Terms of social relations in circumstances of multilingualism and language contact
(with a special focus on the Iranian languages in the context of Central Eurasia)

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Terms of social relations are lexical items denoting various kinds of interdependence and interaction among people in a society: words denoting sex and age (e.g., man, woman, child), kinship terms (e.g., mother, father, son, daughter), and terms of social hierarchy (e.g., lord, lady, servant).

Although most of these words belong to the core vocabulary, evidence distinctly shows that they are prone to influence through language contact. In many languages of Eurasia there is a tendency of borrowing terms denoting non-primary collateral relatives or distant relatives in general (cf. Matras 2010: 82). Terms denoting aunts and uncles are especially subject to this kind of borrowing. For example, both **English** aunt and uncle (Durkin 2014: 421ff.) and the respective **German** terms *Tante* and *Onkel* are loanwords from **French**. Terms for primary relatives are more stable but can also be displaced by borrowings. For example, **Eng.** *sister* is more likely a loanword from **Scandinavian** rather than a regular continuation of **Old Eng.** *sweoster* or *swuster* (cf. Durkin 2014: 198&421). The same is true for **Proto-Indo-Iranian (PII)** loanwords in Uralic:

Mordvin E *sazor* 'younger sister', **Udmurt** *suzer* id., **Komi** *sozor* 'knitting mistake' < **Proto-Uralic (PU)** **sasarV* ← **PII** **swasar-* (> **Sanskrit** *svásar-* 'sister');

Mordvin E *miŕd'e*, **M** *miŕd'ä* 'man, husband'; **Udmurt** *murt*, **Komi** *mort* id. < **PU** **mertä* ← **PII** *mṛta-* 'dead, mortal' > (**Sanskrit** *mṛtá-* 'dead, mortal' and *amṛta-* 'immortal', **Avestan** *aməša-* 'id.', cf. **Greek** βροτός 'mortal') (*NIL* 489ff. with references; Koivulehto 1999: 339)

Language contact, along with articulatory peculiarities of "baby talk", must be taken into consideration when reviewing the astonishing spread of so-called "nursery terms" among genetically unrelated languages. In some cases, similar forms, while wide-spread among languages that have been in extensive contact with one another, cannot be explained through language contact alone due to early attestations outside of the considered sphere of contact (e.g. **an(n)a-* and **at(t)a-* denoting parents or grandparents in many languages of Central Eurasia: **Gothic** *atta-*, **Russian** *otec*, **Turkish** *anne* and *ata*, but also **Hittite** *anna-* and *atta-* in Anatolia in the second millennium BCE). In other cases, the very specific overlap in semantics as well as the absence of these terms in genealogically close languages indicates that language contact is the dominant factor (e.g. **Turkic** **apa-* 'elder sister' → **Dari** *āpa* 'id.', **Udmurt** *apa(y)* 'elder sister, aunt').

Our hypothesis is that this contradictory situation has two main reasons. Firstly, terms of social relations share certain features with personal names (e.g., categorising and characterising people). Borrowing of personal names is often a matter of ideology, prestige, or fashion (e.g., biblical/Jewish names displaced many pagan names in Christian societies, as did Arabic names in Muslim societies). Secondly, such borrowings can be a result of contamination in the process of code-switching in (especially pre-literate) bi-/multilingual communities, which is a very common feature of the Orient and Central Eurasia, in general. In both contexts it is worth emphasising that exactly vocative kinship and social terms / terms of address (such as *mama*, *baba*, or *boss*), words that often displace personal names in colloquial speech, are borrowed especially easily (see the examples below).

The most unexpected result of our pilot study is that not only separate words but also structural pattern can be borrowed. In particular, this concerns the relative age distinction for siblings (which can be expanded to parents' and spouses' siblings). We have thus observed that all languages of Central Eurasia that have/had separate terms for younger and elder siblings have been influenced by languages (and cultures) of Southeast Asia (e.g., **Dravidic**) or languages that evolved in this region (**Turkic** and **Mongolic**).

Lexical age distinction for siblings in some Semitic, Turkic, Mongolic, Uralic, and Indo-European languages
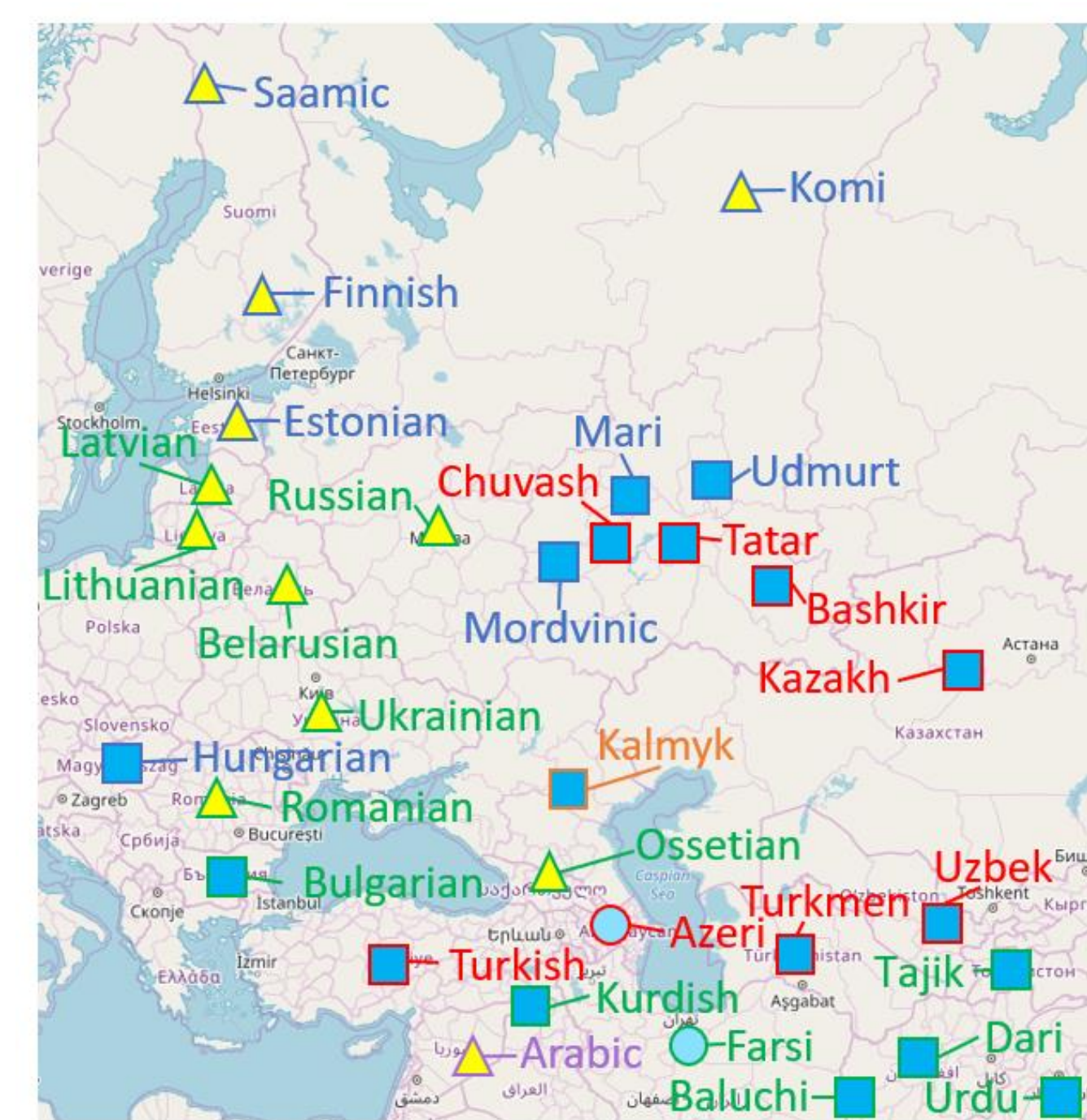
Has distinction ■   Had distinction ○   No distinction ▲

Note the proliferation of a lexical distinction between younger and elder siblings in Eastern Europe as well as Western and Central Asia, relatively unconnected to the genealogical classification of a language. As regards Turkic loan words used here in Uralic and Iranian and Indic (or Dravidian) loan word in Iranian, see below.

Contact phenomena and variations in the Iranian languages

Overview of the inherited kinship terms

Meaning	Origin	Standard Persian (Farsi)	Afghan Persian (Dari)	Tajik Persian	Kurdish (Sorani)	Baluchi	Ossetic (Iron/Digor)
father	PIE *ph₂tér-	*pedar*	*padar*	*padar*	displaced by *bab-*, of Turkic (*bābā*) or Arabic (ab) origin	*pit/pis(s)*	*fəd / fidæ*
mother	PIE *méh₂ter-	*mādar*	*mādar*	*modar*	displaced by *da(y)-* (Iranian Innovation, cf. MP *dāyak <<<* PIE √*deh₁i 'suck, suckle')	*māt/mās*	*mad*
son/boy	PIE *putlo-	*pesar*	*pisar*	*pisar*	displaced by *kur* (Iranian Innovation)	*pus(s)ag*	*fɑrt/furt*
daughter/girl	PIE *dʰugh₂tér-	*doḥtar*	*doḥtar*	*duḥtar*	*dot/ dwêt* (marginal, the common word is *kič/kîž* < Turkic *qiz* 'id.')	*dut(t)uk/ dut(t)ag* (marginal, the common word *janik(k)/jinik(k)*, a diminutive of *jan* 'woman'	displaced by *čažg* (< Turkic *qiz* 'id.')
brother	PIE *bʰréh₂ter-	*barādar*	*barādar*	*barodar*	*bira*	*brāt/brās*	*(æ)rvad* '(any) male relative' (the common word *ævšamær < *æm-šavær-* 'couterinus', Oss. Innov.)
sister	PIE *suésor-	*ḥ(w)āhar*	*ḥ(w)āhar*	*ḥohar*	*ḥušk*	*gwahār/gu(h)ār/gwār/gōhār*	*ho/ hwæræ* (also 'any female relative')
father's brother	PIE, IIr., cf. Skt. *pitṛvya*, YAv. *tūiriia*	*afdar* (obs., class. NP), the common word is Arabic *ʕamu*	*awdor* together with Arab. *ʕamu* and Pashto (< Urdu) *kākā*	displaced by *amak* of Arabic origin	displaced by *amo* of Arabic origin	displaced by Urdu *kākā* and Sindhi *čāčā*	descriptive innovation
man	IIr. **mártija-* (derived from < **mṛtá-* 'dead, mortal')	*mard*	*mard*	*mard*	*mêrd* 'husband' (a common word is *piyaw* of a debated origin)	*mard* (also) 'husband' (borrowed from NP)	*læg* (also 'husband' of Caucasian origin)
husband	PI *fšautar-* and **fšuyaka-* (<< PI √*fšu 'feed')	*šowhar/šuyi*	*šawhar*	*šawhar/šūyi*	*šû*	*lōgē wāja/ lōg-wāja* (lit. 'master of the house'), presumably of Indic origin	Another IE, IIr. word is used: *moy /moynæ*, cf. Skt. *manu-* 'human, man, progenitor' (lit., 'endued with mind')
woman/wife	PIE *gʷen(h₂)-	*zan*	*zan*	*zan*	*žin*	*jan/janēn/jinēn*	displaced by *uš* (IIr., can be etym. conn. to Skt. *yoṣit* 'young female, maiden, wife')
bride-groom/son-in-law	PIE, IIr., cf. YAv. *zāmātar*	*dāmād*	*dāmād*	*domod*	*zawa*	*zāmāt/zāmās* (also 'brother-in-law')	*tamada* 'toastmaster' (at a wedding), 'bride-groom' is *moyag* (< *moy* 'husband', IIr.), son-in-law' is *šiaḥš* (Ossetic Innov.)
bride/daughter-in-law	PIE *snuso-	*sunuh, sun(h)ār* (only obs. Class. NP), the common word is Arabic *ʕarus*	displaced by Arab. *ʕarus*	displaced by Arab. *arūs*	another IIr. word is used instead *bûk* (Class. NP *bayōg*, YAv. *vaδū*)	*nišār/našār* (also 'brother's wife')	only Digor: *nostæ*; another word *čanz/kinžæ* (PIE **ken(H)ih₁on-* 'a young one', otherwise in IIr. 'girl/young woman')
father-in-law	PIE *suékuro-	*ḥusur* (only obs. Class. NP, obs.)	*ḥosor*	*ḥusur* and descriptive	*ḥezûr*	*wasirk/was(a)rik*	innovation
mother-in-law	PIE *suekrúh₂-	*xusrū* (only obl. Class. NP)	*ḥošu*	descriptive innovation	*hesû*	*was(s)ū(g) / was(s)ĭ(g)*	innovation
husband's brother	PIE *deh₂iuḗr-	*divar* (only obs. Class. NP, otherwise descriptive)	*ēwar*	*(h)ewar* (dial.)	*hêwer*	descriptive innovation	*tiw*

Further kinship terms (Abaev I/29, 488, 500, II/62, III/158-9, 213-14, 227, 296-7, IV/ 97-8, 208-9, 437-9; Spooner 1966: 51; Bateni 1973; Korn 2005: 298-308; Aliakbari & Toni; Hassandoust I/92, 232f., 311, 570-2, II/1145-8, 1264f.,1407, III/1772-3, 1925-6, IV/2730f., 2791-2, 2706-7):

- The most common inherited term for child originates from **PIE** **yetsó-* 'one year old' (> **Skt.** *vatsá-* 'calf'; **Oss.-Digor** *wæs* 'calf'!): **Farsi** *bačče*, **Dari, Taj.** *bača.* **Bal.** *bač(l)č)*, *bačak(k)*, *bačik(k)* 'son' is borrowed from **NP**, otherwise *zāg, zāg* 'child' are used, derived from *zāg̱* 'to give birth' like **Kurd.** *zaro(k)* from zayin 'to give birth' and **NP** *farzand* 'progeny > child' (**PIE** <**g̑enh₁*), **Oss.** *šævællon* (lit. 'pertaining to the womb').
- Terms for grandchild in many Iranian languages can ultimately be derived from a common **PIE** form **nepot-* 'grandchild/nephew' but with multiple phonological and morphological variations and semantic shifts (cf., Gershevitch 1973): **Farsi** *nawe*, **Kurd.** *newe*, **Dari** *nawasa* and *nabēra* / **Taj.** *nabera* (which is *nabire* 'great-great-grandchild' in Farsi). **Ossetic** builds descriptive innovations.
- No common terms for grandparents: descriptive innovations following the pattern "mother/father + big/old", e.g., **Farsi** *mādar bozorg*, **Dari** *mādar kalān*, **Taj.** *modarkalon*, **Oss.** *štar mad* (≈ 'grand-mother'), **Kurd.** *bapîr(e)* (lit. 'old father') or nursery terms (mostly loan- or wander words, see below).
- Terms for uncles, aunts, cousins, nephews, and nieces are independent innovations or borrowings (see below)

Most common **Arabic/Semitic** loanwords:
- ab- 'father' → **NP** ab- (used only in names and compounds such as *abā-o-ajdād* 'fathers and grandfathers > ancestors'), **Kurd.** *bab-* 'father' (?or from **Turkic** *baba-*), **Bal.** *abbā/abbō*
- *walad/*(pl.) *aulād* 'child' → **Farsi, Dari, Bal.** *aulāde/a* 'children, offspring', **Taj.** *awlod* 'descendant, generation'
- *wālid/*(pl.) *wāledeyn* 'genitor/ parent' → **NP** (mostly in pl.) *wāledeyn* 'parents' (as a synonym of *pedar-o-mādar*)
- *ʕam-* 'father's brother' → see the table above
- *ʕamma-* 'father's sister' → **Farsi** *ʕamme*, **Dari, Taj.** *ʕamma*
- *ḥāla-* 'mother's sister' → **Farsi** *ḥāle*, **Dari** *ḥāle*, **Taj.** *ḥola* (unclear case, has a competing Iranian etymology)
- *natije* 'result' → **Farsi** *natije* 'great-grandchild'
- *ʕarus* 'bride/daughter-in-law' → see the table above
- *yatim* 'orphan', *sag̱ir* 'small' → **NP** *yatim*, *sag̱ir* 'orphan'
- *insān* 'human being, man' → **NP** *ensān*
- (Hebrew) *adam* → **NP** *ādam*, **Kurd.** *ademî-zad*, **Oss.** *adæymag* 'human being, man'

Most common Turkic (and Mongolic) loanwords (Doerfer I/133-40, II/3-4, 91f., 231-33, III/196f., IV/206-7):
- (Mongolic) **aqa (aḥa, aya, aḥai)* 'male relative older than Ego, but younger than Ego's parents') (Rykin 2011: 32ff.) → **NP** (all variants) *aqa* 'mister' (polite address), **Farsi** (col., voc.) also 'father', **Dari** (col., voc.) also 'father/elder brother' **Uralic** parallels: **Udmurt** *agay* 'elder brother/uncle'; **Turkic** parallels: Turkish *ağa* 'lord'; *ağabey* 'elder brother', **Tatar** *ăga(y)* 'uncle; elder brother' ('elder brother' in dialects)
- **ak(a)-* 'elder sibling' (?) → **Taj.** *aka* 'elder brother' (← **Uzbek** along with *uka* 'younger brother'); **Uralic** parallels: **Mari** *aka(y)* 'elder sister, aunt', **Mordvin M** *aka* 'id.'
- **apa-* 'elder female relative' (cf. **Turkish** (dial.) *aba* 'elder sister; mother', **Tatar** *âpa* 'elder sister') → **Farsi** *āpa* (dial.) 'mother', **Dari** *āpa* (voc., col.) 'elder sister', **Taj.** *apa* (voc., col.) 'elder sister' (← **Uzbek**); **Uralic** parallels: **Udmurt** *apa(y)* 'elder sister/aunt'
- **(baja)naq-* 'wife's sister's husband' (**Turkish** *bacanak*, **Tatar** (dial.) *bâcanaq*, **Chuvash.** *puśanaq*) → **NP** *bājenāq*; further IE attestations: **Bulgarian** *bajanak*; **Uralic** parallels: **Mari** *posana*, **Udm.** *busón(o)*
- **tag̱ay/tāyi* 'mother's brother' (**Turkish, Azeri** *dayi*, **Uzbek** *taya, tayaj*, **Tatar** *dai*) → **Farsi**

dāyi, **Taj.** *tag̱o*
- **yenga-* 'brother's/uncle's wife' (**Turkish** *yenge* 'brother's wife; uncle's wife', **Tatar** *cinğäy* 'elder brother's wife', **Chuvash** *iŋke* 'id.') → **Dari, Taj.** *yanga* 'brother's wife' (← **Chagatai**); **Uralic** parallels: **Mari** *yeŋga* 'elder brother's wife', **Udmurt** (Beserman) *eńgey* 'aunt'
- **baba-* '(grand)father' (cf. **Turkish** *baba*, **Tatar** *bāba(y)* 'grandfather'): **NP** (voc., along with inherited *pedar*) *bābā(i)*, **Oss.** (voc. along with *fɑd*) *baba*, **Bal.** *bābā* (the word can also mean 'child' < "father['s child]", cf. Korn 2005: 300, fn. 86); parallels in **Uralic**: **Udmurt** *babay* 'grandfather'

Some kinship term of Indic (or Dravidian) origin: (Kiselyova 1978: 53; Korn 2005: 301, fn. 92, 93, 94 with references)
- **lala* 'an older person' (**Urdu** *lālā* 'master, teacher of the master's children, servant') → **Dari** *lālā* 'id.', *āg̱ā-lālā* 'elder brother', **Bal.** *lālā, lālō* 'brother', **Kurd.** *lale, lalo* 'mother's brother'
- **dada* 'an older person' (**Sindhi** *dādō* 'elder brother', *dādī* 'elder sister', **Urdu** *dādā* 'paternal grandfather, elder brother') → **Dari** *dādā* 'elder sister', **Kurd.** *dade* 'elder sister, mother', **Bal.** *dādā* 'sister' and *dādā* 'grandfather'
- **kaka* '(paternal) uncle, elder brother' → **Dari** *kākā* 'father's brother', **Bal.** *kākā* 'father's brother, elder brother', **Kurd.** *kake, kakîle* 'elder brother'
- **mama* 'mother's brother' (cf. **Urdu** *māmā/ māmū*) → **Dari** *māmā(ji)*, **Kurd.** *mam*, *mamo*, **Bal.** *māmā*

(these terms are used in the Iranian languages vocatively along with more established terms).

Other loanwords:
NP nursery term *māmān(i)* '(grand)mother' (like **Russian** *mama*) was the result of cultural contacts with France in the 19 century.