

Habib Borjian

The Perside Language of Shiraz Jewry: A Historical-Comparative Phonology

This study concerns the native language of Shirazi Jews, most of whom live in diasporic communities outside Iran. The language Judeo-Shirazi belongs to the Southwest Iranian group, as do most other native languages spoken in southern Iran. As such, Judeo-Shirazi shows general agreements with native rural varieties spoken in inland Fārs. There are, however, phonological features suggesting that Judeo-Shirazi is an insular survivor of the Medieval Shirazi language, from which a sizable literature has survived dating back to the fifteenth century.

Keywords: Southwest Iranian Languages; Fārs Languages; Historical-Comparative Phonology; Consonant Shift; Interdentalization; Vowel Fronting

The Jewish Communities of Fārs

The southern Persian province of Fārs has accommodated a sizable Jewish community at least since medieval times. According to the twelfth century travelogue of Benjamin of Tudela, there were 10,000 Jewish residents in Shiraz. In the late thirteenth century, when the Ilkhanid Arghun Khan appointed the Persian Jew Sa'd-al-Dowla the grand vizier, the latter appointed Persian Jews as governors of several cities, Shiraz included.¹ It was in Shiraz that Šāhin, the most prominent poet of Judeo-Persian literature, flourished in the late fourteenth century. Under the Safavids, Jewish populations were reported in the Fārs towns of Jahrom, Lār, and Shiraz² (see Figure 1).

Historical sources from subsequent centuries reveal that the Jewish colony of Shiraz, with all its ebbs and flows, remained one of the strongest and most stable in

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¹Loeb, *Outcaste: Jewish Life in Southern Iran*, 282.

²Fischel, “History of the Jews of Persia.”

Figure 1. The historical Fārs province.



Source: The base map is from Google Earth.

Persia. In modern times the community was by far the largest (up to 14,000 individuals) in Persia, approaching at times a fifth of Shiraz's population, before mass emigration in recent decades.³ This population increase must have partially been due to the resettlement in Shiraz of the Jewish communities from various districts of Fārs, especially Lār and Jahrom, that took place several times in modern history, to the extent that no other sizable Jewish community was left in the province by the mid-twentieth century.⁴ These historical facts have a bearing on the historical phonology of Judeo-Shirazi, as discussed in the sections to follow.

Up until the twentieth century Shiraz Jewry was secluded in the "Maale," a colloquial pronunciation of Persian *mahalla* "quarter." The community opened up during the social reforms of Reza Shah's administration (1925–41), when many families moved out of Maale to live in affluent neighborhoods of the city among gentiles (*goy(i)m*). Continuous migration to Tehran was already underway by the middle of the century, with a parallel mass emigration of Jews to Israel. Like other Persian

³Loeb, *Outcaste: Jewish Life in Southern Iran*, 300.

⁴*Ibid.*, 12.

Jews, sizable Shirazi Jewish communities resettled in North America after the Islamic Revolution of 1979.

This article is based on data collected from the Shirazi Jewish diaspora living in and around New York City. Their population is estimated at around 4,000 individuals, mostly residing in Brooklyn, where they have seven synagogues exclusive to Shirazis. More than a thousand Shirazi Jews who live in the suburban Great Neck share synagogues with other Persian Jews. The language's endonyms are *judi* "Jewish" and *maaley* "belonging to the [Jewish] quarter." In New York, I found Judeo-Shirazi to be a moribund language, spoken only among the elderly and only in the most intimate situations.

The Language

Judeo-Shirazi belongs to Southwest Iranian, or Perside, group—an extensive family embracing Old, Middle, and New Persian, in addition to numerous living vernaculars spoken in southern Iran, particularly in the historical provinces of Fārs and Kermān. Judeo-Shirazi should have its pedigree, as discussed below (in §2), in what I designate here as Medieval Shirazi, a language which generated sizable corpora in verses;⁵ its written tradition died out circa fifteenth century, probably along with a disappearing native vernacular of Shiraz among Muslims. One thus expects Judeo-Shirazi to be an insular vestige of Medieval Shirazi, having survived Persian in the isolated Jewish quarter of the city.

Judeo-Shirazi shows significant areal affinity in grammar and vocabulary to the rural vernaculars spoken around Shiraz and Kāzerun (Figure 2). These varieties form a rather heterogeneous subgroup of Southwest Iranian, which distinguishes itself by weighty lexical and grammatical isoglosses from the Lārestāni group to its southeast,⁶ and by extension from the Garmsiri languages of Kerman.⁷ Matters get complicated, however, by the fact that Shiraz absorbed Jewish immigrants from all over Fārs in recent times. The most sizable population integrated into Shiraz Jewry, as my informants told me, came from Lārestān, the southeastern district of Fārs. The fusion of Fārs Jewry in Shiraz may offer clues to explain some of the "impurities" found in Judeo-Shirazi.

Judeo-Shirazi has received little scholarly attention. W. Ivanow gives a list of personal pronouns and verb endings.⁸ Georg Morgenstierne provides brief grammatical notes, but more importantly elucidated on the provenance of the lexeme *teš* "louse,"⁹ leading to the notion of an early phonological split in Fārs (see §2 below),

⁵Māhyār-Navvābi, "Lahje-ye Širāz tā qarn-e nohom-e hejri"; Māhyār-Navvābi, "Čand ġazal az Šams pos-e Nāšer"; Šādeqi, "Ġazal-i az Qoṭb-al-Din Širāzi"; Šādeqi, "Abyāt-e širāzi-e Sa'di dar mošallašār"; Šādeqi, "Guyeš-e qadim-e Kāzerun."

⁶Lecoq, "Les dialectes du sud-ouest de l'Iran."

⁷Borġian, "Kerman xvi. Languages."

⁸Ivanow, "Gabri Dialect," 41–2.

⁹Morgenstierne, "Stray Notes on Persian Dialects II," 129–32.

Figure 2. Places in Shiraz-Kāzerun area where native Perside languages are spoken.



Source: The base map is from Google Earth.

which was later elaborated by Hassan Rezai-Baghbidi.¹⁰ Ehsan Yarshater published a single short text,¹¹ based on which Gernot Windfuhr¹² included Judeo-Shirazi in his typological study of the “Fārs dialects.”

Historical-Comparative Phonology

1. *Old Iranian stage.* Historical phonology places Judeo-Shirazi squarely within the Perside family, whose extinct members are Old Persian, Middle Persian, and Medieval Shirazi.

The oldest divergences of this family from proto-Iranian, *ts, *dz, *tr > Perside h, d, s, have these reflexes in Judeo-Shirazi: *da:* (< dah) “ten,”¹³ *rubā* “fox” (< rōbāh < Old Ir. *raupasah-) (see also §2, below); *dinka* “yesterday” (cf. Lori *dinyā*, Mid. Pers. *dīg*; Northwest Ir. *Keša’i heze*), *dišna* “last night,” *doma*, *dumā* “son-in-law” (cf. Mid.

¹⁰Rezā’i-Bāgbidi, “Širāzi-e bāstān,” 35–7.

¹¹Yarshater, “The Jewish Communities of Persia,” 465.

¹²Windfuhr, “Fārs Dialects.”

¹³See §7 for consonant elision.

Table 1. Development of proto-Indo-European palatals

Proto-Indo-European *k, *k _u			
Proto-Iranian *ts, *tsw			
Proto-Shirazi *θ	Proto-Lārestāni *θ	Old Persian θ, s	Avestan, Median s, sp
Medieval Shirazi θ / t		Mid. Pers. h, s	Parthian s, sp
Judeo-Shirazi θ? / t	Lārestāni h	New Pers. h, s	Central-Plateau, Tatic s, sp

Pers. *dāmād*,¹⁴ Av. *zāmātar*-¹⁵), but *δemeθθu* “winter,”¹⁶ cf. Parthian *zmg*, Khārgi *demesto* “winter,” Manichaean Mid. Pers. *dmyst’n*¹⁷; *poθ* “son” (< *pus = Mid. Pers. < Old Pers. *puça*-¹⁸ < *puθra-, Sanskrit *putrá*-), *veθθo* “pregnant” (< *aveston, cf. Mid. Pers. *ābus(tan)*, Av. *a-puθra*-¹⁹). See also §8.5.

To the oldest stratum of sound changes, we may add the development *št > st, whence Judeo-Shirazi *θ(θ)* that appears in *angoθir* “finger-ring” (< *angost*; cf. Mid. Pers. *angust* < OIr. **angušta*-²⁰ “finger”).

2. *Proto-Shirazi mutation.* During the Old Iranian stage, a group of dialects of inner Fārs in the Shiraz area experienced sound changes that distinguish them from the rest of Southwest Iranian languages. This group, which is labeled as “Ancient Shirazi” by Rezaï-Baghdidi,²¹ but I prefer to call it “proto-Shirazi,” survives in medieval poems from Shiraz and Kāzerun and in Judeo-Shirazi and some of the rural vernaculars currently spoken in the area.

The phonological feature that characterizes proto-Shirazi is the merger of proto-Iranian *ts and *tsw into *θ*, and later also to *t*, whereas Persian, in its all historical stages, kept the two prehistoric sounds apart.²² These sound shifts are further illustrated in Table 1 for major Iranian language families.

¹⁴The quoted Middle Persian words are in most cases from Mackenzie, *A Concise Pahlavi Dictionary*.

¹⁵Bartholomae, *Altiranisches Wörterbuch*, 1689.

¹⁶For more recent sound changes *s, z > θ, δ*, see §11.

¹⁷Boyce, *A Word-List of Manichaean Middle Persian and Parthian*, 34.

¹⁸Kent, *Old Persian*, 197.

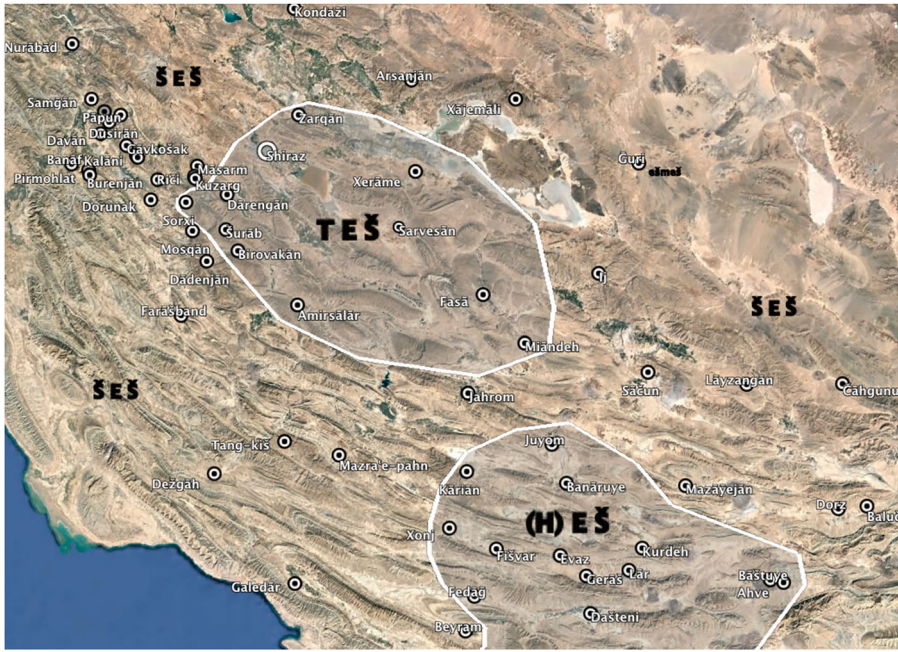
¹⁹Bartholomae, *Altiranisches Wörterbuch*, 85–6.

²⁰Hasandust, *Farhang-e rišesenāxti*, §527.

²¹Rezaï-Bāgbdidi, “Širāzi-e bāstān,” 35–7.

²²Cf. Morgenstierne, “Neu-iranische Sprachen,” 174–5; Morgenstierne, “Stray Notes on Persian Dialects II,” 130–1.

Figure 3. The isomap for “louse” in Fārs.



Source: The base map is from Google Earth.

There are at least three Judeo-Shirazi lexemes that reflect the proto-Shirazi sound changes:²³

- 2.1. Judeo-Shirazi present stem *toδ-* (< *toz-*) “burn,” attested in Medieval Shirazi texts as *toz-* and *θoz-*, corresponding to Old Pers. *θauc-* (emended reading²⁴), Avestan *saoc-*, Sanskrit *śoc* (with *ś* < **k*). Based on the Medieval Shirazi data, Reza'i-Baghbidi²⁵ deduces the Iranian root **tsauk*, while Cheung, who does not cite Shirazi, gives the root as **sauc*.²⁶ Note that all other Perside varieties, including Middle and New Persian and the rural dialects of Fārs, have *sōz-* or the like, not with initial *h-* or *t-*, as anticipated from diachrony.²⁷

²³Reza'i-Bāgħbidi (“Širāzi-e bāstān,” 36) has identified five words of this kind from medieval Shirazi/Kāzeruni: *θal* “year,” *θar* “head,” *θoz-/toz-* “burn,” *tanz-* (for Pers. *sanj-*) “weigh, measure,” *teš* “louse.”

²⁴Cheung, *Etymological Dictionary of Iranian Verbs*, 338.

²⁵Reza'i-Bāgħbidi, “Širāzi-e bāstān,” 36.

²⁶Of which “the IE origin cannot be ascertained” (Cheung, *Etymological Dictionary*, 338–9). Ḥasandust (*Farhang-e rišēnāxti*, §3143) gives the proto-Indo-European root *k'euk-*.

²⁷For problems of the outcomes of word-initial Old Pers. *θ-*, see Cathcart, “Iranian Dialectology,” §§ 2.4.2.1.1, 2.6.3.1.

2.2. Judeo-Shirazi *teš* “louse,” also attested in Medieval Shirazi and a number of dialects spoken to the south, southeast, and east of Shiraz, is rooted in proto-Iranian *tswiš(ā)-, which gives Avestan *spiš*.²⁸ There are two more outcomes of this etymon in Fārs (Figure 3):

- (a) *šeš*, occasionally *šos*, in southwestern Fārs, from Kāzerun down to the Persian Gulf and the littoral band running from Bušehr down to the Strait of Hormuz, as well as in eastern Fārs. This form probably developed from *seš, an expected outcome of *tswiš(ā)-, along the development line of Middle Persian shown in Table 1. Note that Middle Pers. *spiš* and New Pers. *šipiš*, *šepes* (with assimilation of sibilants) must have been borrowed from a northwestern (Median, Parthian, etc.) form.
- (b) *heš* in Lārestān, in southeastern Fārs, presents a fundamentally different change, that is, Proto-Indo-European *k_u > proto-Iranian *tsw > *proto-Lārestāni *θ > Lārestāni h, or, as Reza’i-Bāgbidi proposes, from proto-Shirazi *θ. More data, particularly on the Lārestāni outcome of *k, would shed light on this issue.

2.3. Judeo-Shirazi *tanj*- “drink” must correspond with Medieval Shirazi *tanz*-,²⁹ which is defined by the cognate Persian word *sanj*-,³⁰ a polysemous word with meanings “weigh, pull, draw, smoke”. The semantic shifts “pull, draw” > “draw water” > “irrigate, water, sprinkle” > “drink” is established by Donald Stilo for Judeo-Isfahani *tanj*- “drink.”³¹ The Iranian root, θanj,³² has multiple outcomes in New West Iranian, with initials *t*, *h*, and *s*, for

²⁸Morgenstierne, “Stray Notes on Persian Dialects II”; Skjaervo, “Of Lice and Men”; Reza’i-Bāgbidi, “Širāzi-e bāstān,” 35–6.

²⁹*tanz*- is the ideal Perside form of the word in the sense of -nj- > -nz-; cf. Manichean Mid. Pers. -hynz- “pull, draw.”

³⁰Reza’i-Bāgbidi, “Širāzi-e bāstān,” 36.

³¹Stilo, “Isfahan xxi. Provincial Dialects,” 107. Although Stilo was aware of Shirazi *tanj*- “drink,” he proposed the following development for Judeo-Isfahani *tanj*- “drink”: it consists of an original stem *anj- (< *hanj < *θanj-) prefixed by the remainder *t*- from the original durative marker *at-, which has become a frozen part of the verb stem *tanj*- (ibid.). This derivation can hardly be contested owing to the outlandishness of the form *tanj*- in Isfahan, which lands squarely within the New Median dialectal zone in central Persia.

However, as to Judeo-Shirazi, this derivation does not fit very well, not only due to the diachronic sound rule under discussion, but also regarding the fact that the durative marker in Judeo-Shirazi and kindred dialects spoken in Fārs, as well as in Medieval Shirazi, is *mi*-, as it is in Persian. Nevertheless, one cannot rule out the existence of an older form *at- in inner Fārs, for two reasons: (1) the morpheme *mi*- is very likely a borrowing from New Persian, which grammaticalized it as late as the twelfth century (Xānlari, *Tārix-e zabān-e fārsi* II, 222); (2) the vernaculars of inner Fārs are surrounded by Lori in the northwest, Lāri in the southeast, and Khārgi in the southwest, all of which have the durative markers that can justifiably be derived from the *at- prototype proposed by Stilo. See also Borjian, “The Language of the Kharg Island,” Table 2, Isogloss 5.

³²For the puzzling initial *θ- of the root, see Cheung, *Etymological Dictionary*, 392.

both meanings “pull” and “drink.”³³ I could not find cognate words in other New Persian varieties spoken in Fārs in the available data.

- 2.4. Besides the only two certain instances presented above, there might be more Judeo-Shirazi words reflecting the development *ts > θ. For instance, Judeo-Shirazi *θāl* “year” may carry an ancient θ on the grounds of Medieval Shirazi/Kāzeruni *θal* “id” (< Old Pers. θard-, cf. Av. sarəd-); equally comparable is Judeo-Shirazi *θar* “head” with the same form in Medieval Kāzeruni. However, these instances remain unsubstantiated due to another sound change, fairly recent in all likelihood, i.e. that of systematic interdental articulation of original sibilants, including s > θ (see §11). This latter shift conceals all possible occurrences of *ts > θ; for instance, it is impossible to determine whether Judeo-Shirazi *θāl* “year” is a continuation of Medieval *l̥* or else a relatively recent interdentalization of Pers. *sāl*.

It should be noted that regional dialects in Shiraz-Kāzerun area have the aforementioned items in §2.4 with a word-initial s-. These dialects are Māsarmi, Pāpuni, Samgāni, Buringāni,³⁴ Kuzarki, Davāni, and Dahlā'i.³⁵

3. *Middle Iranian stage.* Here Judeo-Shirazi finds its place on the southern side of the northwest–southwest binary division, on the grounds of these sound shifts: *j > z in *dan* (< zan) “woman”; *-č- > z in *reδ* (< rōz < *raučah-) “day,” *a-der* “under” (°*der* < zēr < *hačā°); *dw- > d- in *dar* “door”; *y- > j in *jow* “barley.”

A notable split that may have occurred in this period is Old Ir. *g > w (contrasting Parthian γ) with the Judeo-Shirazi outcomes *murv* “hen” (< *mrga-), *dorow* “lie” (< *drauga-), *šolom* “turnip,” but not *deḡ/deq* “buttermilk.”

4. *w. The development of Middle West Iranian initial *w- to b occurs systematically in Judeo-Shirazi, e.g. in *bād* “wind,” *baro* “rain,” *barg* “leaf,” *badom* “almond,” *beδ* (cf. MPers. wabz) “bee,” *bijisk* (cf. MPers. winjisk) “sparrow.” Note that *w- > b- occurs in all attested vernaculars of Fārs for the basic glosses “wind” (*bād*, *bād*, *bā*), “rain” (*bāru* (*n*)), and “snow” (usually *barf*, but also *bafr*, etc.).³⁶ This sound change therefore must be deep-rooted in Fārs, quite possibly within the Middle Iranian period. It forms a sharp isogloss within New Southwest Iranian, bisecting the Garmsiri languages of Kermān and Fārs.³⁷ In Judeo-Shirazi the sound change *wi- > go is attested in a closed set, including *gorāδ* “boar” and *gošna* “hungry,” *gorg* “wolf,” likewise in Persian.

³³For “pull, draw, drag,” see Ḥasandust, *Farhang-e tatbiqi-mowzu'i*, 896. For “drink” see *ibid.*, 757.

³⁴Kerimova, “Dialekty farsa,” 331.

³⁵Salāmi, *Ganjine*, I.

³⁶Salāmi, *Ganjine*, I–VII.

³⁷Borjian, “Kerman xvi. Languages,” Table 1.

5. *Lenition*. An opposite effect, the softening of b to v, is prevalent in Judeo-Shirazi: *va* “with” (< abāg), *verd-* (< burd-) “carry,” *toweθθu* “summer,” *veθθo* “pregnant,” *ow* “water,” *owr* “cloud,” *θowδ* “green,” among other words.

6. *Consonant clusters*. The medial cluster *-xt- remains in *θāxt-* “make,” *rext-* “pour,” etc. However, *-xt- gives *-ft* in *doft* “daughter, girl,” likewise in Kondāzi *duft*,³⁸ as opposed to *doht*, *doxt*, and *do:t* in the rest of the varieties spoken in Fārs. Another reflex of the same sound change may be sought in *toft-*, the past stem of the verb “burn,” which is also attested in Medieval Shirazi texts,³⁹ but is absent in other languages of Fārs. In all likelihood the past stem pairs etymologically with its present stem, i.e. Medieval Shirazi *toz-/θoz-* and Judeo-Shirazi *toδ-* (see §2 above), stemming from the proto-Shirazi form *θauxt-. The root *tap (with Persian outcome *tāb-*: *tāft-* “shine, burn”),⁴⁰ while offering another possibility, leads to the problem of a mismatch between the stem pair in Shirazi.

Other consonant groups of interest are as follows. The group *ft is retained systematically in past stems: *goft-* “say,” *xāft-* “sleep,” *gereft-* “seize,” *roft-* “sweep,” *oft-* “fall,” *bāft-* “weave.” The reduction of *-xr- and *fr- are attested in *ta:l* “bitter” (cf. Mid. Pers. *tahl* < *taxra-) and *reš-* “sell” (< frōš-). *st > ss > θ(θ) occurs categorically, as in *oθθoxun* “bone,” the past stem *šaθ(θ)-* “sit,” the past participle marker (< -ist) in *vâ-gēšt-eθ-en* “I have returned,” *em=xard-eθ-â* “I had eaten,” but not in the religious name *Eθter* “Esther.” Old Iranian *sp has developed as variously as *aθb/aθp* “horse,” *eθbolak* “spleen,” *guθfand* “sheep.”

7. *Consonant elision*. Elision of the final consonant is the norm: nasals: *donu* “tooth,” *baro* “rain,” *ḍimi* “earth,” and in person markers in verbs; stops: *doma*, *dumâ* “son-in-law,” etc. Loss of initial h- occurs in *amum* “bath,” *avu* “co-wife.”

8. *Fronting of back vowels*. A remarkable vocal development of the language is fronting of original back vowels, a prevalent feature in Fārs language varieties.⁴¹ The generalized patterns *ū > i, *ō > e, *aw > ē, with exceptions, are inferred from the data. The outcomes are as follows:

- 8.1. *i* < *ū is attested in *dir* (< dūr < *dū-ra-) “far,” *did* (< dūd < *dūta-) “smoke,” *bi-* (< būd-) “was,” *ḍāni/ḍānu* (< zānūg) “knee,” *xin* (< xūn, cf. Av. *vohunī*) “blood,” *θirāx* (< sūrāx) “hole,” *ḵḵa* (<? ḵḵa⁴²) “chick,” *angir* (< angūr) “grapes,” and probably *kiča* “alley,” *tit* “mulberry”; in Arabic loans: *ariθ* “bride,” *haθid* “jealous”; in Hebraisms: *Kipir* “Kippur,” *Pirim* “Purim,” *Miše* “Moses.”

³⁸Hasandust, *Farhang-e taḥbiqi-mowzu’i*, 508.

³⁹Medieval Shirazi *taf-*: *toft-* “burn” is attested in the fifteenth century by the poet Šāh Dā’i.

⁴⁰Cheung, *Etymological Dictionary*, 378; Hasandust, *Farhang-e rišešenāxti*, §1392.

⁴¹See Kerimova (“Dialeky Farsa,” 317, 322) for phonological analyses in Māsarmi, Pāpuni, Samgāni, and Buringāni. Not all outcomes in these varieties are in agreement with Judeo-Shirazi.

⁴²Hasandust, *Farhang-e rišešenāxti*, §1718.

- 8.2. *i* < *ō* is found in *mi* (< *mōy*) “hair,” *ri* (< *rōy* < **rauda*-) “on, face” in *ribun* “roof,” *-šī* (< *šōy* or *šūy*⁴³) “husband,” *miriča/mur* (< *mōr*) “ant,” *giθāla* (< *gōsāla*) “calf, jīš- (< jōš-) “boil.”
- 8.3. *ě* < *ō*, *aw* occurs in *ker* (< *kōr*) “blind,” *re(δ)* (< *rōz*) “day,” *šer* (< *šōr*) “salty,” *reda* (< *rōda*) “intestine,” *reš-* (< *frōš-*) “sell,” *jeḡ* (cf. Pers. *ḡōy*) “brook, stream,” *del* (: < **dōl* < *dalw*) “bucket,” *nē* (< *nō* < **nawa-*) “new,” *nemā* (<? *nō māh* “new moon”) “month,” *me:d* (< Hebrew מועד *mo‘ed* or Arabic موعِد *maw‘id*) “feast, holiday,” *Terā* (< *Tōrā*) “Tora”; note also *θekā* (< *sukā*) “sukkah.”⁴⁴
- 8.4. Note also *i*, *e* < **ū* in *xedā/xodā* “God,” *jeḡd* “owl,” *šemā* “you”; *ate* “in, into”⁴⁵ (<? *a* + *tū*).
- 8.5. The aforementioned frontings are not universal in Judeo-Shirazi. The following items show no fronting of the back vowels: *gōš* (< *gōš* < **gauša-*) “ear,” *toδ-* (< **tōz-* < **tsauča-*) “burn,” *ḡora* < *ḡōra*) “unripe grape,” *ko* “mountain”; *moš* (< *mūš*) “mouse,” *xoroθ* (< **xraus*) “rooster”; *to* (< **tava-*) “you,” *avu* (cf. Pers. *havū*) “co-wife,” *abru* (< *brūg*) “brow,” *bāδu* (< *bāzūg*) “arm,” *gulu* “throat,” *ālu* “potato,” *paθtu* “backroom,” *angoθir* “finger-ring,” *rubā* “fox”; *towr* (< *ṭawr*) “manner.”

A striking attestation to the incomplete process of fronting in Judeo-Shirazi can be demonstrated in the cognates *poθ* (< **puθra-*) “son” and *veθθo* (< **ā-puθra-tanū-* “body with a son”) “pregnant” (see §1). Interestingly, modern Persian, which shows little tendency to front the back vowels,⁴⁶ has both words in fronted forms: *pesar* and *ābestan*. Fronting in *pesar* is explained by Hübschmann and Nyberg as an influence from *pedar* “father.”⁴⁷ Fronting of the back vowel in *ābestan* can be influenced by other common words such as *dānestan* and *tavānestan* in modern Persian.

9. *Front mājhul.* The historical vowel *ē* keeps its quality in *δer* (< *zēr*) “under,” but is shifted up, as in formal Persian, in *bid* “willow; moat,” *bini* “nose,” *biva* “widow,” *rig* “pebble,” *θiv* “apple.”

⁴³Ibid., §3444.

⁴⁴The fronting in Hebraisms appears to follow the general areal feature in Judeo-Shirazi, as pointed out in §8. Nevertheless, a parallel sound shift was observed by the tenth-century Jewish Karaite author al-Qirḡisānī. He mentions the fronting of /*o*/ to /*e*/ in the Hebrew pronunciation of Jews in Iraq and Iran and explains it as an influence from the speech of al-Nabaṭ, a term generally used to refer to the local non-Arabic speaking population of Iraq, who would most likely be speaking Aramaic at that time. (I owe this point to Geoffrey Khan via correspondence on 28 November 2018.)

⁴⁵Cf. Borjian, “The Language of the Kharg Island,” §4.3.

⁴⁶See analyses by Efimov, Rastorgueva, and Šarova, “Persidskij, Tadžikskij, Dari,” 38–44.

⁴⁷Horn and Hübschmann, *Farhang*, §318, and Khaleghi’s notes on this entry; Nyberg, *A Manual of Pahlavi II*, 163.

10. *Final -a and -e.* The Middle Iranian word-final -ak is normally realized as -a in Judeo-Shirazi, e.g. *adina* “Friday,” *biva* “widow,” *čakka* “drop,” *dikna* “yesterday,” *dišna* “last night,” *giθála* “calf,” *gōra* “unripe grape,” *gorba* “cat,” *gošna* “hungry,” *hamθáya* “neighbor,” *ǰǰa* “chick,” *ǰoma* “shirt,” *kiča* “alley,” *ko:na* “old,” *mera* “husband,” *meriča* “ant,” *nava* “grandchild,” *penǰira* “window,” *reda* “intestine,” *vaša* “sneeze,” *θetára* “star,” *dada* “sister,” among many other words. To this list one may add non-Iranian words, such as *amma* “paternal aunt,” *qatra* “drip,” *dokma* “button.”

Nevertheless, contrary to the norm in Iranian languages, Persian varieties included, Judeo-Shirazi has word-final -e as well. The following words are utterances from the same speaker: *báxáǰe* “grandfather,” *taše* “lung,” *owle* “smallpox,” *gorǰe* (Pers. *gowǰe*, *áluče*), *gōnče* “bud,” *solfe* “cough,” *ime* “firewood.” It is quite possible that this dichotomy is at least partly due to amalgamation of the various dialects of Fārs that came into contact in Shiraz’s Jewish quarter during the consolidation of Fārs Jewry in the near past. Note also the doublets *bača/bače* “child” and *ǰolba/qolve* “stone,” by different speakers, in the data.

11. *Interdentalization.* The interdental articulation (θ δ) of original sibilants (s z) is a systematic sound change in Judeo-Shirazi. This shift can be a merger of three processes:

1. Historical: the original phoneme /θ/ in proto-Shirazi, as explained in §2, has been generalized.
2. Areal: similar trends exist in Davāni [δ] (an atypical Fārs variety language spoken near Kāzerun), if only postvocally,⁴⁸ as well as in a few other vernaculars of Fārs, such as Galedāri,⁴⁹ but none immediately around Shiraz.
3. Ethnolinguistic: Although not exactly the same way as in Judeo-Shirazi, interdentalization also occurs in Judeo-Isfahani and Judeo-Kashani,⁵⁰ singling them out areally from their kindred dialects spoken among Muslims. This peculiarity suggests a phonological spread among the Jewish communities of central Iran, with evidence of strong historical ties and extensive migration among urban Jewry in the past.⁵¹ On the other hand, Shiraz Jewry is described as utterly conservative, seldom practicing exogamy.⁵² The Jewish communities of Fārs were separated from other Jewish communities of Iran by a great distance. The closest stable Jewish community, that of Isfahan, was a three-week-long caravan journey from Shiraz. The only known major coreligionist

⁴⁸Šādeqi, “Yāddāšt-i darbāre-ye sāxtemān-e vāǰi-e lahǰe-ye Davāni.”

⁴⁹Salāmi, *Ganǰine*, V.

⁵⁰See Borjān, “Judeo-Iranian Languages”; Borjān, “Judeo-Isfahani”; Borjān, “Judeo-Kashani”; Borjān, “What Is Judeo-Median.”

⁵¹Cf. Yeroushalmi, *The Jews of Iran in the Nineteenth Century*.

⁵²Loeb, *Outcaste: Jewish Life in Southern Iran*, 110.

contact between the two cities, as my informants told me, was the annual pilgrimage made by the Shirazis to the Pir-e Bakrān mausoleum near Isfahan.

Conclusion

This historical-comparative analysis, particularly the outcomes of the phonological mutations from proto-Iranian *ts and *tsw, makes a strong case that Judeo-Shirazi descends directly from the medieval dialect of Shiraz/Kāzerun. This pedigree can further be substantiated from morphosyntax as well as certain lexical items, such as the present stems *ǰ-* “give” and *nis-* “put,” which are also attested in medieval manuscripts.

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