452, and, for the vowel of the second syllable, pp. 445-46) is < Aram *mazzāla* (Bab Amoraic Mishnaic *mazzāl*) “fortune.” (Note Ivanow, 1920, p. 282, on Persian Gypsies not

being fortunetellers; Jews were known until recent times in the Near East as practitioners of occult sciences.)

Words of everyday economy include Abd *otar*, *otor*, Ju *otor* “bazaar, town” < Aram *'atar* “place, town, market”; PG, PD *parak* “cow” < Aram *par(ā)* “bovine, cow”; and Chist *turun(k)* “bull,” AG *tirang* “bovine” (Pers *gāv*); Ju *ozaxtor* “calf” (*“young bull,” cf. LuJ and PD *āzak* “child” [< Middle Pers *zahāg?*] < Aram *tōr*, pl. *tōrān* “bull.”

Chist *katuna* “clothing” < Aram *kittūnā* “shirt, clothing” (KS *tnwdh* = Pers *pirāhan* “shirt” may be miscopying of **ktwnh*).

Old integration of Hebrew words from Jewish culture. The above large number of Aramaisms in the gentile argots, with and without correspondences in 20th-century JLtr, confirms the etymology of Loterā'ī etc. = non-Toraic = Aramaic, in reference to the chief source of the vocabulary. However, Loterā'ī had, even in its medieval phase, a number of Hebrew words as Jewish *Kulturwörter*.

For 20th-century JLtr, the agreement in Hebraisms shown between the JLtr of Iran and Herat (on the medieval distinction of which speech, cf. below on the numerals) in Shir *melāxā* : Her *maloxo* “work, action, affair” and Go *lašun* : Her *lošun* “speech” (< “tongue”) suggests a fairly early common origin; thus also Mash, Yazd *lex-* : Her *le(y)x-* “to go,” cf., in the exclusionary Jewish Neo-Aram of northwestern Iraq, *līx* “leave quickly!, scam!”

Bor *noma*, Isf “*nouma*” (nwm'), *nummā* “moon” (respectively Ebrāhimi, p. 51 and Kalbāsi, p. 229, the latter glossed as Pers *māh* [*borj*], i.e., “moon as month”; neither entry designates the word as Loterā'ī) may be explained from Heb *lāβānāh*, via well-paralleled assimilations and contractions, whose result points to early adaptation.

Gol *tanāim*, Bor *tanāyim* (*sic*) “hen” is explainable as a metaphoric development, in reference to the hen's putative reference to the rooster, from Heb *tānāyīm* “wedding arrangements,” an early sacral-ritual entry. The words in fact have Yiddish equivalents: *māloxə*, *lošn*, and *leyx-ləxo* (a *topos* from Genesis 1.12, and name of a Sabbath lection, Genesis 1.12-17.27) and *tnoyim* (“marriage contract”). Other Hebraisms may have been part of JLtr before the desuetude of Aramaic speech among Iranian Jews (cf. the occurrence of Hebrew in early Jewish documents of Afghanistan). Note also forms like Judeo-Kashani *melōx-e hamōvet*, Judeo-Isfahani *melax movat* = Yiddish *malax ha-*



moves “Angel of Death.”

KS attests the Hebraisms bysh “egg” (Pers *kāya-ye morḡ*) < Heb *bēšāh* “id.”; n’r (miswritten n’z) “boy” (Pers *ḡolām*) < Heb *na’ar* “id.”; and hz’n “caller, reciter, singer” (Pers *kvānda* [for **kvānanda*]) < Heb *ḡazzān* “(synagogal) announcer, precentor, cantor.”

Interestingly, KS *kymwllw* “camel” (Pers *oštōr*) also in br *kymwllw* “camel driver” (with br < associative Aram *bar*, cf. e.g. *bar ḡaylā* “soldier”) and *kymwllw mlk’n* **“camel-render”* (Aram *malq-*, see above) = “elephant” (Pers *pil*). Whereas Aram *gaml-* is relevant here, *kymwllw* = */*gimōlō*/ < Heb *ḡmallō* “his camel,” cf. Gol *ḡamelli* < Heb *ḡmallī* “my camel,” with a different possessive suffix. For **gym-*, cf. Early Judeo-Persian *nym’z* < *namāz* “prayer” and *nymyk* < *name(h)k* “salt” (in a *tafsir* of Ezekiel).

KS ’*byk* “father” compares with Shir *abeq* “father” < Heb *’aβīx(ā)* “thy father”; vs. Khom *ābi* “father” < Heb “my father”; cf. the variation underlying possessive suffixes in the word for “camel.”

SamL *dela* “house, door,” Ju, Abd, Ar *dela, dila*, Luli *dila* “house, tent,” AG *dila* “room, tent” may derive from Heb *delet* “door,” as does Bor *delét* “door.” Possibly via reanalysis as *dela-t* **“thy door,”* or, if from early Heb pronunciation, *deleθ* became **deleh* when Old Pers *θ* went to Mid. Pers *h*, resulting finally in *dela*. For semantics, cf. Pers and Tajik *dar* “door, gate, court”?

PG *nidu, nodo, nedeo*, LG Osof and Kermān *nedow* “woman, wife” seem to presuppose **nidō*, which could derive from Heb (> Aram) *niddāh* “menstruation, menstruant,” if KS and manuscripts of Asadi’s *Loḡāt-e fors* dnh “woman” (Pers *zan*), Abd *dana*, PG/PD *danew, denew, dinki*, and LuJ *dānu*, Mus Mehtar *danow*, Mus Sāzanda *duneh*, Mus Torbat-e Jām *danow*, LG Fars *danow* represent a taboo metathesis < *nidā*, **nidō*. Influence of Arabic *danab* “tail” is possible (cf. Vulgar English slang “tail” for “woman as sexual object,” e.g., “chase tail”), cf. Abd *danap*, PG/PD *deneb*, Ju *danam*, Kav *danap*, etc. “woman.”

Both Aramaic and Hebrew were alternative sources of older JLtr, as reflected by the names of numerals. Aram *ḡad* “one” gave KS *h’dk* “one,” PG *hōt* “a unit”; counting suffix *-hōd, -hōt* (= Pers *tā*); so also AG *(h)āt, (h)od, (h)ot*. The latter forms compare with **-hat-* < Aram *ḡad* in Her *tāreynatak* “two” < Aram *tārey(n)* “two” + **hat* + *-ak*; the segmentation *tārey-natak* gave the Her

numeralive *-natak*. For “two” Heb *šənayim*, *šəney* is reflected by KS *šym* < **šnym*, SD *šann* (Bosworth, 1976, II, p. 313); cf. Shir. *šane*, Bor *šené*. KS has *slws* = **šlwš* < Heb *šālōš* “three,” cf. Shir *šalošā*, but KS has *št* from Aram *šittā* “six,” and *m* < late Aram *ʾammā* “thousand.”

Evidence for a Jewish underworld component in the old gentile argots. The actual involvement of a Jewish underworld in the early formation of the Muslim argot is confirmed by the data of the 10th-century Banu Sāsān *qašida* (AD), together with later data. Aram *hādōr* “circle” and *hādōrā* “peddler, beggar” (both from the root *h-d-r* “to go around”) are involved in the first example: AD *hʾδwr/hʾdwr* “the circle [of fortunetellers and their skills operating in a street assemblage] about which people congregate” (see Bosworth, II, pp. 240-41, with a different Semitic etymology). KS *hʾdwr* “job” (Pers *kār*) may refer to this charlatanry, or professional begging, like PG *khōdur*, SamL, Ar, Abd *hodur*, etc. “beggar,” SamL *hodūri* “begging”; cf. Mag *ādur* “peddling,” the chief occupation of the Sheikh Momadi (Moḥammadi) itinerants of Afghanistan (Petrušinska, p. 48, with literature), with loss of *h-* as in Mag *az-* “look, see” (above, s.v. KS *hʾzydn*).

AD *barkakk* is “street dentist” (Bosworth, 1976, I, pp. 90, 146, 148, 161) < Aram *bar* (see above on KS *br kymwlv*) + *kākkā* “(molar) tooth,” whence KS *kʾk* “tooth” (see above). Privative *bar* (cf. KS *brmyʾ* above) is seen in AD *brkwš* “one pretending deafness” (idem, pp. 161, 175) = KS *br kwš*, where *kwš* = Pers *guš* “ear.”

AD *maysarāni* (verb *maysara*) “someone who begs, pretending to have fought the infidel on the frontier” (Bosworth, 1976, I, p. 175; II, pp. 194, 224), KS *mysr* “fighter for the faith” (Pers *gāzi*), < Aram *mēyšar* “border,” *mēyšarānā* “pertaining to the frontier.”

In the expected field of obscenities are *hurr* “rump,” KS *hrh* (Pers *kun*) and *kyδ* “penis” (Bosworth, 1976, II, pp. 192, 218-19), KS *kyt* = **gyt* * “penis” (Pers *dnd* *dand* “rib,” probably misreading of **kyr* = *kīr* “penis,” near other words pertaining to the abdomen and genitalia; cf. Ju *git* “penis, male,” Aram *gīd* “vein, tendon, penis”).

The foregoing correlations of the AD with KS again show the Jewish Aramaic of the Muslim argot, already in the 10th century.

Note also Bosworth, 1976, II, p. 210, on AD verse 187, where travelers who go



from place to place to lay out rugs are equated with *al-mašāṭih*; this is derivable from Aram *mišṭāhā* “land where something (e.g., a fishing-net) is spread out to dry”; cf. Bosworth, 1976, II, p. 279, with a comparable Hebrew root and derivative. The Arabic *ḥ* indicates a direct borrowing from the Aramaic, as against the *h* of *hurr* “rump,” whose *h* is due to Persian intermediation.

Bosworth (1974) tried to make a case for the presence of Jews in the Banu Sāsān, arguing from both *a priori* considerations and scant textual testimonia which he notes are uncertain as evidence. The correctness of his overall case is now confirmed by the linguistic evidence presented here.

Tenth-century Astarābād and the early diffusion of Jewish jargon: evidence from early twentieth century “Djougi.” It is in the 10th century (the period of Abu Dolaf), we recall, that the term *lwtr* first occurs with regard to Astarābād, without Jewish reference. That this area was indeed instrumental in the entry of the Jewish exclusionary vocabulary into gentile argot is shown by de Morgan’s (pp. 304-6) linguistic material of “Djougi” Gypsies of Astarābād, the city in which *Lō/uterā(i)* is first attested by the *Ḥodud al-‘ālam* in the 10th century. It is likely that, at least in part, this “Djougi” group described by de Morgan as impoverished migratory tent dwellers, who seasonally migrate outwards from Astarābād and return there, at least in part represent the group from which are descended the identically-named Jugi Gypsies of Tajikistan, as indicated by such unique correspondences as Djougi “*homoachtan*,” Jugi *umoštan* (*ūmoštan*), *umor-* (*ūmor-*), cf. AG *āmār-* “to say” < Aram *āmar-*.

The vocabulary of Djougi, as given by de Morgan, has close equivalents to other Gypsy argots of Iran and Central Asia in general:

From Indic: *mōness* “man”; *djévéd* “woman, wife”; *lō* “iron”; *pounó* “water”; *bohót-* “big”; *vagal* “goat”; *gôrá* “horse”; *gérà* “donkey”; *bedjalonen* “to light something up”; *-khez, -khiz* “kinship suffix”; etc.

From Arabic: *khashpouk* “stick of wood”; *ghèlil* “small,” cf. *kölèl* “child”; *nárák* “fire,” etc.

From Iranian: *dakhlodj* “girl”; *takhnoï* “knife”; *süthai* “charcoal” (probably a Caspian reflex of *suxta-* “burned,” cf. Djougi *southa* = Tajik argots *suta* “black,” but note KS *swd’* < Arabic); and *hedjonddan* “to make” (= PG *ajon-*, Ivanow,

1914, p. 454 with pp. 447-48 on the suffix: cf. above on Shir *aj-*, Her *huj-*).

From Aramaic/Hebrew: *dakhana* “good”; *modakhî* “bad” (*mo-* < Pers “not”); *nouhour* “eye”; *hakhaliden* “to eat”; *miokholî* “thou eatest”; *bekimin* “to go”; *hamoachtan* “to speak, say” (see above); *galout* “bad”; *daghno* “mouth”; *-hot/-hod* numerative suffix; and *dela* “house.”

Now, in addition to these forms ultimately from Aram/Hebrew which are found throughout the Central Asiatic argots, Djougi has words from Aram/Hebrew not found in the other gentile argots. These are: *pichto* “easy,” cf. Aram *pāšitā* “id.”; *moda ana* “ewe” (Pers *māda* “female” + Aram *ʾānā* “sheep”); *nomárát* “night” (< (*a*)*rāt* “night, evening” < Indic + disambiguating *noma* = Bor, Isf *noma*, *nu(m)mā* < Hebrew *ləβānā*, discussed above); and further forms:

Djougi *thünoï* “hen” (cf. *tunoï* “egg,” probably parallel to Pers *toḵm-e morġ* “seed of chicken” = “egg,” cf. Pers *toḵm* “seed; egg; testicle”). This *t(h)ünoï* would represent something like /tənoʾi/ < */tanāʾi/, which, with the common denasalization after long vowels, compares with Gol *tanāim*, Bor *tanā(y)im* (*sic*; confirmed by Prof. Yarshater in a letter of 2011). “Hen,” whose Hebrew origin is discussed below, KS tnʾywl (Pers *morġ*), Abd and Ar *tanayul* “chicken,” emerges as a cross of **tarneyul*, cf. Bor *tarnegul* < Aram *tarnəgōl* [tarnəyōl] “rooster,” and *tanā(y)i(m)* “hen,” whose antiquity in gentile argot is reflected by Djougi.

Of the four unique Jewish Semitic words in Djougi, two have correspondences in JLTR. With the addition of *hedjonndan* with correspondences in PG of northern Iran (with and without causative *-on-*), cf. Shir *āj-* and Her *huj-* from fossilized Old Iranian, we have confirmation for the antiquity of the argot in Astarābād, for which the term *lwtrʾ(y)* is attested in the 10th century. These data also confirm the Jewish origin of *lwtrʾ(y)* as both term and speech, referred to in early Persian sources.

The role of Deylam in the early diffusion. As for the passage of the exclusionary Judeo-Iranian speech into non-Jewish argot, specifically in Astarābād in the 10th century, the latter city was variously connected with Deylam (see [Deylamites](#) ii) during this unstable period, which gave rise to two dynasties of Deylami origin, the Ziyarids and more importantly the Shiʾi [Buyids](#), whose power soon extended over most of Iran, setting the scene for peregrinations of [Abu Dolaf al-Yanbuʾi](#) and his patronage among the Buyids.



In this context it is relevant that KS refers to Deylam as *mlky'* = Aram *malkayyē* “the kings,” cf. KS *mlk'*, glossed as Pers *amir*. Furthermore, a Deylami locus of the spread of the argot may be confirmed by KS *d'* = Pers *deh* “village,” if this represents the Māzandarāni pronunciation *də* (of which Habib Borjian has informed me). KS *m'hwz mlk'n* “city of amirs” = “Ray” seems also to reflect Buyid realia. The role of a Jewish underworld—noted above for the 10th-century period of Abu Dolaf on linguistic grounds—may well have been furthered in post-Buyid Deylam via the activities of Ḥasan Ṣabbāḥ, among whose fighters were three communities of tough, rapacious Jews (thus Benjamin of Tudela). It could be expected that such groups settled in cities as a prestigious part of the Iranian underworld.

Jews and argots, East and West. The sociological scenario for the beginnings of gentilization of Loterā'i would have been the emergence of a large Iranian underworld culminating in the 10th century in the Caspian area, of which Jews were a part. Whereas such Jews inherited a vocabulary meant originally to exclude non-Jews (the core of which speech persisted in this function among respectable Jews), for Jews of the Iranian lower class (including poor tradesmen and laborers), this vocabulary was intended to exclude the solid citizens, police, gentry, and rulers. For the non-Jewish underworld, their Jewish colleagues offered a readymade exclusionary vocabulary, whose acquisition was useful. This vocabulary was then transmitted to other marginal groups, particularly Gypsies, and is still partially attested. A very similar development took place independently in the 15th-16th century rise of Gaunersprache/Rotwelsch (Rotwälsch), with its large Jewish vocabulary, among gentile beggars and scoundrels of the German-speaking area. Indeed, Oranskiĭ (pp. 44-45) notes a brief series of gentile Iranian argot words of Jewish etymology, and on p. 46 with fn. 37 adduces Ju *oxol-*: Rotwelsch *acheln* “to eat.” Note further such correlations with early 16th century R(otwelsch) as Chist *ganavidan*, etc., R *genffen* “to steal”; Ju *yavrik*, etc., R *gaver* “man”; and KS *bysh* “egg,” R *betzam* “eggs.”

Early Jewish Loterā'i reflected in the scope of the Persian vocabulary. Early Persian poetry and lexica contain a number of words of Jewish Aramaic origin via our Muslim argot. These include the aforementioned *lwtr'* words in Suzani's poems, *dx* “fair,” *zyf* “vile”; words noted as used by the **sāsiān* (mss. *'sy'n*): *s'bwth*, *ṣ'bwth* “old woman,” *dnh* “woman”; and *kākā* “tooth”; words redolent of the underworld: *hār* “feces” and *hrh* “rump”; the important word *h'dwry* “member of a class of intrepid beggars”; and words which still survive:

nhwr (old vocalism *nuhōr*, cf. Aram *nāhōr(ā)*) and Tajik *nuhūr* “sight, eye”; and *šeydā* “crazy, wild, infatuated, lovesick, enamored” (in Persian literature).

The Aramaic provenance of such words seems indicated in the two tags “suri” for the argot verses at in the final portion of the KS. This term is to be taken as the equivalent of *suryāni* (“Syrian”), which was the usual term for the Aramaic language among Arabic-speaking Jews and others. Already in the Hellenistic period the similar Greek words *Syriakē* and *syristí* were used by Hellenistic Jews for “Aramaic” (the latter word > **swrystyn* in the Palestinian Talmud, 4th-5th centuries CE). Syriac does not come into consideration; although Syriac is similar to the Babylonian Jewish Aramaic source of the argot, it is in fact distinguishable by words like Syriac *nuhrā* vs. Aram *nāhōrā* “eyesight,” Syriac *gād* “tendon, vein,” but Aram also “penis,” a Jewish usage reflected in the Muslim argot.

Conclusion. Loterā'i may now be seen as not only a long-lived Judeo-Iranian speech, but a speech which exerted a remarkable influence on the course of Persian sociolects and Persian in general, with a history which illuminates the account of interethnic relationships and class in the Middle East and Central Asia.

(I thank Mahmoud Omidsalar for his invaluable remarks on KS, and, for helpful provision of suggestions and bibliographic materials toward the preparation of this article, Habib Borjian, Ken Blady, Agnes Korn, Tatiana Oranskaia, Ludwig Paul, Nahid Pirnazar, Houman Sarshar, and Ehsan Yarshater.)

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Sekandar Amanolahi and Edward Norbeck, “A Note on the Secret Language of the Traditional Musicians of Iran,” *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society*, Ser. 4, 1/4, 1978, pp. 283-86.

C. E. Bosworth, “Jewish Elements in the Banū Sāsān,” *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 33, 1974, pp. 289-94.



Idem, *The Mediaeval Islamic Underworld, the Banū Sāsān in Arabic Society and Literature*, 2 vols., Leiden, 1976.

Ayub Ebrāhimi, *Esfahān nesf-e Jahān. Farhang-e vāžahā wa eṣṭelāhāt-e maḥallī-e Esfahān*, 2nd ed., Los Angeles, 2006.

W. Ivanow, "On the Language of the Gypsies of Qainat (in Eastern Persia)," in *Journal [and Proceedings] of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, N.S. 10, 1914, pp. 438-53.

Idem, "Further Notes on Gypsies in Persia," *Journal [and Proceedings] of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, N.S. 16, 1920, pp. 281-91.

Idem, "An Old Gypsy-Darwish Jargon," *Journal [and Proceedings] of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, N.S. 18, 1922 [1923], pp. 375-83.

Idem, "Jargon of Persian Mendicant Darwishes," *Journal [and Proceedings] of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, N.S. 23, 1927, pp. 243-45.

Irān Kalbāsi, *Guyeš-e kalimiān-e Esfahān*, Tehran, 1994.

Ġolām-Ḥosayn Karimi, "Lwtr-e Jāberi," *Majalla-ye zabānšenāsi* 7/2, 1990, pp. 64-68.

Gilbert Lazard, "Note sur le jargon des juifs d'Iran," *JA* 266, 1978, pp. 251-55.

Ḥanina Mizrahi, *Yehudey Paras* [Jews of Persia], Tel Aviv, 1959.

M. Moğdam (Moqaddam), *Guyešhā-ye Vafs o Āštiān o Tafreš*, Tehran (Irānkuda 11), ca. 1960.

J. de Morgan, *Mission scientifique en Perse V. Études linguistiques*, Paris, 1904.

I. M. Oranskii, *Tadzhikoyazychnie etnograficheskie gruppy Gissarskoï doliny Srednaya Aziy*, Etnolingvisticheskoe issledovanie, Moscow, 1983.

Ludwig Paul, "Geheimsprache von Kahak (Tafreš)," *Orientalia Suecana* 48, 1999, pp. 105-114.

Jadwiga Pstrusińska, *O tajnych językach Afganistanu i ich użytkowników* [On the secret languages of Afghanistan], Cracow, 2004.

Houman Sarshar, ed., *Jewish Communities of Iran. Entries on Judeo-Persian*

Communities Published by the Encyclopædia Iranica, New York, 2011.

Anna Leonidovna Troitskaya, "Abdilti—tsekha artistov i muzykantov Sredneĭ Azii," *Sovetskoe Vostokovedenie* 5, 1948, pp. 251-54.

Gernot Windfuhr, "Gypsy ii. Gypsy Dialects," *Encyclopædia Iranica* XI/4, 2002, pp. 415-21.

Ehsan Yarshater, "The Hybrid Language of the Jewish Community of Persia," *JAOS* 97/1, 1977, pp. 1-7; abridged in *Encyclopædia Iranica* XV/2, pp. 156-60.

Idem, "The Dialect of Borujerd Jews," in L. Meyer and E. Haerinck, eds., *Miscellanea in Honorem Louis Vanden Berghe*, Ghent, 1989, pp. 1029-46.

I. I. Zarubin, "O yazyke geratskikh evreev," *Doklady Ross. Akad. Nauk*, 1924, issue no. 4, pp. 181-85.