

# Investigation of Turkish, Kurdish and Lurish words in Ferdowsi's Shahnameh

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## ABSTRACT

Ferdowsi's Shahnameh has been recited in Persian language and its goal is reviving a language that was exposed to change and annihilation following the Arabs' attack. But, since there are words and phrases from other languages in a language so that it can keep on striving, Shahnameh, as well, is no exception to this rule. Hakim Ferdowsi has used Arabic, Turkish, Kurdish, Lurish and even other languages' words in Shahnameh but they are yet to be recognized. This study seeks to find the roots of the Turkish, Kurdish and Lurish words and investigating their applications. It is worth reminding that such words are currently also used in their mother languages but it does not mean that Ferdowsi has definitely used these languages and that some of them might have found their ways into these languages from Persian and even from Shahnameh.

**Keywords:** Shahnameh, word, Turkish, Kurdish, Lurish

## Introduction

Although Ferdowsi's Shahnameh has been recited in Persian, there are found words from some other languages in various forms therein and this is reflective of the participation of Iranian tribes with their specific languages in this national epic. These words might have found their ways from Shahnameh to these languages for the first time but it seems that Hakim Ferdowsi intended to present the cultures and languages of all Iranian tribes in Shahnameh because they are presently being utilized in these languages. The present research is a step towards the investigation and analysis of some of the non-Persian words in Shahnameh.

## Turkish Words:

The Turkish words in Shahnameh can be divided into two sets: the first one includes the names of the individuals and places that have been employed in Shahnameh's context due to the necessity and the second one incorporates Turkish words and expressions that have been used by Ferdowsi without paying attention to the fact that they are not Persian. Some of these words and phrases have been given below.

- 1) Begmaz: it is introduced in dictionaries as a Turkish word. This term is amongst the most ancient words found their ways into Persian. "Begmaz" means wine (wine and beaker according to Rashidi and Oubehi) (Dehkhoda, 1998, under the word "Begmaz")<sup>[1]</sup>  
  
"From now on, it is all our turn to fight; you should take a place in the throne and be drinking wine and holding celebrations"<sup>[2]</sup>.
- 2) Monjuq: this word has been the name of a sphere that usually installed on the flags and pennants. This word is also being currently used.  
  
"The entire ear became full of the mourning of the trumpet; all the eye became full of the color of the sphere [Monjuq]"<sup>[2]</sup>

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- 3) Qorban: it means quiver. Durfar knows this word as being Turkish and comprised of Noqur, meaning belt, and the suffix Bān or Mān<sup>[3]</sup>  
 "If I pull out the bow from the quiver like a Chachi, the time will come out of my quiver"<sup>[2]</sup>.
- 4) Toqrol: it means a bird of prey.  
 "When the bird of prey flew from Turan to Iran, it appeared as if it would never see its ancestors"<sup>[2]</sup>
- 5) Khadang: this word has been used in Shahnameh with a very high frequency. It has been repeated for 50 times. "This word is realized to be originally Turkish"<sup>[4]</sup>. It means a very robust tree the wood of which was used for making spear, arrow and horses' saddles.  
 "The armor-bodied man grasped the rope around the waist and brought out an arrow made of the poplar wood"<sup>[2]</sup>.
- 6) Khaqan: it is the epithet given to the Turk commanders and Chinese emperors and it was gradually used to mean "great king" over time. "It is originally related to the language of the people in Panchury or Sinbi Tribe in China and it has also been applied in the forms of Qa'ān, Khaqān, Qāqān, and Kāqān"<sup>[5]</sup>  
 "Garciaz dreamt a nightmare about his getting killed by the king of Rome"<sup>[2]</sup>
- 7) Tarāj: this word has been repeated in Shahnameh for about fifty times. It is rooted in Turkish and means getting scattered.  
 "All of the treasure was plundered and the whole army was captivated and the young and sharp commander returned old"<sup>[2]</sup>
- 8) Turk: this word is the most important and most original term expressing the name of the language and/or names of the individuals speaking in Turkish. "It has been for the first time seen in Orkhun Inscriptions in the form of 'Turk' or 'Turuk'. Various pronunciations have been used in numerous resources such as Tuki-yuneh, Tuchi-yuneh, Turki-yut, Turkuz, Turkit, and Turk with the latter being the form used in Persian texts. There are various theories about the derivation and meaning of this word amongst which such a meaning as "strong" or "robust", "creation" as well as an adjective describing the power of the ruler or citizens can be pointed out"<sup>[6]</sup>.  
 "One was Rome and East and the other was Turk and China and the third was the plain of the heroes and Iran's land"<sup>[2]</sup>
- 9) Tagin: it means hero and cavalier. "It is amongst the ancient Turkish epithets meaning prince and it was used to refer to the head or grandson of the Great Chinese Emperor" (Hamadani, 1994, 3/2340, annotations)<sup>[3]</sup>.  
 "He ordered the warrior Jahan to lead the army along with Tagins"<sup>[2]</sup>
- 10) Chalesh: in Persian dictionaries, it means a behavior accompanied by haughtiness and charming and pride as well as war and battle: "in Turkish-Persian dictionaries, it has been recorded as Chalish meaning effort and endeavor"<sup>[7]</sup>.  
 "One of them had his both hands and legs cut and he could not challenge anymore"<sup>[2]</sup>

## Kurdish Words:

There are seen words in Shahnameh that are currently being used in the Kurdish language. Although one cannot definitely state that these words have been in the Kurdish language and entered Shahnameh for the reason that the Kurdish language is a dialect influenced by the other languages as authors reckon in such a way that most of the Kurdish words used within the territories of Iran are transformed Persian words; thus, the similarity of some of the words used in Shahnameh to the words used in Kurdish does not prove their being originally Kurdish. For example, if Zahhak kills a valuable cow in the story of Fereydun: "He came and killed that precious cow that was a harmless and kind nanny"<sup>[2]</sup>

The term "nanny" is currently used in the form of "Dālak" in the Kurdish language and it means the person who breastfeeds an infant but this claim cannot prove that the word "Dāyeh" [nanny] has been borrowed from Kurdish and, quite contrarily, the reverse might have occurred. However, there are many words the equivalents or similarities of which are seen in the Kurdish language or dialect commonly spoken by Kurds in Iran; however, several examples have been given below for verifying this claim. Rish: in the Kurdish language, the term Rish means injury as well as beard. It also has an ironical and metaphorical meaning when used in the phrase "Del-e-Rish" meaning "annoyed and upset". These meanings can be also seen in the Persian Language.

"The person who lacks wisdom would find his heart injured by his deeds"<sup>[2]</sup>

Hamāl: this word is pronounced in Kurdish as "Ha and Māl" which means rival and competitor and opponent.

"The archer pulled him all at once and the army commander cut the head of that non-rival off"<sup>[2]</sup>

Navand: in Kurdish, this word is pronounced as "No and Han" that means a one-year-old calf as well as a young ox. It seems that Zahhak has been resembled a Navand in this verse by Ferdowsi in terms of power and coarseness.

"He brought Zahhak as if he is a Navand [ox] and chained him in Damavand Mountain"<sup>[2]</sup>.

Vir: the term Vir means understanding and knowledge and memory in Kurdish and it is pronounced in the form of "Howar"; it is also occasionally abbreviated in speaking and pronounced as Vir.

"They appointed a sharp and knowledgeable magus who was an orator and illuminated and fault-finding person"<sup>[2]</sup>

Ajdeh: in Kurdish and Kalhori Branch thereof, Ajdeh means a sort of sewing that is carried out with large distances and coarse stitches; the big bags are usually sewn using a large needle called Bodkin which is not irrelevant to the use of this word in Shahnameh.

"You are stitching their livers by your mistreatment of them; who would bring mercy upon them, the wild animals?"<sup>[2]</sup>

The same also holds for such words as Kheftan (a sort of women's coat), Jonub (being), Sanan (curse), Gupal (mane and long hair), Kakoy (grandfather or brother, elder), Konan (hole and a suture in the rock or trees' trunks), Dizeh (ominous persons), Koftan

(fall), Khoshab (pleasant and freshwater), Tav (resistance and forbearance), Lav (flood), Dideh (eye), Karteh or Garteh (shirt) and so forth.

These words have been sometimes used in Shahnameh with the same meanings and they are occasionally applied to refer to similar or different meanings. All in all, it has to be stated that if it is accepted that these words feature an identical structure and originate from a single source, it is natural to envision them as Persian words in Shahnameh and Kurdish words in Kurdish because they have many common words due to their closeness. This is while this idea has to be accepted that since most of the Kurdish words have been derived from Persian inside Iran's territory, some Kurdish words can be also naturally seen in Shahnameh.

### Lurish words:

Some of the words existent in Shahnameh have not been subjected to root-finding and meanings' exploration but they can be realized as rooted in Lurish (the language of Lurs in Iran) due to their high similarity to Lurish dialect. Although it is not clear whether these words, like Kurdish words, found their ways into Shahnameh or they have been borrowed by Lurish speakers from it, it appears that the recent theory is very close to reality.

The thing that seems necessary in such discussions is the perception and comprehension of the deep meanings of some words in Shahnameh; it means that if the meanings of Shahnameh's words are clarified in linguistic explorations, their deep meanings can be well perceived and comprehended. Thus, the recognition of Lurish words and the exact retelling of their meanings is a step towards a better understanding of Shahnameh's stories. On the other hand, "one of the most precious cultural treasures possessed by countries enjoying ancient historical backgrounds is the native languages and dialects" [8]. Therefore, it can be stated that the existence of dialects, including Lurish dialects in Shahnameh, is a bilateral exchange and privilege. It can be subtly discerned that "Lurs are also somehow reminders of ancient Iran" [8]. Here and as an example, several words that seem to be similar in Lurish dialect are discussed but, as it was mentioned, only the apparent similarity and their today's application is intended in the Lurish dialect.

Baruhā: eyebrow

"His eyelashes were full of water out of sorrow; his eyebrows were twisted out of knowledgeability" [2]

This word has been used in Lurish dialect in the form of "Berm that can be even an equivalent in English to eyebrow in etymological terms with its roots being brat in Avesta, Bru in Sanskrit, bruk in Pahlavi and meaning the hair that grows on the arched bone between the eyehole and forehead" (Moharrar, 2005, under the term "eyebrow") [9].

Palhang: in Persian, it means rope, lasso, and harness with which the defeated contenders were usually tied. In Lurish, as well, it is a rope tied to the peripheral points for tightening the black tents and it has a meaning similar to thread and string. It has been repeatedly used in Shahnameh:

"He tied saddle and harness to his horse as if it is an elephant then he took the rein in his hands" [2]

Patfuz: mouth, beak, and snout. The term "Patfuz" exists in the Lurish dialect with the same meaning but in the forms of "Pafyuzi" or "Patuzeh" that are used for referring to and addressing individuals so these latter words might have been derived from the same root as that of the abovementioned word".

"When Rostam looked at that roaring dragon with that mane and snout, he shouted a loud voice" [2]

Piseh: having two colors, black and white

"The elders who are of the seed of Viseh are double-faced and hypocritically treating everyone" [8]

This word is used in passive form by the addition of a "y" to its end making it mean black and white in Lurish dialect and it is more utilized for a snake having black and white spots on its body and it refers also to a black-white thread. Piseh is also used for the person who has a large bit of food stuck in his throat with his eyes bulging out due to the intensity of discomfort and the black and white colors of the eyes become clearer and the person's color of the face turns dark blue. It is stated in a Lurish proverb that "Marziyeh Deben Si Piseh Mitarseh" which means "a burnt child dreads the fire". In the Lurish dialect, this word is also used in the same way for the same meaning.

Tash: it means fire.

"The famous king became happy in the heart in the sight of Rostam and his heart did not also start burning with the fire of the sorrow" [2]

Riq or Rig: it means sand. These words are also used in the Lurish dialect for the same meanings.

"I made a special world by the power of my incisive sword; why is king holding a grudge for me" [2]

Marr: number and size. "In a local game in Lurestan and Ilam that is called Dāl Pol, Marr is the unit of counting the game's sets and each Marr is two "Tills" in the course of the game; in other words, every Till is half of each Marr. An old belief signifies that playing this game causes the descending of precipitations and divine mercy" (Alireza'ei, 2000, under the term "Marr") [10].

"I will endow horses, swords, bludgeon, and belts of any sorts many times" [10]

Other words like Ajdan (prick), Buciam (to be), Khosh (good), Zahar (lower extremity), Gonam (nest of the birds and trap), Vir (memory) and so forth have also been used in Shahnameh and their meanings and applications can be also traced in the today's or past time's Lurish dialect. Although Lurs know Lurish dialect as a separate and a unit language, it has to be stated that the traces of the ancient words that have lost their meanings and applications in today's Persian can be sought in the Lurish dialect. Perceptions: according to what was dealt with in the discussions on the non-Persian words in Shahnameh, it can be stated that Shahnameh is the place of most of the Iranian traditions and customs and ethnicities and not only names but also Iranian ethnicities' languages and rites have been reflected in Shahnameh and Hakim Ferdowsi has made use of any means in regard of the spatial and temporal positions so as to be able to keep the cultures

of Iranian tribes alive. Although Arabic words are also frequently seen in Shahnameh, as well, it has to be figured out why Ferdowsi has utilized Arabic words as well as Turkish, Kurdish and Lurish words while his goal has been revitalizing Iranian and Persian language and culture? That is because, as it was discussed, Ferdowsi has not been an enemy to any languages and nationalities but he has exhibited a particular dependency and interest in Iranian culture. On the other hand, many of the Iranian tribes in the past, like in the present era, have been dwelling Iran with Arabic culture and language and they have been envisioned as Iranians. Thus, Hakim Ferdowsi has decorated Shahnameh with the Persian language and culture of Iranian tribes.

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