



# LEXICOGRAPHY IV. TOPICAL VOCABULARIES AND GLOSSARIES

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## iv. Topical vocabularies and glossaries

Both category-based vocabularies and universal mono- and bilingual alphabetized dictionaries often made limited or extensive use of topical lists. The first of the *asāmi* genre, *al-Sāmi fi'l-asāmi* (1104) of Abu'l-Faẓl Aḥmad Maydāni Nišāpuri (facsim. ed., Tehran, 1966; ed. M. M. Hendavi, Cairo, 1967), was topically classified into four parts (Ar. sing. *qesm*): religion, animals, the celestial, and the terrestrial (Monzavi, 1958, pp. 273-74; Storey III, pp. 81-82). The combined dictionary and grammar *Dastur al-loḡa*, also called *al-Ḳalāṣ* (Monzavi, 1958, pp. 270-72; cf. Storey III/1, p. 81 no. 116), is attributed to the 11th-century Adib Naṭanẓi. Its lexical entries are arranged alphabetically by initial in 28 chapters called “ketāb” (representing the 28 days in a lunar month) each divided into 12 sections called “bāb” (representing the 12 months in a year). The lexicographical part is followed by topical sections on the names of months and days and a verse grammar of Arabic. The Arabic-Persian glossary *al-Merqāt*, also called *al-Ṣaḥā'ef* (ed. J. Sajjādi, Tehran, 1967) is also attributed to Adib Naṭanẓi, though rather less plausibly than the *Dastur al-loḡa*. The glossary covers the traditional range of topics in 12 lists, each with subdivisions, without any alphabetical ordering.



Topical vocabularies and glossaries have a quite different, and much longer, pedigree than alphabetical dictionaries; in fact they go back to the dawn of world lexicography. In languages using a writing system other than alphabetical, such as Chinese and Babylonian, the earliest lexicographical works were arranged by topical lists; so also in some alphabetized languages, such as Sanskrit and Middle Persian, before the notion of alphabetical order assumed an indexical function. Archetypical for Persian lexicography is the *Frahang ī Pahlawīg* (see Baevskii, pp. 47-49), a Middle Persian glossary of about 500 Aramaic heterograms (*huzwāresš*) into Book Pahlavi script, arranged under 32 *dar*, compiled probably in the 9th century on the basis of memorized lists and on the model of much earlier Sumerian-Akkadian glossaries. An annotated Persian edition (*Vāža-nāma-ye pahlavi-pāzand: Farhang-e Pahlavi*, ed. Sa'īd 'Oryān, Tehran, 1998) has now been added to the older text-critical editions.

Paraphrased chapter topics of the *Frahang ī Pahlawīg* are: 1. The celestial; 2. The terrestrial; 3. Waters; 4. Grains and fruits; 5. Food and drink; 6. Herbs and vegetables; 7. Livestock and herbivores; 8. Birds; 9. Wild animals; 10. Parts of the body; 11. Family; 12. High-status persons; 13. Low-status persons; 14. Warfare and weapons; 15. Writing; 15a. Clothing; 16. Metals, money, wealth; 17. Trial and punishment; 18. Verbs of thought, communication, cultivation; 19. Verbs of measurement, food preparation, eating, relaxation, copulation; 20. Verbs of motion, transportation, competition; 21. Verbs of conflict and commerce; 22. Verbs of birth and death; 23. Verbs of writing and reading; 24. Pronouns; 25. Adverbs; 26. Adjectives; 27. Divisions of the year; 28. Days and months; 29. Numerals; 30. Weights, measures, coins; 31. Miscellaneous supplement.

Directly or indirectly, this work appears to have provided a model for several New Persian dictionaries.

Topical glossaries are encyclopedic by nature, marshaling knowledge into culturally related clusters of referents rather than graphically or phonetically adjacent lexemes, and aimed more at fostering general cultural literacy than poetical craft. The lists in many of them (both prior to and later than the *Frahang ī Pahlawīg*) are surprisingly similar in sequence and content, reflecting what appears to be a psychological tendency toward a universal taxonomic matrix: i.e., an overall progression from the cosmic and supernatural to the mundane, from human to animal, vegetable, and mineral, and within particular lists usually from general to particular, top to bottom,



outside to inside. Persian exemplars appear to form a more uniform group within the general type. Topical glossaries were not displaced by alphabetically ordered works, and (as noted above) each type exploited features of the other. During the formative periods of Arabic and New Persian lexicography, the two modes sometimes fused and produced some versatile and user-friendly reference tools. Thus an early monolingual Arabic work, *al-Monajjad* of Korā' al-Naml (d. 922; see Omer), is a typical alphabetically-ordered dictionary of homonyms, though divided into 6 topical chapters: 1. Parts of the body; 2. Animate beings comprising humans and animals; 3. Birds; 4. Weapons; 5. The sky; 6. The earth. An interesting modern example, more than a millennium later, is the trilingual *Hedāyat al-ṭāleb* by Moḥammad 'Ali Ḥelmi (Baghdad, 1975). The Arabic–Persian–Puriki glossary was compiled for the use of Shi'ite pilgrims from the Kargil region of Ladakh in northern India, where the majority of Muslims are Twelver Shi'ites, to the shrine cities of Iraq. Their local language Puriki (Purigi) is a dialect of Tibetan, written in Arabic script. Its 29 lists of triple equivalents, comprising ca. 1,500 entries, correspond to 28 of the 31 topics in the *Frahang ī Pahlawīg*, and the remainder is represented in the works of Zamaḵṣari and Faḵr-e Qawwās (see below).

Perhaps the earliest Arabic-Persian topical dictionary attested is the *Ketābalbolḡa al-motarjem fe'l-loḡa*, compiled in 1046 by Ya'qub Kordi Nišāpuri (ed. M. Minovi and F. Ḥarirči, Tehran, 1977). It comprises 40 chapters, called “bāb” and listing Arabic words and phrases with Persian glosses under headings such as: Parts of the body; Kinship; Food; Drink; Clothing; Livestock; Months and days; etc. Maḥmud Zamaḵṣari (d. 1144), the Mu'tazilite polymath of Khwarazm (see [CHORASMIA ii. In Islamic times](#)) and author of the important Arabic dictionary *Asās al-balāḡa* (Foundation of eloquence), also compiled the Arabic-Persian *Moqaddemat al-adab* (Prolegomenon to culture), with the Persian title *Pišrow-e adab* (partial ed. by J. G. Wetzstein, Leipzig, 1850, repr. with introduction by M. Moḥaqqueq, Tehran, 2007; ed. N. N. Poppe, Moscow, 1938; ed. M.-K. Emām, 2 vols., Tehran, 1963).

This compendium is an impressive hybrid, in 5 parts called “qesm”, of which the first two are lengthy lexical lists supplied with Persian (or other) glosses: 1. Nouns, under 99 topical headings, plus comprehensive lists of pronouns; 2. Verbs, arranged under paradigms by root final-medial-initial. One manuscript includes Khwarazmian (see [CHORASMIA iii. Chorasmian language](#)) in addition to Persian glosses, and others from later eras have been supplied (additionally or alternately) with Eastern Turkish, Ottoman, and Mongolian glosses



(Monzavi, 1958, pp. 276-77; Storey III/1, pp. 82-84). The work thus amply justifies its title, as an Arabicized Iranian's comprehensive lexical and grammatical manual of the scientific lingua franca, plus a survey of the educated Muslim's material and cultural universe, arranged in accordance with the traditional universal taxonomy as a matrix for glossaries in contemporary Iranian and Turkic vernaculars. In the arrangement of its topical lists, and often in the very order of the component items, the *Moqaddemat al-adab* is so strikingly similar to the *Frahang ī Pahlawīg* as to suggest a conscious expansion of this rather than just another coincidence of conventional taxonomy. Thus, while some 17 of the 40 chapters in *Ketābal-Bolġa* have approximate counterparts among the 32 chapters of the *Frahang*, though not in a similar sequence, in the *Moqaddema* topics or suites of topics ("Livestock and herbivores," for instance, covers 8 adjacent chapters) correspond to all but 3 of those in the *Frahang ī Pahlawīg*, often in the same sequence or close proximity.

The *Farhang-e Qawwās* is probably the second oldest monolingual Persian defining dictionary to have come down to us. It was compiled at the K̄alji court of Delhi about the year 1300 by Faḡr-al-Din Mobārakšāh Qawwās Ġaznavi, a contemporary of [Amir K̄osrow Dehlavi](#) (d. 1325). Its 1,340 entries are confined to simplex nouns and infinitives, and arranged under 5 thematic headings called *baḡš* "part" (whence the work is also known as the *Panj-baḡši*): 1. The heavens (including religion and the four elements); 2. Minerals; 3. Plants; 4. Animate beings comprising humans and animals; 5. Humankind's products and activities. There are subdivisions termed *guna* and *bahr* for a total of 26 headings. Its 20th century editor Naḡdir Aḡmad (Tehran, 1974) suggested, on the basis of each work having 5 parts, that Faḡr-e Qawwās might have modeled his work on Zamakšari's (Introduction, p. 7), even though the respective parts are quite different in kind. But a cryptic acknowledgment in the preface of the *Farhang-e Qawwās* of a certain "dastur-e rowšanhuš" (perhaps a Zoroastrian high priest? see [DASTUR](#)) raises the intriguing possibility that Faḡr-e Qawwās may have been shown a copy of the *Frahang ī Pahlawīg* in the *dastur*'s possession. Information about Parsi scholarship and activities under the [Delhi sultanate](#) is lacking, but during the reign of [Akbar I](#) (r. 1542-1605) Zoroastrians were active at the Mughal court, and by the 18th century Parsi scholars in Gujarat had acquired a number of manuscripts of the *Frahang ī Pahlawīg*, some of which included a New Persian translation of the Pahlavi glosses (Junker, pp. 2-12). In this field, at least, Islamic Persian scholars may well have maintained an intermittent link with their Zoroastrian



forebears.

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