



# TURKIC LOANWORDS IN PERSIAN

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Turkic-Iranian language contacts, as well as reciprocal loaning/borrowing of words, go back to the era of the Old Turkic language. During that period, the Turkic languages mostly borrowed from the Iranian languages of Central Asia (e. g., Sogdian, Middle Persian, or Saka). In this regard, the Uighurs borrowed especially the basic vocabularies of religious spheres of Manicheism and Buddhism (e. g., Uig. *ažun* ‘world’ < Sogd. *”žwn*; Uig. *tamu* ‘hell’ < Sogd. *tmw*, etc.). An effective reverse influence can be observed as well, except for some borrowed Turkic names (e. g., in the Middle-Pers. *Maḥrnāmag* [the title of a Manichean hymn book]) from the beginning of the penetration of turcophone groups into the Persian language area to the time of the conquests of [Čengiz Khan](#) (d. 1227) and his successors. Of the Iranian languages, Persian and Tajik, which are to be seen separately from each other in this regard, were especially affected by these influences.

*Turkic elements in Persian.* Through the continued coexistence of Persian and Turkic languages, an extensive exchange of elements has happened. For many centuries, Turkic languages have influenced Persian and have left their marks until the present, but in modern time a Persianization of Turkic languages in Iran can be observed. Depending on the historical facts, different languages played a role in these processes. Altaic—and Turkic among them—elements in



Persian can be divided into three larger layers: 1. an older “pure” Turkic layer which consists of southern and eastern Turkic elements (Doerfer, 1959, p. 11); 2. a Middle Mongolian and Turkic layer, which includes Mongolian and southern and eastern Turkic elements (Doerfer, 1959, pp. 11-12); 3. a later “pure” Turkic layer which comprise southern-Turkic elements only (Doerfer, 1959, pp. 12-13). It is remarkable that Mongolian elements in Persian are often of Turkic origin, and there is a number (several hundreds) of Old-Turkic words which had first been borrowed by the Mongols and then came to Persian in their “specific Mongol” forms (e. g., Pers. *nom* ‘sacred scriptures of the Buddhists’ < Mong. *nom* ‘religion, law, etc.’ < Uig. *nom* [same meaning], originally < Gk. *nómos*). Sometimes one can see elements of all three layers side by side, as in the *Tāriḵ-e ‘ālamārā-ye ‘abbāsi* of [Eskandar Beg Torkamān Monši](#) (see Doerfer, 1965, p. 4).

According to Gerhard Doerfer (1963, pp. 37-44), who follows Artturi Kannisto’s model of systematic grouping (Kannisto, pp. 237-40), the Turkic elements in Persian can be divided into twelve semantic groups.

1. Terms for body parts, sensory perception, movement, sickness, death, etc. (Pers. *ašūḡlu* ‘flesh around the ankle’ < Turkic [Oghuz] *ašūqlū* < *ašūq* ‘ankle’; Pers. *āzu* ‘molar (tooth)’ < Turkic *azu* < *azīy*; Pers. *bograk* ‘kidney-shaped’ < Turkic [Chaghatay] *bögür* ‘kidney’; Pers. *īlik* ‘bone (marrow)’ < Turkic [Uzbek] *ilik*; Pers. *qul* ‘arm’ < Turkic *qol*).

2. Animals, stockbreeding, hunting, etc. (Pers. *eyġer* ‘stallion’ < Turkic [Chaghatay] *adyīr* < *dyīr*; Pers. *butā* ‘young camel’ < Turkic *boto*; Pers. *keklik* ‘partridge’ < Turkic [Uzbek] *käklik*; Pers. *kepek* ‘dog’ < Turkic *köpäk*; Pers. *yāl* ‘mane, [nape of the] neck’ < Turkic *yāl* ‘mane, fat under the mane’).

3. Plants, agricultural terms, etc. (Pers. *burčāf* ~ *burčāq* ‘pease, bean’ < Turkic *burčaq*; Pers. *čigit* ‘cotton seed’ < Turkic [Uzbek] *čigit*; Pers. *čaman* ‘meadow’ < Turkic *čimān*; Pers. *kendir* ‘hemp, mat, string’ < Turkic [Uzbek] *kändir*; Pers. *tariqčī* ‘farmer’ < Turkic [Chaghatay] *tariqčī*).

4. Terms for different terrains, minerals, weather conditions, etc. (Pers. *kul*, *kol* ‘lake’ < Turkic *köl*; Pers. *goz* ‘(large) river’ < Turkic *ögüz*; Pers. *leng* ‘meadow steppe’ < Turkic [Chaghatay] *ölänj*; Pers. *qarqasū* ‘lead’ < Turkic [Azeri] *qorqušun*, Turkic [Uzbek] *qoryaşim*; Pers. *qum* ‘sand’ < Turkic [Uzbek] *qum*).

5. “Everyday life,” dwelling, clothing, food, festivities, games, business, trade,



etc. (Pers. *aqča* ‘money’ < Turkic *aqča*, original meaning ‘whitish’; Pers. *armaġān* ‘gift, present’ < Turkic *armayan*; Pers. *baġiltāq* ‘padded clothing worn under the armor’ < Turkic [Chaghatay] *bayirdaq*; Pers. *čāġbut* ‘piece of cloth, rag’ < Turkic [Chaghatay] *čapyut* ~ *čaybut*; Pers. *kerak* ‘lattice of the tent’ < Turkic [Chaghatay] *käräkü*).

6. Terms of relationship (Pers. *aka* ‘elder female relative (sister, aunt)’ < Turkic *äkä*; Pers. *dada* ‘grandfather’ < Turkic *dädä*; Pers. *eči* ‘elder brother’ < Turkic *eči*; Pers. *igdiš* ‘half-brother’ of ‘half-sister,’ especially for children of one mother but different fathers < Turkic *igdiš*; Pers. *īnī* ‘younger brother’ < Turkic [Chaghatay] *ini*).

7. State, government, judgment, law, administration, etc. (Pers. *ordu* ‘palace [tent], [army] camp’ < Turkic *örd* [same meaning]; Pers. *surġuč* ‘sealing wax’ < Turkic [Uzbek] *suryuč*; Pers. *sangun* ‘general’ < Turkic *šaġun* < Mong. < Chin.; Pers. *tamġā* ‘brand, seal, customs’ < Turkic [Chaghatay] *tamya*; Pers. *tarġān* ‘title, a privileged one, one who is free from taxes, customs, etc.’ < Turkic *tarġan*).

8. Sphere of war (Pers. *aġtarma* ‘booty, plundering, looting’ < Turkic *aqtarma*; Pers. *čomāq* ‘club’ < Turkic *čomaq*; Pers. *kiš* ‘quiver’ < Turkic *keš*; Pers. *qur* ‘quiver’ < Turkic *qor*; Pers. *qurbān* ‘cover for the bow’ < Turkic [Old Oghuz] *qurban*).

9. Sphere of religion (Pers. *bayāt* ‘god’ < Turkic *bayat*; Pers. *bot* ‘idol’ < Turkic *but* < Chin. < Skr. *buddha*; Pers. *irim* ‘superstition’ < Turkic [Uzbek] *irim*; Pers. *kočurma* ‘rite [of exorcism, etc.]’ < Turkic [Uzbek] *köčürmä*; Pers. *qām* ‘shaman’ < Turkic *qam*).

10. Mathematics, space and time, chronology, religious holidays, etc. (Pers. *bešinč* ‘fifth’ *bešinč āy* ‘fifth month’ < Old Turkic *bešinč*; Pers. *bir* ‘one’ < Turkic *bir*; Pers. *čāġ* ‘time, period’ < Turkic [Chaghatay] *čaġ*; Pers. *sakkez* ‘eight’ < Turkic [Azeri] *säkiz*; Pers. *yīl* ‘year’ < Turkic [Chaghatay] *yīl*).

11. Terms for colors and other adjectives (Pers. *ālā* ‘coloured, dappled’ < Turkic *ala*; Pers. *barāq* ‘thick-hairy (animal)’ < Turkic *baraq*; Pers. *bilga* ‘wise’ < Turkic [Chaghatay] *bilgä*; Pers. *tansūq* ‘precious [gift, present]’ < Turkic [Chaghatay] *taṡsuq*; Pers. *oloġ* ‘great’ < Turkic *uluy*).

12. Abstracta (Pers. *usal* ‘careless’ < Turkic [Chaghatay] *osal* ‘carelessness’).



*Turkic elements in Tajik.* In the case of Tajik, the influence that Turkic languages have had on it is completely different. It is important to notice right away that northern Tajik (the dialects of Ašt, Brič-Mulla, Čust, Kanibadam, Kassansaj, Rištan, Šajdan, and occasionally the dialect of Vazrob; about the dialects see Rastorgueva, 1963 and 1964) was much more affected than southern Tajik. It is true, that Turkic elements are available in southern Tajik as well, but to a much lesser extent. Contrary to Persian, northern Tajik had been influenced by eastern Turkic languages for centuries. This influence might have led to its extinction—or its displacement—if it would not have been maintained in the 20th century as a *lingua sovietica* through specific promotion and revaluation. Gerhard Doerfer once considered northern Tajik as a Turkic language *in statu nascendi*, that is, a language in transition from one language family (Indo-European) to another (Turkic), which was an impression one could get at the beginning of the 1960s (Doerfer, 1967, p. 57). But this process changed in favor of the Indo-European family through the consequences of the Soviet language policy and the socio-cultural and political changes in Central Asia.

Turkic elements in Tajik can be divided into four larger layers: 1. a probable pre-Uzbek (Chaghatay) layer; 2. an original Uzbek layer that shows dialectical and archaic characteristics; 3. an Uzbek layer going back to Central-Turkic (Qepčāq-Uzbek); 4. an Uzbek layer going back to Mongolian (Doerfer, 1967, pp. 72-79). Apart from the pure lexical elements, different morphological elements were also borrowed from Uzbek language (e.g., the suffix *-ča* < Uzbek *-ča*, like *uruš-ča* ‘in Russian’; Doerfer, 1967, p. 54). Furthermore, numerous Uzbek calques, mostly loan translations, exist in northern Tajik (e.g., *sip-siyo(h)* ‘completely black’ < Uzbek *qāp qāra*; Borovkov; Doerfer, 1967, p. 52; Rastorgueva, 1964, pp. 143-53).

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