

# The Origin of Turkic Bal [Honey]

## Türkçe Bal [Honey]'in Kökeni

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### ABSTRACT

The Turks got in touch with many regions on Earth and many people living in those regions thanks to the mobility a nomadic lifestyle provides. As a result of this, they borrowed many loans from other languages and lent the words belonging to their languages to others. However, there are terms related to beekeeping that are used in Turkic, and beekeeping rather seems to be a field of occupation akin to a sedentary lifestyle, of which the most outstanding is the name given for honey. Beekeeping is rather a field of occupation akin to sedentary life. So the words related to beekeeping appear to be non-Turkic elements because it is accepted that the Turks mostly adopted a nomadic lifestyle, and all terms pertaining to honey used among Turkic-speaking communities are regarded as foreign borrowings. Especially the widespread use of common naming used for honey in Indo-European languages and the non-existence of the words, which start with the letter m in Turkic, constitute the background of such a point of view. Another important thing is the fact that the oldest name used for honey among Turkic dialects is not known. For this reason, it is claimed that the Turks must have borrowed this word from Indo-Europeans. In this paper, for the first time, a word that has not been noticed by all linguists until now and seems to be the origin of Turkic bal, "honey," will be shared, and the fact that Turkic bal is a linguistic remnant belonging to the Scythian language will be shown.

**Keywords:** Turkic, Indo-European, Scythian, Honey, Eastern Europe

### ÖZ

Türkler göçebe hayatın getirdiği hareketlilik sayesinde dünyanın pek çok bölgesi ve o bölgelerde yaşayan halklar ile sürekli bir temas halinde olmuşlardır. Bunun neticesi olarak çoğu kereler diğer dillerden pek çok kelime almışlar ve öte yandan temas kurdukları pek çok lisana da kendi kelimelerini ödünç vermişlerdir. Bununla birlikte, Türkçe'de kullanılan ve de daha ziyade yerleşik hayata dair bir uğraş sahası gibi gözükten arıcılık ile ilgili terimler vardır ki, bunların başında bal için verilmiş Türkçe adlandırma yahut adlandırmalar göze çarpmaktadır. Arıcılık daha ziyade yerleşik yaşama özgüdür ancak Türklerin ise ekseri itibarıyla göçebe bir yaşam biçimini benimsemiş oldukları kabul edildiğinden ötürü arıcılık ile ilgili kelimeler Türkçe dışı unsurlar olarak göze çarpar ve böylesi bir peşinen kabul edilmiş önyargı temelinde Türkçe konuşan topluluklar arasında halihazırda kullanılmakta olan tüm bal ile ilgili terimler Türkçe'ye dışarıdan gelmiş yabancı ödünçlemeler olarak kabul edilir. Özellikle de bilim dünyası içerisinde halihazırda mevcut olan fikre göre Türkçe'ye bu sözcük Çince üzerinden girmiş Hint-Avrupa kökenli bir ödünçlemedir. Bu türden bir fikrin en büyük dayanaklarından biri hiç şüphe yoktur ki, Hint-Avrupa dilleri içerisinde bal için kullanılan ortak adlandırmanın yaygın oluşu ve de Türkçe'de -m harfi ile ilgili başlayan kelimelerin Türkçe'de hali hazırda mevcut olmayışıdır. Bir diğer önemli husus ise tarihsel olarak Türk lehçeleri içerisinde bal için kullanılan en eski adlandırmanın bilinmeyişi. Bu sebepten ötürüdür ki, Türkler bu sözcüğü Hint-Avrupalılardan aldıkları iddia edilir. Bu çalışmada ilk kez de olsa bugüne değin tüm dilbilimcilerin gözünden kaçan ve de fark edilmemiş ve de Türkçe bal kelimesinin kökeniymiş gibi duran bir sözcük paylaşılacak ve bu sözcüğün Hint-Avrupalıların diline ait değil gerçekte Sakaların diline ait bir dilsel miras olduğu gösterilecektir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Türkçe, Hint-Avrupa Dilleri, Sakaca, Bal, Doğu Avrupa

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### Introduction

Denomination for honey in Turkic dialects can be seen as follows: Turkish *bal*, Azerbaijani *bal*, Gagauz *bal*, Bashkir *bal*, Kazakh *bal*, Kyrgyz *bal*, Uzbek *bal*, Tatar *bal*, Turkmen *bal*, Uigur *bal*, Karachai-Malkar *bal*, Qaraqalpaq *bal* and *pal*, Kumuk *bal*, Nogai *bal*, Khakass *bal* and *pal*, Shor *pal*, Chuvashian *pi*, etc. In addition to those forms, it should be noted that it was lent to Mongolian later on. It exists in the form of *bal* in Mongolian of today and Mongolian dialects [Kalka *bal*, Buryat *bal*, Kalmuk *bal*] (Lessing, 1960:

78; Poppe, 1938: 433; Zemaşşeri, 2009: 181; Ramstedt, 1935: 30), and they are accepted to be borrowings of Turkic stock. (Sanzheyev, Orlovskaya, & Shevernina, 2015: 70). The Korean word 벌[bel>beol], meaning “bee,” is included in this list (Witzel, 2003: 13).

As to the origin of the word *bal* that constitutes the main subject of this article, Danişment’s statements about the mentioned word is the following:

Turkic	<i>Bal</i> = Honey, juice of different herbs
Indo-European	<i>Mēdhu</i> = honey
Hittite	<i>Milit</i> = honey
Sanskritic	<i>Madhu</i> = honey
Zend	<i>Madhu</i> = honey
Homeros	μέλι = <i>mēli</i> = honey
Latin	<i>Mel</i> = honey
Old Irish	<i>Mil</i> = honey
Old Slavic	<i>Medu</i> = honey
Latvian	<i>Medus</i> = honey
Lithuanian	<i>Medus, midus</i> = honey
Gothic	<i>Milith</i> = honey
Old High German	<i>Meto</i> = honey wine
Armenian	<i>Meğr</i> = honey

Danişment, who presents the world list expressed above, is of the view that Turkic *bal* and other namings used in Indo-European languages stem from the common root (Danişment, 1936: 201).

Clauson holds an opinion based on the fact that it is actually a Chinese borrowing in Turkic dialects and ultimately of Indo-European stock. He links it with the Sanskrit word *madh*, “honey,” and shows Latin *mel*, “honey,” as the closest parallel to Turkish forms in Indo-European languages (Clauson, 1972: 330, 771). Severtyan, Räsänen, Tietze, and Stachowski totally agree with Clauson about this matter, and all of them are of the opinion that it is connected to Sanskrit *madh* (Räsänen, 1969: 59; Tietze, 2002: 268; Severtyan, 1968: 47; Stachowski, 2013: 615). On the other hand, Menges, who states that *bal* is of Turkic origin and not Indo-European, connects its root to the Turkish word *balık*, meaning “mud” (Menges, 1982: 111).

One reason that Clauson regards that as being of Indo-European origin is the fact that 蜜[mi], the Chinese word for honey [early Middle Chinese *mjit* (Pulleyblank, 1991: 213) and Ancient Chinese mjēt̚ (Karlgren, 1973: 196)], is accepted to be a loanword from Tocharian B *mit* (Conrady, 1925: 3–19; Lubotsky, 1998: 379–390; Pulleyblank, 1966: 10).

According to this kind of contention, Turks have borrowed this word of Indo-European stock from Chinese [mjit~bjit~bal] thanks to geographic proximity.

Another reason that the word *bal* cannot be of Turkic origin is the existence of common prejudice and deep-rooted belief in the linguistic field towards the fact that Turkic words cannot start with the letter m (Clauson 1972: 330).

Contrary to Clauson’s identification of Turkic *bal* with Latin *mel*, De Vaan states that both the source of and also the way of appearance of the word *Mel* in Latin are disputed and uncertain (De Vaan, 2008: 370). Smoczyński raises an objection to the identification of Latin *Mel* with Sanskrit *Madh*. According to him, both forms are completely different from each other, and there is no association between them (Stachowski 2013: 615).

The fact that Smoczyński’s objection has consistent points is seen when the names given to honey in the Indo-European language family are examined.

First of all, the namings for honey in Germanic languages [German *honig*, Old High German *honag*, English *honey*, Old English *hunig*, Frisian (North Frisian *honning*, Saterland Frisian *huunich*, West Frisian *huning*), Danish *honning*, Afrikaans *heuning*, Limburgish *heuning*, Luxembourgish *hunneg*, Norwegian (Bokmål *honning*, Nynorsk *honning*), Swedish *honung*, Dutch *honing*, Icelandic *hunang*, Faroese *hunangu*, Old Norse *hunang*] are all the way different from other terms in the rest of Indo-European language family. The most striking equivalence of German form used for honey is Japanese word 蜂蜜 pronounced as *hani*.

Secondly, the form *mel* is primarily observed in the Romance languages within the Indo-European language family. Italian *miele*, French *miel*, Spanish *miel*, Galician *mel*, Portuguese *mel*, Occitan *mèl*, Catalan *mel*, Aragonese *miele*, Romansch *mel*, Sardinian *mele*, Venetian *miel*, Ladin *mil*, etc.

The form *madh* has been mostly preserved in the Iranian and Balto-Slavic branches of Indo-European languages. Belarussian мёд, Bulgarian мед, Macedonian мед, Rusyn мед, Sorbian [Lower Sorbian *mjod*, Upper Sorbian *měd*], Polish *miód*, Ukrainian мед, Czech *med*, Croatian *med*, Latvian *medus*, Lithuanian *medus*, etc.

There is also another connection Clauson ignores in his attempt to explain the origin of the word *Bal*. The ancient Greek word for honey was also μέλι (Dvoretzkiy, 1958: 1067; Çelgin, 2011: 420) (Liddell & Scott 1996: 1097), which is exactly the same as the Latin one, while μέθυ meant “entoxicating drink, wine” (Dvoretzkiy, 1958: 1062; Çelgin, 2011: 418; Liddell & Scott 1996: 1090) in the same language. Existence of and use of μέλι and μέθυ in Ancient Greek in the same period contradict the assumption that Turkic *bal* has evolved out of the form μέθυ and the view that the forms *mel* and *madh* may have derived from the same root.

Beekes links Greek μέθυ with the forms *medh/madh* (Beekes, 2010: 919) meaning “honey and wine” in Iranian languages, while he presents a series of etymological explanations about μέλι and ties it to the form *milīt* “honey” (Beekes, 2010: 926) in Hittite language. He also touches upon its Scythian connection. The most striking statement he made about μέλι is that μέλιτιον [*melīt*], the so-called Scythian word for honey, is a word that stems from an unknown source (2010: 926).

To speak honestly, I could not come across the form μέλιτιον of the Scythian word in any historical work. The form μέλιτιον is really the arbitrary reconstruction (Carpelan & Parpola, 2005: 115) of the Scythian name mentioned by Hesychus of Alexander. Another author who uses the same Scythian word is Glaucus. The Scythian naming given by both authors is more different than the form μέλιτιον, as will be seen below.

Such a word list related to honey and bees appears when we look at Finno-Ugric languages outside of the Altaic and Indo-European language families. The words for honey in this language family are Hungarian *méz*, Finnish *mesi* “nectar of flowers; honey,” Finnish *mete*, Veps *meži*, Vote *mesi*, Estonian *mesi*, Liv. *me’iž*, Lapp *mieta*, Mordvin *miéd’*, Cheremis *mü*, *müj*, Votyak *mu*, Zyryan *ma*, Komi-Zyr *ma*, etc. (Collinder, 1977: 115; Rédei, 1988: 273; Hajdu, 1975: 33; Gamkrelidze & Ivanov, 1995: 829–830), and the ones for bee in the same language family are Hungarian *méh*, Finnish *mehi-läinen*, Mordvin *mekš*, Cheremis *mukš*, Votyak *muš* and etc. Those terms are regarded as one of the most important key words in determining the Finno-Ugric homeland (Hajdu, 1975: 33; Kuz’mina, 2007: 200).

Stetsyuk regards the closeness between beekeeping terms belonging to Indo-European and Finno-Ugric language families as a result of cultural contact, which dates back to the third millennium BC (Stetsyuk, 2000: 73), while another point of view is the claim that linguistic contact, which is related to beekeeping terms, between Proto-Uralic speakers and Proto-Indo-Europeans would have taken place with the appearance of the earliest ceramics in the forest region of Eastern Europe, c. 6000 BC. (Carpelan & Parpola, 2007: 122).

On the other hand, the words *mesi* and *mete* in Finnish can be linked with Iranian languages, but there are more different namings used for honey in the same language. One of them is *hunaja* “honey,” which is very clearly related to the Germanic world, while another one is *pulu* “honey,” which is connected to the Altaic world. Vogul *pól* “honey” (Fischer, 1995: 147) is one of the words that must be evaluated at this point. Neither *pulu* nor *pól* are borrowings of Indo-European stock that have evolved into the form *madh*. Both forms point to the fact that both Finnish and Vogul have borrowed those from a source outside of the Indo-European language family.

Finno-Ugric terms [with the exception of the forms *pulu*, *pól*, and *hunaja*] listed above correspond to their counterparts in Indo-European languages very closely but seem to be far from those in Altaic languages. The best Indo-European parallels to Altaic terms today are Greek and Latin words. How can the linguistic connection between the Mediterranean and Altaic worlds be established then?

There is only one answer to a question of this kind. The main source for both Altaic languages and also Greek and Latin seems to be the Scythians.

Hesychus of Alexander, in the lexicon study he compiled from divergent sources, recorded one Scythian word. It is μέλύγιον meaning “beverage with honey” (Mayrhofer, 2006: 21). Glaucus, another author who mentions the same drinking, relates the following: “When the drivers agreed, he dismissed the assembly, and dispersing each to his home, they prepared the μέλύγιον. This drinking is more intoxicating than wine and is made of honey boiled with water, with the addition of a certain herb; for their country produces much honey and also beer, which they make out of millet.” (Grenfell & Hunt, 1922: 161).

Thanks to Glaucus’ explanations, we learn that the Scythians produce a lot of honey. The fact that the name of Melitopol, a city in what is today Ukraine where the Scythians lived in antiquity, comes from Greek *meli* “honey” and *polis* “town” (Room, 2006: 244) matches up with Glaucus’ sayings.

The appendix *ιον* in the name μέλύγιον is a typical Greek nominal suffix. The original form of the Scythian word is *melug*, and it has always been tried to link with [maluga<Madu-ka<] Madu “honey” in Iranian languages (Schrinoni & Hunt, 2009: 77), but the attempt to link both words with one another does not seem to be convincing.

Not to put too fine a point on it, the Scythian word has been the most outstandingly preserved in Altaic languages, neither in Indo-European nor in Finno-Ugric ones, even though Altaic and Indo-European denominations remain close to each other to some extent. The following word list and short explanation regarding this issue is quoted from the work entitled “An Etymological Dictionary of Altaic Languages.”

“...male honey, plant oil: Tungus \**mala*; Mongolian \**milaya*-; Turkish \**bāl* asd Proto-Tungus \**mala* sesame oil, plant oil (кунжутное масло, растительное масло)...” (Starostin, Dybo, & Mudrak, 2003: 897)

It is interesting that Starostin, Dybo, and Mudrak regard the original root form of Turkic and Mongolian words as *Male* above. In addition to those above, it should be added that the Turkish word *meliken*, meaning “some kind of oil” (DS, 2019/IV: 3158), is identical with the Mongolian word *milaya*. The root of all terms related to honey used in Altaic languages seems to belong to the Scythian language. The phonetic and semantic resemblance between Scythian *Melug* [<μέλύγιον] and *Male* is incontestable.

What must be debated here is why the Scythian word for honey is close to its counterparts in Altaic languages but is far away from its ones in Iranian languages. The prevailing scholarly view regarding the origin of the Scythians was that they were an Iranian-speaking tribe, although we do not have any solid evidence to confirm such a point of view. The Ossetes living in Caucasus today are accepted to be the only grandsons of the Scythians. The Ossetian word for honey is (Digor) *муд* and (Iron) *мыд*. However, those do not correspond to the Scythian form.

Turkic word for city is *Balık* and Turkic one for fish is *Balık* and Turkic ones for mud are *balık* and *Balçık*. All of them are semantically related to the word *Bal* “honey” (Stachowski 2013: 616–617).

The denomination for fish among Turkic dialects is, respectively, as stated below: Proto-Turk. \**bālik* fish (рыба): Old Turkish. *balıq* (OUygh.); Karakhanide Turkic *balıq* (MK); Turkish *balık*; Gagauz *balıq*; Azerbaidzhan *balıq*; Turkmenian *balıq*; Salur *baluχ*; Middle Turkish. *balıq*, *balıy*; Uzbek. *balıq*; Uyghurian *belıq*; Karaim. *balix*; Tatar *balıq*; Bashkir *balıq*; Kirghiz *balıq*; Kazakh *balıq*; Karachai Balkar. *balıq*; Kara Kalpak. *balıq*; Kumuk *balıq*; Noghai. *balıq*; Khakass *palix*; Shor *palıq* (R.); Oyrot (Mountain Altai) *balıq*; Tuva *balıq*; Tofalar *balıq*; Chuvash *polь*; Yakut *balık*; Dolgan *balık* (Starostin & Dybo & Mudrak 2003: 1076).

As it is seen, the general name used for fish in Turkic dialects is in the form of *balık*. However, we find the name of a kind of salmon as *bil* in Yakut dialect (Hauenschild, 2008: 20), *pel* in Teleut dialect (Sirkaşeva & Kuçığışeva, 2000: 85), and *pil* in Hakass dialect. (Naskali ve diğerleri, 2007: 377). All words in the list mentioned above regarding honey and bee in Finno-Ugric languages start with the letter *m*. On the other hand, a kind of salmon is called *päll* in Ludic dialect, a Finnic language in the Uralic language family, and its counterpart in Veps dialect is **pal'l** (Collinder 1977: 66).

Denominations for salmon in Finno-Ugric dialects besides Turkic dialects point to the fact that the original form of the word *Balık* in Turkish was *pal*. The fact that the Chuvash word for fish is *пыла* supports this inference.

This is supported by the fact that denominations for “mud and dirt” in Altaic languages are Tungusic \**bul-*; Mongolian \**bul-*; Turkish \**bal-*; Japanese \**pu-*; and Korean \**piro* (Starostin, Dybo, & Mudrak 2003: 344). And the root form for all of them is regarded as \**bälü* (2003: 344). The earliest form of Turkic *bal*, meaning “mud,” was *pal*, in accordance with the linguistic rule that Turkic initial *-b* was in the form *-p*.

The most striking counterpart regarding *Balık* “swamp” is the name of the Baltic Sea, which is closely associated with the word *Balt*, meaning swamp (Bojtár 1999: 8). It is connected with Prussian *balt*, Lithuanian *bala*, Slavic *boloto*, Latin *palus*, which is the name of *Palus Meotis*, including *Balaton* Lake in Hungary, etc., which carry the meaning of swamp (Bojtár 1999: 8).

The etymological dictionary of Latin language links *Palus* with Old Prussian *pelky* “marsh” and Lithuanian *pélké* (De Vaan 2008: 442), and Harper’s Latin Dictionary connects *Palus* to Sanskrit *palvala* “pool” and Greek *πηλός* “mud, loam, and clay” in Ancient Greek, which does not have a convincing etymology (Beekes 2010: 1186) and evaluates the denomination of *Palus Maeotis* in this context (Lewiss & Short, 1879: 1294).

It has been shown that Greek words *πηλός* “mud,” *bátos*, *vátos* “bog,” and Latin *palus* “mud, clay” are related to Turkic *balçık* “mud clay” and *balık*, “city, castle, palace, and headquarter” (Tuna, 1961: 642–643).

The fact that there is a phonetic and semantic relation between Greek *πηλός*, Lithuanian *bala*, and *baalu*, meaning “muddy place and valuable,” in the Altai Turkic dialect in addition to Turkic form *pal* (Naskali & Duranlı, 1999: 33), is obvious. It also must be noted that the English words “value” and “valuable” are identical with *Baalu*. There is the change from *b* to *v*, seen in Turkish commonly, between *baalu* and *value*. *Baalu* means “valuable, precious” also in Kyrgyz, and *paha* “value” and *pahalı* “expensive,” derived from the same root in Turkish, are related to English “value.” Old Prussian *pelky* “marsh,” Lithuanian *pélké* “marsh,” Latin *mel* “honey,” *Palus* “swamp,” and Greek *πηλός* can be easily connected to Scythian *melug* (μέλυγιον). Scythian *melug* > *belug* > *pelug* > *pelgy* and *pélké*.

John Tzetses, the Greek author of the XII<sup>th</sup> century AD, relates that the Scythian denomination for the Azov Sea was *Karpaluk* (Kuun, 1880: LIX). It is also probable that Tzetses presents the name given by the Kypchaks for the Azov Sea here. The word *Balık* “fish” is in the form of *Baluk* in CC (Codex Cumanicus), a historical dictionary of the Kypchaks (CC, 2015: 433; Grönbech, 1992: 22; Toparli, Vural, & Karaatli, 2007: 23).

Some authors explain this naming as Turkish *Karabalık*, “big fish” (Miziyev & Laypanov, 2010: 99), but what they could not notice is the fact that *Paluk* carries the meaning of swamp. Namely, *Karpaluk* means “Big Swamp.”

The Turkish denomination used for the Azov Sea in the Ottoman period was *Baluk Denizi*, “Fish Sea.” One would think that the reason Turks designate the mentioned sea as *Baluk* is because of its high fish productivity (TEB, 1876: 147). Deduction of this kind has nothing to do with historical truth. The only reason for the use of such a designation in the Ottoman period stems from the fact that the Azov Sea has been known by the Turks as a muddy body of water since time immemorial. The real thing meant with *Baluk* in the Ottoman period is “swamp,” and its real meaning appears to be “swamp sea,” not “fish sea.” The ancient Greek word *πέλαγος* (*pélagos*), “open sea,” seems to be related to the denomination *Baluk* in the Ottoman period.

As to another semantic and phonetic connection between the denomination of *Palus Maeotis* and Turkic language, Herodotus tells of the happening of ditch. According to what he told, the Scythians came across the ditch dug by a young generation descendant of their own stock around *Palus Maeotis* and Crimean Peninsula (Azov Sea) while returning from their campaign targeting Asia Minor and its neighboring regions (Herodotos, 2004: IV: 3).

Pal, meaning “swamp” in the denomination of Palus Maeotis, also carries the meaning of “ditch” in Turkic. Sevortyan links Bal “honey” with Bal meaning “ditch, trench” in some Kazakh dialects (Sevortyan 1968: 48). The verb *balğa*, meaning “to dig” in Chaghatai Turkic dialect, is very closely associated with *bal* in the meaning of “trench.”

Lake Balkash, which is situated in the eastern part of what is today Kazakhstan, is semantically identical with Balkaş (Balkash), meaning “swamp” in Turkic dialects. It is very clear that both Palus “swamp” and Balkash are identical to each other. The words for fish in the Shor and Teleut dialects of Turkic are *palık*, and the words for “mud and clay” in the same dialects are *palgaş* (Tannagaşeva & Akalın, 1995: 75; Sırkaşeva & Kuçığaşeva, 2000: 82). It is necessary to relate that Tuna sees the word *Palgaş* as the equivalents of the words *balık* and *balçık* (Tuna 1961–642). *Palgaş*, another reading form of *Balkaş* (Balkash), and Palus (Maeotis) are fundamentally the same.

The semantic and phonetic connections between Turkic *bal* (honey) and *Balık/Balçık/Baalu* (clay/muck) and *Bal* (ditch) are also seen in Indo-European languages. If necessary, give an example: The English word for muck or clay is *mud*, English word for trench is *moat*, and Ossetian word for honey is *Mud*. Maeotis, one of the denominations used for the Azov Sea, seems to be related to the words *moat* “swamp” and *mud* “clay.” The people of Maeotians living in the vicinity of Caucasus in antiquity must have taken their name from here.

To sum up, the root of the Turkic words *bal* and *balık/baluk* seems to be the Scythian one *melug*. It appears from all of those statements above that the Scythian *melug* has turned into *Belug/Baluk* and *Balık* in Turkic dialects over time. The fact that *bil*, the Yakut word for “a kind of salmon,” is also in the form of *mil* (Hauenschield 2008: 110) in the same dialect is a strong argument for the change  $m > b$ .

Sinor regards the origin of Turkic *Balık* “city, town” to be of Ugric origin (Sinor, 1981: 102). However, Scythian naming makes this impossible. The source of Ugric and Turkic names is of Scythian origin.

The Scythian denomination bears witness to the fact that the earlier Turkic pronunciation of the word *Balık* was *Malık*. *Mılık*, meaning “the place made by the slowing water into a swamp, mud brought and accumulated by the floodwaters, and little aqueous place,” and *Mılı*, seems to be the root of *Mılık*, meaning “little wet, wet” in Derleme Sözlüğü (Compilation Dictionary of Turkish), must be evaluated in this context.

There is another linguistic proof to affirm this claim. You can see the image used for the letter *M* in the Orkhun Inscriptions belonging to the VIII th century AD. below. It is exactly the same as fish. Even this image is in favor of the view that the earlier pronunciation of Turkic *baluk*, “fish,” was *Malug*. An historical record also confirms such a claim. Boodberg identifies the name of Mo-le city [Ancient Chinese Muâ-lək] as so named by the T’uchüeh (the Turks) because of the excellent fish in the river nearby, which occurs in the well-known early gazetteer named T’ai-p’ing huan-yü chi 太平寰宇記

, a work compiled in the period of 976–983 A.D., with Turkic *balık* “fish” (Boodberg, 1956: 407). The mentioned Chinese source refers to both city and fish with the naming *Mo-le*.

However, geographical denominations and word equivalences related to honey, which belong to antiquity, point to the fact that it has existed and been used in the form of *pal* since the early stages of the Scythian period. At this point, I will present several more linguistic materials regarding the change from *m* to *b* between Turkic and European languages.

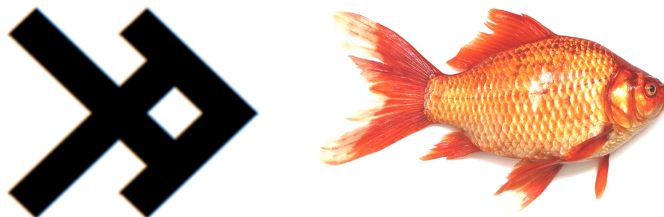
The German word *mauer*, meaning “wall,” comes from Latin *mūrus*, “wall,” and the Germans pronounced it as *mūr* in the past (Stachowski, 2011: 88). The word *baru* used in Turkic dialects carries the meaning of wall (Nemeth, 1990: 8). It goes without saying that *baru* and *mauer* are of the same stock.

*Mud* “muck, clay” seems to be identical with *bat*, the root of Turkic *batakılık* “swamp.” German *müde* “tired, exhausted” is identical with *bit*, the root of Turkish *bitkin* “tired, exhausted.”

*Murut* means “mustache” (Yudahin, 1998: 576) in Kyrgyz. It is identical with English *beard* and German *bart*.

*Müren* means river in Mongolian and Turkic dialects, and *mu/mö* carries the meaning of “water” in Mongolian dialects (Starostin, Dybo, & Mudrak, 2003: 935). There is also another word used for river in Mongolian dialects. It is *bira* (Starostin, Dybo, & Mudrak, 2003: 359). Of course, it is identical with the Turkic words *bere* and *bara*, meaning “lake and swamp.” It appears that the *Maris* River mentioned by Herodotus in Melpomene and the Latin *mare* “sea” are identical with the aforesaid Mongolian and Turkic words. *Moat*, meaning trench, is in the form of *Batuu* (Yudahin, 1998: 99) in Kyrgyz and so on.

It can be said that Turkic words had begun even with letter *-m* before the common era. What must be debated about is whether the change  $m > b$  or  $b > m$  was initial. It is highly probable that the original form used by the Scythians was *Pal* and *Paluk*. They have pronounced the word, which they used as *Paluk* and *Pal* firstly, also as *Maluk-Meluk* over time. It is likely that Altaic communities used the



**Figure 1.**  
The form used for letter *-m* in Orkhun inscriptions and a fish picture.

forms starting with the letters -m and -b in order to designate honey and fish, but the forms starting with the letter -b have gained more popularity in the daily use of Altaic communities.

It can be easily said that the word *bal* is not a Indo-European borrowing which enters Turkic from Chinese. It is really a Scythian linguistic remnant.

By the way, I would like to touch upon another linguistic example related to honey. Denominations used for honey in Turkic and Germanic languages don't share similarities. However, I must state that there is one common word related to honey in both language families. It is the word *seim*, "strained honey, sweetness," without a certain etymology. Its other equivalents in Germanic dialects are Old High German *seim* "honingseim," Middle High German *seim* "honigseim," Old Saxon *sēm* "honey, nectar" (Kroonen, 2013: 422; Orel 2003: 313; Kluge, 1891: 332; Schützeichel, 2012: 275), and so on.

Those namings in Germanic dialects are the same as Chuvash *sim*, *səm* "honey drink" (Starostin, Dybo, & Mudrak 2003: 1328). This word also means "some kind of beer" in the same dialect (Bayram, 2007: 103). *Süüm*, meaning "stump or material put on a pan while molasses or paste is boiled" (Cebeci, 2010: 234) in the language of the Turks living in the Deliorman region of what is today Bulgaria, is also identical with the words above.

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## Structured Abstract

The Turks are one of the oldest peoples on earth and they played major roles in a very wide area stretching from Chinese boundaries until inner parts of Europe and African continent throughout history. Of course, no doubt that one of the most important factors in spreading of the Turks in such a immense land is stemming from the fact that they have managed to use horse a means of transportation since immemorial times. Using horse a means of transportation allowed those to migrated to very remote areas and regions in the world and to settle in those places. The Turks got linguistically in touch with other neighboring tribes, communities and peoples in the places where they resettled as a natural result of such a mobility. They borrowed many words from the languages of those communities and lent many to those. Probably, the communities speaking Indo-European languages were those the Turks got in touch with the most from the linguistic point of view. Naturally it is very usual to see many common terms and namings between both languages families. Outside of linguistic borrowings between Turkic speaking peoples and Indo-European communities, there are such namings which are widely regarded to be of Indo-European origin but really have Turkic one. One of them is the naming used for honey among Turkic speaking peoples, that is to say, Bal. Denomination for honey in Turkic dialects can be seen as follows: Turkish bal, Azerbaijani bal, Gagauz bal, Bashkir bal, Kazakh bal, Kyrgyz bal, Uzbek bal, Tatar bal, Turkmen bal, Uigur bal, Karachai-Malkar bal, Qaraqalpak bal and pal, Kumuk bal, Nogai bal, Khakass bal and pal, Shor pal, Chuvashian pil and etc.

Although theory of Altaic Language families formulated a long time ago has lost his popularity and incredibility in our-present-day Turkic is even still regarded to be a branch of this so-called language family and is evaluated within the framework of the same language family. So we can find similar equivalents of Turkic bal in other languages which are included in this language family. For example, Turkic bal exists in the form of bal in Mongolian of today and Mongolian dialects. It is accepted that Mongolians forms are really Turkic borrowings. Korean word 벌[bel>beol] meaning "bee" is included in this list and its connection with English bee is clear. It is very widely believed that beekeeping is invention of peoples of Indo-European stock and as a natural result of this, all denominations and terms used for beekeeping all languages in Altaic language family are accepted to be of Indo-European origin. Such a point of view can be correct or false but as to Turkic case matter seems to be different to some extent. First of all, it is not certainly known when and where the first linguistic contact between Turkic communities and Indo-European speaking people started but it is almost certain that this linguistic contact started in the Scythian age. The likeliest place for such a linguistic contact seems to be Eastern Europe, more precisely, what is today Ukraine. Although the Scythians are certainly accepted to be of Indo-European origin their origin is far away from being explained because the only thing which makes them an Indo-European speaking tribe is the arbitrary explanation of Scythian onomastic which are reflected in the works of Greek authors on the base of Indo-European vocabulary. Topic of this paper is not the ethnical roots of the Scythians but on the other hand, existence of the earliest denomination used for honey among Turkic speaking peoples in the language of the Scythians constitutes the main topic of this work. Linguistic connection between Turkic and Scythian has always been neglected until now. On the other hand, the Scythian denomination for honey has always been tried to link with an Indo-European origin. All attempts made in order to connect the mentioned Scythian naming to an Indo-European stock has been unsuccessful by far. The most striking feature of the Scythian naming is the fact that it stands very close to the forms used for honey in Turkic and Mongolian phonetically. Such a close similarity between Altaic languages and Scythian is not observed between Scythian and Indo-European languages. Naturally the fact that Iranian theory, which is of the fact that the Scythians were an Indo-European speaking tribe, should be interrogated. Existence of the earliest denomination used for Turkic bal in the language of the Scythians invalidates the claim that the Turkic bal is an Indo-European borrowing willy nilly. Turkic bal is a linguistic relic which goes back to the Scythian age.