

# TURKISH WORDS IN THE LIBYAN DIALECT OF ARABIC

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It is customary to divide the Ottoman rule in Libya (1551-1911) into three major parts: 1- The First Ottoman Period (1551-1711). 2- The Karamanli Dynasty (1711-1835). 3- The Second Ottoman Period (1835-1911). The first period, beginning with Murat Agha (1551-1557), covers military reinforcement, unification, construction and political activities against the enemies invading Libya from Europe. The Second Period starting with Ahmed Pasha Karamanli (1711-1745) is, however, considered to be the Golden Era of the Turco-Libyan amalgamation which continued its effect until the last day.

The newly mixed generation born after the Golden Era, usually called Koroghli by the Libyans (father-side Turks or rarely mother-side Turks) had learnt or at least heard Turkish at home. In the army the case was different; almost all military terms of Turkish origin were used.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, Libyan Arabic freely borrowed words from Turkish. Over the past fifty years Arabic teachers, especially those of other Arabic nationalities, have tried to eliminate a great number of these Turkish words. It is, therefore, essential to list the remnant before they completely disappear from the contemporary Libyan Arabic. These borrowed words can be categorized as follows:

1 – Turkish words > Libyan Dialect

2 – Persian words > Ottoman > Libyan Dialect

3 – Arabic words > Ottoman (here they are either combined with Persian or Turkish words or lose their actual meanings) > Libyan Dialect

The Turkish words that are still used in the villages around Benghazi can be divided according to the nature of their meanings into these six groups:

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<sup>1</sup> For such terms see Ahmed Ateş, "Arapça Yazı Dilinde Türkçe Kelimeler" (Turkish Words in the Written Arabic), *Türk Kültürü Araştırmaları*, yıl II, 1965 Ankara, pp. 5-25.

1- Military terms such as “Bilik bashi” 2- Administration as “Kaymakam” 3- Some implements or tools as “Chakush” 4- Adjectives, for example “Doghri” 5- Food and drinks such as “Yahni” 6- Dress as “Yaka”.

Below the reader will find a list of the words under consideration with their possible etymologies followed by a list of abbreviations and sources. Those Turkish words that have entered other Arabic Dialects (i.e. Egyptian, Iraqi, Syrian etc.) have been removed from the list on the ground that they can be found in any standard Arabic dictionaries. However, some Turkish words that required etymological explanation have been included.

I – *TURKISH WORDS AND THEIR MEANINGS IN THE LDA :*

*MEANINGS IN TURKISH WITH SOME ETYMOLOGICAL DETAILS:*

آبلا abla:

“A Lady teacher.”

*abla:*

“An elder sister.” < *Ağā* = “master” + *bula* = “lady of a house” (see Tar., p. 122; Rad., I, p., 634). Thus *ağabula* > *abla*.

آغا agha:

“A head of establishment; a lord; noble man.”

*ağā:*

“Lord, master, elder brother, oldest man in a family” probably from the Turkish verb *ağmak* = “to rise up, ascend” See Cl., p. 77, *ağ* + -a or -e suffix for verbal noun, see Muharrem., p. 183). It is also claimed to be of Mongolian origin (see Doerfer., I, p. 131).

اردکاش ardakash:

“Comrade, friend” In TT. it is *arkades*. In LDA the syllables “ka” and “da” changed their places.

*arkadaş:*

“Comrade, friend” (A combination of *arka* = ‘back’ or rhetorical, ‘support’ (see K., I, p. 60) + -*daş*: a suffix for noun of association (see Cl., p. XIII).

الايات alayat:

"A group of soldiers, a regiment."

<alay (Turk.) + at suffix for plural in Ar.

alay:

"A regiment" (Tar., IV, 1957, p. 15).

اوجاك ujak:

"A heater for making coffee" (all other meanings given by Gülensoy see p. 136 do not exist in the LDA.).

ocak:

"A heater, a stove or hearth" *oçok* or *oçak* (see Cl., p. 22).

اون باشى onbashi:

"Head of a group of ten soldiers."

onbaşı:

Same.

<on = "ten" + baş = "head".

بويا boya:

"Paint, dye, colour."

boya: Same.

From the old Turkish form 'bodug'. (see Dizin., p. 98).

باشا basha:

"The highest title of civil and military officials."

paşa:

"The highest title of civil and military officials, general" (two etymological explanations are possible. It is either a distorted form of Persian word *Padshah*

(پادشاه) = "the king" (see Stein., p. 147 and Rasanen., p. 381). or from *baş* = "head" + *ağa* = "master") In the 13 century this word was used by Sultan Veled son of Rumi as *paşa* (see *Divan-i Türkiyi*, Sultan Veled, İstanbul, p. 14).

باش شاولش bash shavush:

"A chief sergeant" (since there is no "ch" in Arabic it changed into "sh").

baş çavuş:

"Sergeant" (<*baş* = "head" + *çavuş* = "sergeant") *Çavuş* = "a person who arranges lines of soldiers during war and protects them during peace" (see DT., I, p. 368).

بشواش bishvash:

"Slowly, silently" (The first consonant 'y' changed into voiced labial 'b' that preceded 'sh' for easy pronunciation). However, the original form 'yavash' is also seen in the LDA.

yavaş:

"Slow" actually "mild, gentle and peaceful" (see Cl., p. 880) and (DT., III p. 10-11).

برداك birdak:

"A cup or glass; mug".

bardak:

"A glass or cup." (The old Turkish form was "bart" (see DT., I p. 241) and (Cl., p. 358).

برغل barghal:

"Boiled and pounded wheat or barley; dish made of same." (see Stein., p. 198).

bulgur:

Same.

برنجی birinji:

"First."

birinci:

"First" < *bir* = "one" + -inci = ordinal suffix.

بسطرمة bastırma:

"Pressed meat cured with garlic and other spices".

pastırma:

Same.

From the verb *bastırmak* = "to press" + -ma = the deverbial n. suffix.

بغجه boghja:

"A bundle, bundle in a wrapper" pl. is 'buckaj' (see Ateş., p. 11).

bohça:

"A bundle" < *boğ* = "a bundle" + -ça (Per.) = an affix to form diminutives (see "*boğ*" Cl., p. 311). Ali Imam's etymology is far from being correct because he says it comes from *بوی* = "bubbles on water" + -ça (see *ibid.*, p. 89).

بيك bek:

"Chief, Mr., husband."

بكرج bakraj:

"A pot for boiling coffee".  
The final letter "ch" changed  
into "j" as usual.

بلطه balta:

"An ax or hatchet."

بوريك burek:

"Dishes made from dough,  
filled with chopped meat or  
minced meat."

بلقباشي bilikbashi:

"Head of an army division."

بيرق barek:

"A flag or banner."

دامغه damgha:

"A stamp, a seal or mark of  
ownership."

bey:

"A prince, head of a clan, hus-  
band, a noble or head of  
a kingdom" (see DT., Dizin, p.  
78; Cl., p. 322, Cl., claims it to  
be of Chinese origin 'po').

bakraç:

"A copper cauldron for water or  
milk, copper bucket."  
*bakır* = "copper" + *-aç* =deno-  
minial suffix, (see Muharrem., p.  
167).

balta:

Same. From and old form "*bal-  
du*" (بلدو)  
(see DT., I, p. 14 and 418. For  
other details see Cl., p. 333).

börek:

"Flaky pastry with layers of  
cheese or other filling." (Red-  
house, p. 196). There are variet-  
ies of *börek* in other Turkic dia-  
lects (see T.D.S., p. 110).

bölükbaşı:

Same. A noun from *bölmek* = "to  
divide" (see DT., I, p. 383) +  
*baş* = "head".

bayrak:

"Flag, banner, standard". From  
*batrak* (see Dizin., p. 17) for  
other details). see DT., 11, p. 205  
and Cl., p. 307).

damga:

Same. For detail (see Doerfer.,  
11, p. 933; Cl., p. 504; DT., 1,  
p. 424).

- دوغری doghri:  
"Straight" for distances.
- دوشه dosha:  
"A quarrel, conflict and noise". The whole vowel harmony has been broken under the Ar. influence.
- سنزق sanzak:  
"A flag, subdivision of a province" (see Shir., p. 114 foot note).
- شاکوش shakush:  
"A hammer."
- شاورمه shavurma:  
"Well fried and roasted meat."
- شاوش باشی shavush bashi:  
"The principal military officer, a sergeant."
- doğru:  
"Straight, direct, right, correct, honest, true and towards". From *toğuru*: "to go straight." (see Cl., p. 465).
- dövüş:  
"Fight" verbal noun of the verb *dövüştürmek* = "to fight". For the old form *tögüşmek*. (see DT., 11, p. 106).
- sancak:  
"Flag, banner, star boardside of, a ship, subdivision of a province" From the verb *sançmak* = "to pierce to poke in earth (as flag)" + -ak (the suffix for v.n., see Muharrem., p. 167).
- çekiç:  
"Same" it is not of Per. origin as shown by Ali Misrati see. p. 257. It is from *çekuk* = "a hammer (see DT., 11, p. 297). Other forms in Turkic Dialects are *çeküç/ çeküş/ çöküç/ çöküş/ çakuş* (for further details, see Cl., p. 415).
- çevirme:  
"Lamb or chicken roasted by skewers" (see Y.T.S., p. 53). From the verb *çevirmek* = "to turn up."
- çavuşbaşı:  
"Head sergeant, quart, chief of the corps of halberdiers of the sultan's bodyguard". For the Turkish meaning of the word see *başçavuş* here.

- شاوش shavush shavush: This form is not used in IT.  
 "Sergeant of sergeants."
- شكماجه shekmaja: çekmece:  
 "A drawer." "A drawer, ornamental casket."  
 Noun from the verb *çekmek* =  
 "to draw or pull".
- شنطه shanta: çanta:  
 "A bag, case, handbag." "bag, case, valise etc." It is not  
 found in Stain or Burhankati.  
 The other forms are *çantay* (DS.,  
 III, p. 1071). Çağ. *çontay* (see  
 ŞS., p. 159).
- شيللا sheyle beyla: şöyle böyle:  
 "All, al that comes, let all "so so, more or less" (*şöyle* =  
 go". "like that" + *böyle* = "like this"  
 It is interesting to notice that in  
 Turkmen dialect it used as *şöyle*  
*beyle*.<sup>2</sup>
- صكلو sakali: sakallı:  
 "A bearded man, an old "Bearded" Adj. from the noun  
 man" (see Shir., p. 154). *sakal* = "beard" (deverbil n.  
 from *saka* = "something hanging  
 down" i.e. 'beard' (see Cl., p.  
 808).
- طولمه tolma or dolma: dolma:  
 "Stuffed vegetable" (Ali Mis- "Stuffed vegetable, lamb or even  
 rati. p. 234). chicken" with meat or rice" (Dev.  
 n. of *doldurmak* = "to stuff".
- طابور tabur: tabur:  
 "A line or queue." "A battalion of 1000 men, lined  
 up people" old form was *tabkur*  
 = "Lened up soldiers or a line  
 of carriages chained together."

<sup>2</sup> Vide, İlhan Çeneli, *Türkmen Türkçesi Sözlüğü*, Türk Dili Araştırmaları Yıllığı, Ankara 1986, p. and 73.

- (see K., II, p. 82 and ŞS., p. 97, Rad., III, p. 978). It is of Mongolian origin.<sup>3</sup>
- طابو tabbu: "A land certificate".
- طابو tapu: "Written survey of a province, land certificate" From *tapı* = "agreement" (see DT., III, p. 216).
- طوبجی topji: "Cannoneer, gunner, artilleryman."
- طوبجی topçı: "Artilleryman" From *tob* = "a ball, ankle-bone or vannon ball" + *-çı* (N. agental suffix). See *tobık* Cl., p. 437.
- قاشق kashik: "A spoon."
- قاشق kaşık: "A spoon, literally something hollowed out by scratching" (for other details see Cl., p. 671) < *kaşımak* = "to scratch".
- قفتان kaftan: "A long dres for ladies or men."
- قفتان kaftan: "Outer gown or robe with long skirts and sleeves usually with sash or buttons" (see DT., I, 435; III, p. 109, 287, 298).
- قیمه kiyma: "Minced meat cooked with onion and eggs."
- قیمه kıyma: "Any kind of cooked or uncooked minced meat" < *kıymak* = "to chop or mince" (see DT., II, p. 173). Same form is used in Urdu and Persian.
- کات kat: "Storey of a building."
- کات kat: "Storey of a building, layer, fold, stratum" (see DT., I, p. 320).

<sup>3</sup> See. Tuna, Osman Nedim, "Osmanlıcada Moğolca Kelimeler", TM. XVIII, İstanbul 1972, p. 222.



- كباب kabak:  
"Pumpkin."
- کیرباج kirbaj:  
"A whip, scourge."
- کوروغلی koroghli:  
"A name of a family in Libya descended from a Turkish father (rarely mother)."
- کوبری kubri:  
"A bridge" In other Arabic dialects kubri كبرى or kabari (see Gülensoy., p. 153).
- کوریک kurek:  
"A showel, a long showel for handling bread at a bakery" Also in the LDA a proverb من کوریک الی بیت النار — from showel to the hell i.e. go to hell".
- نیه neyse:  
"Don't worry, let things go as they are."
- ورغان worghan:  
"A quilt" initial "y" has been changed into "w" in LDA.
- یامیشی yamishi:  
"Dry fruit such as dried grapes or figs" (see Misrati p. 233).
- kabak:  
"Pumpkin, vegetable marrow, gourd, tasteless unripe melon" (DT., I, p. 382 and Cl., p. 582).
- kırbaç:  
Same. < *kır* = 'to scrape' (see Cl., p. 643) + *-baç* = a suffix for deverbative noun (see Muharrem., p. 187).
- köroğlu:  
*Köroğlu* is name given by a husband to his wife in Turkish, c.f. "the Missus".
- köprü:  
Same. < *köprüğ* = "a bridge" (see DT., I, 478). In Türkmen dialect it is also *köpri* (see İlhan Çeneli., *ibid*, p. 60).
- kürek:  
From the old form *kurgek*' = "showel" (see DT., II, 289).
- neyse:  
"However" < *ne + ise* = "whatever it is, or never mind."
- yorgan:  
Same. (see DT., I, p. 197 where the old form is given as *yogurkan*.)
- yemiş:  
"Fruit; among public 'fig'" (For other details see Cl., p. 938).

ياقه yaka:

"The collar of a shirt".

yaka:

"A collar, edge, bank" (for the origin of the word see DT., I, 389, 253)

يوغورت yoghurt:

An international word for "curded milk".

yoğurt:

Same. For the root of the word (see Cl., 907 and DT., I, 182).

يوك yok:

"Not available, absent."

yok:

"Non-existent, absent, not present." (see Dizin., p. 153).

II – PERSIAN WORDS:  
THEIR MEANINGS IN THE  
LDA.

THEIR MEANINGS IN  
TURKISH:

بارا bara:

"A coin, money" "p" changed into "b".

para:

"Money" In Persian para = "a piece of something". As "money" it is not used in Per.

برواز bervaz:

"Frame of a window or picture".

pervaz:

"Fringe, border, cornice" (A Per. word in form but has undergone some semantic changes in Ottoman. For Persian see Stein., p. 245).

بياده biyade:

"A soldier on foot, infantry" In some other Arabic Dialects 'baidak' and 'bayadiy' forms are also used see Ali Imam., p. 113.

piyade:

Pedestrian, infantry" "*Pedestrian*" commoner in Per. than in Turkish.

دسته deste:

"Bunch of something, a dozen, number or amount between 10-12" (see Misra-ti., p. 250)

deste:

"I - Dozen 2 - a quire ou paper 3 - a bunch of something." *dest* (Per.) = "hand" thus *deste* = "a handful of something".

خردة *khurda*:

"Pieces of old iron, scrap metal".

hurde (pl. *hurdat*):

"Small bit, particle, unimportant objects" *hurdat*: "Rubbish, trash, small pieces" < *khurd* (Per.) = "small."

خسته خانه *khastekhane*:

"Hospital."

*hastehane*:

Same. *khasta* in Persian means "tired" or "fatigued" while *khane* = "house" thus *khastekhane* = "a house for the tired". In Ott. it has changed symantically and means "a sick person". It is interesting to notice that in Urdu it means "crisp" ant *nan-i khasta* will not mean "a sick bread" but "a piece of crisp bread".

خشاف *khushaf*:

"Cold drink of stewed fruit with plenty of sugary juice."

*hoşaf*:

Same. < *khosh* (Per.) = "nice, tasty" + *ab* = "water".

زبرك *zambarak*:

"Spring of a watch" also in the Libyan proverb: "he has become detached from his spring" i.e. he has become uncontrolled.

*zemberek*:

"Spring of awatch, spring door-latch" In Turkish "*Zembereği boşaldı*" = "he has lost his control on himself". In Persian it means "a cross-bow" (see Stein., p. 623, *zamburak*).

جنزير *janzir*:

"A chain, fetters" (see Misrati, p. 252).

*zincir*:

"A chain" (for other meanings see Stein., p. 624).

سردار *serdar*:

"A head or chief."

*serdar*:

Same. < *ser* (Per.) = "head" + *-dar* suffix from the verb *dashtan* = "to possess".

سرسری sarsari:  
"A wicked person."

سواری suvaru:  
"Cavalry, horseman."

شارشاف sharshaf:  
"Bed-sheet."

شیشمه shishma:  
"A fountain, water tap or spring."

شوال shuwal:  
"A sack, a bag."

شوربه shurba:  
"Soup, broth."

طنجره tanjera:  
"Vessels for kitchen."

افارم afaram:  
"Live long, bravo" (see Shir.,  
p. 160)

فشیک fushek:  
"A cartridge."

serseri:  
"A vagabond, tramp" in Turkish. In Persian it means "folly, vain words." (for detail see Setin., p. 675).

suvarı:  
Same. In Persian, "art of horsemanship, riding." (see Stein., p. 705).

çarşaf:  
"bed-sheet, women's outdoor overgarment". Purely Ottoman usage.

çeşme:  
"Water tap". In Persian it generally means "fountain, source of water spring". < *cheshm* = "an eye".

çuval:  
"A sack; a fat person (slang)" in Persian *juval* (see Stein., p. 376).

çorba:  
"Soup" < *shur* (Per.) = "salt" + *ba* (Per.) = "Soup or water of meat". (See Z., p. 1337).

tencere:  
"A sauce pan, a pot" It is more common in Turkish than in Per.

aferin:  
"Well done, bravo". Same in Per.

fişek:  
"A metallic cartridge, cartouche" TT. usage; in Persian it is *Fish-eng* (see Stein., p. 930).

کفته kuf̄ta:

"Meat ball."

köfte:

"Meat ball, hamburger" < Per. verb *kuf̄tan* = "to beat" also used in Urdu and other Arabic dialects.

کلیم kilim:

"A rug without pile."

kilim:

"Woven matting, a rug" The Per. is *gilim* (see Stein, p. 1096).

کهنه kuhna:

"Old, ancient."

köhne:

"Old, ancient" (see Stein., p. 1067).

ماشه masha:

"Tongs, pincers."

maşa:

"Tongs, smith's forceps, pincers" (see An., VI, p. 3748).

نازک nazik:

"Tender, delicate or fargile."

nazik:

"Delicate, easily damaged, fargile, refined" (For other details see Stein., p. 1871).

نامه nama:

"A writing, a letter, particularly an official document." (see Shir., p. 115).

name:

"A letter, a writing" (for other meanings see Stein., p. 1380).

نیشان nishan:

"A sign, mark."

nişan:

"A sign, spot, mark" < the verb *nishandan* (Per.) = "to mark out".

هندازه handaza:

"Estimate, proportion."

endaze:

"Estimate, measure" a Persian usage.

یخنی yakhni:

"A rich stew of meat, gravy".

yahni:

"Meat stew with onion" (see Stein., p. 1529).

## III - WORDS OF ARABIC ORIGIN IN FORM OR MEANINGS:

## MEANINGS IN THE LDA:

## MEANINGS IN TURKISH:

اجزخانه ajzakhana:

"Drugstore, pharmacy".

eczane:

Ott. usage. In TT. the *kh* has been changed into "h". < *ajza* (Ar.) = "chemical elements" + *khane* (Per.) = "house"; "a place where medicine is prepared or sold."

اختيار ikhtiyar:

"An aged man" (see Misrati, p. 232).

ihtiyar:

"Old man, elder, chief" Ottoman usage. Otherwise in Ar. it means "a selected person".

اسطى usta:

"Chief workman, foreman".

usta:

Same. A shortened form of Ar. word < *ustaz* = "the master, experienced person". In Ott. the last "z" has been dropped.

بودالا budala:

"Stupid silly".

budala:

"Simple, stupid or foolish" Ott. usage. In Ar. it is the plural of *badil* = "a pious man".

باش تعمیرچی bashtamirci:

"A chief repairman or technician".

baştamirci:

Same. < *baş* (Turk.) = "head" + *tamir* (Ar.) = "emendation" + -ci (Turk.) suffix denoting professions. Purely Ott. usage.

باش کاتب bash katib:

"A chief secretary".

başkatip:

Same. < *baş* (Turk.) = "head" + *katib* (Ar.) = "secretary".

تیزدان tezdán or dizdan:

"A wallet or container of money".

cüzdan:

Same. < *cuz* (Ar.) = "piece" hence money + -dan (Per.) = "container" (nominal suffix).

دبسیز debsiz:

“Disrespectful” (The initial front open unrounded vowel “e” has dropped totally).

زبون zabun:

“Traditional uniform of Libya”.

سجاده sejjade:

“A prayer rug or mat.”

عرايه جی arabaji:

A coach driver.”

قائم مقام kaym makam:

“Governor of a town.”

قرمزی kırmızı:

“Crimson, scarlet red.”

مقنبر mukander:

“Hump, hunchbacked.”

edebsiz:

“III-mannered, rude, shameless” < *adab* (Ar.) = “refine manners” + -siz (Turk. suffix for negation).

zıbin:

“A sleeved quilted underjacket without collar, generally for children.” In Arabic this meaning does not exist.

seccade:

Same. Ott. usage from the Ar. word *sejde* = “act of prostrating”.

arabacı:

“Driver of a cart, wagon, coach etc” *araba* (Ar.) = wheel” + -cı (For other Turkish dialects see K., p. 49 and Kırgız p. 39).

kaymakam:

“Governor of a town, lower in rank than *vali* (provincial governor)” Ott. usage.

kırmızı:

“Red, red dye” (after the name of an insect *kırmıs*, for detail see Ali Imam, p. 528).

kambur:

“Hunchbacked, crooked, curve of an animal’ back”.

Some words shown as of Turkish origin by Ali Misrati for example:

افندی خوجه محلیه بلاو زلایه فوطه شلیی جوخ طایه بشماط بجامه بابوخ تفته  
بوری برنامع دهقان

have been excluded from the list on the ground that they either do not exist in Turkish at all or are used widely in other Arabic Dialects.

*Abbreviations and Bibliography*

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- Misrati : Al-Misrati, Ali Mustafa (1968), *Al-sillat Beyn Libya ve Türkiya*, Trablus, Matba' Wazarat al-Am va Sakafa.
- Ott. : Belonging to the Ottoman Turkish, Ottoman usage.
- Per. : Persian
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- TT. : Turkish of Turkey.
- Turk. : Turkish.
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