



# ARABIC LANGUAGE II. IRANIAN LOANWORDS IN ARABIC

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## ARABIC LANGUAGE

### ii. Iranian Loanwords in Arabic

Loanwords in Arabic, traditionally called *mo'arrab* (arabicized) or *daḳīl* (foreign words), include a considerable number of Iranian elements. Political relations between the Iranians and the Arabs go back to the Achaemenid period (5th century B.C.), when *Arabia* (Old Pers. *Arabāya-*) formed a satrapy of the Persian empire consisting of Palestine, Lebanon, and the Syrian desert up to the Euphrates. In the absence of any evidence for cultural relations between the two nations in this period, Arabic words that can be proved to be of Old Iranian origin must have been borrowed later through Aramaic, which was the *lingua franca* and the chancellery language of the Achaemenids. From the 5th century A.D., the Lakhmid princes of Ḥīra in Babylon, west of the Euphrates, were Sasanian vassals, and the Lakhmid kingdom was one of the cultural intermediaries between the two peoples. Some of the Arab poets of the Lakhmid court, including 'Adī b. Zayd and A'sā, were well versed in Middle Persian and acquainted with Iranian culture. 'Adī b. Zayd served as secretary at the court of Ḳosrow I and was later sent as the king's envoy to Byzantium; A'sā also lived a long time at the Sasanian court. Other Arabs living in Ḥīra



were well acquainted with Iranian mythology and history; at the time of Moḥammad, Naẓr b. al-Ḥāreṭ from the Qorayš tribe related stories of Iranian kings and other heroes in Mecca and compared them with the Qur’ān and the sayings of the Prophet.

Bahrain and Oman to Yemen were also under Iranian rule. An Iranian community called *asābeḍa* (plural of *asbaḍ* “horse-master”) lived in Bahrain, and the Sasanian commander Wahrēz led a successful campaign against Abraha, the Ethiopian ruler of Yemen at the request of the Himyarids. The Iranians, called “sons of nobles” (*Banu ’l-aḥrār*), are constantly praised by the Arabs for their liberation of Yemen (A.D. 562-72).

After the Arab conquest of Iran, the new Muslim rulers, who had no experience with imperial government, sought the assistance of the Iranians in administering the newly established states, and in succeeding centuries, the Iranians also made important literary and scientific contributions, including the translation of a number of Pahlavi books into Arabic.

Most Middle Persian or New Persian words entered Arabic during the first four centuries of the Islamic period. This occurred both directly and indirectly. Most of the words entering directly came from Middle Persian (Pahlavi), the official language of the Sasanian period, which survived as a religious language in Zoroastrian communities, and to a certain degree as an administrative language in the early centuries of the Islamic period. Besides the loans from Middle Persian, there are also some that must have come from Parthian (or a related dialect), cf. *marj* “meadow” (Parth. *marg*, NPers. *marḡ*, but Mid. Pers. *marw*); *-jūn* “color” (Parth. *-gōn*, Mid. Pers. *-yōn*, NPers. *-gūn* and *-yūn*; cf. e.g. Ar. *samanjūn*, Parth. *zargōnag*, NPers. *zaryūn* “golden”); *tāj* (Parth. *\*tāg*, cf. Arm. *ṭ’ag*, Syriac and Mandaean *tāgā*, NPers. *tāj*); *raṣāṣ* “tin, lead” (Parth. *\*aṛčič*, cf. Arm. *aṛčič*, Mid. Pers. and NPers. *arzīz*); *namraq* (*nomroq*) “cushion” (cf. Parth. *namr* “humble, meek,” Mid. Pers. and NPers. *narm* “soft”).

Loans from New Persian can be identified only when the NPers. forms differ from the Mid. Pers. ones. Thus the following can be assumed to have been borrowed from New Persian: *kāna* “box, column” (NPers. *kāna* “house,” Mid. Pers. *xānag*); *šīra* “juice” (= NPers., cf. the earlier loan *sīraj* from Mid. Pers. *šīrag*); *kūšk* “kiosk” (= NPers., cf. *jawsaq* from Mid. Pers. *kōšk*, cf. Syr. gwšq’); *zīr* “soprano, treble” (= NPers.; Mid. Pers. *zēr*).



Indirect borrowings took place via Aramaic or Syriac, cf.: *kanz* “treasure” (Aram. *gnz* from Old Pers. \**ganza-*); *fetkar* “idol” (Aram. *ptkr* “relief, sculpture,” from Old Pers. *patikara-*); *zarnīk* “orpiment” (Aram. *zrnyk*, from Old Pers. \**zaranyaka-*, a Median form, beside genuine Old Pers. *daraniya-* “gold”); *dāšen*, plur. *dawāšen* “gift” (Aram. *dšn’*, from Old Pers. \**dāšna-*, cf. Mid. Pers. *dāš(i)n*); but also via Turkish (in the Ottoman period, see K. Vollers, “Beiträge zur Kenntniss der lebenden arabischen Sprache,” *ZDMG* 50, 1896, pp. 607-57; W. Eilers, “Iranisches Lehngut im Arabischen,” *Actas do IV Congresso de Estudos Árabes e Islâmicos* [Lisbon, 1968], Leiden, 1971, p. 595), cf.: *tāzja* “joiner’s bench” (Turk. *tezgiah*, from NPers. *dastgāh*); *tarzī* “tailor” (Turk. *terzi*, from NPers. *darzī*); *šorrāb* “stocking” (Turk. *čorab*, cf. the older loanword *jawrab*, both from NPers. *ǰūrāb*).

The Iranian loans in Arabic were of course adapted to the Arabic phonology. Phonetical changes include the following. Vowels: The Mid. and classical NPers. *majhūl* vowels *ē* and *ō* appear as *ī*, *ay*, or *ā* and *ū* or *aw*, e.g., *dībāj* “silk brocade” (Mid. Pers. *dēbāg*, NPers. *dībā*); *fīrūzaj* or *fayrūzaj* “turquoise” (Mid. Pers. \**pērōzag*, NPers. *f/pīrūza*); *bāl* “spade” (Mid. Pers. *bēl*, NPers. *bīl*); *šerās* “glue” (Mid. Pers. \**@srēš*, NPers. *serīš*); *rašāš* “tin, lead” (see above); *mūq* “shoe” (Mid. Pers. *mōg*); *rawšan* “window” (Mid. Pers. *rōšn* “light,” NPers. *rowšan*).

*Consonants.* Iranian *p*, *č*, and *g*, which are sounds foreign to Arabic, are replaced by *f* or *b*; *š* (*s*), *š* or *ǰ*; and *ǰ* or *q* (in late borrowings also *k*). Ir. *p*, cf.: *fostaq* (*fostoq*) “pistachio” (Mid. Pers. *pistag*, NPers. *peste*); *fālūđaj*, sweetmeat of flour, water, and honey (Mid. Pers. *pālūdag*); *bābūš* or *bābūj* “slipper” (NPers. *pāpūš*); *ferǰār* or *ferkār* (*berkār*) “pair of compasses” (NPers. *pargār*); *fīšfaraǰ* and *šofāraǰ* “sweetmeats” (Mid. Pers. *pēšpārag*). Ir. *č*, cf. *šanǰ* “harp” (Mid. NPers. *čang*, Parth. *šang*); *šarm* “hide, leather” (Mid., NPers. *čarm*); *šārūǰ* and *šārūq* “mortar” (Mid. Pers. *čārūg*); *šehrīǰ* “cistern” (Mid. Pers. \**čāhrēg*); *ǰašš* “gypsum” (Mid., NPers. *gač*); *šawbaǰ* and *šawbaq* “rolling pin” (Mid. Pers. *čōbag* “wand”); *šawđar* “veil” (Mid. Pers. *čādur*); *šaṭranǰ* “chess” (Mid. Pers. *čatrang*); in *tašmīzaǰ*, a medicinal black grain (NPers. *čašmīzag*), we have *t* through dissimilation (cf. R. Dozy, *Supplément aux dictionnaires arabes* I, Leiden, 1877, p. 147); in some late loans we find *ǰ*, cf.: *ǰank* “harp” (cf. *šanǰ*, above); *ǰankī* “harp player;” *ǰārkāh*, the name of a musical mode (NPers. *čārgāh*); *ǰormūq* and (older?) *sarmūǰa* “boot” (Mid. Pers. \**čarmmōg* “leather shoe,” see Eilers, *Lehngut*, 1971); *serāǰ* “lamp” has *s* instead of *š* (Parth. *čarāg*, NPers. *čarāg*, Aram. *šrg’*, Mid. Pers. *čarāh*). Ir. *g*, cf.: *ǰawhar* “substance, jewel” (Mid. Pers.



*gōhr*); *ḵond* “army” (Mid. Pers. *gund*); *ḵo’dar* “calf” (Mid. Pers. *gōdar*); *ḵāmūs*, plur. *ḵawāmīs* “buffalo” (Mid. Pers. *gāwmēš*); *ḵond* and *qond* “testicle” (Mid. Pers. *gund*); *ḵorboz* and *qorboz* “sly, cunning” (NPers. *gorboz*); *qašnīz* “coriander” (Mid. Pers. *gišnīz*, NPers. *gešnīz*; on this word see W. B. Henning, *Asia Major*, N.S. 10, 1963, pp. 195-99); in final position: *korbaḵ* (*qorbaḵ*) “shop, tavern” (Mid. Pers. *kurbag*); *nāmaq* and *nāmaḵ* “letter, writing” (Mid. Pers. *nāmag*); *mūq* “large boot” (see above); *dokāh*, *sekāh*, cf. *ḵārkāh* above (NPers. *dogāh*, *segāh*).

Ir. *t* and *k* are sometimes replaced by the emphatic *tÂ* and *q*; *k* occasionally also by *ḵ*. Ir. *t*, cf.: *tāḵ* (see above), *tūt* “mulberry” (NPers. *tūt*); *tadroḵ* (*taḵdroḵ*) “pheasant” (from Parth. \**tadarg*? cf. Mid. Pers. *tadar(w)*, NPers. *taḵdarw*); *ḵābaq* “frying pan” (Mid. Pers. *tābag*); *ḵayhūḵ* “partridge” (Mid. Pers. *tēhōg*, NPers. *tīhū*); *ḵabar* “axe” (Mid., NPers. *tabar*); *ḵaṭranḵ* (see above). Ir. *k*, cf.: *korbaḵ* and *qorbaḵ* (see above); *qayrawān* “caravan” (Mid. Pers. *kārwān*); *qafīz*, a measure (Mid. Pers. *kaḵfīz*); *qabī* “partridge” (Mid., NPers. *kabk*); *qabā*, “outer garment” (Mid. Pers. *kabāg*); *ḵandaq* “ditch, moat” (Mid. Pers. \**kandag*).

Ir. *s* is sometimes replaced by the emphatic *ṣ*, and Ir. *š* occasionally by *s*. Ir. *s*, cf.: *sejḵīl*, “lumps of baked clay” (Mid. Pers. *sag* “stone” + *gil* “clay”); *serḵīn* “dung” (Mid. Pers. *sargēn*); *bostān* “garden” (Mid. Pers. *bōstān*); *ṣard* “cold” (Mid., NPers. *sard*); *feṣfeṣ* “clover” (Mid., NPers. *aspast*); *ṣaṣṣ* “fish-hook” (NPers. *ṣast*); Ir. *st* is occasionally replaced by *zd*, cf.: *rostāq*, *rosdāq*, and *rozdāq* “district” (Mid. Pers. *rōstāg*); *rozdaq* “row” (Mid. Pers. *rastag*). Ir. *š*, cf.: *šīrāz* “curdled whey” (= NPers.); *šāḵerd* (Mid. Pers. *hašāgird*, NPers. *šāgerd*); *šāhdānaḵ* “hemp seed” (Mid. Pers. *šāhdānag*); *ḵoṣknān* “dry bread” (= NPers.); *serwāl* “trousers” (Mid. Pers. *šalwār*); *sīraḵ* “sesame oil” (Mid. Pers. *šīrag*); *mesk* “musk” (Mid. Pers. *muṣk*, NPers. *moṣk* and *meṣk*); *dast* “plain” (Mid., NPers. *dašt*); *ḵast* and *ḵass* “bowl” (Mid., NPers. *tašt*).

Ir. *ḵ* is occasionally replaced by *ḥ*, Ir. *ḵ*<sup>v</sup> by *ḵ* or *ḵw*. Ir. *k*: *kāna* “box, column” (see above); *ḥobb*, “earthen vessel” (Mid. Pers. *xumb*); the name of the Sasanian king Ḵosrow, Kesrā, is borrowed from Syriac *Kwsrw* (see A. Siddiqi, *Studien über die persischen Fremdwörter im klassischen Arabisch*, Göttingen, 1919, pp. 40, 72). Ir. *ḵ*<sup>v</sup>: *ḵordīq*, a kind of broth (Mid. Pers. *xwardīg* “food”); *ḵewān* or *ḵowān* “tray, table” (Mid. Pers. *xwān*).

Loanwords have sometimes been altered to conform with the trilateral (and quadrilateral) root system of Arabic and with the so-called “forms” (*qāleb*), thus the final consonant of monosyllabic words was often geminated: *ḵaṣṣ*



“gypsum” (Mid., NPers. *gač*); *ǰoll* “rose” (Mid. Pers. *gul*); *qazz* “silk” (Mid., NPers. *kaz*); consonant groups were simplified: *forānaq* “army leader” (Mid. Pers. *parwānaq*); *fehres* “summary, register” (Mid. Pers. *pahrist*; NPers. *fehrest* from Arabic?); initial or final syllables were dropped: *samanǰūn* “sky blue” (NPers. *āsmāngūn*); *mārestān* “hospital” (Mid. Pers. *wēmārestān*, NPers. *bīmārestān*); *šofāraǰ* (*fīšfāraǰ*) “sweetmeats” (Mid. Pers. *pēšpārag*); *koštobān* “thimble” (Mid. Pers. *anguštān*, cf. Aram. *gwspnqʹ*); *daydab* and *daydabān* “watcher, guard” (Mid. Pers. *\*dīdbān*).

The complete integration of loanwords sometimes led to new formations, e.g.: 1. names of trades (*faʿāl*): *ǰaššāš* “plasterer, gypsum seller,” *šarrām* “seller of hides,” *qazzāz* “silk manufacturer” (from *ǰašš*, *šarm*, *kazz*, see above). 2. broken plural forms of Iranian loans: *mawānīd* “tax debts,” from *mānd* (Mid., NPers. *māndan* “to remain”). 3. back formations on the basis of forms interpreted as plur.: *fadan* “palace” from *afdān* (Old Pers. *apadāna-*, Syr. *ʿpdnʹ*); *ferdaws* “Paradise” from *farādīs* (from Gk. *parádeisos*, OIr. *\*paridaiza-*); *ǰāmūs* “buffalo” from *ǰawāmīs* (from *\*ǰawāmīs*, Mid. Pers. *gāwmēš*); *nebr* “warehouse” from *anbār* (= Mid., NPers.). 4. denominative verbs: *razaqa* “provide nourishment,” from *rezq* (if from Mid. Pers. *rōzīg* “daily bread”); *zaraqa* “to be greenish,” from *zarqūn* (see below), *dašana* “to give,” from *dāšen* (see above); *tāǰa* “to put on a crown,” from *tāǰ* (see above); *namaqa* “to write a book,” from *nāmaq* (see above); *mahara*, *mahhara* “to seal,” from *mohr* (= Mid., NPers.).

Following is a list of Ir. loans in Arabic grouped according to their semantic sphere: 1. Administration: *fayǰ* “courier” (Mid. Pers. *payg*, NPers. *peyk*); *dīwān* “office, administration, collected writings” (= Mid., NPers.); *mawānīd* “tax debts” (see above); *ǰahbaǰ* “moneychanger” (Mid. Pers. *\*gēhbad*, OIr. *\*gaiθāpati-*, see W. Eilers, “Iranisches Lehngut im arabischen Lexikon,” *IJ* 15, 1962, p. 211); *marzabān* “margrave” (Mid., NPers. *marzbān*); *dostūr* “rule, minister” (Mid. Pers. *dastwar*, NPers. *dastūr*); *farmān* “order, decree” (= NPers.; Mid. Pers. *framān*). 2. Science: *ǰawhar* “essence, substance” (see above); *ǰawzahr* “the Dragon” (astrology, Mid. Pers. *gōzihr*); *zīǰ* “astronomical table” (Mid. Pers. *zīg*); *eyāraǰ* “medication” (Mid. Pers. *ayārag* “helper”). 3. Music and entertainment: *šanǰ* “harp” (see above), *nāy* “flute” (= Mid., NPers.); *mostaq* “bagpipe” (Mid. Pers. *mustaq*, Pahlavi Texts 32.14); *wann* “lute” (Mid. Pers. *win*, from OInd. *vīṇā*); *tonbūr* “cither, pandora” (Mid., NPers. *tanbūr*); *baydaq* “pawn,” plur. *bayādeq* (chess; Mid. Pers. *payādag*); *farzān* “queen” (chess; Mid. Pers. *frazēn*); *rokk* “rook” (chess; NPers. *roǰ*). 4. Cuisine: *sekbāǰ*, a dish made of



meat, wheat flour, and vinegar (Mid. Pers. \**sikbāg*, NPers. *sekbā*); *kāmak*, a kind of gruel (Aram. *kmk'*); *jawzīnaḡ* (*jawzīnaq*) “walnut sweetmeat” (Mid. Pers. *gōzēnaḡ*); *ḡordīq* “broth” (see above). 5. Animals: *jawḡdar* “calf” (see above), *ḡāmūs* “buffalo” (see above), *tadroḡ* “pheasant” (see above); *ḡayhūḡ*, a kind of partridge (see above); *ḡaqr* “falcon, hawk” (Mid. Pers. *čark*, NPers. *čark*, *čarg*). 6. Plants: *jawz* “walnut” (Mid. Pers. *gōž*); *banafšaj* “violet” (Mid. Pers. *wanafšag*, NPers. *banafša*); *ḡoll* and *ward* “rose” (Mid. Pers. *gul* and Parth. \**ward*, cf. Arm. *vard*, Syr. *wrd'*); *ḡazar* “carrot” (NPers. *gazar*). 7. Textiles and clothing: *istabraḡ* “thick silk brocade” (Mid. Pers. *stabrag*); *narmaḡ* “white fine cloth” (Mid. Pers. *narm* “soft”); *dībaj* “brocade” (see above); *qabā* “outer garment” (see above); *mawzaj* “shoe” (Mid. Pers. *mōzag*); *mūq* “large boot” (see above); *qafš* “shoe” (Mid. Pers. *kafš*); *serwāl* “trousers” (see above); *šawḡdar* “veil” (see above). 8. Architecture: *korbaḡ* and *qorbaḡ* “shop, tavern” (Mid. Pers. *kurbag*), beside *kolbaḡ*, *ḡolfaq* (NPers. *kolba*); *ḡawsaq* “palace” (see above), *fadan* “palace,” plur. *afdān* (see above); *ḡonbaḡ* and *qobba* “vault, cupola” (Mid. Pers. *gunbad*); *sorādeq* “tent cover, curtain” (Mid. Pers. *srādag* “hall,” cf. Mandaean *srđ'q'*); *dehlīz* “vestibule” (Mid. Pers. *dahlīz*); *ḡahrīḡ* “cistern” (Mid. Pers. \**čāhrēḡ*, cf. Ar. *ebriq* “water jug,” from Mid. Pers. \**ābrēḡ*); *nebr* “warehouse,” plur. *anbār* (see above); *zīḡ* and *zīq*, “builder’s string” (Mid. Pers. *zīg*); *ḡārūḡ* “mortar” (see above). 9. Minerals: *zāj* “alum” (NPers. *zāḡ*, *zaj*), *nawšader* and *nūšader* “sal-ammoniac” (NPers. *nošādor*). 10. Measures, coins, money: *qafīz*, measure of grain (Mid. Pers. *kafīz* or *kabīz*); *farsaq* “farsang, league” (= NPers.); *dānaḡ*, sixth part of a drachm (Mid. Pers. *dānaḡ*); *ḡorda* “(small) change” (= NPers.; Mid. Pers. *xwurdag*). 11. Colors: *zarḡūn* “zircon” and *zarḡūn* “reddish, wine” (Mid. Pers. *zargōn* “golden”).

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