



MONGOLS II. MONGOLIAN LOANWORDS IN PERSIAN

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It is difficult to analyze Mongolian elements in Persian separately from the Turkic ones. This is due to the fact that the speakers of both languages had been in contact with each other for a long time before the Mongolian presence can be traced in the Persian speaking area. Besides, early Turkic and Mongolian have many common features that were occasionally interpreted as indications to a genetic relationship between the two language families. Early Turkic elements are certainly present in Mongolian (Ligeti; Doerfer, 1963), but, on the other hand, a definite Mongolian influence on the Turkic languages can be documented from the 13th century onwards as well (cf. Poppe; Vladimirtsov). In spite of this, the Turkic and Mongolian elements in Persian can be clearly differentiated.

The “Altaic” (Mongolian and Turkic) loanwords and morphology in Persian can be divided into three larger layers: 1. an older “pure” Turkic layer which consists of southern and eastern Turkic elements (Dorfer, 1959, p. 11); 2. a middle Mongolian and Turkic layer which includes both Mongolian elements and southern and eastern Turkic elements (Dorfer, 1959, pp. 11-12); 3. a later “pure” Turkic layer which comprises southern Turkic elements only (Dorfer,



1959, pp. 12-13). The penetration of Mongolian elements into the Persian language can be clearly traced chronologically, from the time of the conquests of [Čengiz Khan](#) (d. 1227) and his successors (see [IL-KHANIDS](#)) in the early and middle 13th century up to the collapse of the Timurid dynasty in the late 15th and early 16th century.

Different arguments show that Mongolian was already dead in the late Ilkhanid period (Spuler, pp. 457-58), but also that it remained in use in the Persian speaking area up until the Timurid times. The arguments in favor of the latter are as follows: 1. during the reign of Timur (1371-1405) some coins still bore the Mongolian expression *üge manu* ('our word'; Doerfer, 1963, p. 17); 2. Mongolian songs were chanted at the court of Timur (Naṭanzi, see Doerfer, 1963, p. 17); 3. Mongolian decrees and Mongolian secretaries are attested for the 14th-century Persia (Doefer and Herrmann, 1975a; Idem, 1975b; Hinz, 1954, p. 345); 4. Mongolian-Persian vocabularies were compiled until as late as the end of the 15th century (Doefer, 1963, p. 16); 5. new Mongolian words, which are not found in earlier works, like those of 'Alā'-al-Din ['Atā Malek Jovayni](#) or Faḏl-Allāh Rašid-al-Din (see Doerfer, 1963, p. 16 and Idem, 1959, pp. 18-19), continued to appear in the 15th-century Timurid historical compositions, such as the chronicles of Neḏām-al-Din Šāmi (written in 1404), Mo'in-al-Din Naṭanzi (written in 1412), 'Abd-Allāh Ḥāfeḏ-e Abru (several works written in 1410s and 1420s, see [HĀFEḐ-E ABRU](#)), and 'Abd-al-Razzāq Samarqandi (written in 1471).

According to Gerhard Doerfer (1963, p. 35; Idem, 1959, pp. 16-19), Mongolian (and, in general, Altaic) elements in Persian can be divided into five categories: 1. names; 2. titles that often represent "dead" vocabularies; 3. words that are considered and described in Persian sources to be of Mongolian origin; 4. special terms which were not of common knowledge and were only used by a few authors (foreign words); 5. loanwords in a narrower sense, that is, those available in living vocabularies.

Further to that, according to Doerfer who follows Artturi Kannisto's model of systematic grouping (Kannisto, 1925, pp. 237-40), Mongolian elements in Persian can be divided into twelve semantic groups (Doefer, 1963, pp. 37-44).

1. Terms for body parts, sensory perception, movement, sickness, death, etc. (Pers. *amān* 'mouth' < Mong. *aman*; Pers. *yāsūn* 'corpse' < Mong. *yasun* 'bones').
2. Animals, stockbreeding, hunting, etc. (Pers. *ahtā* 'gelding' < Mong. *aqta* ~



aḡta; Pers. *buluḡān* ‘sable, *Mustela zibellina*’ < Mong. *bulayan*; Pers. *čīna* ‘wolf’ < Mong. *čīno*).

3. Plants, agricultural terms, etc. (Pers. *būrḡāt* ‘willow(-tree), *Salix arenaria*’ < Mong. *buryasun*, pl. *buryat*; Pers. *sūqāi* ‘tamarisk’ < Mong. *suqai*).

4. Terms for different terrains, minerals, weather conditions, etc. (Pers. *arāl* ‘isle’ < Mong. *aral*; Pers. *bōrān* ‘storm’ < Mong. *bōrān* ‘[snow-]storm’; Pers. *elat* ‘sand, desert’ < Mong. *elesün*, pl. *elät*; Pers. *salqīn* ‘wind’ < Mong. *salqīn*).

5. “Everyday life,” dwelling, clothing, food, festivities, games, business, trade, etc. (Pers. *degala* ‘jacket with short sleeves’ < Mong. *degäläi*; Pers. *ogulg* ‘gift, present’ < Mong. *öglige*; Pers. *qabturḡā* ‘square bag’ < Mong. *qabtaya(n)* ‘purse’).

6. Terms of relationship (Pers. *abāqā* ‘father’s brother’ < Mong. *abaḡa*, Pers. *beri* ‘daughter-in-law’ < Mong. *beri*; Pers. *berīgan* ‘elder brother’s wife’ < Mong. *berigän*; Pers. *ebuga* ‘grandfather, ancestor’ < Mong. *ebüge* ‘ancestor’; Pers. *elančik* ‘great-grandfather’ < Mong. *elenčeg*; Pers. *ötčīgīn* ~ *ötḡikin* ‘youngest son’ < Mong. *otčikin*).

7. State, government, judgment, law, administration, etc. (Pers. *urān* ‘throne’ < Mong. *ōran* ‘place, throne’; Pers. *ōrdū* ‘imperial court, camp of the khan’s troops’ < Mong. *orda* ‘court of the khan, camp’; Pers. *qarātū* ‘belonging to the household’ < Mong. *qariyatu* ‘subordinate’; Pers. *qūnqū* ~ *qōnqū* ‘wife of the Great-khan [in China]’ < Mong. *quvaḡqu* ‘empress’ < Chin.; Pers. *tūšimāl* ‘official [of lower rank]’ < Mong. *tüsimel* ‘official’).

8. Sphere of war (Pers. *barāḡār* ‘right wing of an army’ < Mong. *bara’un ḡar* ~ *baran ḡar*; Pers. *čāḡdāvul* ‘rearguard, commander of the rearguard’ < Mong. *čaydayul* ‘rearguard’; Pers. *kebtetul* ‘night watch’ < Mong. *kebtetul*; Pers. *mess* ‘swords, arming’ < Mong. *mesäs*, pl. of *mesä* ‘sword’).

9. Sphere of religion (Pers. *arūn* ‘kind, obliging’ < Mong. *ariyun* ‘pure’; Pers. *lāma* ‘lama, Buddhist monk’ < Mong. *lama* < Tibet.; Pers. *erkevun* ‘Nestorian priest’ < Mong. *erke’ün* ‘priest’; Pers. *yada* ‘rain magic, rain-stone’ < Mong. *jada* [< Early Turkic *jadä]; Pers. *šārīl* ‘religious relic’ < Mong. *šaril*).

10. Mathematics, space and time, chronology, religious holidays, etc. (Pers. *dālān* ‘seventy’ < Mong. *dalan*).



11. Terms for colors and other adjectives (Pers. *baqa* ‘small, little’ < Mong. *baġa*; Pers. *bīdūn* ‘simple, common’ < Mong. *bidūn* < *bidūgūn*; Pers. *kečev* ‘coarse, rough, strict’ < Mong. *kečegü*; Pers. *korn* ‘dark brown (color of a horse)’ < Mong. *kürän*).

12. Abstracta (Pers. *asarāmīšī* ‘to care for somebody, to educate (a child)’ < Mong. *asara-*).

The spelling of the Mongolian words (as well as of the Altaic elements in general) in Persian by the means of the Arabic alphabet was not standardized. It can show minor deviations, depending on the period of time and the author (for more details see Doerfer, 1963, pp. 17-22).

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