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Endangered Jewish Language Varieties in Hamadan Province: Judeo-Hamadani, Judeo-Nahavandi, Judeo-Tuyserkani, and Judeo-Malayeri

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ABSTRACT

Among the diverse language varieties spoken in Hamadan Province are those of its Jewish communities. These varieties warrant urgent scholarly attention, as over the past few decades, the majority of their speakers have emigrated from the region. The remaining speakers are now dispersed across various cities and countries, and there is currently no reliable data regarding speaker populations, or the status of intergenerational language transmission. This article investigates some of these varieties by drawing upon available linguistic data and the oral knowledge of local populations concerning the Jewish communities of Hamadan Province. Building upon previous research on the language varieties of Iranian Jews—specifically those in Hamadan Province—this study aims to identify features that indicate their affiliation with the Northwestern Iranian languages. Through an analysis of the Jewish varieties from Hamadan, Nahavand, and Tuyserkan, this study examined their linguistic features and found that they were influenced by the surrounding non-Jewish varieties (Hamadani, Nahavandi, and Tuyserkani). While no data is available for the language variety of the Jews of Malayer, given the historical presence of a Jewish community there, the present study suggests that the conclusions drawn from prior research and the current analysis may be reasonably extended to this variety as well.

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1. Introduction

Jews have inhabited Iran since several centuries B.C.E. Like any community in sustained contact with a surrounding society, they would have adopted the dominant language of their environment. It is generally accepted that Iranian Jews, following the Babylonian captivity, replaced Hebrew with Aramaic and subsequently shifted from Aramaic to Persian (Pirnazar, 2003, p. 124). As Hebrew lexical items were incorporated into the Persian they spoke, their language gradually acquired a distinct character. Furthermore, given the geographic dispersion of Jewish communities across Iran, local linguistic features increasingly permeated their speech, resulting in noticeable differentiation among the dialects of Jewish communities. An additional distinguishing factor is the use of the Hebrew script for writing their variety of Persian, which has further set it apart from other Persian varieties and led to its designation as "Judeo-Persian." As is often the case with the language of minority groups—particularly those defined by religion—it can be expected that the Persian of Iranian Jews, as well as their other Iranian language varieties, would exhibit greater conservatism compared to the surrounding Persian varieties and other related Iranian languages.

Hamadan Province is located in western Iran. The geographical position of the province accounts for its remarkable ethnic and linguistic diversity. Among the old yet numerically small components of the province's population are its Jewish communities. The presence of Jews in Hamadan Province is attested by historical monuments, including the *Tomb of Esther and Mordechai* in Hamadan, the *Tomb of the Prophet Habakkuk* in Tuyserkan, and the *Tomb of Baba Hossein* (Yusha ibn Noah) in Malayer[1]. Historically, Jewish communities resided in the cities of Hamadan, Malayer, Nahavand, and Tuyserkan. However, in recent decades, the majority of the Jewish population has emigrated from the province. At present, with the exception of Hamadan, no Jewish communities remain in the other three cities. No information is available regarding the presence of Jews in other parts of Hamadan Province, which have a considerably shorter history of urbanization compared to the four cities mentioned above.

The Jews of Hamadan Province have historically been engaged in professions, including medicine, trade, and tailoring. Similar to Jewish communities elsewhere in Iran, they constituted bilingual or multilingual speech communities that maintained their own distinct language varieties alongside Persian, while simultaneously acquiring proficiency in the dominant local language of their respective regions. This article investigates the language varieties of the Jews of Hamadan Province with the aim of addressing the following two research questions:

1. Which distinguishing features of the New Northwestern Iranian languages are observable in the language varieties of the Jews of Hamadan?
2. What influences have the language varieties of the Jews of Hamadan Province absorbed from surrounding languages, and what do these influences reveal about these varieties?

2. Literature Review

In examining the language varieties of Iranian Jews, attention must be directed toward two distinct yet interconnected categories of studies. The first category concerns Judeo-Persian (Farsi-ye Yahudi)[2], while the second category pertains to the language varieties that Iranian Jews have historically used for communication. The latter comprises various dialects, such as Judeo-Yazdi, Judeo-Isfahani, Judeo-Shirazi, Judeo-Kashani, and Judeo-Hamadani.

1. The modern city of Malayer was founded in the early decades of Qajar rule under the name "Dowlatabad." The city's initial population originated from Khonsar, Isfahan, Ashtian, Tafresh, Hamadan, and the older villages of the Malayer plain (Emad Malayeri, 1945, p. 36).
2. In Persian فارسی یهودی/فارسیهود

Since the second half of the nineteenth century, researchers have recognized the historical and linguistic significance of Judeo-Persian. Darmesteter (1882) drew attention to the existence of a considerable number of Judeo-Persian manuscripts and emphasized their importance, asserting that such texts were both illuminating for the religious history of Iran and a valuable component of the language and literature of Iran. Shaked (2009) examined the linguistic features of early Judeo-Persian texts, while Paul (2013) provided a grammatical description of Early Judeo-Persian that contributed substantially to our understanding of the language and its diachronic development. In another study, Paul (2003a) observed the presence of Middle Persian features in Early Judeo-Persian and their relative scarcity in Early New Persian, noting that this disparity indicated the more conservative character of Judeo-Persian with respect to the retention of such features.[1]

Pirnazar (2003) identified that Judeo-Persian literature played a role in preserving and transmitting lexical items from Pahlavi to Modern Persian, including words such as *ivar* ('evening') and *chavush* ('chamberlain'). Additionally, Hebrew lexical items such as *g'ula* and *refua* ('salvation and health'), *avon* ('sin and guilt'), and *migqash* ('holy place') were attested in these texts. Pirnazar further referred to the fusion of three languages—Persian, Arabic, and Hebrew—in some Persian-Jewish texts and provided examples that might be considered instances of code-switching. More recently, Asefi and Šafiī (2020) studied the *Judeo-Persian Letter of Dandan Oilik 2*, as well as the *Judeo-Persian Letter of Dandan Oilik 1*. Their study indicated that, from at least the seventh to the tenth centuries C.E., there were Jews in China who spoke a variety of Judeo-Persian.

Naghzguye Kohan (2009) noted that the number of Jews in Hamadan barely exceeded twenty. He cited various historical sources indicating that in the twelfth century A.D., the Jewish population of Hamadan numbered approximately fifty thousand. Nineteenth-century sources offered varying estimates, ranging from 500 to 800 families, or approximately 2,000 individuals, while a 1972 source reported a population of 350 Jews in Hamadan. Furthermore, Naghzguye Kohan referred to the distinctive language of the Jews of Hamadan, termed the Judeo-Hamadani dialect, and stated that due to the small size of the community and the fact that its members themselves did not know Judeo-Hamadani, he was unable to locate any speakers of this variety in the city.

Mo'tamedi (2011) pointed out that Bābāʾi ben Loṭf had devoted chapters 17 and 18 of his work, *The Story of Kashan Regarding Jews and the Jews That Converted to Islam and Became Goyims*[2], to the Jews of Hamadan. Mo'tamedi's findings indicated that, like Kashan and Isfahan, Hamadan had hosted a substantial Jewish population during the period 1694–1730. Mo'tamedi also identified about two hundred Hebrew and Aramaic words in the aforementioned work. Among these lexical items, *ajdar* /ædʒdær/ ('dragon') and *ajdha* /ædʒdæhɑ/ ('dragon') were particularly relevant to the aims of the present article. Mo'tamedi further explained that the word *ajdar* was not used anywhere in this work; he noted that while Persian dictionaries included *azhdaar* /æʒdær/, they did not record *ajdar*. It should be noted, however, that the alternation between /ʒ/ and /dʒ/ was widely attested in Persian, as exemplified by *kæʒ* → *kædʒ*[3]. Mo'tamedi also drew attention to the word *kham*[4] /xæm/ ('sadness') in this work, which was pronounced identically in Kurdish.

Stilo (2003) maintained that the dialect spoken by the Jews of Hamadān and a close variant spoken by the Jews of Tyserkān belonged to the Central Plateau Dialect (CPD) group of Northwestern Iranian languages (NWI). With regard to the demographic decline of these communities, Stilo reported that according to Ehsan Yarshater's informants, the Jewish

1. For a study on the relationship between Early Judeo-Persian and New Persian, see also the articles collected in Paul (2003b).
2. In Persian سرگذشت کاشان در باب عبری و گوییمی ثانی
3. In Persian (کَج → کَژ')
4. خَم corresponding to Persian غَم /qæm/

community had dwindled from around 13000 souls in 1920 to less than 1000 by 1969, and of these about half originated from Jewish communities of Malāyer, Tuyserkān, and various points in Kurdistan. He further noted that, according to his own informant in 2001–2002, there were only eight people from the Jewish community left in Hamadan at the time. Stilo also observed that only people born before the mid-1940s were raised speaking the dialect. Concerning the Jewish community of Tuyserkān, Stilo suggested that it was likely extinct, noting that Yarshater's informants reported that in 1969 there were only two Jewish families left and they were at the time planning to leave. Regarding the origins of these communities, Stilo stated that the Jewish community of Hamadan claimed to have mostly migrated from Yazd, while the Jewish community of Tuyserkān traced its origins to Yazd and, for a portion of its members, to Isfahan. According to Stilo, since the Jewish community of Tuyserkān was most likely derivative of Hamadan, Judeo-Tuyserkāni also agreed with Judeo-Hamadani in all major grammatical points and lexical items. Nevertheless, he noted lexical differences, citing examples such as *karu~kargu* ('must') (corresponding to Judeo-Tuyserkāni *bāyad*) and *ercene* ('sneeze') (corresponding to Judeo-Tuyserkāni *pešme*).

Borjian (2014) classified the spoken Iranian languages used by various Jewish communities into two groups: those belonging to the "Southwest branch," such as Bukhari and Juhuri (Judeo-Tat), spoken by the Jewish population of Central Asia and the eastern Caucasus, respectively; and those belonging to the "Northwest Iranian branch," such as Judeo-Isfahani, Judeo-Yazdi, and Judeo-Hamadani. He designated the second group as "Judeo-Median," noting that it was "genealogically distinct from Persian," just as Judeo-Persian and other Judeo-varieties belong to the Southwest subbranch of Iranian languages. Borjian emphasized that, unlike Judeo-Persian, which possesses a written tradition, Judeo-Median has only survived in spoken form. He further observed that several areas within Hamadan Province, including Hamadan, Nahavand, Malayer, and Tuyserkan, possessed their own Judeo-Median varieties, a pattern also seen in Borujerd, within the Lori-speaking region of Lorestan. He further noted that, despite the existing scholarship on dialects of Hamadan, Isfahan, and Kashan, the western dialects—specifically those in Borujerd and the three townships of Hamadan Province—remained insufficiently documented. Ultimately, he characterized Judeo-Hamadani as a language group consisting of the dialects spoken by the Jewry of Hamadan Province—particularly Malayer, Nahavand, and Tuyserkan—as well as potentially those in Borujerd, located in Lorestan Province.

Gholami (2021) investigated the language of the Jews of Hamadan and its historical origins. She reported on the current state of the community and its language, stating that at the time of her research, the community had been reduced to three families, totaling nine individuals. She noted that most of the Hamadani Jews had already left the country. During her fieldwork in Iran, Gholami found only two people who still spoke the language. Her informants referred to their language as *ebri*[1], meaning 'Hebrew,' or *zabāne qadim*, meaning 'old language.' Gholami clarified that while the language is not Hebrew, the term *ebri* appears to be used to define and distinguish it in relation to Persian. She further noted that the foreign designation of the language is *guyeš/zabān-e yahudiyān-e hamedān* or *guyeš/zabān-e kalimiyān-e hamedān*, meaning 'the dialect/language of Jews of Hamadan.' By the time Gholami began her work in Hamadan, she observed that most of the Jews who spoke the language had either passed away or moved to other countries. She concluded that the fluent speakers of Judeo-Hamadani (JH) were, unfortunately, lost, and the dialect could be considered extinct.

Drawing on data from her informants, Gholami (2021) demonstrated that the influence of Persian had led to linguistic changes across phonological, morphological, semantic, and syntactic

1. In Persian عبری

features of the language. Her study examined the historical phonology of Judeo-Hamadani in greater detail than that of Stilo (2003), revealing both the phonological changes that had affected the language and the preservation of certain Old Iranian features. She argued that these retained features constituted distinctive characteristics of the New Northwestern Iranian languages as manifested in the Judeo-Hamadani dialect.

Borjian (2025) introduced the term "the Ecbatanic language group" to refer to the "Median Jewish Dialects of Tuyserkan, Nahavand, Borujerd, Khonsar, and Golpayegan." He employed this designation—derived from Ecbatana, the ancient Greek name for Hamadan—to prevent confusion with Judeo-Hamadani proper and to provide a unified term encompassing the Jewish dialects of the aforementioned cities. Borjian contended that the Jewish communities within the Ecbatanic linguistic zone had originated from the Central Plateau of Iran, a conclusion based principally on lexical and morphosyntactic similarities among these varieties. Borjian's grammatical analysis of the Ecbatanic varieties—encompassing phonology, nouns, pronouns and deixis, adpositions, particles, verb stems, prefixes, durative marking, negation, person marking, ergativity, fronting, and tense systems—offered a comprehensive picture of these language varieties. His contribution was particularly significant given that the data for these varieties were limited and, in some cases, rare.

3. Theoretical Framework

This study aims to identify distinguishing features of the New Northwestern Iranian languages within the language varieties of the Jews of Hamadan Province. To accomplish this objective, it is necessary to first establish the characteristic features that differentiate Northwestern Iranian languages from their Southwestern counterparts. Kasravi Tabrizi (1925) is recognized as the first to articulate the systematic differences between what he terms the "northern language" and "southern language," referring to the distinction between the languages of the Medes and the Persians.

Kasravi Tabrizi (1925) identifies systematic phonetic differences between the northern and southern languages, which correspond to the distinction between the Medes and the Persians. He observes that what is typically "shin" /ʃ/ in the north becomes "sin" /s/ in the south, as evidenced by the replacement of northern terms like "Shamiran" and "Shamirom" with southern counterparts such as "Simiran" and "Semirom." Furthermore, he notes that the northern "gaf" /g/ corresponds to the southern "jim" /dʒ/, illustrated by the relationship between "Gahramdez" in the north and "Jahrom" in the south. Moreover, he points out that the northern "za" /z/ is replaced by the southern "dal" /d/; for instance, while southern varieties use "danam" and "damad," northern dialects such as Kurdish and Semnani respectively retain "zanam" "zuma." He concludes that these patterns represent only a portion of the broader linguistic differences that exist between these varieties.

Kasravi Tabrizi's (1925) north-south dichotomy is formulated on a geographical basis. However, an examination of his examples—particularly the third set—reveals that his classification aligns substantially with the established division of New Western Iranian languages into northern and southern branches.

Kurdish is one of the most extensively studied languages within the Northwestern branch of New Iranian languages. MacKenzie (1961) defines Kurdish by identifying the features that distinguish it from other Iranian dialects. He maintains that a primary distinction between Kurdish and its neighbors is the preservation of an archaic form of the root čyu- ('go'). Specifically, all Kurdish dialects retain the č- in stems derived from the root, whereas in the other West Iranian dialects, it had already developed into š-. This phonological distinction explains the presence of /tʃin/ ('go') in Kurdish, in contrast to forms such as /ʃoven/ and /ʃe/ in Gilaki and Talyshi—two other West Iranian languages—which reflect the innovation of /ʃ/ from original č-.

A further distinguishing feature of Northwestern Iranian languages concerns the reflex of Old Iranian /z/. This is exemplified in Kurdish by forms such as *zānīn* ('to know') (cf. Balochi *zānag*) and *zavā* ('bridegroom'), (cf. Gorani *zamā*), which correspond to the Persian /d/ in *dānistan* (cf. Bakhtiari *dūnistan*) and *dāmād* (cf. Bakhtiari *dūmā*). Another feature differentiating Kurdish and other Northwestern Iranian languages—such as Balochi—from Persian and other Southwestern Iranian languages involves the treatment of Old Iranian ǰ (/dʒ/). MacKenzie (1961) observes that while Persian exhibits /z/ derived from the older ǰ, Balochi preserves the original /dʒ/, and Kurdish has innovated /ʒ/. This pattern is illustrated by the Persian *zan* (/zæn/) and Bakhtiari *zēna* (/zinæ/) 'woman,' which correspond to Kurdish *žin* (/ʒin/) and Balochi *ǰan* (/dʒæn/). As the subsequent analysis will demonstrate, these phonological features serve as critical criteria for examining the linguistic affiliation of the Judeo-varieties in Hamadan Province.

4. Method

This study employed a descriptive, analytical, and explanatory approach. The findings were derived from an examination of available data regarding the Judeo-varieties of Hamadan, Nahavand, and Tuyserkan. For Judeo-Hamadani, data were obtained from two primary sources: (a) a twenty-five-minute video interview with Ms. Purandokht Saadat, a Jewish speaker from Hamadan, conducted on November 11, 2021, and (b) linguistic material extracted from Asef (2024). The Judeo-Nahavandi data consisted of a one-minute and twenty-six-second video excerpt from an interview conducted by Dr. Habib Borjian with Ms. Pari Tabibian. This excerpt was part of a larger video recording documented in Borjian (2025, p. 28). Additionally, the Judeo-Tuyserkani data were gathered from a one-minute and fourteen-second video interview with Mr. Parviz, conducted by Ms. Hayedeh Ayenechi[1]. Finally, information concerning the Jews of Malayer was sourced from the author's conversations with local residents, supplemented by existing literature.

5. Results

In this section, the available data on the language varieties spoken by the Jews of Hamadan, Nahavand, and Tuyserkan are examined. Moreover, due to the lack of linguistic data on Judeo-Malayeri, the discussion of this variety is limited to information regarding the Jewish community of Malayer available in the literature.

5.1 Judeo-Hamadani

As illustrated in examples (1) through (8), Judeo-Hamadani exhibits considerable structural and lexical similarity to Persian. In these instances, only a few words differ from their Persian counterparts in pronunciation and morphological structure. For instance, in (1), the pronunciation /ʔesmem/ ('my name') differs from the Standard Persian /ʔesmæm/. This pronunciation is identical to that found in the Malayeri, Nahavandi, and Tuyserkani dialects. This correspondence with the three aforementioned varieties can also be observed in the words /jɑdem/ ('my memory'), /sɑlem/ ('my age'), /kitʃe/ ('alley'), and /mine/ ('in'), as presented in (4), (6), (7), and (8), respectively. Conversely, the pronunciation of /betʃe/ ('child') in (5) matches that of the Hamadani dialect. Such examples, which are frequent within the research data, indicate the influence of surrounding dialects on Judeo-Hamadani at the phonetic level.

1. ʔesmem purɑndoxt-e sæʔɑdætu.
   'My name is Purandokht Saadat.'
2. mon ʔæhl-e hæmædunɑn.
   'I am from Hamadan.'
3. hæmedun donjɑ bumjɑn.
   'I was born in Hamadan.'

1. All three videos are available on the "persianjews" Instagram page (Retrieved 14 February 2026).

4. doros jɑdem nej ke tʃe sɑli bumjɑn tehrɑn mese ʔinke hezɑr-o sisæd-o bist-o pændʒ bo.
   'I don't remember exactly what year we migrated to Tehran; it seems that it was 1946.'
5. betʃe bijom.
   'I was a child.'
6. ʃiʃ hæft sɑlem bud, hæft sɑlem bo.
   'I was six or seven years old.'
7. næ ʔun-væqtɑ mærdom tænɑ ʃijɑjæn kitʃe.
   'No, in those times, people went to the alley alone.'
8. hiʃ-væx neʃæʃ ʔɑrzu hitʃi mine deleɱɑn bemon.
   'Never have I had a wish not be realized.'

The analysis revealed that, lexically, a substantial number of Judeo-Hamadani words are also used in the language varieties of Hamadan, Malayer, Tuyserkan, and Nahavand. Among these, the words /berɑr/ ('brother') in (9) and /dɑdɑ/ ('mother') in (10) are notable, with the qualification that the latter in Judeo-Hamadani carries a meaning entirely distinct from that in the aforementioned varieties, where /dɑdɑ/ typically denotes 'older brother.'

9. hɑmɑ pændʒ tɑ xɑ berɑr bijɑjim.
   'We were five sisters and brothers.'
10. dɑdɑm hemiʃe poʃteʃ dærdeʃ ʔeke.
    'My mother always had back pain.'

On the other hand, the data revealed that several Judeo-Hamadani words are also used in varieties such as Luri, Khargi, the Central Iranian Plateau varieties, and Talyshi. For instance, in (11), the word /kijɑ/ ('house') in Judeo-Hamadani is also found in Talyshi and in several Central Iranian Plateau varieties.

11. zor ʃijɑjim kijɑje xodʒæmɑn.
    'At noon, we returned home.'

In (12), /rɑs ʔekere/ ('they make') is used in Khargi and several other Iranian varieties of southern Iran. The word /mire/ ('husband') in (13) and (14) is also found in Luri.

12. ʔine tʃedʒur rɑs ʔekere ʔune tʃe dʒur rɑs ʔekere.
    'What is the way to do this? What is the way to do that?'
13. næ næ mirej mo ʔovæxt bemærte bo.
    'No, no, my husband had died at that time.'
14. mirej mon sɑli ke ʔenqelɑb ʔebo bemært/.
    'My husband died the year the revolution took place.'

As demonstrated in (15) and (16), /mire/ in Judeo-Hamadani also functions as a verb, corresponding to the compound verb *šowhar kardan*[1] ('to marry') in Standard Persian.

15. mon tɑ kelɑse dæ ke beʃdom mirom beke.
    'When I finished the tenth class, I got married.'
16. væxti ke beʃtɑm ʔɑmrikɑ, dotem, dot mæstærem mireʃ bekærde bo, ʔæmɑ ʔun do tɑ næ.
    'When I went to the United States, my eldest daughter was already married, but my other two daughters were not.'

The word /vɑt/ ('to say') is used in Judeo-Hamadani, as seen in (17). This verb is also attested in certain varieties of Natanzi and other Central Iranian Plateau varieties. Example (17) further presents another occurrence of /kije/, as discussed above, and demonstrates the use of /kov/ ('where'), a form attested in the varieties of southern Iran.

17. hær kodɑmeʃɑ ke xoʃeʃɑn ʔɑmed vɑteʃɑn ke kijetɑn kovɑv.
    'To everyone who liked, tell where your home is.'

1. In Persian شوهرکردن

The analyzed data further confirmed that several Judeo-Hamadani lexical items are also used in Zoroastrian Dari (see Amini, 2025), providing evidence of the historical relationship between the two varieties. Notable examples include the word /mæs/ (‘grand’), observed in the comparative adjective /mæsætær/ (‘older’) in (18), and the compound noun /ʔɑqɑ-mæstærem[1]/ (‘my grandfather’) in (19). The word /mæs/ also carries the same meaning in Pahlavi (see Faravashi, 2002, pp. 76–77).

18. mɑ je xɑri ʔæz xodæm hæft hæʃt sɑl mæsætær dɑrɑn.
‘We had a sister who was seven or eight years older than I.’
19. ʔævæl ʃɑnɑ kijeje ʔɑqɑ-mæstærem, beʃdɑn kijeje ʔæmem.
‘First, I went to my grandfather’s house, [then] I went to my aunt’s house.’

The analysis revealed that the presence of archaic words, such as /dim/ (‘face’) in Judeo-Hamadani, constitutes another characteristic feature of this variety. Interestingly, Persian expressions like *ruy-e ham rafte*/[2] (‘all in all’) have been calqued into Judeo-Hamadani, yielding constructions such as /dim-e hæm beʃde/. In this construction, alongside the use of /dim/, the verb */šodan/*[3] ‘to go’ is observed instead of */raftan/* ‘to go.’ Furthermore, the retention of words like /dærzan/[4] (‘needle’)—which has been replaced by */suzæn/*[5] in Modern Persian and several other Iranian languages—indicates the archaic character of Judeo-Hamadani.

It was observed that certain morphosyntactic features of Judeo-Hamadani distinguish it from other Iranian languages of Hamadan Province. Notably, the suffix /-tʃi/ is employed to convey a diminutive meaning. This is illustrated by lexical items such as /tændirtʃi/ (‘small cooking pot’), /piretʃi/ (‘little boy’), /dottʃi/ (‘little girl’), /vætʃetʃi/ (‘little child’), and /xɑʃɑtʃi/ (‘a bit’). This suffix performs a function identical to that found in various dialects of the Velati language, including Kahangi, the variety spoken in the village of Kahang in the central district of Ardestan County.

Another notable feature of Judeo-Hamadani—and, as will be seen, of other Judeo-varieties in Hamadan Province—is the presence of Hebrew loanwords. One such word is /gujim/, used in (20) and (21). This term refers to anyone who is not Jewish and may be translated as ‘non-Jew.’ It appears that this word, similar to terms such as *Tat* (‘non-Turk’), *Ajam* (‘non-Arab’), *Barbar* (‘non-Greek/western’), and *Kafir* (‘non-Muslim’), has acquired negative connotations.

20. pɑsport rɑ be ʔesme gujimim bem hemgeft.
‘They gave me a passport with my non-Jewish name.’
21. monæm beʃdɑm ʔesme gujim hedɑ.
‘So, I said give with my non-Jewish name.’

Another Hebrew word identified in Judeo-Hamadani is /ʔisrɑʔil/, meaning ‘Jew’ (see Examples 22–24). This usage is specific to Jewish language varieties. In other languages spoken in Iran, terms such as *Yahudi*, *Kalimi*, and *Johud* (the last of which carries negative connotations) are employed to refer to Jews. In contemporary Iran, *ʔesraʔil* is used to denote the state of Israel.

1. Cf. /bomæs/ (‘grandfather’) and /memæs/ (‘grandmother’) in Zoroastrian Dari (Amini, 2025, p. 92).
2. In Persian روی‌هم‌رفته
3. In Persian شدن
4. درزن The following verses from classical Persian literature illustrate the use of this word:

بـرای این‌کـه خـرازان گـه خـرز کننـــد از ســـبلت روبـــاه درزن (Khaqani)
کس از مرد در شـهر و از زن نمانـد در آن بتکـــده جـــای درزن نمانـــد (Sa’di)

5. سوزن An example of using this word in Modern Persian, can be seen in the sentence below:

«برای تعمیر کیف ما به سورن نیاز داریم.»

“To repair the bag, we need a needle.”

22. ʔævæl be ʔesme ʔisrɑʔilim hemgeft, beʃɑn geft ke mɑ be ʔisrɑʔilɑ pɑsport nædim.
'First, I tried to get a passport with my Jewish name, but they said we don't give Jews passports.'
23. khɑnom behæmir beʃod ke to ʔesmet ʔesme ʔisrɑʔili nejbo.
'Ms. Behamir said that your name isn't a Jewish name.'
24. bemvɑt vɑlɑ mon ʔisrɑʔilɑm.
'I said, "be sure I am a Jew."'

The Hebrew proper names *Purim*, *Esther*, and *Ezra* were observed within Judeo-Hamadani, with specific instances noted in (25)–(27), respectively. Additional Hebrew loanwords in Judeo-Hamadani are presented in Table 1. These items are predominantly religious in nature, pertaining to the Torah or Judaism more broadly.

25. mon purim donjɑ ʔomæm.
'I was born on Purim.'
26. beʃɑd ʔesme ʔebrit tʃi bu, bemvɑt ʔester.
'She said, "What's your Jewish name?" I said Esther.'
27. beʃɑd zuni to ʔesrɑ bexuni.
'She said, "Can you read Ezra?"'

Table 1. Hebrew Loanwords in Judeo-Hamadani

Hebrew in Judeo-Hamadani	English	Hebrew in Judeo-Hamadani	English
/kætibɑ/ ketubɑ/	marriage contract	/tɑme/	impure
/ʃɑbɑt/	Saturday	/ʃexɑr/	wine, sweet drinks
/milɑ[1]/	Penis	/tefilɑ/	Tefillah
/dɑrɑʃ/	preaching, inquiring	/moed-e sukɑ/	Feast of Tabernacles, Feast of Booths
/ɑsor/	Forbidden	/keleb/	dog
/jɑjn/	Wine	/tevɑ/	pulpit
/hæʃem ɑdunɑj/	the name of my master (the name of God)	/avon/	sin/fault
/mɑsɑ/	unleavened bread	/sedɑqɑ/	charity

Observations on Judeo-Hamadani revealed that the kinship term /qɑjn/ ('brother-in-law'), as shown in (28), warrants attention as a Mongolian loanword used in Turkish. Its use in Judeo-Hamadani likely results from contact with the Turkish varieties spoken in the Hamadan region. Other kinship terms in Judeo-Hamadani, such as /ʔæme/ ('paternal aunt') in (19), are of Arabic origin.

28. piʃ-e qɑjnem
'with my brother-in-law'

Prolonged language contact has sometimes obscured the distinctive features of the Northwestern and Southwestern Iranian languages, particularly in the case of Northwestern Iranian languages spoken on the Central Iranian Plateau. Consequently, identifying traces of these features may require closer examination of the relevant varieties. One feature noted earlier is the use of /ʒ/ in certain words in Northwestern languages corresponding to /z/ in Southwestern languages. This is exemplified by Kurdish /ʒæn/ versus Persian /zæn/ ('woman'). It is also noteworthy that /ʒ/ is generally a low-frequency phoneme in the analyzed Iranian languages, and in several varieties, this phoneme has undergone or is undergoing a shift to /dʒ/. The presence of /dʒ/ in such languages may therefore indicate that it has replaced an earlier /ʒ/, whether through internal sound change or as a consequence of language contact. Examples (29) and (30) from Judeo-Hamadani illustrate this.

29. qedimɑ mærdom ke kɑʃɑn dʒæn pejdɑ bekren, ʔon bijɑjen dæm-e mædrese.
'In the old days, those people who wanted to find a woman [to marry], come in front of the school.'

1. As seen in the phrase /milɑ konun/ ('circumcision party')

30. monæm berɑm berɑʃ dʒæneʃæ ʔæz jɑnɑ befræst.
'My brother sent his wife from there.'

In both (29) and (30), the Persian word */zan/*[1] ('woman') appears as /dʒæn/ in Judeo-Hamadani. Based on the argument presented above, the initial consonant of this word may have originally been /ʒ/; if so, it can be inferred that, at an earlier period, this word appeared as /ʒæn/ in Judeo-Hamadani, consistent with Kurdish and most Northwestern Iranian languages. According to Asef (2024), Judeo-Hamadani attests both /dʒæn/ and /ʒæn/ as equivalents of the Persian */zan/*, which supports to this hypothesis. Other Judeo-Hamadani words exhibiting /dʒ/ where Persian and other Southwestern Iranian languages maintain /z/, include /ɑʃpedʒ/ ('cook'), /vɑdʒɑr/ ('bazaar'), /dʒir/ ('under'), /dʒirʃælvɑri/ ('pants'), /dʒirdæsti/ ('writing-pad'), /tɑrdʒæn/ ('tar player'), /xɑk ridʒi/ ('embankment'), /dʒædæn/ ('hit'), and /dʒænɑne/ ('feminine'). As previously noted, based on the forms listed in Asef (2024), /ʒ/ is attested in a limited number of Judeo-Hamadani words, such as /tɑʒe/ ('new') and /ʒæn/ ('woman'). However, since /dʒ/ appears in most instances where /ʒ/ might be expected—including in compounds such as /ɑris-e tɑʒe/ ('new bride') and /dʒæn buɑ/ ('stepmother')—it can be concluded that Judeo-Hamadani has been undergoing a sound change whereby /ʒ/ shifts to /dʒ/.

Another feature distinguishing Northwestern from Southwestern Iranian languages, as previously discussed, is the realization of /z/ in the former versus /d/ in the latter in the initial position of the verb meaning 'to know' (e.g., /zɑnin/ in Kurdish versus /dɑnestæn/ in Persian). Examples (31)–(35) from Judeo-Hamadani illustrate this point.

31. mon berɑm bɑʃem bu, beʃɑd ke hɑmɑhɑ **næ<u>z</u>unim** ʔæz hitʃ kovɑ vizɑ ʔegirim.
'My brother was with me, and he said we can't receive a visa from anywhere.'
32. beʃɑn ʔotriʃ **nemz<u>u</u>nɑm** vizɑ begirɑm.
'She said I can't receive a visa from Austria.'
33. to **ne<u>z</u>uni** bɑ hæmeje xunevɑde beʃi.
'You can't go with all the family.'
34. ʔunvæxt beʃæm vɑt ke to **ne<u>z</u>uni** beʃi, be to henædim.
'Then they told me that you can't go, we won't give you [a visa].'
35. beʃɑd **<u>z</u>uni** to ʔesrɑ bexuni, bemvɑt ʔɑre.
'She said, "Can you read Ezra?" I replied, "Yes, I can."'

In examples (31)–(35), the forms /næzunim/ ('we cannot'), /nemzunɑm/ ('I cannot'), /nezuni/ ('you cannot'), and /zuni/ ('you can') demonstrate that in Judeo-Hamadani, the initial phoneme of the verb corresponding to Persian */dānestan/*[2] ('to know') is /z/, which is consistent with Northwestern Iranian languages. It might be objected that in these examples, the verb in question conveys the modal meaning 'can' or 'be able to' rather than 'to know.' In response, it should be noted that in several Iranian languages, the verb meaning 'to know' is also employed in the sense of 'can' or 'be able to.' For instance, in the Malayeri dialect, /nemenem/ may mean either 'I do not know' or 'I cannot,' depending on the context. This analysis indicated that Judeo-Hamadani similarly utilizes the verb for 'to know' to convey ability.

Another feature of Judeo-Hamadani is the use of the verb /ʃodæn/ in place of /ræftæn/ ('to go'). While /ʃodæn/ has a very restricted usage in Modern Persian varieties, it continues to function as the verb for 'to go' in some other Iranian languages (see Sharifi & Sabouri Helestani, 2018). Examples of this usage in Judeo-Hamadani are provided in (36)–(39); the verb in (39), for instance, is used metaphorically to mean 'to die,' as follows:

1. In Persian زن
2. In Persian دانستن

36. beraj to … ke beʃi ʔotriʃ.
    'for you … to go to Austria.'
37. beʃdim kijej khɑnom behæmir.
    'We went to the house of Ms. Behamir.'
38. mon-o dotem-o vætʃaʃ beʃdim hend.
    'My daughter and I went to India.'
39. do-taʃon beʃdin, se-taʃon bumjen.
    'Two of them are dead, three of them are alive.'

The use of pronominal clitics constitutes another feature of Judeo-Hamadani. This characteristic aligns the variety with Central Iranian Plateau languages such as Zoroastrian Dari, as well as with some southern Iranian languages like Khargi (see Borjian, 2019) and Khvormuji. Since this aspect of Judeo-Hamadani has been addressed in previous studies, it will not be elaborated upon here; examples (40) and (41) suffice to illustrate this point.

40. dær ʔærze je ru beraj mon vizaʃ heget.
    'He obtained a visa for me in one day.'
41. ʔunɑ be mon pɑsportʃɑn hedɑ.
    'They gave me their passport.'

5.2 Judeo-Nahavandi

While Judeo-Nahavandi exhibits clear similarities with Judeo-Hamadani, it also possesses its own distinct characteristics.

42. tæmome doktoraje navændo hækimɑ hæmæ ʔisrɑʔil bijæn.
    'All the doctors and physicians of Nahavand were Jewish.'
43. pedær-e pedær dʒæd-o hɑmɑm hækim bijæn.
    'The father of our grandfather was a physician as well.'
44. hæme tæhsilkerdæ bijæn.
    'They all were educated.'
45. hæme mine navæn xejli ʔehteræʃon dɑ, ʔisrɑʔilɑ væ gujmɑ.
    'Everyone in Nahavand respected them a lot, both Jews and Muslims.'

Examples (42)–(45) illustrate similarities between Judeo-Nahavandi and the Nahavandi dialect, as well as neighboring dialects spoken by the Muslim populations of Malayer, Tuyserkan, Borujerd, and elsewhere. For instance, in (42), the Standard Persian word /tæmɑm/ ('all') appears as /tæmom/ in Judeo-Nahavandi. The change from /ɑ/ to /o/ is a characteristic feature of the Nahavandi, Malayeri, Tuyserkani, Borujerdi, and other nearby dialects, which also yields forms such as /xonæ/ for Persian /xɑne/ ('house') and /mejdon/ for Persian /mejdɑn/ ('square'). In (43) and (44), the verb /bijæn/ ('they were') is pronounced identically to its counterpart in the Nahavandi dialect. The word /mine/ ('in') likewise appears in this variety exactly as in Nahavandi. Similarly, in (42) and (45), the toponym "Nahavand" is pronounced as /navænd/ and /navæn/, matching its pronunciation in the Nahavandi dialect. Furthermore, "Tehran" is pronounced as /tehron/ in Judeo-Nahavandi, again reflecting the influence of the local dialect.

Moreover, the use of the word /hækim/ meaning 'doctor' in (42) and (43) is noteworthy, as this term, while employed in this sense in older forms of Persian, no longer carries this meaning in Modern Standard Persian. Thus, Judeo-Nahavandi, like other language varieties of similar status and function, preserves certain archaic lexical items or retains older meanings of words. This observation also applies to the base of the word /dævɑxonɑ/ ('pharmacies'), which is archaic in Modern Standard Persian, where /dɑruxɑne/ is the usual term. The engagement of Nahavandi Jews in medicine and related professions is further reflected in their surnames; the speaker whose data is used here explains that /fɑmilimon tæbibijɑno hækimijɑn/ ('our family names were Tæbibijɑn and Hækimijɑn'), both meaning 'physician,' and notes that /doktorɑ dævɑxonɑ hæme ʔisrɑʔil bijen/ ('all the doctors and pharmacies were Jewish').

As demonstrated in (42) and (45), the terms /ʔisrɑʔil/ and /gujim/ are used in Judeo-Nahavandi to denote 'Jew' and 'Muslim,' respectively. The speaker's references to /ʔisrɑʔilɑ/ ('Jews') and /gujimɑ/ ('Muslims') suggest that relations between the two communities were characterized by mutual respect, as evidenced by the following account:

> gujimam xejli bɑ hamɑ xæb bijen tʃunke hamam bɑ gujumɑ xæb bim. mɑ bædimon ʔæz gujumɑ nætije vo. væ ræftare xæbeʃon vɑ hamɑ dɑ, væ hamam bɑ ʔonɑ xæb bimɑn. ʔzad bim, je ʃære ʔɑzɑdi bo. qejr ʔæz ʃæraje ʔemi vateʃon ke ʃæraje ʔemi ʔisrɑʔilɑ ʔɑzɑdiʃon nædɑ. xejlija ʔæz ʃærestɑnɑ ʔemi ʔomijen mine nɑvæn dʒænejʃon kæ, ʔæz ʃirɑz, ʔesfæhɑn, kɑʃɑn, jæzd, kermɑʃɑ, hæmedɑn, hæme je meqdɑri ʔisrɑʔiliʔɑ bonej mine nɑvæn dʒænejʃone kæ, tʃun je ʃære ʔɑzɑde xejli xæbi bo.
>
> We have seen no bad from Muslims. Their behavior was good towards us, and we were good to them as well. We were free. It was a free city, unlike other cities. They said that in some other cities, Jews were not free. Many people from other cities came to Nahavand and lived there. From Shiraz, Isfahan, Kashan, Yazd, Kermanshah, Hamedan, some Jews had come to Nahavand and were living there. Because it was a very good free city.

The profound influence of the Nahavandi dialect on Judeo-Nahavandi may be attributed to the positive relationship between the Jewish and Muslim communities of the city. In other words, it can be argued that in the absence of such close interaction and contact, the influence of Nahavandi—as the language variety of the Muslim majority—on Judeo-Nahavandi—as the language variety of the Jewish minority—would likely have been considerably less.

According to the informant, the Jews of Nahavand attended the Alliance School for their education. There are currently no remaining speakers of Judeo-Nahavandi in Nahavand, as the entire community has migrated from the city. The informant provided the following accoun:

> mædresæmonæm mædresej ʔɑlijɑns bo, tæmome ʔisrɑʔilia ʃim mædresej ʔɑlijɑns ke mɑle dʒointe færɑnsævije. pedæɾɑmono mɑdæɾɑmon hæme zæbone færɑnsæ bælæd bijen, færɑnsæʃone xon. bædeʃæm ke hɑmɑm ke bætʃe bimɑn bimonim tehron, mædresæm ʔemi tætil vɑvo, hitʃ ʔisrɑʔili næmon mine nɑvæn.
>
> Our school was the Alliance School; all Jews went to the Alliance School, which belonged to the French Joint. Our fathers and mothers all knew French and studied in French. Later, when we were children, we came to Tehran, and the school was closed. No Jews remained in Nahavand.

It remains unclear whether speakers of Judeo-Nahavandi maintained their language variety after migrating from the city. However, given that in most immigrant communities—particularly those with small populations—language shift typically occurs within two or more generations, it is plausible that with the dispersal of the Judeo-Nahavandi speech community, the variety was not transmitted to subsequent generations. At present, at best, only a few elderly speakers of the community may retain knowledge of the variety.

Based on the two quoted utterances above, several additional observations about Judeo-Nahavandi were made. First, despite the many similarities between this variety and the Nahavandi dialect, certain features clearly differentiate them. For example, the word /xæb/ ('good') in Judeo-Nahavandi appears as /xu/ in the Nahavandi dialect. Second, the word /dʒænejʃon/ ('their life') (Standard Persian */zendegiʃɑn/*[1]), which was used twice in the first utterance, exhibits the change from /ʒ/ to /dʒ/ discussed above in relation to Judeo-Hamadani. This provides further evidence of the affiliation of Judeo-Nahavandi with the Northwestern branch of Iranian languages. Third, the use of the verb /ʃim/ ('went') in the second utterance, attestes to the employment of the verb /ʃodæn/ in the sense of 'to go' in Judeo-Nahavandi, confirming that the observations made regarding this verb in Judeo-Hamadani also apply here. Finally, the phrase /færɑnsæʃone xon/ in the second utterance demonstrates that pronominal clitics are also used in Judeo-Nahavandi.

1. In Standard Persian زندگی‌شان

5.3 Judeo-Tuyserkani

Examination of Judeo-Tuyserkani revealed similarities to the Tuyserkani dialect, as well as affinities with the Hamadani and Nahavandi dialects (see Examples 46–49).

46. je mædresæmon dɑrt, mædresej ʔetehɑd, be modirijæte ʔqɑ nurolɑ nurɑni.
'We had a school, Etehad School, managed by Mr. Nurollah Nurani.'
47. bædeʃ ʔɑqɑje nurolɑ nurɑni ʔæz tuserkon boʃo melɑjer, bæʔd berɑreʃ modire mædrese vɑbo.
'Then Mr. Nurollah Nurani went from Tuyserkan to Malayer, and his brother became the school principal.'
48. væqti ʔesteqrɑre ʔesrɑʔil ʃoru vɑbo, je ʔedeji mohɑdʒeræteʃon kerd, bæʔd je ʔedeji bemonden.
'When the establishment of Israel began, some people emigrated [from Tuyserkan], and some stayed [in the city].'
49. ʔo ʔedejæm ke bemonden tuserkon, zæmɑni ke dɑʃten mine tuserkon xijɑbonkæʃi beke xijɑbon boʃo mine mehæle ʔisrɑʔilɑ.
'Those who stayed in Tuyserkan, when they were building streets in Tuyserkan, a street passed through the Jewish quarter.'

In (46), the pronunciation of the final syllable of the word /mædresæmon/ ('our school') reflects the influence of the Tuyserkani dialect on Judeo-Tuyserkani, where /-mon/ functions as a pronominal clitic. In (47), the toponyms /tuserkon/ ('Tuyserkan') and /melɑjer/ ('Malayer') are pronounced similarly to their counterparts in the Tuyserkani, Malayeri, and Nahavandi dialects. Furthermore, the word /berɑr/ ('brother') in this sentence is also used in these dialects. In the same sentence, as well as in (49), the use of the verb /boʃo/ ('went' or 'passed') demonstrates that Judeo-Tuyserkani, similar to the Judeo-varieties of Hamadan and Nahavand, employs the verb *šodan* in the sense of 'to go.' In (48), another example of a pronominal clitic is observed in the verb /mohɑdʒeræteʃon kerd/ ('they migrated'). Finally, in (49), further phonetic similarities between Judeo-Tuyserkani and the Tuyserkani dialect are evident in the words /mine/ ('in') and /xijɑbon/ ('street'). This sentence also illustrates the use of /ʔisrɑʔil/ in the sense of 'Jew' within this variety.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, the information conveyed in (48) and (49) is significant for understanding the fate of the Jewish speech community of Tuyserkan. In (48), the emigration of Jews from Tuyserkan following the establishment of Israel is noted as the start of the Judeo-Tuyserkani speech community's disintegration. In (49), the disruption of the city's old fabric due to urban development projects in Tuyserkan is documented. The speaker whose data were used in this study describes the consequences of these developments as follows:

> dærnætidʒe kelisɑje ʔisrɑʔilɑ væ tæmume xunehɑje ʔisrɑʔilɑ dær mæsire xijɑbon qærɑreʃ beget, hæmæ rɑ xærɑbeʃon kerd væ ʔi bɑʔes bæbo ke pændʒɑ dærsæde dʒæmʔijæte ʔisrɑʔilɑje tuserkon ʔæz tuserkon mohɑdʒeræteʃo ke. je ʔede beʃoden teron væ je ʔedæm beʃoden ʔesrɑʔil. bæʔd be tædridʒ jævɑʃ-jævɑʃ tɑ tuserkon kɑmelæn ʔæz ʔisrɑʔil xɑli vɑbo/.
> As a result, the synagogue and all the Jewish houses were located on the street, all of them were destroyed, and this caused 50 percent of the Jewish population of Tuyserkan to emigrate. Some went to Tehran, and some went to Israel. Then, gradually, Tuyserkan was completely emptied of Jews.

Observations on the existence of a "Jewish quarter" in Tuyserkan revealed the significant population and longstanding presence of Jews in the city. In the quoted utterance above, the verbs /qærɑreʃ beget/ ('was established'), /xærɑbeʃon kerd/ ('they destroyed'), and /mohɑdʒeræteʃo ke/ ('they migrated') illustrate other uses of pronominal clitics. The expressions /bɑʔes bæbo/ ('caused') and /xɑli vɑbo/ ('was emptied') in the utterance, are compound verbs specific to Judeo-Tuyserkani, whose verbal components are not used in the

Tuyserkani dialect. In this utterance, /kelisɑj-e ʔisrɑʔilɑ/ (‘church of the Jews’) refers to the synagogue. The toponym /teron/ “Tehran” is also pronounced in a manner consistent with the Tuyserkani dialect.

5.4 Judeo-Malayeri

At the time of the study, no linguistic data were available concerning the language variety of the Jews of Malayer, the second most populous city in Hamadan Province. The author conducted extensive searches and inquiries in an attempt to identify and interview a Jewish speaker from Malayer to gain insight into their language variety. These efforts included contacting the *Tehran Jewish Committee* to locate individuals of Malayeri Jewish origin or to obtain any extant linguistic data. However, representatives of the committee reported having no information regarding this community, suggesting that its members might have all emigrated from Iran. Nevertheless, through these searches and conversations with long-term residents of Malayer, some information about the city’s Jewish community was obtained.

Many elderly residents of Malayer have informed the author that the Jews of the city were predominantly engaged in clothier trades, pharmacy, and medicine. These informants uniformly expressed favorable views of the Jewish community, describing them as good and righteous people. Safa’i (1960), being a native of Malayer, observed that “the city of Malayer has a population of about 25,000 people, more than 1,000 of whom are Armenians and Jews, and the Jews are clothiers and sellers” (p. 7). This indicates that sixty-six years ago, over four percent of Malayer’s population consisted of Armenian and Jewish residents. Assuming that approximately half of this percentage was Jewish, it can be estimated that Jews constituted about two percent of the city’s population at that time. Moreover, since Safa’i’s book was published in 1960 and employes the present tense in referring to the Armenians and Jews of Malayer, it can be inferred that a significant Jewish community still resided in the city as of that year, with emigration occurring primarily in subsequent decades.

Given the substantial Jewish population historically present in Malayer, as well as the social and cultural patterns shared by Jewish communities across Iranian cities, it is highly probable that the Jews of Malayer possessed their own language variety. This variety would likely have resembled the Judeo-varieties of other cities in Hamadan Province, as well as those of nearby cities such as Borujerd, Golpayegan, and Khonsar, which have been documented in previous studies.

However, it was observed that compared to Hamadan, Nahavand, and Tuyserkan, the modern historical profile of Malayer is relatively recent, spanning approximately two centuries. As explained in a footnote at the beginning of this article, the initial population of Malayer originated from cities such as Khonsar, Isfahan, Tafresh, and Hamadan. It is, therefore, plausible that the Jews of Malayer likewise originated from these locations—particularly from Hamadan, as well as from Nahavand and Tuyserkan, given their geographical proximity. From this perspective, it can be argued that Judeo-Malayeri likely exhibited the greatest affinity with the Judeo-varieties of Hamadan, Nahavand, and Tuyserkan.

Some previous studies contain information that not only suggests the migration route of Malayer’s Jewish population but also allows for hypotheses regarding their language variety. For instance, Borjian (2025) notes that according to Yarshater, most Jewish residents in Hamadan had migrated from Kurdistan, Malayer, and Tuyserkan, while Haideh Sahim later observed that by the mid-1970s, the community was mainly composed of migrants from Tuyserkan and Kermanshah (p. 25). It can be argued that if the language varieties of any of these immigrant groups had differed significantly from the variety spoken by Jews native to Hamadan, Yarshater would likely have noted this difference. Consequently, it may be inferred that Judeo-Malayeri was either identical to or very closely aligned with Judeo-Hamadani.

As a final observation, it is noteworthy that a significant portion of the Judeo-Hamadani lexicon is shared with the Malayeri dialect or with other Iranian varieties spoken in Malayer County. The words listed in Table 2 represent Judeo-Hamadani lexical items that occur in identical form or with minor phonetic variations in the Nænnæji dialect, the language variety of the village of Nænnæj in Malayer County. These lexical correspondences further attest to the longstanding presence of Jewish communities throughout Hamadan Province and to the historical linguistic contacts among the region's diverse populations.

Table 2. Judeo-Hamadani Lexical Items Shared With the Nænnæji Dialect

Judeo-Hamadani	Nænæji Dialect	English	Judeo-Hamadani	Nænæji Dialect	English
/dæhæn dære/	/dɑn zæræ/	yawn	/dim/	/dim/	face
/mælhæm/	/mærhæm/	healing	/golɑre/	/golɑræ[1]/	eye
/melitʃ/	/melitʃ/	sparrow	/lil/	/lil/	drooling
/nedɑr/	/nedɑr/	poor	/ogej/	/ogeji/	of half blood
/bæl zemin/	/bæl zemin/	Put it down!	/espid/	/espid/	white
/tenæbi/	/tænævijæ/	back room	/bivær/	/bibær/	pepper
/sejzun/	/sejzɑn/	basement	/nudʒu/	/nudʒu/	A kind of lentils
/gole kɑse eʃkene/	/gole kɑsæ eʃkenæ/	red horned-poppy	/væræk/	/væræk/	alhagi
/ræf/	/rofæ/	shelf	/gidʒin/	/gidʒing/	literally "heel of the door"
/venædik/	/vænædik/	window glass/ glass window	/modbæq/	/modbæq/	kitchen
/qæzoun/	/qæzqɑn/	large copper pot	/tijɑntʃe/	/tijɑntʃe/	small pot
/ovgærdun/	/evgærdun/	Literally "ladle for transferring water"	/mɑqɑʃ/	/mæqɑʃ/	tweezers
/ɑlæt/	/ɑlæt/	turmeric	/dæsgiruni/	/dæsgirɑni/	engagement
/qentʃ kærtæn-e ɑris/	/qæntʃ kærtæn-e erus/	makeup the bride	/mertʃ/	/murtʃ/	acerb
/zitʃæ xijɑr/	/zotʃej xijɑr/	small Armenian cucumber			

6. Discussion and Conclusion

This study demonstrates that Judeo-Hamadani, Judeo-Nahavandi, and Judeo-Tuyserkani are influenced by the surrounding Hamadani, Nahavandi, and Tuyserkani dialects, to the extent that individuals familiar with the aforementioned dialects readily recognize the affinities between each dialect and its corresponding Jewish variety when presented with the data. These similarities attest to sustained language contact between the Judeo-varieties and the non-Judeo varieties of the region.

Such contact, moreover, reflects amicable relations between the Jewish and Muslim communities in the region. The occupational complementarity of these communities—particularly the engagement of many Jews in professions such as medicine, pharmacy, and cloth trading, which serves both Muslim and non-Muslim populations—fosters conditions conducive to linguistic exchange. The peaceful nature of these relations is illustrated by the testimony of the Judeo-Nahavandi speaker, who reported that Jews from cities such as Shiraz, Kashan, and Kermanshah migrated to Nahavand precisely because of the favorable intercommunal climate. Furthermore, the use of the term /gujim/ ('non-Jew') by the Judeo-Nahavandi speaker carries no negative connotation, in contrast to the pejorative associations attributed to this word in most dictionaries. This usage may be interpreted as additional evidence of respectful relations between Jews and Muslims in Hamadan Province.

1. This word is prevalent in Kurdish as well. The ancient word /gomez/ ('urine') is shared by both languages and has roots in the Avesta.

In examining the language varieties of the Jews of Hamadan Province, this study identifies evidence supporting the classification—advanced by previous researchers—of these varieties within the Northwestern branch of Iranian languages. While some of this evidence is less salient due to subsequent phonological developments, identifying it requires close attention to the phonetic changes that affect these varieties and to the general direction of such changes across Iranian languages. The treatment of the words /dʒæn/ and /dʒænejʃon/ in Judeo-Hamadani and Judeo-Nahavandi exemplifies this consideration. In his introductory note to Asef (2024), Setareh-shenas identifies the local language of the Hamadan Jews as "Raji" (p. 5); however, Asef (2024) characterizes the language as "Pahlavi," which he considers to be the "Dari language" (p. 10). If by Dari language he intends Modern Persian, this characterization is linguistically inaccurate. However, the designation Raji for the language of Hamadan's Jews may constitute evidence of its connection with the Central Iranian Plateau languages.

The present study reveals that Judeo-Hamadani, Judeo-Nahavandi, and Judeo-Tuyserkani exhibit clear lexical and structural similarities. In all three varieties, for example, the Persian word /miyan/ ('in') has undergone reduction to /min/. Furthermore, they share specific lexical items such as /berɑr/ ('brother') and /xæb/ ('good'). Notably, the use of pronominal clitics in these varieties distinguishes their verbal morphology from that of the surrounding Hamadani, Nahavandi, and Tuyserkani dialects, while aligning them with varieties such as Zoroastrian Dari, the Velati varieties of the Central Plateau, and Khargi in southern Iran.

Migration results in the complete disappearance of Jewish speech communities in the cities of Nahavand and Tuyserkan. In Hamadan, although a small number of Jews continue to reside in the city, it cannot be said that a viable speech community for Judeo-Hamadani persists there. No information is available regarding the maintenance of these Judeo-varieties among those who have emigrated from these cities. Given the small size of these communities and the dispersal of their members across various cities and countries, it is likely that no cohesive language variety remains for any of them. The few remaining speakers, including the three individuals whose linguistic data were examined in this study, are all elderly, and there is no indication that their language varieties are being transmitted to younger generations. This situation places the Judeo-varieties of Hamadan Province at the highest level of language endangerment.

Finally, the case of Judeo-Tuyserkani illustrates how factors other than migration can contribute to the dissolution of minority speech communities. As documented above, the implementation of urban development projects in Tuyserkan, specifically the construction of a street through the Jewish quarter, precipitates the disintegration of the community and ultimately the emigration of its members. This observation underscores the broader sociolinguistic principle that the disruption of traditional urban textures through modernization projects can have unintended consequences for the survival of minority language varieties that such textures had long sustained.

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Conflict of Interest

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