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# 4 Judeo-Gūrānī: Tracing the emergence of a literary corpus

**Abstract:** The Jewish community in Kermanshah, despite its extensive historical presence, remains a relatively obscure segment within Iran's religious landscape. The recent discovery of five manuscripts, collectively known as the Judeo-Gūrānī corpus, has revealed a complex layer of nineteenth-century intellectual history. These manuscripts stand as a vibrant testament to the intricate backdrop of Kermanshah's nineteenth-century Jewish community, showcasing a diverse tapestry of linguistic encounters stemming from varied social interactions and cultural exchanges. This article is structured into two parts: The first section unravels the sociocultural milieu surrounding the emergence of the Judeo-Gūrānī corpus. Kermanshah, predominantly Kurdish-speaking, experienced dynamic social, religious, and cultural transformations during the nineteenth century. This era witnessed the ascendancy of literary Persian, championed by the Dowlatšāhī cadet branch of the Qajar dynasty, alongside successive waves of Jewish migration that ultimately reshaped the region's linguistic landscape. Within the Judeo-Gūrānī corpus, this multilingual environment is reflected primarily through literary Gūrānī texts, accompanied by a single literary Persian piece and colophons in Persian and Hebrew. Moreover, this period marked the emergence of two religious dynamics—the rise of state-sponsored Shi'ism and Christian missionary endeavors—impacting non-Shiite religious communities, leading to conversions within the Jewish community and the Ahl-e Ḥaqq. Shared experiences among marginalized religious minorities likely fostered a closer cultural affinity, observable in at least one text within the Judeo-Gūrānī corpus, potentially influenced by the association between the Jewish community and the Ahl-e Ḥaqq. The article's second part conducts an in-depth analysis of each codex, examining their contents and comparing them with parallel manuscripts of the same texts, offering deeper insights into this unique corpus.

**Keywords:** Judeo-Gūrānī, Gūrānī literature, Jews of Kermanshah

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# 1 Introduction

Despite its centuries-long presence in the region, the Jewish community of Kermanshah remains among the least-known religious communities in Iran. Several travelogues are the main sources of our information about this once-prosperous community, yet little is known about their social and cultural life, let alone their intellectual activities and cross-communal relations with their neighboring religious communities, such as the Ahl-e Haqq, Shi'ite, and Sunnis. However, a recent discovery has presented new first-hand materials that may augment our understanding of their nineteenth-century intellectual history – that is, a corpus of five manuscripts covering several literary Gūrānī texts transcribed in Hebrew characters and henceforth referred to as the Judeo-Gūrānī corpus.

Over centuries, literary Gūrānī served as a conduit for transmitting a rich and multifaceted literary tradition within the Kurdish community inhabiting the western Iranian plateau. However, the discovery of the Judeo-Gūrānī corpus sheds unprecedented light on the fact that this literature also found its way into the hands of select members within the Jewish community of Kermanshah. Kermanshah is the epicenter of this phenomenon, situated in the heart of the Zagros region, marked by a predominantly Kurdish population. The presence of a substantial collection of Gūrānī texts within this corpus, encompassing diverse literary genres, all transcribed in Hebrew characters during the latter half of the nineteenth century, prompts intriguing inquiries into the social and intellectual milieu of the Jewish community in Kermanshah during this epoch.

This article is structured into two parts. The first part endeavors to illuminate the social and cultural milieu of the Jewish community in Kermanshah within their broader regional context. It seeks to uncover possible explanations for how and under what circumstances Jewish individuals embraced and transcribed the ostensibly non-Jewish Gūrānī literature. Additionally, it explores the potential roles played by social, religious, and cultural factors in this process. The second part presents a comprehensive overview of the Judeo-Gūrānī corpus.

An investigation into this understudied corpus is crucial for both Jewish as well as Gūrānī Studies. For the former, because it provides first-hand sources from within the community, which has barely any presently known traces, and for the latter, because it opens new horizons in the field by providing new valuable data which will increase our understanding of the nature, social status, and linguistic variability of literary Gūrānī.

Before delving into the main discussion, two points should be clarified: firstly, in this article, Kermanshah is referred to in two senses, first as 'the city,' which is the modern center of the eponymous province, and second in a larger sense, which

roughly corresponds to the modern borders of the modern province itself. Kermanshah in the latter sense includes the city of Kermanshah and several other towns such as Sahneh, Kangavar, Harsin, Harunabad, Islamabad, Kerend, Gahvareh, Qasr-e Shirin, among others; the western extreme of this region is the city of Khanaqin in Iraq, the southern extreme is Lorestān-e Kūčak, or Pošt-e Kūh, while the eastern extreme is the city of Asadabad in the province of Hamadan. The northern extreme is the city of Sanandaj.

Secondly, it should be noted that this article is specifically focused on the manuscripts that were copied in Kermanshah. The corpus being investigated in this study comprises five manuscripts, four of which were copied in Kermanshah during the 19th century and are collectively referred to as the Kermanshahi group throughout this article. The fifth manuscript, on the other hand, was produced in 1926 in the village of Choplu near Tekab, West Azerbaijan Province. This manuscript is a 28-folio historical epic that narrates the rebellion of Ismail Aqa Semko (d. 1930) in Azerbaijan. Due to the different social, historical, and cultural contexts in which it was produced, the fifth manuscript requires a separate study. Therefore, to provide a more cohesive analysis of the Kermanshahi group, this article will exclusively focus on the four manuscripts copied in Kermanshah during the 19th century. By doing so, we can better understand the distinctive features and cultural significance of this specific group of manuscripts.

# 2 Jews of Kermanshah

## 2.1 Sources

Today, there are few, if any, Jews living in Kermanshah province[1]. Their population decreased drastically following the 1979 Revolution in Iran. Nothing is known about the early history of the Jews in Kermanshah. For centuries, the Jews in Kermanshah lived on the edge of Babylonia's once-prosperous Jewish academies and in the vicinity of other flourishing Jewish communities in Hamadan and Nahavand from the

**1** An informal census estimates their population to 100 individuals in 2011. This census is documented in https://www.adyan-iran.com (access date: 12.12.2022).

other side. However, the Jews of this region are almost absent from all the pre-Islamic and Islamic sources[2], indifferent to the religious background of the source[3].

For the Europeans, whose primary source for the antiquity of the Jews was the Old Testament, the Jewish communities of west and northwestern Iran, as well as northern Iraq and southern Turkey, were the descendants of those "lost in the land of Assyria" (Isiah 27:13), living in *terra incognita.* Their travelogues and itineraries comprise the main sources of our understanding of these Jewish communities. Although recorded controversial information, the itinerary of the twelfth-century Jewish traveler Benjamin of Tudela is the earliest account of the Jewish communities of Kermanshah. According to his account, near the river of Holwan, one finds "the abodes of about four thousand Jews" (Asher 1840: 120)[4].

History is silent about the aforementioned Jewish communities for the next seven centuries after Benjamin of Tudela. Only in the nineteenth century did they come out of the shadows. From this century, there have been several travelogues that can be categorized into three types of sources. The first type is the works of European Jewish travelers who aspired to find their lost cousins. The itineraries of rabbi David D'Beth Hillel (1832), Israel Joseph Benjamin, known as Benjamin II (1846–1855), and Ephraim Neumark (1884–5) were more focused on the Jewish communities, and therefore, provided more detailed information. Another set of sources containing valuable information about the Jewish communities of Kermanshah is provided by several Christian missionaries hoping to get in touch with the Jewish communities of the region; among them, Joseph Wolff (1837) and Henry Stern (1854) are to be mentioned. The last but not least set of sources is offered by the European diplomats or inquisitive travelers who visited the Jews in Kermanshah or heard something about them. The travelogues of Henry Rawlinson (1839), Edward Ledwich Mitford (1884), and Eugene Aubin (1908) are to be mentioned under the latter category.

Although the Judeo-Gūrānī corpus, in particular, is an unseen piece of evidence, the Jewish communities of Kermanshah and their social and cultural aspects are the topic of some studies in recent scholarship. Habib Levi (1960), in his seminal

**2** There is an implication in the work of al-Maqdisī, who in the course of his fairly long description of *Jibal* including the city of Qarmisin (the historical name of Kermanshah), sufficed to mention that "the Jews in this region are more than Christians" (Aḥsan al-Taqāsīm, 394). He also reports that *darb al-Yahūd* is one of the neighbourhoods of Hulwan, and outside the city, there is a synagogue built from plaster and stones and is highly venerated (ibid, 123).

**3** Even in the Judeo-Persian narrative of Babai bin Lotf, the seventeenth century Jewish chronicler from Kashan, there is no mention of the Jewish community in Kermanshah.

**4** This account should be used cautiously. Reportedly, Benjamin himself did not travel beyond Baghdad, and his reports of Kurdish regions are based on the information he obtained from others (Brauer 1993:38; Fischel 1994: 196).

work *The History of Iranian Jews*,[5] provides invaluable information on the Jews of Kermanshah and their historical background as part of the broader picture of Jews in Iran. The comprehensive book of Avraham Cohen (1992), *The Jewish Community in Kermanshah (Iran) from the Beginning of the 19th Century until World War II*[6], focuses on different social, cultural, and religious aspects of the Jewish community in the city of Kermanshah and its adjacent regions. Heshmatollah Kermanshahchi (2007), in the book *Iranian Jewish Community, Social Developments in the Twentieth Century,* dedicates an entire chapter to the Jewish community of Kermanshah City. Since the author was a former community member, this chapter resembles an autobiography with an excursion to what he has already heard from older Jewish generations of the city. Willem Floor and Parisa Mohammadi (2018), in the chapter "The Jewish Community of Kermanshah" in Willem Floor's book, *Kermanshah, City & Province, 1800–1945,* collect the available data from different primary sources, such as itineraries, autobiographies, and legal documents, and present a concise account of the Jews in Kermanshah during the period of the book.

## 2.2 Jews of Kermanshah in the nineteenth century

As these sources suggest, the Jewish communities of the province of Kermanshah in the nineteenth century had a diverse and dynamic nature, consisting of different Jewish groups with varying linguistic and cultural backgrounds. For instance, according to D'Beth Hillel, in the cities of (sic.) *Karmasa* and *Zaho* (=Kermanshah and Zohab), respectively, 300 and 40 Jewish families lived who were Neo-Aramaic speakers (D'Beth Hillel 1832:88–90)[7]. Using Neo-Aramaic as vernacular indicates

**5** In Persian: Tārīx-e Yahūd-e Īrān

**6** In Hebrew: ha-Ḳehilah ha-Yehudit be-Kermanshah (Iran) be-me'ot ha-19 ṿeha-20 'ad la-Milḥemet ha-'Olam ha-Sheniyah

**7** What David D'Beth Hilel reports about the Neo-Aramaic vernacular of the Jews in Kermanshah goes in contrast to what Hopkins (1999: 319) and following him Borjian (2017) stated regarding the exclusion of the city of Kermanshah from the domain of Neo-Aramaic dialect area. According to David D'Beth Hilel the Jewish community in the city shares similar "manners, customs, and languages as those of Bahadina" (D'Beth Hillel 1832: 89). In his earlier chapter on the language spoken in Bahadina, which is "the same language as prevail among the Israelites of Zachoo " (ibid, 56), David D'Beth Hilel notes that this language is known as *Lyshana-Yahoodayah* (ibid, 58), and is also spoken by the Jews of Zachoo. Moving backwards to his account of the Jews in Zachoo demonstrates that this language had to be a certain variety of Neo-Aramaic. In this chapter he reveals that the Jews of Zachoo share the same vernacular with the Christian inhabitants of Pasoover, a small village in the vicinity of Mosul speaking in "the Caldees language, which is very similar to the language written in some chapters of Ezra and Daniel, they call it Lishanah Yahoodiya (i.e. Jewish

that these communities were part of the larger Northeastern Neo-Aamaic (NENA) map that used to live in Iran, Iraq, and Turkey. Based on the oral tradition of these people[8], they are descendants of the oldest Jews who were exiled "in Halah and in Habor by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes" (2 Kings 17:6; 18:11) when Israel and Judah were conquered by the Mesopotamian kings in 8th and 6th BCE (Ben-Zvi 1955: 57, Sabar 1982: xxvii–xxix)[9].

Historically, these Neo-Aramaic communities coexisted with speakers of different varieties of Kurdish, Turkish (mainly Azeri) and Arabic dialects in Iraq, Turkey, and Iran. Due to this coexistence, the NENA speakers were mainly bilingual or trilingual (Khan 2018: 15). Recent scholarship proves that Jewish NENA settlements in Kermanshah, in addition to what is reported by D'Beth Hillel, also existed in other cities of the region, such as Kangavar, Kerend, and Qasr-e Shirin (Hopkins 1999: 319; Khan 2018: 11, Borjian 2017). By the end of the nineteenth century, Jewish families were scattered across the province, often living among different Kurdish tribes (Aubin 1908: 333).

The Jewish community in Kermanshah City in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was even more heterogeneous regarding linguistic and cultural background. In the nineteenth century, the Jewish community living in the city witnessed several waves of Jewish refugees and immigrants from different cities of Iran and, later in the twentieth century, from Iraq.[10] Ephraim Neumark mentions a certain Hakham *Yaḥazqal Yazdī* as one of the highly esteemed members of the Jewish community in nineteenth-century Kermanshah (Neumark 1967: 73). His epithet clearly shows that he is from Yazd and was thus not a native of the city he came to reside in. Moreover, in the aftermath of the forced conversion of Jews in Mashhad in 1839, known as *Allāhdād*, Kermanshah was among the safe places where the Jewish refugees from Khorasan relocated (Tsadik 2011: 34–36; Sarshar 2011:158–60). Perhaps due to this mixed linguistic background, the non-Jewish

language), and Arabs call it Jabali" (ibid, 50, 51). This is also attested in the work of Aubin, where he writes there are 300 hundred Jewish families in the city of Kermanshah who, like other Jews of Kurdistan, speak in "un jargon syriaque"(Aubin, 1908: 336.)

**8** Sabar remarks the significant role of orality in transmitting religion among Jews of Kurdistan (Sabar 1982: xxviii).

**9** The Assyrian kings, Shalmaneser V, and his successor Sargon II conquered the land of Samaria and expelled many Jews from their homeland in 8th century BCE (Yamada & Yamada 2017: 406–09). A later wave of banishment came when Nebuchadnezzar II, the Babylonian king, destroyed Jerusalem and captured the people of Judah in 586 BCE and settled them in Mesopotamia (Beaulieu 2018: 228).

**10** For the refugees from Bukhara prior to the Iranian Constitutional Revolution in 1905–11 see.: Pirnazar 2017. For the Neo-Aramaic/ Arabic speaker who sought refuge from Iraq, mainly from Baghdad., see.: Avraham Cohen 1992: 15–16; Alavikia 2019: 77.

vernaculars of Kermanshah, Farsi, and Kurdish were adopted by the local Jewish population for communication within their community in the city.[11]

There is a general agreement that the general population of Kermanshah in the nineteenth century varies between 300000 to 350000 (Floor 2018: 181). Regarding the census of Jewish communities of Kermanshah, Levi provides detailed information (Table 1; Levi 1960c: 813–14). It seems that the Jews in the aforementioned century were less than 1% of the whole population:

**Table 1:** Census of Jewish communities of Kermanshah, based on Levi (1960c).

| City | Census |
|---|---|
| Kermanshah | 1406 individuals |
| Gahvareh | 18 families |
| Kerend | 30 families |
| Qasr-e Shirin | 12 families |
| Sarpol-e Zohab | 30 families |
| Bilavar | 4 families |
| Dinavar | 4 families |
| Sonqor Kolya'i | 12 families |
| Payravand | 4 families |
| Sum | ≈ 2000 individuals (if one considers each family about 5 individuals) |

As sources reveal, these communities lived humble lives, both economically and socially. D'Beth Hilel reports that most Jewish families living in Kermanshah and Zohab are poor (1832: 89–90). Stern, a Christian missionary who visited the Jewish community in the city of Kermanshah on 27 February 1852, observed that the Jews live a miserable life, and their synagogue is an "insignificant mud building" situated in "an unhealthy part of the town" (Stern 1852: 236). Some of these Jews were small-scale traders, according to D'Beth Hillel reports. Benjamin II met a Jewish Mullah who deceived Persians [i.e., non-Jewish people] by making amulets for them (Benjamin II, 1863: 253). According to Levi's report, in 1900, Jews of Kermanshah were mainly small-scale traders, itinerant herbalists, and hawking drapers (1960c: 813). Apparently, Jews were not allowed by Muslims to open stores, which accounts for the hawking jobs they were involved in (Floor and Mohammadi 2018: 486). In

**11** This is reflected in an autobiography of Heshmatullah Kermanshahchi: "one of the interesting facts about the Jews of [the city of] Kermanshah was that, compared to the other inhabitants of the city, they did not have any distinguished and different dialect, which might be due to the short historical presence of them [in the city]" (Kermanshahchi 2007: 357)

Kermanshah City, they lived in their own neighborhood and had three synagogues. Seemingly, it was not only the Muslim majority who wanted them to live separately, but also the Jews themselves preferred to live in their ghetto to keep the cohesiveness of their Jewish identity (ibid: 488–89).

The Jewish educational institutions in this century were limited to schools for boys. In the classical *maktabs*, mainly held in the rabbis' houses, students learned to read and write Hebrew, studied the Torah, and memorized Jewish daily prayers.[12] Reportedly, among the Jews of Iran, those who knew the Hebrew language and the Assyrian alphabet were known as Mollā (Levi 1960c: 657). Although written in Hebrew characters, Persian literature was part of their curriculum as well (Floor and Mohammadi 2018: 498). By the turn of the twentieth century, the classical curriculum of the Jews in Kermanshah was terminated by establishing two modern schools in Kermanshah. Christian missionaries established a school in Kermanshah in 1902 to spread their Christianity. Following this, a branch of Alliance School Israélite Universelle (AIU) was opened in Kermanshah (Floor and Mohammadi 2018: 498–99) and later, in 1926, in Kerend (Alavikia 2019:83).

## 3 Linguistic background

The accounts provided by Rabino (1900: 17–40) and Curzon (1892: 557) regarding the demographic map of Kurdish nomadic and sedentary tribes, along with their respective districts in Kermanshah, bear a striking resemblance to the current geographical configuration. Kalhor, Sanjābī, Zangena, and Gūrān tribes were in the western and southwestern zones, the Jāf tribes (Šarafbayānī, Fattāḥbeigī, Morādī) were in the western and northwestern zones, Kolīyāʾī tribe in the northern, northeastern, and eastern zones, Ḥamadvand and its branches (Ḥamadvand Bohtoui and Ḥamadvand Čalabī) in western zones close to the city of Qasr-e Shirin, the Lak tribes (Jalālvand, Osmānvand and Kākāvand) in southern and southwestern regions. Bājalānī tribe, who migrated from Mosul in the eighteenth century during the rule of Ottomans, settled eventually in the western zones, in the vicinity of the Zohab region (Rawlinson 1839: 107). Except for Jāf tribes, whose dialect is categorized as a branch of central Kurdish dialects (Hamzeh'ee 2008), and Bājalānī tribe,

12 It seems the knowledge of Hebrew was not common among the ordinary Jews. This is reflected from the Stern's narrative, where, in order to decrease the influence of his speech, he was asked by a rabbi in the synagogue to speak in Hebrew with the Jews, so that nobody can understand it. He refused, and answered " it was my duty to declare the saving message in a language understood by all".(Stern 1854:237)

whose spoken variety is considered a subgroup of Gūrānī dialects (Oberling 1988a), the other tribes were speakers of the southern Kurdish varieties (Borjian 2017).

Due to the strategic position of Kermanshah, situated on the road connecting the Iranian plateau to Iraq, and the rule of the Persian-speaking Qajars, the Persian language, as a *lingua franca*, was prevalent in the city of Kermanshah in this century.[13]However, as Aubin portrays, this Persian spoken "mixed with Kurdish expressions" (Aubin 1908: 338). The settled speakers of Hawrami, reportedly categorized as a subgroup of Gūrānī dialects, live in the northwestern corner of Kermanshah. The Gūrānī dialects stretched southwards to the cities of Kerend and some villages such as Gawrajū and Zardah in its vicinity (Bailey 2018: 7–9; Borjian 2017). Also, a Turkish population existed in Sonqor, a northeastern town in Kermanshah (Floor 2018: 181–82).

As illustrated by this linguistic map, it is highly probable that during this century, the Jewish community in the province of Kermanshah maintained contact with Kurdish speakers (particularly the southern and central dialects) in regions such as Zohab, Qasr-e Shirin, Kangavar, and the city of Kermanshah. Furthermore, it is plausible that Kerend and its surrounding areas, historically with a significant Jewish population, were also in contact with the local Gūrānī speakers.

## 4 Religious landscape

The religious landscape of nineteenth-century Kermanshah was a vibrant amalgamation of diverse faiths and beliefs. Despite earlier attempts in the eighteenth century to enforce the conversion of its inhabitants to Shi'ism[14], the majority of Kurdish tribes in nineteenth-century Kermanshah continued to adhere to the Ahl-e

**13** In nineteenth century, Kermanshah was under the rule of a cadet branch of Qajar dynasty. Moḥammad ʿAlī Mīrzā Dowlatšāh (rule 1806–1821), the oldest son of Fatḥ ʿAlī Šāh Qājār, his sons Moḥammad-Ḥosayn Mīrzā Hešmat-al-Dowleh (1821–1826), and Emāmqolī Mīrzā ʿEmād al-Dowleh (1852–1875), ruled over Kermanshah. It was in their time that Persian in this region was not only an administrative language, but also through the migrations of different families, mainly bureaucrats and Shiite clerical ones, from other Iranian cities to Kermanshah, Persian language became more common in this region (Boushasbgusheh & Azadian 2021:159–162). Soltani has discussed the formative role of Dowlatšāh as the patroniser and reviver of Persian poetry in Kermanshah (Soltani 2015: 153–236).

**14** Shi'ism in this article refers to the Post-Safavid Twelver Shi'ism. For a panoramic account of the evolution of Twelver Shi'ism during the Safavid era in Iran, from 1501 to 1722, see Kathryn Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs and Messiahs: Cultural Landscapes of Early Modern Iran* (Cambridge: Harvard Center for Middle Eastern Studies, Harvard University Press, 2002). For the dialectic relationship between Twelver Shi'ism and the Qajar political ideology see "Part three: The Shi'ite

Ḥaqq faith (Floor 2018: 44). These sedentary and pastoral Ahl-e Ḥaqq communities primarily resided in the cities, villages, and plains between Zohab and Kermanshah, where the main Jewish settlements were also located. Reportedly, their substantial presence in Kermanshah served as a counterbalance to the authority of Shiite clerics, who were relatively few during this period and, therefore, had limited influence in the city (Aubin 1908: 337).

Notwithstanding their majority in number, the Ahl-e Ḥaqq were tolerant in treating followers of other religions (Binder 1887: 348), most likely due to the vernacular nature of Ahl-e Ḥaqq faith. This atmosphere of religious tolerance is reflected in the observations of Neumark, who noted that the hatred against Jews in Kermanshah is not so extreme compared to other central Iranian cities (1967: 73). Evidence suggests a close association between the Jewish and Ahl-e Ḥaqq communities.[15] For instance, during his visit to Zohab, D'Beth Hillel encountered the Ahl-e Ḥaqq[16] of the city and "stayed with them to better understand their faith" (D'Beth Hillel 1832: 89). Upon revealing his Jewish identity, he was warmly received, and the Ahl-e Ḥaqq

Hierocracy and the State, 1785–1890" in Amir Arjomand, Said. 1984. *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam. pp.* 213–273. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

**15** This closeness is endorsed by some other accounts from this century. In his march from Zohab towards Khuzistan, Major Rawlinson visited Ahl-e Haqq community in 1838. In a passage, based on etymological analysis of (sic.) Ḥolwán and its supposed association with the name of the ancient city of Halah, he argues that the (sic.) Kalhurs and (sic.) Gúráns, who are offsets of Kalhurs, as well as their faith, Ahl-e Haqq (he calls them 'Alí Iláhí), are reminiscent of the Jews who were captured by the Assyrians in ancient time and settled in this region. He writes: "Jewish traditions abound in this part of the country, and David is still regarded by the tribes as their great tutelar prophet. If the Samartian captives can be supposed to have retained to the present day any distinct individuality of character, perhaps the Kalhur tribe has the best claim to be regarded as their descendants. . .They [referred to Kalhors] have many Jewish names amongst them, and, above all, their general physiognomy is strongly indicative of an Israelish descent. . .a part of them [referred to Kalhors] with the Gúráns, are still of the 'Alí Iláhí persuasion- a faith which bears evident marks of Judaism, singularly amalgamated with Sabæan, Christian and Mohammedan legends"(Rawlinson 1838:35–36). Later on, he adds that those 50,000 families of Jews of Hhuphthon mentioned by the Spanish Benjamin of Tudela, may have been the Ahl-e Haqq adherents whose faith at the time of Benjamin "may have been less corrupted" (ibid. 36–37). Julius Heinrich Petermann visited the region of Kermanshah at large in 1865. In Kerend he met several Ahl-e Haqq believer, including his own mule rider. He writes: " Gegen die Juden sind sie sehr freundlich gesinnt, und unser Qatirdschi sagte einst zu einem Juden unserer Begleitung, dass ihre Religion und die seinige eigentlich gleich sein. Dieses ist möglicherweise auch nicht so ganz unrichtig, da sie nach Allem, was wir über sie erfahren konnten, ein verzerrtes Judentum haben, und vielleicht von den Juden der Gefangenschaft abstammen "(Petermann 1865: 263). He also saw that an Ahl-e Haqq lady smoke from the same nargileh from which two Jews had already smoked (ibid. 263), and noted that the recipe of baking a bread by an Ahl-e Haqq lady was similar to the Jewish Mazzoth (ibid. 265).

**16** D'Beth Hillel designates this community as *davoodee* (D'Beth Hillel 1832:89.)

expressed a sense of spiritual kinship, stating that "there is no more than the skin of an onion between their faith and that of the Israelites" (D'Beth Hillel 1832: 89–90). To support this statement, D'Beth Hillel enumerates several similarities between the two faces, such as practicing circumcision, believing "in one God of Abraham, Isac, and Jacob," and "in Moses who is called by them "Moosa Rabbina" (sic.) and "in Benjamin" and "in King David".[17] This passage not only highlights the aspect of physical proximity but also underscores the presence of a remarkable openness and receptivity, a characteristic especially pronounced within the Ahl-e Ḥaqq community.

However, despite this general peaceful coexistence between the Ahl-e Ḥaqq and the local Jewish community, Kermanshah, especially the city, experienced a concerted effort in the nineteenth century to promote Shi'ism in the region organized through cooperation between *'ulama* and the local government, to promote Shi'ism in the region. The residence of notable cleric families in the city, whom the governors usually invited to guide the local people, and later the establishment of *madrasa* under the ʿEmād al-Dowleh governorship in 1868 might have accelerated this process. This dynamic soon targeted non-Shi'i religious communities, namely the Ahl-e Ḥaqq and the Jews, and attempted to convert them to Shi'ism(Floor 2018: 45).

Āqā Moḥammad ʿAlī Behbahānī, also recognized as Āqā Moḥammad ʿAlī Kermānšāhī, stands out as one of the radical Shiite clerics who took up residence in Kermanshah during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Originally hailing from Behbahan, a city situated in the modern province of Khuzistan in southwestern Iran, Āqā Moḥammad ʿAlī relocated to Kermanshah at the invitation of Allāh-Qolī Xān Zanganeh, who served as the governor of Kermanshah during the latter half of the 1700s (Floor 2018: 44). During his tenure in Kermanshah, particularly under the governance of Ḥājjī 'Alī Xān Zanganeh, the son of Allāh Qolī Xān, the early stages of organized efforts to convert the Ahl-e Ḥaqq to Shi'ism reportedly transpired (Floor 2018: 44). Notably, Āqā Moḥammad ʿAlī Kermānšāhī earned a reputation for his stringent and uncompromising stance against Sufis in Kermanshah, a stance that led to his epithet of *Ṣūfī-koš* meaning "the sufi-slayer". While there is no documented record of any encounters between Āqā Moḥammad ʿAlī and the Jewish community of Kermanshah during his residency in the city, his polemical treatise titled *Rādd Šubahāt al-Kuffār* ("The Refutation of the Infidels' Doubts") provides insights into his views on Judaism and Christianity. According to his treatise,

**17** These names happened to represent the highly venerated figures of the Ahl-e Haqq history, i.e., Sultān Isḥāq, and his disciples Mūsā, Benyāmīn, and Dāvūd. For a short overview of their deeds in the Ahl-e Haqq faith, see Kreyenbroeck, Phillip G. (2020) *"God First and Last". Religious Traditions and Music of the Yaresan of Guran.* pp. 53–4. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.

he considered Judaism and Christianity true religions, albeit with elements that had become mixed with falsehoods over time.[18]

Another instance of polemical activities carried out by Shiite clerics against various religious communities in Kermanshah is found in a treatise titled *Hedāyat al-Nuṣayrīyyah* ("The Guidance of the *Nuṣayrīs*") authored by ʻAlī ibn Moḥammad ʻAlī al-Hoseynī al-Meybodī in the year 1898. As indicated by his epithet, al-Meybodī hailed from the central Iranian city of Meybod. The opening chapter of his treatise recounts his pilgrimage to the sacred shrines of Najaf and Karbala and subsequent residence in Kermanshah to guide the astray *Nuṣayrī*s.[19] The author systematically critiques and refutes Nuṣayrī beliefs in this treatise, demonstrating their faith's perceived corruptions and exaggerations.[20]

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**18** *Rādd Šubahāt al-Kuffār* is a polemical treatise composed in response to theological inquiries posed by Fatḥ ʿAlī Šāh, a ruler of the Qajar dynasty (Rādd, 4). In its concluding chapter titled "Ethbāt Nabovvat-e Xāṣṣe" (The Argument for Special Prophethood), Āqā Moḥammad ʿAlī Kermānšāhī addresses "šobahāt va adelle" (doubts and arguments) raised against "melale tholāth" (the three religious communities), namely Jews, Christians, and Muslims (ibid, 24). Here, the author supports the prophethood of Moses, Jesus, and Mohammad by presenting evidence and constructing arguments. However, in a subsequent subchapter titled "Xāteme dar dhekr-e baʿẓī az maṭāʿen va abḥāth-e vārede bar ṭāyefe-ye yahūd-e ʿanūd" (An epilogue on certain objections and refutations against the hostile tribe of Jews), the author critiques certain Jewish beliefs and narratives, labelling them as "kofrīyāt" (blasphemies), "hadhyānāt" (delirious ideas) (ibid, 198), and "harze" (absurdity) (ibid, 201). The context surrounding the creation of this treatise and the sources from which Āqā Moḥammad ʿAlī Kermānšāhī derived his information about Judaism and Christianity have been explored by R. Pourjavadi and S. Schmidtke (2006) as well as M. K. Rahmati (2007).

**19** *Nuṣayriyya* is commonly known as the title for a Shiite extremist religious group currently live in Syria and southeastern Turkey (see. Nuṣayriyya. *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition. Brill). However, this name was apparently in use during Qajar time to denote the Ahl-e Haqq, for it is attested in a small treatise written by Mohammad Hossein Foroughi for Naser al-Din Shah to "ascertain the truth about the religion and ways of the *ʿAlī Allāhī*s who are also known as *Nuṣayrī*, *Ghālī*, and *Ahl-e Ḥaqq*" (Kurin 2021: 2). Meybodī designs the treatise in a short preface, and three chapters: "dar bayān-e sabab va manšaʾ-e īn madhhab (On the reason and origin of this denomination)" (*Hedayat*, f.4r), "dar bayān-e bad va gholov va haqīqat-e īn madhhab (on the badness, exaggeration, and truth of this denomination)"(*ibid*, f.22r), and "dar bayān-e jahāt-e boṭlān-e īn madhhab (on the reasons of the falseness of this denomination)" (*ibid*, f.38r).

**20** The tensions between Shiites and Jews in Kermanshah occasionally escalated beyond intellectual disputes. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a series of significant pogroms occurred, with three particularly noteworthy incidents taking place between 1893 and 1909. These events were identified within the Jewish community of Kermanshah as the first, second, and third 'plunders' (Kermanshahchi 2007: 324–25). These violent episodes were primarily incited by the city's fundamentalist *ʿulama* (Islamic scholars) and carried out by angry mobs. Regrettably, the authorities, it is reported, hesitated to address the grievances of the Jewish community due to their apprehension of the *ʿulama*. In an effort to defuse these conflicts, the Jewish community adopted a strategy of mass conversion to Islam after each plunder. This decision was influenced by the

In addition to the Shiite institutionalized efforts aimed at marginalizing the Ahl-e Ḥaqq and Jews, both communities were also exposed to the influence of foreign missionary activities in Kermanshah. Before the nineteenth century, little information was available regarding the presence of Christians in Kermanshah. However, as missionary activities began to gain momentum in Iran during the nineteenth century, Kermanshah became one of their destinations. Given that conversion to Christianity was prohibited for Muslims throughout the Qajar dominions, missionaries primarily focused their efforts on religious minorities as potential converts. Kermanshah, with its sizable Ahl-e Ḥaqq population and the presence of Jewish communities, became an attractive ground for missionary work (Whipple 1900: 814, Floor 2018:52). Henry Stern, a German-born British missionary, provided a vivid account of his interactions with the Jewish community in Kermanshah. While there, he met Mollā Rachamim, the chief rabbi of Kermanshah city. According to Stern, the pressure exerted by Muslims on the Jewish community, coupled with their difficult living conditions, made them receptive to the message of Jesus (Stern 1854: 236–7).

These illustrative examples shed light on the intricate socioreligious dynamics that characterized nineteenth-century Kermanshah. During this period, both the Ahl-e Ḥaqq and Jewish communities experienced a collective sense of marginalization. This marginalization resulted from the combined impact of two influential forces: the Shiite clerical establishment and the endeavors of Christian missionaries. The shared status of 'other' within Kermanshah's predominantly Muslim environment may have played a pivotal role in fostering closer ties between the neighboring communities of Ahl-e Ḥaqq and Jews. Facing similar challenges and forms of marginalization, these communities may have found common grounds for intellectual and communal interactions.

## 5 Gūrānī literature

Over centuries, the people in the western Iranian plateau have employed a poetic idiom known as literary Gūrānī for literary purposes. Literary Gūrānī was a predominant idiom not only in Kermanshah but also in a larger area roughly corresponding to the central Zagros region, namely the modern provinces of Kurdistan, Kermanshah, Ilam, northern parts of Lorestan, and some zones in the Iraqi Kurd-

Islamic inheritance law, which stipulates that if a Muslim and a non-Muslim are both heirs of an individual, the Muslim inherits everything. This legal factor played a role in prompting some Jews to embrace Islam (Tsadik 2010: 241–42).

istan, such as the old city of Shahrizor and its vicinity. The relationship between this literary idiom and the spoken language of the region, particularly a group of dialects collectively known as Gūrānī, and the very nature of it is still among the open questions of the field.[21]

The vast corpus of Gūrānī literature consists of numerous versified texts, mainly in ten-syllabic verses. As Kreyenbroeck (2010: 70) has previously discussed, orality was the predominant domain of the Gūrānī tradition in Kurdistan, which would account for the relatively late date of the extant Gūrānī manuscripts. The earliest dated manuscript in literary Gūrānī, Ms. Or. 6444 at the British Library, is dated 1782/4 (Mackenzie 1965: 256). According to the proliferation of the Gūrānī manuscripts written in the nineteenth century, it seems that this period was a turning point in the textual history of the Gūrānī literature, a century in which the transition from oral records to the written form accelerated. This phenomenon has also been referred to as *textualization*. However, some Gūrānī texts are evidently composed several centuries before what the so-called oldest Gūrānī manuscript suggests. A blatant example of this chronological difference is *Parīšān Nāmeh* by Mollā Parīšān, a Ḥurūfī[22] follower living in the late-fourteenth/early-fifteenth century in Dinavar (Dehqan 2011:57). However, the earliest manuscripts dated to the nineteenth century, almost 500 years after the composition of *Parīšān Nāmeh* (Hosseini Abbariki 2021: 1)[23].

Regarding stylistics, Minorsky (1943: 89) categorized Gūrānī literature into three "classes": epic, lyric, and religious. Chamanara & Amiri (2018: 629–31) divide Gūrānī literature into three main "groups": religious thoughts, epics and romances,

**21** For more discussion on this topic, see: Kreyenbroeck, Philip G. & Behrooz Chamanara .2013. Literary Gurāni: Koinè or Continuum? In Hamit Bozarslan & Clémence Scalbert-Yücel (eds.), *L´e´ternelle chez les Kurdes*, 151–169. Paris: Karthala; and Mahmoudveysi, Parvin. 2016. *The Meter and the Literary Language of Gūrānī Poetry*. Hamburg: University of Hamburg dissertation (Chapter 5. pp.65–136). Gholami in her recent article (2023) discusses thoroughly different uses and meanings of the terms Gūrān and Gūrānī.

**22** Ḥurufīyyeh was a non-mainstream-Islamic and messianic movement evolved by Faẓl Allāh Astarābādī in fourteenth century. The central concept of this movement was the manifestation of God in the world through the letters, "ḥurūf". Astarābādī's main teachings comprise numerological interpretations of the Arabic and Persian alphabets, in order to perceive God, and his sealed book, Quran (Algar 2012, Bausani 2012).

**23** For a list of the oldest manuscripts of this text kept in the Iranian libraries, which are predominantly copied as late as the nineteenth century, see: Bidaki, Hadi. 2016. The Descriptive Catalogue of the Kurdish Manuscripts in the Iranian Libraries; the Religious and Romance Texts [*Fehrest-e Towṣīfī-ye Motūn-e Xatī-ye Kordī dar Ketābxāneh-hā-ye Irān: Manẓūmeh-hā-ye Dīnī va ʿāšeqāneh*], *Kashkul Journal* 5 & 6. 192–221

and lyrical poetry.[24] From a historical perspective, however, three stages are distinguishable in the development of Gūrānī literature: the early period, the Ahl-e Ḥaqq texts, and the Ardalan era. Looking back to history, some works such as Mārfatū Pīr Šālīyār composed, reportedly, in the late-eleventh/early-twelfth century and *Parīšān Nāmeh* by Mollā Parīšān composed in fourteenth-early-fifteenth century suggest that prior to the advent of Ahl-e Ḥaqq faith, who institutionalized literary Gūrānī, Gūrānī literature in particular manner existed in different Zagros spots (Fuad 1970: xi–xii).

It seems that the Ahl-e Ḥaqq were the first who elevated literary Gūrānī to the status of a sacred language. For centuries, they expressed their faith, the story of creation, and the early history of their community by using it (Chamanara 2011: 127). As far as the religious memory of the Ahl-e Ḥaqq community is concerned, most of the saintly figures of their religious tradition were Gūrānī poets inspired by their incarnated divine essence, known as *ẕāt*. Indeed, the most remarkable Ahl-e Ḥaqq religious corpus, collectively known as *Saranjām,* is an anthology predominantly in Gūrānī which is arranged chronologically, according to their emic understanding of history as cycles (or *dowra*) in which the divine essence is incarnated in human form.[25] It should be noted that literary Gūrānī remained the preferred Ahl-e Ḥaqq language until the nineteenth century. The latest Ahl-e Ḥaqq texts were versified in the first half of the nineteenth century in the Tūtšāmī village, in the vicinity of Kerend, by a religious figure, Āqā Seyed Birāka and his thirty-six dervishes (Heydari Guran 11–28).

Apparently, in the late sixteenth century, the house of Ardalan, who may have embraced the Ahl-e Ḥaqq faith, began to encourage poets to compose in literary Gūrānī (Blau 2010:7).[26] It was under their patronage that literary Gūrānī flourished

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**24** The problem in this categorization is the fact that the Gūrānī literature here is not categorized based on one single criterion; for example, in Chamanara & Amiri (2018:629), the category of "religious thought" encompasses Ahl-e Ḥaqq texts, a group of epic texts, such as *Rustam o Moqātil,* and didactic texts such as *Rūla Bizānī,* in terms of their shared themes, and the fact that all these texts are faith oriented. However, the other two groups, namely epics/romances and lyrical are categorized based on the genre. In this category, some texts, such as *Rustam o Moqātil,* may fall under two categories.

**25** There are Ahl-e Haqq corpora in Persian (see., Ivanow, W. (1953). *The Truth-worshippers of Kurdistan: Ahl-i Haqq Texts Edited in the Original Persian and Analysed by W. Ivanow*. E. J. Brill.) and Turkish (see the unpublished doctoral thesis of Geranpayeh, B. (2006). Yārıstān – die Freunde der Wahrheit: Religion und Texte einer vorderasiatischen Glaubensgemeinschaft, Die Philosophischen Fakultät, Georg-August-Universität Göttingen.)

**26** A Kurdish emirate with Sanandaj or "Sinnah" as the capital city. The early history of this emirate is not clear, but they came to the scene after Mongol invasion in thirteenth century. In the sixteenth century, they reached an agreement with the Safavids and played a key role in their conflict

in faith-neutral (genres such as lyrical and romance. The Ardalani poets developed an interest in trying new ideas, such as introducing the new poetry form, Gūrānī Ghazal, by Yūsef Yāska (1592–1636) or translation, with marginal modifications, of notable Persian poetical works such as *Leylī va Majnūn* composed initially in Persian by Nizami (d. 1209) and translated into literary Gūrānī by Xānā Qobādī (1700–59) (Ibid, 8; Chamanara & Amiri 2018: 631)

A remarkable amount of Gūrānī texts, consisting of historical, epic, romance, and didactic genres, were produced in the eighteenth century. Although many texts in this corpus, particularly the epic texts under the name of *Šānāma*, *Razmnāma*, or *Jangnāma*, have deep roots in the Zagros culture and orally prevailed in this region over centuries, the extant texts are mainly the eighteenth-century redactions of these old stories. In this century, Dīnavar and Kanduleh, located in the Kermanshah region, became prosperous centers of Gūrānī literature with figures such as Almās Xān Kandūleh'i and Mīrzā Šafīʿ Dīnavarī. The epic and romance narratives of this century usually have a religious worldview that shows close ties with the Ahl-e Ḥaqq faith (see., Chamanara 2011, 2015), thus suggesting shared sources or a formative impact of Ahl-e Ḥaqq worldview on these texts in their oral phase.

The extensive and diverse body of Gūrānī literature, encompassing a wide range of genres including religious, romantic, and historical texts, stands as the cultural memory of the region.[27] This literary tradition has served as a profound means by which the inhabitants of this region have externalized and codified their religious experiences, love stories, and epic narratives. They remembered *their* past through it (especially when one considers the epic and historical accounts) and defined their present by it (specifically in religious Ahl-e Ḥaqq texts.)

## 6 Judeo-Gūrānī

As expounded by the aforementioned sources, the Jewish communities of Kermanshah lived an intersectional life during the nineteenth century shaped by a confluence of diverse trends and societal changes that irrevocably transformed their

with the Ottomans during sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The last *valī* of Ardalan, Amānollāh Xān II, was deposed in 1867–68 by the Qajar King, Naser al-Din Shah (Oberling 1988b).

**27** According to Assman (2008: 110) cultural memory "is a kind of institution. It is exteriorized, objectified, and stored away in symbolic forms that, unlike the sounds of words or the sight of gestures, are stable and situation-transcendent: They may be transferred from one situation to another and transmitted from one generation to another… Things do not "have" a memory of their own, but they may remind us, may trigger our memory, because they carry memories which we have invested into them, things such as dishes, feasts, rites, images, stories and other texts…".

collective identity. Their society witnessed various factors that informed their personal and social identities, including differences in culture, language, and religion, which paved the way for potential cultural encounters. Indeed, on a larger scale, these communities faced two mobilized dynamics in the religious landscape of Kermanshah. The first of these was the pervasive presence of state Shi'ism, which sought to assert its influence over the region's diverse religious communities, including the Jews. The second dynamic came from Christian missionaries, who similarly attempted to convert the Jewish population to their faith. These pressures exerted by external religious forces undoubtedly impacted the Jewish communities of Kermanshah, profoundly shaping their personal and collective identities. On the intra-communal level, the arrival of Jewish migrants from various other cities and regions, each bringing their unique cultural backgrounds, further altered the nature of the Kermanshahi Jewish community. These changes, in turn, played a significant role in shaping the hybrid identity that would ultimately be expressed through the corpus of Judeo-Gūrānī.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that the Jewish communities of Kermanshah lived in a society rife with political and economic turmoil during the nineteenth century. In many ways, Kermanshah served as a microcosm of the larger geopolitical realities of the time, characterized by instability and uncertainty. Indeed, while there were brief periods of relative peace and security during the governorships of Dowlatšāh (r. 1809–21) and his son, ʿEmād al-Dowleh (r. 1852–75), the city was plagued by the instability of political power and the oppressive rule of governors appointed by the Qajar authorities. The powerful tribes of the region, while nominally allied with the central power, were, in reality, always poised to revolt at the first opportunity, adding yet another layer of uncertainty to an already tumultuous situation. The economic impact of this instability was also severe, with the people of Kermanshah suffering from widespread impoverishment due to the constant upheaval and uncertainty that characterized their daily lives. In many ways, the challenges faced by the Jewish communities of Kermanshah mirrored those faced by the broader society.

The linguistic hybridity[28] of the Kermanshahi corpus of Judeo-Gūrānī is a testament to the diverse cultural encounters and influences that shaped the lives of

**28** I borrow the term 'hybridity' from Homi Bhabhai seminal work, *The Location of Culture* (1994). Homi Bhabha's theory of hybridity proposes that cultural identities are not fixed or pure, but are constantly in a state of flux and negotiation, shaped by colonial encounters and cultural exchanges. He argues that hybridity disrupts dominant cultural narratives and opens up new possibilities for cultural innovation and transformation. Bhabha's theory emphasizes the importance of recognizing and valuing cultural diversity and hybridity, rather than seeking to impose homogenizing

the Jewish community in the region.[29] The coexistence of three languages, Gūrānī, Persian, and Hebrew, reflects the intricate web of interactions within and beyond the community. The Gūrānī language dominates the corpus, with most of the texts being versified Gūrānī texts, except for one text, Ms. Heb. 28°4385, f.84r–f.97r are known from other sources written in the Persian script. In writing headings, when they are included, the copyists used the Persian language, as other Gūrānī texts in the Persian alphabet attest. The only Persian text in this corpus is *Ḥeydar Bag va Ṣanambar,* recorded in Ms. Heb. 28°4385, f.1r, and f.49r–f.83v. The use of Persian in this context indicates the influence of Persian, as an important cultural idiom of the time, on the Jewish community. Most of the colophons are in Persian; however, some words, particularly in Ms. Heb. 28°4388, f.227v, reflect the influence of Kurdish on the employed Persian, a fact that reminds the account mentioned above of Aubin about the Persian dialect of Kermanshah.

Moreover, the presence of Hebrew in the corpus is a testimony to the Jewish identity of the community and its ties to the larger Jewish world. In this corpus, dates, when provided, are recorded following the Jewish calendar in Hebrew, a practice that underscores the community's adherence to Jewish religious customs and traditions. The two shorter colophons written entirely in Hebrew in Ms. Heb. 28°4389, f.13v clearly indicate the community's connection to the Hebrew language and its use in various contexts. The integration of Hebrew sentences and phrases into Persian colophons, as seen in Ms. Heb. 28°4388, f.228v and Ms. Heb. 28°4389, f.121v, exemplifies the fluidity of language use in the community and the creative ways in which they negotiated the diverse linguistic and cultural influences around them. Overall, the hybrid language status of the Kermanshahi corpus of Judeo-Gūrānī shows clearly the complex cultural and linguistic exchanges that occur in the multicultural society of Kermanshah.

Notable to mention is the predominant coverage of epic and romantic works of the Gūrānī literature by the Judeo-Gūrānī corpus. The Jewish community's delib-

forms of cultural assimilation or purity. He suggests that cultural hybridity provides a productive site for negotiating power relations and challenging colonial forms of domination.

**29** In his book *Hybrid Judaism* (2016), Darren Kleinberg explores the influence of social encounters on the development of Jewish identity in the United States in the 20th century. Through his analysis, Kleinberg highlights the pivotal role that these encounters played in shaping the context from which a controversial Jewish scholar, and his mentor, Irving Greenberg, emerged. Greenberg is known for his contributions to the theology of encounter, which emphasizes the importance of dialogue and interaction between different cultures and religions. Kleinberg argues that Greenberg's ideas were deeply rooted in his own personal experiences of encountering diverse cultures and communities, particularly during his time as a soldier in World War II. Ultimately, Kleinberg's work demonstrates the complex interplay between personal experience, social context, and the evolution of Jewish identity in Greenberg's personal and academic status.

erate selection of faith-neutral genres for internalization is also evidenced among their Yiddish counterparts in Europe. Recreational literary works drew inspiration from German heroic epics, chivalrous tales, European folk songs, and folk plays (Mark 1949: 860–61). The preference for epic and romance works within the Judeo-Gūrānī corpus may suggest that the community was open to communication with the outside world while maintaining its distinct Jewish identity and was committed to its religious faith. It also indicates these genres' popularity and broader circulation among the Zagros people.

In the whole corpus, the names of three copyists are attested. Our knowledge about the copyists is limited. As reflected in two colophons, Ms. Heb. 28°4385, f.82v and Ms. Heb. 28°4389, f.121v, Benyāmīn bin Elyāhū was in contact with another copyist, Yaḥazqal bin Yūnā, and borrowed the books for copying from him. Benyāmīn bin Elyāhū is known from at least three Judeo-Persian liturgical manuscripts. He is the copyist of the manuscripts number 2160[30] and 2167[31] at Klau Library of the Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, USA, and a single manuscript, JER HEKHAL Qu. 71[32], courtesy of Hekhal Shlomo, Jerusalem, Israel (Spicehandler 1968: 125–6)[33]. Moreover, Yaḥazqal bin Yūnā and the third copyist, namely Nāser Askar bin Yūnā, might have been brothers, as their equal paternal name, Yūnā, suggests.

Two colophons reveal that these texts are copied initially from a written *vorlage*. In Ms. Heb. 28°4385, f.82v and Ms. Heb. 28°4389, f.120v, Benyāmīn bin Elyāhū states that this כתב "book"[34] belongs to Yaḥazqal bin Yūnā. Moreover, these original written texts were most likely written in Persian scripts. This hypothesis relies on the fact that misspellings may appear only in a text which can only occur in a text written in the Persian alphabet. For example, כובל "mace" (Ms. Heb. 28°4385, f.2r) is the Hebrew transliteration of کوپال, which represents the regular alternation of پ to ب. Moreover, סיתן "*Sītān(<Sīstān)" (Ms. Heb. 28°4385, f.4r) which is a misspelling of سیستان most likely because the second س was written flatly as سیـــتان in the original manuscript.

This corpus reflects a complex interplay of Jewish culture and literary Gūrānī tradition, resulting in a unique form of expression that transcends the boundaries of both components. The use of Hebrew script and Jewish calendrical systems in the Judeo-Gūrānī texts situates this corpus within the Jewish tradition. Yet, their

**30** A collection of hymns and *piyyutim*.

**31** A *tafsīr* of the hymn known as אם אפס. The manuscript is tagged by the Spicehandler to be composed in Hamadan (1968: 126).

**32** Sermons of *haftarah*.

**33** This manuscript is digitized and accessible in the NLI website: https://www.nli.org.il/en/manuscripts/NNL_ALEPH990001773770205171/NLI?volumeItem=1#$FL32258541.

**34** In Ms. Heb. 28°4389, f.120v, it is spelled as כאתב.

content draws heavily on the literary and cultural heritage of the Zagros people. Combining these diverse elements creates a corpus that cannot be entirely attributed to any single cultural identity. The internalization of Gūrānī literature by the Jews in nineteenth-century Kermanshah suggests a desire to deepen their engagement with the cultural memory of the Zagros region. The resulting hybridization of Jewish literacy and literary Gūrānī tradition allowed these Jewish communities to expand their cultural horizons and become members of a broader community. This phenomenon highlights the porous nature of cultural boundaries and the potential for cultural exchange and hybridization to create new forms of expression. The Judeo-Gūrānī corpus is a compelling example of how cultural hybridity catalyzes creative innovation and cross-cultural understanding.

In the following passages, I provide a brief overview of each manuscript by presenting its contents, themes, and codicological descriptions.

## 6.1 Ms. Heb. 28°4385

The manuscript contains 129 folios, 11×17.5 cm. The lines of each page vary between 19 and 30. Each folio has the foliation sequence starting at the inside front cover with 1 and terminates at the last folio with 127; these numbers are written in Arabic numerals by pen and located in the top left corner of the recto side of each folio. The codex contains miscellaneous texts written in Gūrānī and Persian by different scribes and five colophons dated 1877, 1878, and 1879. The place of copy is not provided in the manuscript; however, as the online catalog suggests, it was copied in Kermanshah.

f.1r: *Ḥeydar Bag va Ṣanambar*: The page contains the first two couplets of the Persian romance, *Ḥeydar Bag va Ṣanambar* composed by Balākeš Kūh Nārvani in 16th CE (Netzer 1973: LXII). This text is known from other Judeo-Persian manuscripts (Moreen 2015: 54, 290). The page is damaged on the right edges and affixed later to its current place.

*Incipit:*

| *Transcription:* | *Transliteration:* |
|---|---|
| alāhī ey tūtī notq šekar... | אלהי אי תותי נותק שכר... |

*Translation:* O! Thou the mel[lifulous] parot…

f.2r–f.4v: *Babr-e Bayān*: The composer of this Gūrānī epic is anonymous. The story in the JG manuscript portrays a splendid banquet at the court of Kaykāvūs, the Kīyānī king, attended by the heroes of Iran. Suddenly, the banquet is interrupted by

a group of mourning people appealing to the king to kill a monster. This text is also known in the Persian alphabet from several manuscripts (Chamanara 2015:231–3; Fuad 1970:45) and is regarded as part of the so-called Kurdish *Šāhnāma* (Advay 2013: 62; Chamanara, ibid). The JG text is incomplete at the end.

*Incipit:*

| *Transcription:* | *Transliteration:* |
|---|---|
| kizah kabāb [u] mazah šahd šūr | כזה כבב מזה שהד שור |
| pīyāla [u] bazm miy sāqīyān ža dowr... | פיילה בזם מיי סאקין ז דור... |

*Translation:* The smell of kebab, the taste of wine
chalice and wine's banquet, pages [are] circling . . .

f.4r–f.47r: *Rustam u Sohrāb*: This Gūrāī epic, which narrates the tragic battle between Sohrab and Rustam, is versified by Almās Xān Kandūleʾī, eighteenth century (Fuad 1970: 32, 57; Mardoukh Rouhani 2003: 239). The text is well known in the Persian alphabet and is regarded as an essential component of the so-called Kurdish Šāhnāma (Chamanara 2015, passim). The JG text is incomplete in the beginning. It begins with delivering the news of Sohrāb's birth to Rustam.

*Incipit:*

| *Transcription:* | *Transliteration:* |
|---|---|
| 1-sūwār bī šī ba Sītān[35] " baʾaw ziyd | 1-סוואר בי שי בסיתנ " באוו זיד מאוא באוו |
| māwā baʾaw milk [u] makān... | מלכ מאכן... |

*Translation:* [he] mounted and went to Sistan " to that settlement and shelter, to that estate and land. . .

*Colophon*, f.47r:

| *Transcription:* | *Transliteration:* |
|---|---|
| 1-hezārān sojūt hezārān salām bar | 1-הזארן סהגות הזארן סהלם בר סחיב תביב |
| sāheb tabīb elāhī salām·: | אילהי סלם |
| 2-tamām šod īn ketāb dar rūz došabat | 2-תמם שוד אין כיאתב דר רוז דושבת כ"א |
| <21> čāhār māh iyār <5637> šanat | גיהר מהי אייר תרלז שנת תרלז. |
| 5637[36]. | |

**35** A misspelling for סיסתאן "Sīstān".
**36** It corresponds to 17.04.1877.

*Translation:* Thousands of bended knees, thousands of greetings to the lord, the divinely wise, [to him] greeting. This book was finished on Monday, the fourth of Iyyar, year 5638.

f.49r–f.83v: *Ḥeydar Bag va Ṣanambar*: This text corresponds to f.1r (see above).

*Incipit:*

| *Transcription:* | *Transliteration:* |
|---|---|
| alāhī ey tūtī notq šekar xā | אלהי אי תותי נותק שכר כאה |
| be-zendān qafas tā ka konīd jā | בזנדאן קפס תא כא כוניד גא ... |

*Translation:* O! Thou the mellifluous parrot
how long would you dwell in the prison cage…

*Colophon*, f.82v:

| *Transcription:* | *Transliteration:* |
|---|---|
| 1-īn ketāb māl-e yaḥezqal ben ha-mollā yūnā | 1-אין כתב מל יחזקל בן ם "ה יונה |
| 2-be xat kamtarin xāja ben ha-mollā lyāhū | 2-בכת כמתרין כאגה בן ם "ה ליהו |
| 3-tamām šod dar rūz 4 šab <...>5 māh | 3-תמם שוד דר רוז ד' שב <...> ה" מה |
| 4-iyār šanat <...>5638[37]. | 4-אייר שנת <...> תרלח. |

*Translation:* This book, belonging to Yaḥezqal ben ha-mollā Yūnā, was finished by the humblest, Xāja ben ha-mollā Elyāhū on day 4th, night 5th of Iyyar, the year 5638.

Beneath the colophon, in the Persian alphabet, written in pencil:

| *Transcription:* | *Transliteration:* |
|---|---|
| ketāb ḥeydar bag ṣanambar | کتاب حیدربگ و صنمبر |

*Translation:* The book of Ḥeydar Bag Ṣanambar

f.84r–f.97r: This Gūrānī historical epic is unknown from other sources. The text begins with a description of the battle between Amānollāh Beyg Vakīl and Amānollāh Xān II, known as Xolām Šāxān, the last vālī of Ardalan, happened in June 1846 (Ardalan 1953:198).

37 It corresponds to 07.05.1878.

*Heading:*

| *Transcription:* | *Transliteration:* |
|---|---|
| daʿvā kardan[-e] vakīl bā xolām šāxān vālī kordestān | דעוא כרדן ווכיל בא כולאם שאכאן ואלי כורדסתאן |

*Translation:* The battle of Vakīl with Xolām Šāxān, the governor of Kurdistan.

*Incipit:*

| *Transcription:* | *Transliteration:* |
|---|---|
| tifangčī ābdār nīm zarʿī dirāz“ dō angušt das vatāy tāj naqšsāz | תפנגׄי אבדאר נים זרעי דראז" דו אנגושת דס וואתאי האגׄי נקשסאז |

*Translation:* The prepared rifleman [with a rifle which was] half a *zarʿ* long” two fingers at the end of [rifle's] stock

*Colophon*, f.97r:

| *Transcription:* | *Transliteration:* |
|---|---|
| 1-nevešta šod rūz-e 1 šabat | 1-נושתא שוד רוזי א' שבת |
| 2-šīšom mā-[y]e tamūz šanat | 2-שיש הום מאי תמוז שנת |
| 3-5638[38], amen neṣaḥ selah va-ʿed[39] | 3-תר'לח' אנס''ו |

*Translation:* [It] was written on Sunday, sixth of month Tamuz, the year 5638. Amen! Forever and ever.

f.99v–f.100v: *Babr-e Bayān* in Gūrānī. The text corresponds to f.2r–f.4v.

*Incipit:*

| *Transcription:* | *Transliteration:* |
|---|---|
| kizah kabāban mazah šahd šūr bīyāle bazmī sāqīyān na-dowr | כזה כבבאן מזה שהד שור ביילה בזמי סאקין ...נדור |

*Translation:* The smell of kebab, the taste of wine banquet's chalice, pages [are] circling around…

**38** It corresponds to 07.07.1878. It is noteworthy that the text is transcribed in the Hebrew alphabet- only if there existed an original text written in the Persian alphabet, 32 years after the historical event happened in 1846. Given the proximity between the date of this manuscript and the date of actual event, it is remarkable to see how well-informed these Jews were of the political and intellectual discourse of Kurdish region.

**39** אנס"ו is an acronym for the Hebrew phrase אמן נצח סלה ועד “Amen! forever and ever.”

f.100r–f.122v: *Leyl-e Majnūn*: This text is a Gūrānī romance versified by Mīrzā Šafīʿ Kolyāʾī, eighteenth century (Rouhani 2003: 266). The story is a famous motif in Persian literature and has been versified several times by Persian poets, such as Nezāmī and Amīr Xosrow Dehlavī (Seyed-Ghorab, 2009). The Gūrānī text is well-known from different manuscripts in the Persian alphabet as Nowfel Nāmeh or Leylī o Majnūn (Fuad 1970:27, Hosseini Abbariki 2015: passim). The JG text begins with a haunting scene of Šā Nowfel.

*Heading* (written on f.99v in Persian alphabet):

| *Transcription:* | *Transliteration:* |
|---|---|
| ketāb leyl[-e] majnūn | کتاب لیل مجنون |

*Translation:* The book of Leyl[-e] Majnūn (Figure 1)

*Incipit:*

| *Transcription:* | *Transliteration:* |
|---|---|
| mīrzām šekār kird | מירזאם שכאר כרד“ |
| yak rūz šāy nowfil ʿazm-e šekār kird | יך רוז שאי נוופיל עזם שכאר ... כרד |

*Translation:* My master hunted; one day, king Nowfel decided to hunt

*Colophon*, f.122v:

| *Transcription:* | *Transliteration:* |
|---|---|
| 1-īn ketāb neveštam dar | 1-איו כיתאב נווישתם דר |
| 2-rūz 3 šabat 11 šabaṭ | 2-רוז ג שבת יא שבט |
| 3-šanat 5639[40] nevešta-ye | 3-שנת תרלט ניווישתאי |
| 4-<...> Askar. | 4-<...>אסכאר |

*Translation:* I wrote this book on Tuesday, 11th of Shəvaṭ, year 5639, written by <. . .> Askar.

f.122r–f.123v: This text is a short Gūrānī *mathnavī* by Mīrzā Šafīʿ Kolyāʾī.

*Incipit:*

| *Transcription:* | *Transliteration:* |
|---|---|
| čarxīm čarxīm xeyr bū | גרכים גרכים כייר בו |
| dūs del navāz yādet va xeyr b[ū]... | דוס דל נווז יאדית וכייר ב... |

**40** It corresponds to 04.02.1879.

*Translation:* I turned, I turned, may it be blessed
Oh! Beloved friend, may your memory be blessed…

f.123v–f.124r: This text is a short Gūrānī mathnavī by Mīrzā Šafīʿ Kolyāʾī.

*Incipit:*

| *Transcription:* | *Transliteration:* |
|---|---|
| falak jādūjāt | פלך גִאדוגִת |
| namāz čīš karūn gardūn jādūjāt | נמז גִיש כרון גרדון גִאדוגת |

*Translation:* The firmament [is full of] conjuration " Why should I pray, [when] The firmament [is full of] conjuration

f.124v–f.125v: This text is a Gūrānī tarjīʿ band by Seyyed Yaʿqūb Māhīdaštī[41], nineteenth century (Soltani 1998: 14).

*Incipit:*

| *Transcription:* | *Transliteration:* |
|---|---|
| dela d[ā]manī, dela d[ā]manī | דלא דמני דלא דמני |
| dāyem gīrūda ḥalqiy dāmanī | דאים גירודא חלקי דמני |

*Translation:* The heart is a trap; the heart is a trap " [it is] constantly caught in the circle of trap…

f.125v–f.127r: Gorbe u Mūš: this Gūrānī mathnavī is composed by Almās Xān Kandūleʾī. The text is well known in the Persian alphabet (Advay 2013: passim; Fuad 1970:19–20).

*Incipit:*

| *Transcription:* | *Transliteration:* |
|---|---|
| mīrzām gūš bidar! mīrzām gūš bidar! | מירזם גוש בידר מירזם גוש בידר… |

*Translation:* Listen, O! My master; listen, O! My master.

**41** Seyyed Yaʿqūb Māhīdaštī born in 1808 in Māhīdašt, Kermanshah was an Ahl-e Haqq poet who composed his poets in Kurdish, literary Gūrānī, and Persian (Soltani 1998: 14–15).

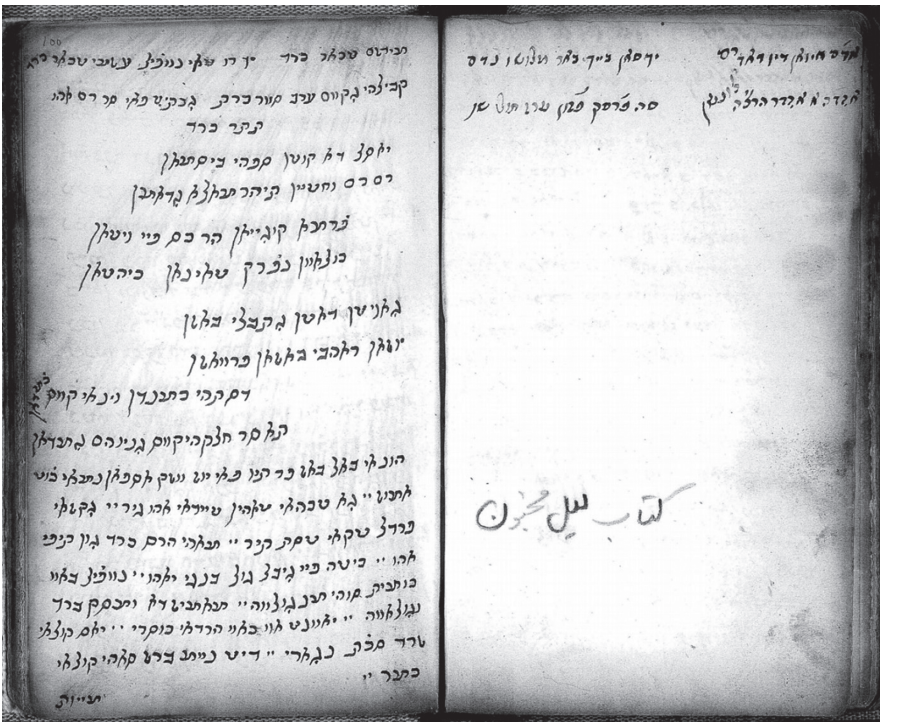

**Figure 1:** Ms. Heb. 28°4385, f.99v & f.100r.

*Colophon*, f.128r:

| *Transcription:* | *Transliteration:* |
|---|---|
| 1-aškam javāher | 1-אשכם גוואהר |
| 2-por šoda 25 māh [A?] | 2-פור שודא כ"ד מה [א...] |
| 3-šabaṭ rūz[-e] čāhār šabat. | 3-שבט רוז גֹהר שבת |

*Translation:* The phrase *aškam javāher por šoda* has no clear meaning. The rest means: "25th of month Shəvaṭ, [on] Wednesday".

## 6.2 Ms. Heb. 28°4386

The manuscript contains 86 folios, 10.5×17.5 cm. The lines of each page vary between 20 and 24. Each folio has the foliation sequence starting at the inside front cover with 2 and terminates at the last folio with 86; these numbers are written in Arabic numerals by pen and located in the top left corner of the recto side of each folio. The codex contains one complete text written in Gūrānī with a colophon

dated 1877. The place of copy is not provided in the manuscript; however, as the online catalog suggests, it is apparently copied in Kermanshah.

f.2v–f.85r: *Xoršīd-e Xāvar:* This text is a Gūrānī romance, which is also known as Xoršīd u Xarāmān depicting the love story between Xoršīd, a prince of Xāvar and Xarāmān, the princes of China. It seems that the text had different variations, as fundamental differences among the extant manuscripts may reveal (Shams, 2019). A single manuscript of Staatsbibliotheck Berlin registered as Ms. or. oct. 1171 contains a different variation compared to the manuscript of Tehran University, registered as 4181. The one in the Library of Iran Parliament, registered as 17299/1, mentions the name of the composer as Mollā Nūr Alī Kolyā'ī, while some scholars attribute the composition of this text to Almās Xān Kandūleh'ī (Fuad 1970: 37, Rouhani 2003: 239). The uncertainty about the composer of this text has led scholars to date the texts differently. While some scholars, such as Minorsky, date the composition of *Xoršīd-e Xāvar* to the early nineteenth century, others date it back to the eighteenth century (Minorsky 1943: 90, Bidaki 2016: 207).

*Heading:*

| *Transcription:* | *Transliteration:* |
|---|---|
| hāzā ketāb xoršīd xāvar | הזא כתב כֹורשיד כֹאוור |

*Translation:* This is the book of *Xoršīd-e Xāvar* ("The Sun of East")

*Incipit:*

| *Transcription:* | *Transliteration:* |
|---|---|
| pādišāhī bī na-mulk xāvar | פדשאהי בי נמולכ כֹאוור |
| wa-farmāniš bī xāvar saransar... | ופֹרמנש בי כֹאוור סרנסאר... |

*Translation:* There was a king in the kingdom of *Xāvar*
The whole east was under his command.

*Colophon*, f.86r (Figure 2):

| *Transcription:* | *Transliteration:* |
|---|---|
| 1-tamām šod ketāb xoršīd xāvar | 1-תמם שוד כתב כֹורשיד כֹאוור |
| 2-dar rūz 4 šabat 24 māh | 2-דר רוז ד' שבת כ"ד" מהי |
| 3-šabaṭ šanat 5637[42], tam tam. | 3-שבת שנת תרלז תם תם |

*Translation:* The book of *Xoršīd Xāvar* ("The sun of the East") was finished on Wednesday, 24th of Shəvaṭ, year 5637, finished finished.

**42** It corresponds to 07.02.1877.

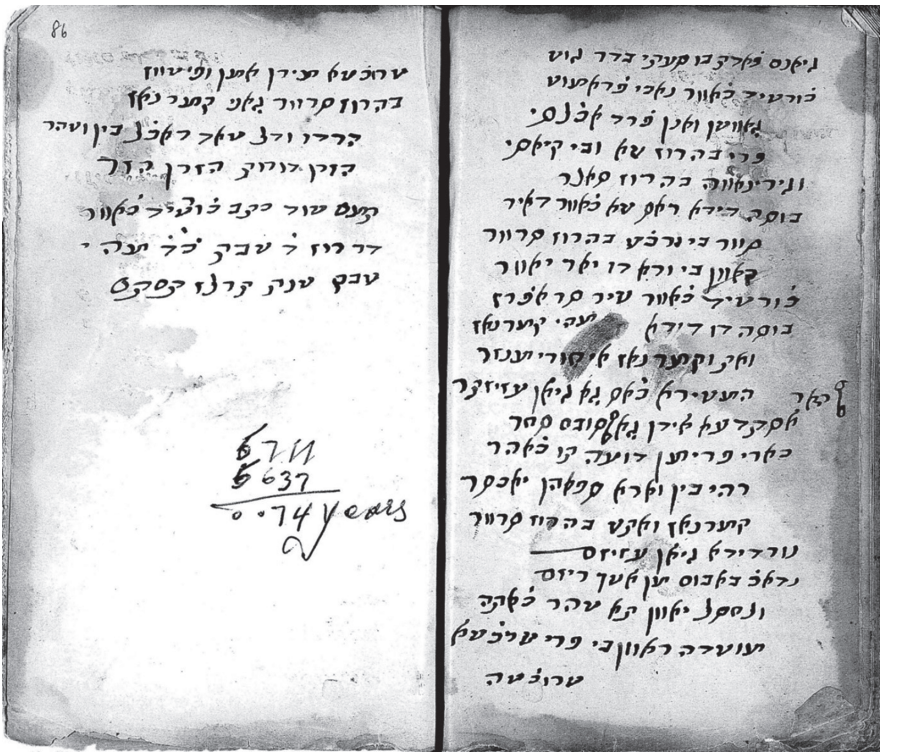

**Figure 2:** Ms. Heb. 28°4386, f.85v & f.86r.

The last folio of the codex, f.87v, contains a page apparently attached later. On the top right corner of the page, the number 1 is indicated. The first two lines (to the middle of the second line) are written in Persian; however, the rest has remained obscure.

*Colophon*, f.87v:

| *Transcription:* | *Transliteration:* |
|---|---|
| ra(?) barādar ʿazīz nūr-e čaš[m] | ר בראדר עזיז נורי גש[ם] |
| be-salāmat būdeh bāšad... | בסלמת בודה בשת... |

*Translation:* . . .dear brother, apple of eyes,
would be healthy. . .

## 6.3 Ms. Heb. 28°4388

The manuscript contains 228 folios, 11×18 cm. The lines of each page vary between 12 and 18. Each folio has the foliation sequence starting at the first folio with 1 and terminates at the last folio with 227; these numbers are written in Arabic numerals by pen and located in the top left corner of the recto side of each folio. The codex contains one complete text written in Gūrānī with a colophon dated 1885. The place of copy is not provided in the manuscript; however, as the online catalog suggests, it is apparently copied in Kermanshah.

f.1r–f.227v: *Ketāb-e Nāder* or *Nāder Nāmeh*: This Gūrānī epic is composed by Almās Xān Kandūleʾī in the second half of 18th CE. The text verifies the wars of Nader, the Afsharid king of Iran, against Afghans and Turks in the eighteenth century (Hosseini Abbariki 2017). There are several copies of this text in the Persian alphabet (Bidaki 2017: 78–80, Fuad 1970: 16–18, 54–5).

*Incipit:*

| *Transcription:* | *Transliteration:* |
|---|---|
| na-ča-tūf tūfān har na-tarsanān | נגַתוּפ תופאן הר נתרסנאן |
| *č[?]ʾr čvvrh* hāwāl pirsanā[n] | גְ[.]אר גְוורה הוואל פרסנאן... |

*Translation:* They are not afraid of the storminess of a storm
… [they are] inquiring after affairs

*Colophon* I, f.227r (Figure 3):

| *Transcription:* | *Transliteration:* |
|---|---|
| 1-katavti bi-shəvilsiman tov āqā dāvūd binū āšir[43] | 1-כאתבתי בשביל [ס"ט אג]א דאוו[ד בנו] אשר |
| 2-tamām šod ketāb nāder nāder rūz 1 | 2-תמאם שוד כתאב נאדר נאדר [ר]וז א |
| 3-rūz 1 šabat 21om ḥodeš ādār šanat | 3-רוז א שבת כא אום חודש אדר שנת |
| 4-šanat 5645[44], har ke [ḫā]nad az doʿā | 4-שנת תרמה הרכה [כ]אנד אז דועא |
| 5-man bandeh gonah kār [...] | 5-מן בנדה כונה כאר [...] |
| 6-...del šād... | 6-[...] דל שאד[...] |
| 7-...*d* laʿnat xodā...*d* | 7-[...] ד לענת כודא [.]ד |
| 8-...jahat yādegār | 8-[...] גְהת יאדגאר |
| 9-man namānam xat | 9-מן נמאנם כת |
| 10-bemānad rūz- | 10-במאנד רוז |

**43** The first line is written in Hebrew. The lacunae are reconstructed according to what is provided in the online catalogue.

**44** It corresponds to 08.03.1885.

| | |
|---|---|
| 11-gār man | 11-גאר מן |
| 12-īn neveš- | 12-אין ניויש |
| 13-tam | 13-תאם |
| 14-tam | 14-תם |

*Translation:* I wrote it as a good sign for Āqā Dāvūd binū Āšir. The book of Nāder was finished on Sunday, the 21st of the month, Adar, of the year 5645. Who reads this, [do not forget] me, the sinful man…from praying… the curse of God… I will not survive; the script will remain in the world. I wrote this. Finish!

Diagonal, right

| *Transcription:* | *Transliteration:* |
|---|---|
| 1-ketābī nevešt ... ʿaz nāz be vaqt javānī | 1-כתאבי נו[ש]ת [.]סד עז נאז בווקת גִוואני |
| 2- ʿom[r] derāz yādegārī zamāneh | 2-עים[ר] דראז יאדגארי זמאנה |
| 3-bāšad ḥonar ... | 3-באשדּ חונאר ר[.]ד[.] |
| 4-neveštam | 4-נוישתאם |

*Translation:* A book…from blandishment in the time of youth of the long life. The remembrance in the world is art… I wrote.

Diagonal, left

| *Transcription:* | *Transliteration:* |
|---|---|
| 1-agar dīdī xat zeštam manʿ makon dar *[.]m[g] ny* | 1-אגר דידי כּת זשתם מנע מכון דר [.]מ[ג] ני |
| 2-neveštam dar īn tārī ke borūn az qalam | 2-נווישתם דרין תארי כה [ב]רון אז קלם |
| 3-šod darānī būd gandom ham | 3-שוד דראני בוד גנדום הם |
| 4-čaman šod | 4-גמן שוד |

*Translation:* if you see my awful handwriting, do not blame [me], in… I wrote [it]; in the darkness which came out of the pen, was simultaneous to the time that wheat grew into the grass.

*Colophon*, II, f.227v:

| *Transcription:* | *Transliteration:* |
|---|---|
| 1-ani ha-saʾir[45] yazqal bin ha-mollā yūnā[46] | 1-אני הסאיר יאזקל בן ה"ם יונה |

**45** This word is a misspelling of הצעיר.

**46** This line is written in Hebrew.

**Figure 3:** Ms. Heb. 28°4388, f.226v & f.227r.

| | |
|---|---|
| 2-tamām kardīm ketāb | 2-תמאם כרדים כהתאב |
| 3-nāder rūz 1 šabat 5 ādār | 3-נאדר רוז א שבת דא אדר |
| 4-rīšon mā ketāb nāder | 4-רישון מא כתאב נאדר |
| 5-neveštam be ḥāl ḫerāb | 5-נוישתם בחאל כיראב |
| 6-qamgīn maḥzūr nātām | 6-קמגין מחזון נאתאם |
| 7-na kāsebī dāštam na kesmī[47] | 7-נכסבי דאשתם נכסמי |
| 8-az dast-e qaumal zāle- | 8-אז דאסתי קאומאל זאלי |
| 9-mīn sad naʿlat[48] bād be qaum | 9-מין סד נאעלת באר בקום |
| 10-bad naʿlat bar rīše-ye | 10-באד נעאלת באר רישאייא |
| 11-qaum bad naʿlat tamām | 11-קאום באד נעאלת תאמאם |

*Translation:* I [am] the humble Yazqal ben Yūnāh. We finished the book of Nader on Sunday, the 5th of the first Adar month. I wrote [this book] in a desolate, sorrowful,

**47** This word is a south Kurdish variation of the Arabic كسب "trading, job" (Jalilian 2009: 580).
**48** This word is a south Kurdish variation of the Arabic لعنت "curse" (Jalilian 2009: 732).

restricted [and] defective manner. I had no market or job because of the harm-doers (Arabic: *qaum al-ẓālimīn*). May hundred curses be upon the harm-doers. May the harm-doers be cursed (abbreviately written as *qaum*), may the root of the harm-doers be cursed (abbreviately written as *qaum*), may [it] be cursed. Finish!"[49]

## 6.4 Ms. Heb. 28°4389

The manuscript contains 122 folios, 11×17.5 cm. The lines of each page vary between 18 and 22. Each folio has the foliation sequence starting at the inside front cover with 2 and terminating at the last folio with 122; these numbers are written in Arabic numerals by pen and located in the top left corner of the recto side of each folio. A page with 1 on the top left side is attached on f.2r. The codex contains two complete texts written in Gūrānī by different scribes and two colophons, both dated to 1885. The place of copy is not provided in the manuscript; however, as the online catalog suggests, it is apparently copied in Kermanshah.

f.1v: This page contains 20 *beyt*s of an anonymous Gūrani text. The top and bottom edges are severely damaged by water, which hinders reading.

*Incipit:*

| *Transcription* | *Transliteration:* |
|---|---|
| men xamān ja del rahāndah | מן כ̇אמן גִא דל רהנדה |

*Translation* I set free sorrows from my heart

f.2r: Seven lines in the Hebrew alphabet are written on this page. The first two lines are hardly readable due to the severe water damage. It is a list of some edible materials paired with some measurements.

*Colophon*, f.2r:

| *Transcription:* | *Transliteration:* |
|---|---|
| 1- ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... .. *mišā dim* | ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ...-1 מְשָׁ דִם |
| 2- *d.g h... ... ... ... dm* | ...ד.ג ה ... ... ... דם ...-2 |
| 3- ... *s*... samq šāx-e *bvr* armanī *tvvš. zk vzlnr* : | ... ס... סמק שׂכי בור ארמני תווש. זק וזלנר : -3 |

**49** This colophon takes on significant meaning when viewed within the context of the aforementioned pogroms, which were referred to by the Jewish community of Kermanshah as "ghārat" (plunder).

4- ..*nq* qalui[50] toxmehsefīt : darmān-dart .*q*.l — 4-..נק קלוי תוגמהספת : דרמנדרת .ק.ל
5- *kf*… qan sefīt 3 šemšeh : toxmehsefīt 100 — 5-כפ... קן ספת ג' שמשה : תוכמספת ק
6- ..3 *rmnh xh* 2 mesqāl qan 1 mesqāl — 6- ..ג' רמנה כה ב מסקל קן א' מסקל <...>
7- …*l* — 7- ...ל

*Translation:*
1-
2-
3-. …gum of twig of Armenian …
4- …roasted white sunflower seed: the pain cure…
5- …white cube sugar, 3 *šemšeh*[51]: white sunflower seed 100
6- . .3 … 2 *mesqāl,* cube sugar 1 *mesqāl*
7- …

f.3r–f.12v: *Vasf-e Masīḥāy Miryām* (Figure 4): The JG text is written partly in vocalized Hebrew characters. The story is one of the Gūrānī versions of the famous worldwide tale of a miraculous dialogue between Jesus and a King's skull.[52] Two manuscripts bearing the title of سلطان جمجمه are known, which are kept in Staatsbibliothek Berlin registered as Ms. or. oct. 1153 and Ms. or. oct. 1179 (Fuad 1970: 15, 47). However, none of them complies with the JG text.[53]

**50** Thanks to Dr. Geoffry Khnn for suggesting this reading.

**51** It originally means "ingot" but in this context it is the unite of counting cube-sugar because the shape of product looks like ingot.

**52** For the Persian version of the story, see.: Zolfaghari, Hassan. 2020. سلطان جمجمه [Sultān Ğomğomeh ]. In *The Great Islamic Encyclopedia* (Vol. 5). Tehran: The Centre for the Great Islamic Encyclopedia. For a historical study of the talking skull's motif, see.: Grypeou, Emmanouela. (2016). Talking Skulls: On Some Personal Accounts of Hell and Their Place in Apocalyptic Literature. *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum* 20(1), 109–126.

**53** In 12.02.2022, I have come across an audio recitation of a text entitled سلطان جمجمه [Solṭān Jomjomah] in a Telegram group. Surprisingly, the recitation complied to the JG text almost fully. I began to search for the reciter of the text. He is Mr. Shahram Baba'i, a local researcher from Sar Pol Zohab with profound knowledge of Gūrānī literature. In 18.02.2022, he informed me that this version of Solṭān Jomjomah is composed by Mollā Valad Xān Gūrān who lived in eighteenth century, in vicinity of Kerend (Rouhani 2003: 235). According to Mr. Baba'i, the manuscript, which he has in disposal, copied by Morād Kāka'i, an Ahl-e Haqq adherent from the scribal family of Kāka'i lived in Gahvareh, in the first half of the twentieth century.

*Incipit:*

| *Transcription:* | *Transliteration:* |
|---|---|
| dānende-y dānā | ۱-دَنِنْدَیِ دَنَه |
| aftedām wa-nām dānende-y dānā | ۲-اَفْتِدَم وَنَم دَنِنْدَه دَنَه |

*Translation:* The wise who knows " I begin with the name of the wise who knows

*Colophon* I, f.13v:

| *Transcription:* | *Transliteration:* |
|---|---|
| 1- yom šnei šabat … | ۱- یوم شَنیی شبت <אללו> טט |
| 2- elul ... | ۲- אלול <תל>ת |

*Translation*: Monday. . .Elul

*Colophon* II, f.13v:

| *Transcription:* | *Transliteration:* |
|---|---|
| 1- 18 elul yom šnei šabat 5634[54] | ۱- יח אלול יום شَני شَبت תרלד |
| 2- 5635[55] nasra askar ben yūnā | ۲- תרלה <ל>נסרא אסכר בן יונה |

*Translation*: 18th of Elul, Monday, 5634, by Nāser Askar ben Yūnā

f.13r–f.120r: *Bahrām o Golandām*: This Gūrānī romance narrates the love story of *Bahrām*, son of the king *Kešvar*, and *Golandām*, the princess of China. The Gūrānī text is known, at least, from two other manuscripts in the Persian alphabet, one in Staatsbibliotheck Berlin registered Ms. or. oct. 1181, and another in the British Library registered as Add. 23,554; however, they are not identical with the JG text (Fuad 1970: 49–50; Rieu 1881: 734). The composer of this Gūrānī text is unknown.

*Heading* I, f.13r:

| *Transcription:* | *Transliteration:* |
|---|---|
| hāzā ketāb bahrām golandām | הזא כתב בהרם גולאנדם |

*Translation:* This is the book Bahrām Golandām

**54** This date is wrong because 31.08.1873 was Sunday, not Monday.
**55** It corresponds to 31.08.1874.

*Heading* II, f.13r:

| *Transcription:* | *Transliteration:* |
|---|---|
| barām golandām | برام گلندام[56] |

*Translation:* Barām Golandām

*Incipit:*

| *Transcription:* | *Transliteration:* |
|---|---|
| yak farzandī dāšt kešvar safdar | יך פַרזנדי דאשת כשוור ספַדר |
| čūn šamʿ xāvar madrā barābar | גִון שמע כַאוור מדרא בראבר... |

*Translation:* The brave Kešvar had a child
Like the candle of the east stood in front

*Colophon*, f.121v:

| *Transcription:* | *Transliteration:* |
|---|---|
| 1- tamām šod īn ketāb dar rūz | 1-תמם שוד אין כאתב דר רוז |
| 2- jomʿeh 21 māh e ādar rīšon | 2-גִומעה כ"א מהי אדר רישון |
| 3- šabat 5635[57] dar xat ḥaqīr | 3-שנת תרלה דר כַאת חקיר |
| 4- sar tā pā taqsīr benyāmīn ben | 4-סרתפה תקסיר בניאמין בן |
| 5- ha-mollā elyāhū, man neveštam īn | 5-ה"ם ליהו מן נוושתם אין |
| 6- ketāb be xoš rūzgār, man namānam | 6-כתב בכַש רוזגר מנ נמנם |
| 7- xat bemānd yādegār, tamaʿ doʿā | 7-כַאת במנד יאדגר תמע דועה |
| 8- dāram zān ge man bandeh | 8-דארם זאנג מן בנדה |
| 9- gonah kāram | 9-כונה כארם |
| 10- īn ketāb māl yaḥazqal ben | 10-אין כאתב מל יחזקל בן |
| 11- ha-mollā yūnā, tam və-nišlam | 11-ה"ם יונה תם ונשלם |

*Translation:* This book was finished on Friday, the first Adar month, in the handwriting of the humble [and] fallible, Benyāmīn ben ha-Mollā Elyāhū. I wrote this book in a pleasant time; I will not survive [but] the handwriting will. I covet [your] prayer because I am a sinful man. This book belongs to Yaḥazqal ben ha-mollā Yūnā, finished and concluded.

**56** It seems that the Persian heading has been added later. The drop of postvocalic -h- in *Barām* without compensatory lengthening in the previous vowel is odd here.
**57** It corresponds to 28.03.1875.

**Figure 4:** Ms. Heb. 28°4389, f.3v & f.4r.

# 7 Conclusion

The Judeo-Gūrānī corpus showcases a unique hybrid entity. It is simultaneously a Gūrānī and a non-Gūrānī collection of texts, and it bears the marks of both Jewish and non-Jewish intellectual traditions. The codices in the corpus embody a fascinating tapestry of linguistic contacts borne of the diverse social encounters and cultural exchanges that characterized the milieu in which they were produced. The objectives of this article were twofold: first, to delve into the cultural and social context from which this corpus emerged, and second, to provide a comprehensive overview of the contents and codicological attributes of four specific codices, collectively referred to as the Kermanshahi corpus within this article.

The primary inquiry of the initial segment of this article sought to elucidate the sociocultural milieu underpinning the emergence of the Judeo-Gūrānī corpus. It was expounded that during the nineteenth century, Kermanshah experienced a rapid and transformative series of social, religious, and cultural dynamics that left an indelible mark on the region's cultural landscape. From a linguistic stand-

point, the predominant vernacular in the region was Kurdish, complemented by the presence of a literary idiom known as literary Gūrānī. Nevertheless, over the nineteenth century, literary Persian ascended in prominence, primarily championed by the Dowlatšāhī, a cadet branch of the Qajar dynasty, which held dominion over Kermanshah during this epoch. The linguistic milieu of the city's Jewish population also underwent significant transformations due to successive waves of Jewish migration from diverse urban centers. This rich tapestry of linguistic diversity is conspicuously reflected in the multilingual composition of the Judeo-Gūrānī corpus. The majority of the texts are composed in literary Gūrānī, accompanied by a singular literary Persian text (Ms. Heb. 28°4385, f.49r–f.83v: *Ḥeydar Bag va Ṣanambar*), alongside colophons in both Persian and Hebrew.

Additionally, during this century, two religious dynamics, namely the ascendance of state-sponsored Shi'ism and the advent of Christian missionary endeavors, made their presence felt in Kermanshah. Both of these developments were aimed explicitly at non-Shiite religious communities. Consequently, the Jewish community and the Ahl-e Ḥaqq, another local non-Shiite group with deep-rooted connections to Gūrānī literature, found themselves significantly impacted by these evolving religious dynamics, which resulted in waves of conversions within their communities.

The shared experience of both communities as marginalized religious minorities likely fostered a closer cultural affinity between these historical neighbors. The outcome of this cross-religious association is also discernible within the Judeo-Gūrānī corpus. Notably, the inclusion of poems by Ahl-e Ḥaqq poets like Seyyed Yaʿqūb Māhīsaštī (Ms. Heb. 28°4385; f.124v-f.125v) and the parallel transmission of *Vasf-e Masīḥāy Miryām* (Ms. Heb. 28°4389; f.3r–f.12v), also known as *Sulṭān Jojomeh*, within both Jewish and Ahl-e Ḥaqq contexts[58], may indicate that the Jewish community received elements of the Gūrānī tradition through their association with the Ahl-e Haqq. This association likely intensified due to the prevailing circumstances in the region during that period.

In the second part, each codex has been analyzed individually. The contents of each manuscript have been thoroughly examined and compared with parallel manuscripts of the same text.

**58** See the footnote 55.

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