

(Jaffi Accent) A Sub-variety of Central Kurdish: A Dialectological Study

Asst.Prof.Dr. Twana Saadi Hamid ¹, L.Dr. Bekhal Abubakr Hussein ²

^{1,2} English Dept., College of Languages, University of Sulaimani; ¹ twana.hamid@univsul.edu.iq
² bekhal.hussein@univsul.edu.iq

Corresponding Author: Asst.Prof.Dr. Twana Saadi Hamid *

ABSTRACT

This study investigates a language sub-variety within Central Kurdish (CK henceforth). The sub-variety, spoken by a tribe known as Jaff, is spoken in the northeast of Iraq and west of Iran. The language variety is identical to CK in terms of grammar and vocabulary; it has its own phonetic features. In the literature of Kurdish dialectology, the Jaffi variety has not been studied. Mackenzie (1961, 1962) refers to the variety by collecting raw data from two speakers of the variety without describing its phonetic features or identifying the area where it is spoken. The current study concludes that Jaffi is an accent within CK, having its own phonetic features. It is also found that the variety is initiated by language contact with Southern Kurdish in the south, with Ardalani Kurdish in the north. There is variation among the Jaffi speakers in different areas where the language variety is spoken.

KEY WORDS:

1.INTRODUCTION

The study of Kurdish dialectology is still in its infancy. Some orientalist (Mann, Fossum, Jardine, Khodzko inter alia) made the effort to amateurishly describe varied aspects of the Kurdish language. Local Philologists also gave a sketchy account of Kurdish dialects: Wahby 1939; Xal 1960; Nabaz 1976. However, none of these studies consulted the linguistic features of the speakers of different varieties to classify the Kurdish language into its

dialects. Proper and linguistic study of the Kurdish dialects begins with Mackenzie (1961). The difference among the scholars is so huge that they disagree on whether certain varieties are dialects of Kurdish or separate languages. There is a general consensus, however, among scholars (Kurdish and foreign) that the Central and Northern dialects are varieties of the Kurdish language. The disagreement is on the status of peripheral dialects such as Gorani and Zazaki. Some scholars maintain that Zazaki and Gorani are not Kurdish (Mackenzie 1961; Paul

- **Publisher:** University of Sulaimani, **ISSN (Print):** 1813-0852, **ISSN (Online):** 2617-3034
- **Journal Website:** <https://sjh.univsul.edu.iq/>, **Volume:** [1], **Issue:** [3], **Year:** [2026], **DOI:** [10.17656/jzsb.12562]
- **Submission Date:** [5/5/2026], **Revised Date:** [11/5/2026], **Accepted Date:** [1/6/2026], **Published Date:** [30/9/2026]

1998a; Haig and Matrass 2002), while others consider them Kurdish dialects (Khursheed 1983; Smirnova and Eyubi 1999; Mukryani 2022).

The shortage of scholarly work on the sub varieties of the main dialects is even more severe. Fattah (2000) is the only comprehensive reference on the division of Southern Kurdish into its sub varieties. As for the Northern Kurdish, Opening and Haig (2014), Haig and Opengin (2018) are the two papers that classify it into its sub varieties. Mackenzie (1961) remains the sole serious dialect study on CK. These studies have their own flaws, including methodological, analytical, and the incomprehensive representation of the data (see Matrass et al. 2022) for a review of each study.

Mackenzie's study of CK fails to include the varieties of CK spoken in Iran. His limited mobility and unfamiliarity with the dialect resulted in misrepresenting the subdialects of CK. For example, he limits Jaffi variety by naming it "Warmawa," which is a small village located at the borders of the isogloss. Mackenzie travelled in the Warmawa locality and therefore had informants from only that area in the Jaffi subdialect. Some other studies by local researchers label the same variety as "Garmiyani," which is the name of an area in the Iraqi part of Kurdistan. Khursheed (2008: 55) claims that this variety is almost the same as Sulaimani and is spoken in Kifri, Kirkuk, and Duz. Mukiryani 2022, on the other hand, includes Garmiyani as a sub variety of CK.

This study aims to establish a subdialect of Kurdish language as a variety of Central Kurdish.

The study claims that the variety is spread along a larger area than has been reported in the literature. It tries to identify the areas where the variety is spoken. The study also tries to describe the phonological divergence of the variety from the Slemani dialect, which acts as the standard form of CK.

Even though the morph syntax of the variety is identical to CK, the variety has its own phonological features to the exclusion of other sub-varieties of Central Kurdish. The variety also has different lexical items from those of the standard version of the dialect.

2 . Previous Studies

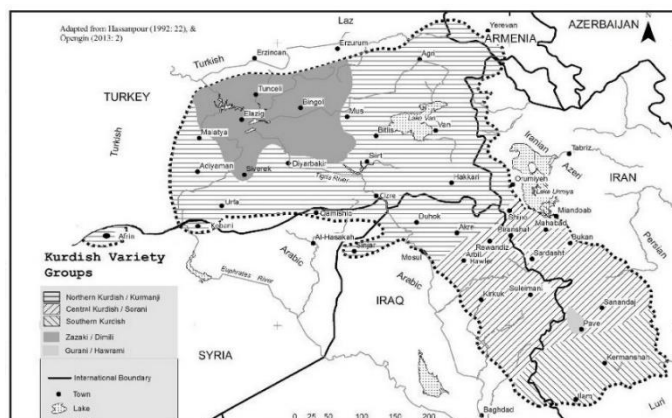
Kurdish Studies started with the orientalist in the 18th Century when missionaries visited the region. The studies are mainly limited to the grammatical description of one of the varieties without putting the broader language into perspective. In some cases, phonetic description and translation of some lexical items are given (Blau 2009). In the early 20th Century, the study of Kurdish made headway with the formation of modern Iraq when Kurdish was used in the education and administration at the local level. Some British Army rulers in the region published a description of Kurdish language (Soane 1913 and Jardine 1922). Local intellectuals, on the other hand, started a campaign of purging the language from loan words in the press (Abdulla 1980).

Kurdish is a western Iranian language of Iranian languages, a subbranch of the Indo-Iranian language family, which in turn is a branch of the Indo-

European language family. Kurdish is usually a broad name referring to a language continuum including several dialects, the main of which include Northern Kurdish, Central Kurdish, and Southern Kurdish. It is spoken by an estimated number of 35 – 40 million people spread across a vast geographical region in the Middle East between Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Armenia. Northern Kurdish, which is also referred to as Kurmanji, is spoken by the majority of Kurds in Eastern Turkey, parts of Northwestern Iran, Northern Iraq, and Northern and Northeastern Syria. The aforementioned places are known to Kurds as Northern Kurdistan, Eastern Kurdistan, Southern Kurdistan, and Western Kurdistan, or Rojava, respectively. Central Kurdish or Sorani is spoken in Eastern Kurdistan and Southern Kurdistan (also known as Kurdistan Region), where it is the official language of the Kurdistan Regional Government and media across the whole region.

Likewise, Sheyholislami (2015) believes that “Kurdish is a macro-language consisting of at least five dialect groups: Northern Kurdish (Kurmanji), Central Kurdish (Sorani), Southern Kurdish (Kirmashani/ Faili/ Kalhuri), Zazaki, and Gorani/ Hawrami” (see Map 1). The reason that

varieties classified under Kurdish are called a language continuum or macro language is that some of the varieties are not mutually intelligible.



Map(1)Kurdish Dialects (from Sheyholislami, adapted from Hassanpour 1992)

As for the CK, it has been divided into its subdialects in different ways. For Wahby (1939) and Sheyholislami (2015), Jaffi is not regarded as a subdialect of Central Kurdish. To them, CK has only four subdialects: Slemani (also known as Babani spoken in Sulaimani province); Hawleri (also known as Sorani spoken in Erbil Province, Mukri (spoken in Bikan, Shno, Sardasht), and Ardalani (spoken in the city of Sina and its surrounding villages). According to MacKenzie, the CK dialects consist of eight dialects starting from the geographical south to north: Slemani, Warmawa, Bingird, Pishdar, Mukri, Erbil, Rawandiz, and Xoshnaw.

The Jaffi, as a term to refer to a tribe and their dialect, was first mentioned by the traveller James Claudius Rich in his memoir “Narrative of a Residence in Koordistan and on the Site of Ancient Nineveh,” written in 1820 and published posthumously. Rich describes the Jaff tribe as “inhabiting the highest mountains on the frontier of

- **Publisher:** University of Sulaimani, **ISSN (Print):** 1813-0852, **ISSN (Online):** 2617-3034
- **Journal Website**<https://sjh.univsul.edu.iq/>, **Volume:** [1], **Issue:** [3], **Year:** [2026], **DOI:** [10.17656/jzsb.12562]
- **Submission Date:** [5/5/2026], **Revised Date:** [11/5/2026], **Accepted Date:** [1/6/2026], **Published Date:** [30/9/2026]

the territory of the Vali of Sina. [...] In the summer, they encamp in the high mountains of Sinna, in the autumn, they are scattered over the district of Shehrizoor; and in the winter they live at Shirwaney, on the river Diala.” He also states that “Their dialect of Koordish differs considerably from that of the Bebbeh¹ Koords”. This is the first use of the term Jaffi to refer to a certain dialect of the Kurdish language. And the dialect is associated with a tribe that travels throughout the year in certain areas during the seasons. This mobility resulted in contact of the speakers with two different varieties: Southern Kurdish in South when they inhabit in Garmiyani in winter, and the Ardalani Kurdish to the north in Summer.

The first local writer who used the term “Jaffi” for this language variety was the town administrator of Khurmāl Shakir Fattah. In 1940, he divided the speakers in the small town of Khurmāl into two different varieties: those who came from the east of the town and from the Hawraman villages speak Hawrami, whereas those who are from the west of the town and from the plains of Sharazoor speak the Jaffi variety.

On the other hand, Fattah (*ibid*) did not describe the geography of the variety or its linguistic features; he only explained that the CK speakers in the town of Khurmāl speak the Jaffi subdialect. Moreover, two other researchers referred to this variety without describing its linguistic features or its Sparchbund (Khursheed 1983; Mukiryani 2022). They use the

term Garmiyani for this dialect. They include the Garmiyani subdialect, an area that speaks the Jaffi variety within CK. However, they do not mention what Garmiyani is and where it is spoken.

Perhaps the most systematic sketch of the Kurdish dialects is that of MacKenzie (1961;1962). His division of the Central Kurdish dialect includes the Jaffi dialect (which he calls the Warmawa dialect). MacKenzie rather accurately describes the phonological features of the variety. Warmawa was a sub-district in the Sharazoor plains whose population largely speaks the Jaffi variety. MacKenzie’s data came from speakers of the Sayyara village near the district of Derbendixan. MacKenzie does not describe the area where this variety is spoken. He only indicates Warmawa on a map to be near the town of Halabja. The inhabitants of this area are indeed Jaffi speakers; however, it is a small portion of the subdialect. Moreover, MacKenzie’s study suffers from a lack of informants. He only has four informants from the same village.

Recently, the Manchester Database of Kurdish Dialects (MDKD), which is a comprehensive online database for Kurdish dialects, has been created. This database is a resource for the documentation of Kurdish varieties, covering mainly Northern and Central Kurdish. This database is unprecedented in using multiple tools of data collection, the large number of informants of the study, and the diverse locations of the data collection. The project used

both questionnaire elicitation and semi-structured interviews for data collection. Over 200 speaker consultants were recorded in over 150 locations, including South-Eastern Turkey, Northern Iraq, and Europe (Matras et al 2022).

However, apart from the gap of Southern Kurdish and Zazaki acknowledged by the project leaders, MDKD is a collection of raw data from Kurdish speakers in different areas. In other words, although the project provides data for future research on Kurdish dialectology and identifies the geographical area for each main dialect, the project in itself is not informative on classifying the Kurdish speakers into subdialects of each dialect and the geographical area for each subvariety. Moreover, given that the informants are well-schooled and highly literate, they adopt the semi-official subdialect at the expense of their local variety. The informants from the Jaffi variety switch to the “semi-official” variety of Sulaimani outside of their region. Urbanization and the influence of media and education are some other factors that brought about dialect levelling and the decline of using the Jaffi variety.

3 .Jaff as a Tribe and Jaffi as a Language Variety

Jaff is a confederation of a large Kurdish tribe inhabiting the south and east of Kurdistan. The tribe, once nomadic as they lived on livestock grazing, migrated seasonally across the Perso-Ottoman border; living in what is now called the Garbiyan administration in winter, in Halabja and Sharazoor in

autumn, and in areas between Sina and Kermashan in summer. Jaff people are native to the northern and central Zagros area, which is divided between Iran and Iraqi Kurdistan. The Jaff tribe originated in the year 1114 under the Kurdish King Zaher Beg Jaff. The Jaffi dialect is part of Sorani, a south-eastern branch of the Kurdish language family.

The governor of Kurdistan in the years 1867-74, prevented the sections stationed in the Ottoman territories from entering Persia (Fariborz 2012 Iranica). The Jaff tribe is now settled in some north-west areas of Iran in the towns of Javanrud, Ravansar, Serpile Zahab, Qasri Shireen, and some areas around Paveh. In Iraq, the tribe is scattered in the north east of the country; mostly located in the towns of Halabje, Kalar, Derbendixan, and the villages and small towns around them

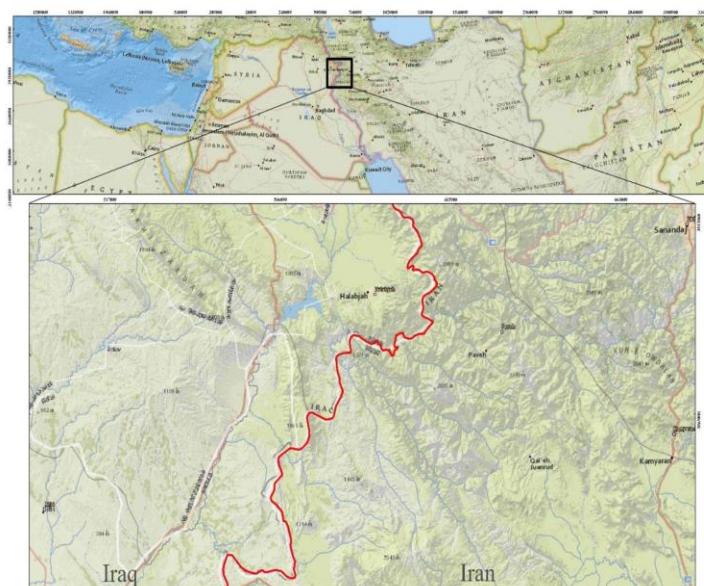
The area in the black dotted line is the area where the Jaff tribe mostly lives. However, this area is inhabited by other people, such as Gorani speakers. “The language of the Jāf belongs to the group of Kurdish dialects known as Sōrāni, but it has adopted many elements of Gurāni and south Kurdish, especially in regions like “Māhidašt” and Qaşr-e Širin, where they live next to the south Kurdish speakers in many towns and villages. The Jāf are culturally related to the inhabitants of Central Kurdish, like the Mokri, Bābān, and Sōrān”(ibid).

There are two reasons to assume the (Jaffi) variety belongs to the area and the people who live there, not to the tribe itself. First, some other people who do not belong to the Jaff tribe but live in that area speak the variety. Some people who live in the

- **Publisher:** University of Sulaimani, **ISSN (Print):** 1813-0852, **ISSN (Online):** 2617-3034
- **Journal Website**<https://sjh.univsul.edu.iq/>, **Volume:** [1], **Issue:** [3], **Year:** [2026], **DOI:** [10.17656/jzsb.12562]
- **Submission Date:** [5/5/2026], **Revised Date:** [11/5/2026], **Accepted Date:** [1/6/2026], **Published Date:** [30/9/2026]

town centres of Halabja do not belong to the Jaff tribe, but they speak the Jaff variety. The Jaff tribe indeed settled in the area, but not all the people who live in that area belong to the Jaff tribe. Nevertheless, all the inhabitants of the area speak the Jaffi variety. Second, some branches of the Jaff tribe who live outside the area, in Dukan district and Jaffan Valley (the valley of Jaffs), west of Sulaimani city, do not speak the variety. Therefore, one can conclude that the variety belongs to the area, not to the tribe.

However, the area that speaks the variety (Sparchbund) is not a uniform area, such as a city, province, region, or any other geographical title. The closest name to the variety could not have another label other than Jaffi, as the Jaff tribe forms the majority of people who live in the area. Other names for the variety, such as Warmawa (MacKenzie, 1961) and Garmiyani (Khursheed, 1983, and Mukryani, 2022), are only a small part of the area where the variety is spoken. Map (2) shows the area where the variety is spoken. As it is clear from the map (2), the Jaff tribe area coincides with the area where the variety is spoken.



Map (2) Jaffi speaking area

4 . The Results

This study argues that there is an unreported cross-country variety of CK. The variety starts from Ravansar and Javanrud from the east, including Salas Bawajani, Sarpole Zahab, and the non-Gorani areas around Paveh in Iran. It crosses the Iraqi border to include Halabja, Sharazoor, and Garmiyani. Since this area is mainly inhabited by a tribe known as Jaff, we propose to use the “Jaffi” term for this variety. In the dialectology literature of Kurdish, this variety has been reported improperly. MacKenzie (1961) describes the linguistic account of this variety. He claims that this variety, which is a subdialect of CK, is spoken only in the west of Sharazoor (Warmawa). On the other hand, Hama Khursheed (1983) and Mukryani (2022), (1980) describe this sub-dialect of CK as Garmiyani. However, the linguistic account of this variety, as stated above, is much wider than

described in the literature, starting from Ravansar in the east to Kifri and Garmyan in the west.

The linguistic behaviour that sets this variety apart from other sub-dialects of CK is mainly phonological. So, it is more of an accent than a dialect. The Sulaimani sub-variety of CK is unofficially regarded as the standard variety of CK since it is the language of media, education, and administration in the region. Therefore, the Jaffi variety's unique linguistic features are compared to the Sulaimani sub-variety. The Jaffi Variety is mainly distinguished from other CK sub-varieties by the following features (IPA transcription is used to present the data):

1. Invariably, /s/ replaces the copular verb /a/ for the third person singular when the complement (adjective or noun) ends with non-high vowels /a, o/ and /a/:

Sulaimani	Jaffi	Gloss
/ʔazaʒa /	/ʔazas/	'he is brave.'
/ʃarazaʒa/	/ʃarazas/	's/he is an expert.'
/haʔoja/	/haʔos/	'it is eagle.'
/pandʒaraja/	/pandʒaras/	'it is window'

In the Sulaimani variety of CK, the hiatus resulting from a noun or adjective ending with a non-high vowel followed by the copular verb /a/ is resolved by the glide insertion.

2. The copula verb /a/ does not change to /s/ when the complement ends with high vowels or ends with a consonant:

Sulaimani	Jaffi	Gloss
/spi + a/	/spija/	'it is white'
/pamu + a/	/pamuwa/	'it is cotton'
/dʒuwan + a/	/dʒuwana/	'it is pretty'
/sur + a/	/sura/	'it is red'

3. /s/ also replaces the copular verb /a/ in the verb *habun* 'to have', which expresses possession. The construction /habun/ consists of the prefix /ha/, which stands for possession, and the copular verb /a/ in present and /bu/ in the past. The prefix and the copular verb sandwich the clitic, which stands for the personal pronoun. Here, some other phonological alternations accompany the /a/ to /s/ shift.

The verb is used with all the personal pronouns:

<u>Sulaimani</u>	<u>Jaffi</u>	<u>Gloss</u>
/hama/	/hasim/	'I have it.'
/hata/	/hasit/	'you have it.'
/hamana/	/hasman/	'we have it.'
/hatana/	/hastan/	'you have it.'
/hajati/	/hasi/	'ha has it.'
/hajana/	/hasjan/	'they have it.'

This construction seems to be a combination of the verb *to have*, the verb *to be*, and the clitic that refers to the person number. The prefix /ha/ refers to the verb to have, whereas the /a/ is the copular verb of the construction, which is semantically empty as it has a syntactic function of agreement rather than any lexical meaning. In addition, the clitic pronoun that refers to person number is sandwiched by the

/ha/ ‘verb *to have* and the /a/ the copular verb *to be*. However, in the Jaffi variety, the copular verb, which is represented by /s/, swaps its place with the personal pronouns.

4. The verb iterative suffix /awa/ is attached to the end of conjugated verbs and infinitives, adding repetition to the meaning of the verb. The suffix can be added to both transitive and intransitive verbs, to active and passive voice verbs, and to past and present verbs (Karami 2017). However, the /awa/ suffix is realised as /o/ in the Jaffi variety, as shown in the examples below:

	<u>Sulaimani</u>	<u>Jaffi</u>	<u>Gloss</u>
i.	/nusimawa/	/nusimo/	‘I wrote it again’
ii.	/daxwenimawa/	/daxwenimo/	‘I am reading again’
iii.	/xawtimawa/	/xawtmo/	‘I slept again’
iv.	/sutenrajawa/	/sutenrajo/	‘was burnt again’
v.	/hastenrajawa/	/hastenrajo/	‘was raised again’

The reason for the change in the examples (i-iii) can be attributed to the vowel cluster merge known as vowel coalescence or hiatus resolution. As for the examples in (iv and v), since the merging of the vowels in *awa* does not result in a hiatus resolution since the suffix is preceded by a vowel. Therefore, the vowel cluster in Jaffi, similar to the Sulaimani variety, is resolved by glide insertion.

5. In the perfective aspect, when two adjacent low vowels cause coalescence in Sulaimani, they are blended to a mid-back vowel in Jaffi:

<u>Sulaimani</u>	<u>Jaffi</u>	<u>Gloss</u>
/hatawa/	hato	‘came back’
/dajxstawa/	/dajxsto/	‘locked again’
/kuzandjawa/	/kuzandjo/	‘switched off’
/ʃunawa/	/ʃunawao/	‘went back again’

The resolution of hiatus through coalescence in Jaffi (as in 4 and 5), rather than glide insertion as in Slemani, can be attributed to contact with Gorani.

6. In complex and compound adjectives derived from infinitive, in passive and transitive form, /g/ replaces /w/ and a glide phoneme is inserted:

	<u>Sulaimani</u>	<u>Jaffi</u>	<u>Gloss</u>
i.	/nusraw/	/nusjag/	‘written’
ii.	/stamlekraw/	/stamlekrjag/	‘oppressed’
iii.	/sutaw/	/sutjag/	‘burnt’
iv.	/ʃkaw/	/ʃkjag/	‘broken’
v.	/dilsutaw/	/dilsutjag/	‘heart-broken’

7. Likewise, in nouns, Jaffi /ig/ replaces the /w/ in other subvarieties of CK:

	<u>Sulaimani</u>	<u>Jaff</u>	<u>Gloss</u>
i.	/mirdu/	/mirdig/	dead
ii.	/xanu/	/xanig/	house
iii.	/dazu/	/dazig/	thread
iv.	/tinu/	/tinig/	thirsty
v.	/zinu/	/zinig/	alive

8. In the Jaffi variety, /s/ replaces /t/ when it is followed by a front high vowel in complement + copular second person /t/:

<u>Sulaimani</u>	<u>Jaffi</u>	<u>Gloss</u>
/garmajati/	/garmajasi/	‘s/he is hot’
/maweti/	/magesi/	‘not finished’
/tinujati/	/tingesi/	‘s/he is thirsty’
/birsijati/	/birsijasi/	‘s/he is hungry’

9. The stop consonants are mostly lenited in the Jaffi variety or deleted in consonant clusters:

<u>Sulaimani</u>	<u>Jaffi</u>	<u>Gloss</u>
/xabar/	/xawar/	‘news’
/dʒuwab/	/dʒuwaw/	‘answer’
/qabirsan/	/qawarsan/	‘graveyard’
/haʎabdʒa/	/haʎawdʒa/	‘city name’
/mamosta/	mamosa	‘teacher’
/xast/	/xas/	‘thick’

5 .Discussion

This study investigates the Jaffi variety, focusing on the most distinctive phonological characteristics that differentiate it from other Central Kurdish sub-dialects. The dialectological analysis revealed systematic phonological alterations, particularly the replacement of the copular verb /a/ with /s/ in specific morphosyntactic contexts and the substitution of /w/ with /g/ in complex and compound adjectives. These features underscore the unique identity of the Jaffi variety within the CK linguistic continuum.

As the results indicate, the Jaffi variety is an established accent with its own unique phonetic features and a clear geographical area for its

speakers. The results also demonstrate that the speakers in a certain cross-country geographical area have their own accent, as the variety has its own features. The accent has salient phonetic features that differentiate it from other CK subvarieties. When the copular verb /a/ is preceded by a non-high vowel in the complement, it is replaced by /s/ in the Jaffi variety. Another feature is that the /awa/ verb suffix in the Sulaimani variety, denoting the repetition of the action, is replaced by /o/ in the Jaffi variety. Consonant lenition is more prevalent in Jaffi compared to other subvarieties of CK.

The use of /s/ could be attributed to language contact influence with Farsi. /est/ is also used in Farsi as a copular verb. پنجره است is the translation of *panjaras*. There is also some evidence from the vocabulary of Jaffi that shows it has a closer language contact with Farsi.

10. <u>Sulaimani</u>	<u>Jaff</u>	<u>Farsi</u>	<u>Gloss</u>
/wara/	/be/	/bija/	‘come’
/dirang/	/der/	/der/	‘late’
/henan/	/hawrdn	/awrdan/	‘bring’

Apart from Mackenzie’s (1961) incomplete description of the variety, no researcher has alluded to the Jaffi variety. The Jaffi variety’s linguistic features are similar to what MacKenzie calls Warmawa. In fact, Warmawa village is in the middle of the Jaffi speaking area. However, MacKenzie only recorded two speakers of the variety from a village of the informants of his study, but he did not explain where the geographical area of the variety is, and why

- **Publisher:** University of Sulaimani, **ISSN (Print):** 1813-0852, **ISSN (Online):** 2617-3034
- **Journal Website**<https://sjh.univsul.edu.iq/>, **Volume:** [1], **Issue:** [3], **Year:** [2026], **DOI:** [10.17656/jzsb.12562]
- **Submission Date:** [5/5/2026], **Revised Date:** [11/5/2026], **Accepted Date:** [1/6/2026], **Published Date:** [30/9/2026]

the variety is different from Central Kurdish. The researchers of the current study are native to the Jaffi area and therefore have first-hand access to the linguistic features of the variety. A possible explanation of restricting the Jaffi variety in MacKenzie's study is that he tried to identify the different varieties of each dialect and where they are spoken, without pinpointing the geographical area of each isogloss.

The results here suggest that the Jaffi variety forms a wide area of CK. This requires a review of CK subvarieties and reconsider a new sociolinguistic classification. Due to rapid urbanization and pressure from the Slemani "substandard" dialect, Jaffi undergoes dialect levelling and diffusion among the younger generation. Therefore, it is of huge necessity to record and recognize the linguistic features of the variety. Further research on Jaffi is needed to compare it with the neighboring varieties, particularly in the area where there is contact with another variety, such as the Garmiyan area, where it borders the southern Kurdish dialect.

Despite the clear results from the current study, certain crucial aspects of the variety have not been investigated. Variation within the Jaffi variety is clearly observed and calls for independent research. Since Jaffi borders three other subvarieties: Southern Kurdish from the south, Slemani variety from the west, and Ardalani variety from the north, its speakers who border those areas have picked up features of their bordering dialects. Younger generations of the Jaffi speakers do not use the variety when they interact with speakers of the other

CK varieties. Therefore, future research must compare the older and younger Jaffi speakers in terms of using their accent and look into the factors that push them to abandon the variety. To show patterns across age, gender, class, and region, future quantitative studies should also explore the variationist sociolinguistic approach of the variety.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, the documented phonological deviations may be influenced by social factors such as community identity, language contact, and regional interaction patterns. The Jaffi variety thus not only embodies a linguistic system with distinctive structural elements but also reflects the social dynamics and historical processes shaping language use in the region. Comparatively, while other CK subdialects exhibit their own phonological and lexical variations, the patterns observed in Jaffi suggest a localized innovation or maintenance of archaic features absent elsewhere. This adds a rich layer to Kurdish dialectology, emphasizing the need to recognize micro-dialectal variation for accurate linguistic classification and description.

The reliance on native speaker intuition as a primary methodological tool provided valuable qualitative insights but also poses limitations, notably a lack of broader empirical validation and potential subjectivity. Future research would benefit from combining socio-phonetic fieldwork, acoustic phonetic analysis, and larger speaker samples to strongly confirm and extend these findings.

This study advances understanding of the Jaffi variety's linguistic profile and sociolinguistic context, contributing significantly to the

dialectological mapping of CK. It invites further interdisciplinary exploration to deepen insights into language variation, change, and identity in Kurdish-speaking communities. The phonological features that characterize the Jaffi variety, such as the replacement of the copular verb and specific consonant substitutions, can be viewed as part of such isoglosses.

6 . Conclusions

The results show that there is a hitherto unreported variety within the CK. The variety is spoken in the area where the Jaff tribe is inhabited. The variety is more of an accent than a dialect since most of the linguistic features that distinguish it from the CK are phonetic. No significant unique lexical and/or morpho-syntactic characteristics of the variety are found or reported. No sociolinguistic variables, such as age, gender, or social class, are reported to be the trigger of the accent. The accent is spoken in a geographical area that separates it from the neighboring varieties. Therefore, it can be concluded that the Jaffi variety is a typical example of the phonological isogloss.

The nomadic Jaffi speakers' seasonal movement in the past, generating contact with different language varieties, has brought about the accent: southern Kurdish in the south and Ardalani Kurdish in the northeast. In other words, the accent is rooted in contact-induced language change. Under the influence of urbanization and schooling, the accent has undergone leveling and diffusion.

Therefore, the variety is not widely used by the the Jaffi younger generations and the Jaffis dwell in the metropolitan cities such as Sulaimani and Erbil. Language transmission is achieved through socialization and culture, not genetically. In addition, languages undergo generational replication errors, which means the slight changes that happen when language is passed from one generation to the next. Each generation learns the language of the previous one, but they never copy it perfectly, so tiny differences appear over time. Likewise, the Jaffi variety is not widely used by the younger generations nowadays. Therefore, it is recommended that quantitative studies look into the age factor among the Jaffi speakers.

Further studies can also investigate the impact of other sociolinguistic variables on this conclusion, especially the variation among the Jaffi speakers who neighbour different language varieties.

References

- Abdulla, J. (1980) Some aspects of language purism among Kurdish speakers. Ph.D. thesis, University of York.
- Blau, J. (2009). Kurdish language. II. History of Kurdish studies. In E. Yarshater (Ed.), *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (online ed.). Encyclopaedia Iranica Foundation.
- Fattah, I. (2000). Les dialectes kurdes méridionaux: Étude linguistique et dialectologique (Acta Iranica 37). Leuven: Peeters
- Fossum, L. O. (1919). *Practical Kurdish grammar*. Inter-Synodical Evangelical Lutheran Orient-Mission Society.

- Haig, G., & Matras, Y. (2002). Kurdish linguistics: A brief overview. *Language Typology and Universals*, 55(1), 3–14. <https://doi.org/10.1524/stuf.2002.55.1.3>
- Haig, G., & Öpengin, E. (2018). Kurmanjî Kurdish in Turkey: Structure, varieties, and status. In C. Bulut (Ed.), *Linguistic minorities in Turkey and Turkic-speaking minorities of the peripheries* (pp. 157–230). Harrassowitz.
- Haig, G., & Öpengin, E. (2024). Gorani substrate within Kurdish: Evidence from southern dialects of Central Kurdish.
- Hamzeh'ee, M. R. F. (2012). Jāf. In E. Yarshater (Ed.), *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (online ed.). Encyclopaedia Iranica Foundation. <https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/jaf>
- Jardine, R. F. (1922). *Grammar and vocabulary of the Kurdish language as spoken by the Kurds of Mosul division and surrounding districts of Kurdistan*. Government Press.
- Jardine R. (1922). *Bahdinan Kurmanji: a Grammar of the Kurmanji of the Kurds of Mosul Division and Surrounding Districts of Kurdistan*. Baghdad
- Karami, S. (2017). *Lexicology of the Kurdish language* (1st ed.). Kurdistan University Press.
- Khodzko, A. (1857). *Grammaire de la langue kurde*. Imprimerie Impériale.
- Khursheed, F. (1983). *Kurdish Language and the geographical distributions of its Dialects*. Baghdad, Ishbelia Press.
- Khurshid, F. H. (2008). *Kurdish language and its dialects: A geographic analysis* [In Kurdish]. Sulaimani: Sardam Publishing House.
- MacKenzie, D. N. (1961). *Kurdish dialect studies* (Vol. 1). Oxford University Press.
- MacKenzie, D. N. (1962). *Kurdish dialect studies*. (Vol. 2). London: Oxford University Press.
- Manchester Database of Kurdish Dialects (MDKD)* [Database]. The University of Manchester.
- <https://kurdish.humanities.manchester.ac.uk>
- Mann, O. (n.d.). *Kurdish grammar and texts* [Manuscript]. (Cited in MacKenzie, 1961, as an unpublished 60-page sketch of a Kurdish dialect.)
- Matras, Y., et al. (2022). *Structural and typological variation in the dialects of Kurdish*. Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-78837-7>
- Mukryani, K. (2022). *Kurdish dialects: Research and Comparison*. Sanandaj: Rojhelat publication
- Nebez, J. (1976). *Zimanî yekgirtûy Kurdî* [Towards a unified Kurdish language]. Bamberg: National Union of Kurdish Students in Europe (NUKSE).
- Öpengin, E., & Haig, G. (2014). Regional variation in Kurmanji: A preliminary classification of dialects. *Kurdish Studies*, 2(2), 143–176.
- Paul, L. (1998a). Zazaki: A Kurdish dialect or an independent language? In G. Haig & S. Yıldız (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 3rd International Conference on Kurdish Linguistics* (pp. xx–xx).
- Rich, C. J. (1836). *Narrative of a residence in Koordistan, and on the site of ancient Nineveh: With journal of a voyage down the Tigris to Bagdad and an account of a visit to Shiraz and Persepolis* (Vols. 1–2). J. Duncan. (Journey undertaken in 1820.)
- Saadi Hamid, T. (2023). Jaffi Variety: A sub-dialect of Central Kurdish. Paper presented at the 6th International Conference on Kurdish Linguistics (ICKL6), Frankfurt, Germany
- Sheyholislami, J. (2015). Identity, language, and new media: The Kurdish case. In H. K. Holmes (Ed.), *Language and the media: Critical perspectives* (pp. 289–312). Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Sheyholislami, J. (2015). Language varieties of the Kurds. In W. Taucher, M. Vogl, & P. Webinger

(Eds.), *The Kurds: History, religion, language, politics* (pp. 29–51). Vienna: Austrian Federal Ministry of Defence and Sports.

Smirnova, I. A., & Eyubi, K. R. (1999). *Kurdskij dialekt mukri* [The Mukri Kurdish dialect]. St. Petersburg, Russia: Institute of Oriental Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences.

Soane, E. B. (1913). *Grammar of the Kurmanji or Kurdish language*.

Wahby, T. (1929). *Dastûr-i ziman-i Kurdî* [Grammar of the Kurdish language].

Baghdad, Iraq: Matba‘at al-‘Irāq.

Xal, M. (1960). *Ferhengî Xal* [Xal dictionary].

Silêmanî, Iraq: Xal Publishing House.

یوخته:

ئەم ئىكۆلىنەمۇ ئىكۆلىنەمۇ لە ژۇر جۆرە زمانىك دەمات لە ناو كوردى ناوەراست (CK) لەمەدوا. (ئەم جۆرە لاوەكەيە كە لەلايەن ھۆزىكى ناسراو بە جافەمە قەسەى پىندەكرىت، لە باكوروى رۆژەھەلاتى عىراق و رۆژناوای ئىران قەسەى پىندەكرىت. جۆراوجۆرى زمان لە روى رىزمان و وشەسازىيەمە ھاوشىوہى سەى كەمە؛ تايبەتمەندى فونىتىكى تايبەتى خوى ھەمە. لە ئەدەبىياتى زاراوەناسى كوردىدا، جۆرى جافى ئىكۆلىنەمۇ لەمەمە نەكرائە. ماكىزى (1961، 1962) ئاماژە بە جۆرەكە دەمات بە كۆكرەنەمەى زانىارى خام لە دوو قەسەمەى جۆرەكە بەبى ئەمەى باسى تايبەتمەندىيە فونىتىكىيەكانى بكات يان ئەم ناوچەمە دەستنىشان بكات كە قەسەى تىدا دەكرىت.

لیکۆلینەو مەکانی ئێستا بەو ئۇنجامە دەگەن کە جافی لە هەجیە کە لەناو
سی کەیدا، تاییەتمەندی فۆنیتیکی تاییەتی خۆی هەیە. هەروەها
دەرکەوتوو کە جۆر و جۆرییە کە لە بەرکەوتنی زمان لە گەڵ کوردی
باشوور لە باشوور، لە گەڵ کوردی ئێرە لانی لە باکوور
دەستبەندە کات. جیاوازی لە نێوان جافی قسە کەر مەکاندا هەیە لە بوارە
جیاوازی مەکاندا کە جۆر و جۆری زمانە کە قسە ی بێدەکرێت.

الملخص

تتناول هذه الدراسة لهجة فرعية ضمن اللغة الكردية الوسطى (يُشار إليها فيما يلي بـ "الكردية الوسطى"). تتحدث هذه اللهجة قبيلة تُعرف باسم "جاف"، وتنتشر في شمال شرق العراق وغرب إيران. تتطابق هذه اللهجة مع اللغة الكردية الوسطى من حيث القواعد والمفردات، إلا أنها تتميز بخصائص صوتية خاصة بها. لم تُدرس اللهجة الجافية في أدبيات علم اللهجات الكردية. وقد أشار إليها ماكيزي (1961)، من خلال جمع بيانات أولية من متحدثين اثنين دون وصف خصائصها الصوتية أو تحديد المنطقة التي تُتحدث فيها.

تخلص الدراسة الحالية إلى أن اللهجة الجافية هي لهجة ضمن اللغة الكردية الوسطى، ولها خصائص صوتية مميزة. كما تبين أن هذه اللهجة نشأت نتيجة التداخل اللغوي مع اللغة الكردية الجنوبية في الجنوب، ومع اللغة الكردية الأرمنية في الشمال. ويوجد تباين بين متحدثي اللهجة الجافية في المناطق المختلفة التي تُتحدث فيها.