

Standard for transcription from modern Persian into Norwegian

فارسی - نروژی

Introduction

This standard applies to the transcription of place names and proper names from modern Persian into Norwegian. However, it may also have other usages, such as when transcribing Persian words and terms.

In this standard, Persian is used as a collective term for Dari and Persian (Farsi), which are the official languages of Afghanistan and Iran, respectively. These variants are extremely closely related and belong to the Indo-Iranian branch of the Indo-European language family. In addition to the two countries mentioned above, variations of Persian are currently spoken in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and in the Persian-speaking diaspora. Persian has a long-standing history as a literary language in large parts of the Middle East and Central Asia, and has deeply influenced all the region's languages.

The Persian language has undergone few fundamental changes over the past millennium. The language used in classical Persian literature since the end of the first millennium is therefore closely related to the modern language variants. There are nevertheless some differences in early Persian's written and spoken forms and the language variants now spoken in the respective geographical regions. This standard should therefore only be used for Persian as it is written today.

Persian uses a modified form of the Arabic script. The exception is Tajikistan, where the official written language is Tajik, which is written using the Cyrillic alphabet. The Persian alphabet is supplemented by four letters not found in Arabic, while some non-alphabetic characters common in Arabic are rarely or never used in Persian.

The standard has been drawn up by Nina Zandjani, who teaches Persian at the University of Oslo, in consultation with the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration's language unit SPRÅK.

General principles

Persian characters are often transcribed in a haphazard and inconsistent manner. This standard is intended to introduce a number of principles that should be easy to implement in practice when rendering Persian words and names into Norwegian.

Unlike most Western European languages, there is generally a one-to-one relationship between characters and sounds in Persian. Therefore, combinations of characters are rarely used to produce a single sound. The pronunciation of certain characters varies regionally, but this variation is typically not indicated in writing, in the same way that *r* is written in Norwegian, despite the fact some people use an uvular trill (guttural *r*), while others do not.

The Latin characters used for transcribing Persian into Norwegian can all be found on a standard Norwegian keyboard. In order to produce a transcription that can be used with a

standard Norwegian character set, diacritics or letters that are not part of the Norwegian alphabet should not be used.

It is a prerequisite that the names transcribed according to the standard are recognisable to those they concern. This consideration suggests that special Nordic spellings should be avoided, both in terms of vowels and fricatives. The fact that names, when transcribed into Norwegian, should be recognisable to our European partners and to authorities in the applicants' home country supports the same approach. At the same time, it is important that names transcribed according to the standard work as well as possible in the Norwegian language community.

Academic transcription of Persian uses a reversible system, meaning that it should be possible to transcribe each individual character back to the original script without modification. In that context, the Latin alphabet is expanded using various diacritical marks to indicate precisely which Arabic character is transcribed. However, this standard is a tool to be used by the Norwegian public administration when transcribing from Persian into Norwegian, i.e. only in one direction, and diacritical marks should not be used.

Consonants

A number of Persian consonants have the same pronunciation, and these are therefore transcribed into Norwegian using one and the same Latin character.

Persian characters rendered using one and the same letter in Latin script:

t	ت - ط
s	ث - س - ص
z	ذ - ز - ض - ظ
h	ح - ه

Some Persian characters are rendered using a combination of two letters in Latin script, the second always being *h* (with the exception of the diphthongs *ou* in Persian and *au* in Dari). *ش* is therefore represented using *sh*, which is also found in a number of loanwords in Norwegian (*sherry, shipping, shoppe, shorts, show*). Otherwise, *kh* is pronounced as in the German *ach*, *gh* as a uvular trill (guttural *r*), *ch* as in the Spanish *mucho*, and *zh* as in the French pronunciation of the name *Jean*.

For *sh* and *zh*, the relationship between the unvoiced *s* and *sh* is therefore equivalent to the relationship between the voiced *z* and *zh*. For *kh* and *gh*, the relationship between the unvoiced *k* and *kh* is equivalent to the relationship between the voiced *g* and *gh*.

Persian characters rendered using two letters in Latin script:

sh	ش
zh	ژ
kh	خ
gh	غ
ch	چ
ou /au (only when <i>و</i> is pronounced as part of a diphthong)	و

In transcriptions of Persian (as with Arabic and Kurdish), *j* is used to render ج. *J* is already established with this pronunciation in Norwegian in a number of loanwords, such as in the English words *jeans* and *jersey* and the Arabic word *jihad*.

It is worth mentioning that Persian and other languages written in Arabic script use double consonant. The practice is distinct from languages that use Latin script, as instead of writing two consonants consecutively, the symbol ّ (*tashdid*) is used above the letter that is to be pronounced as a double consonant. For example, in names such as عبد الله (Abdollah), محمد (Mohammad) and فرّخ (Farrokh). Consequently, letters with a *tashdid* should be transcribed as a double consonant, with the exception of *sh, zh, kh, gh og ch*, i.e. consonants that are already transcribed using two characters in Norwegian. As with short vowels and other diacritical marks, *tashdid* is often omitted in writing. In most cases, the person transcribing must therefore know which names and words should be rendered with a double consonant in Norwegian.

Vowels

Persian distinguishes between long and short vowels. The short vowels *a, e* and *o* are rarely indicated in writing, while the long vowels *a, u* and *i* are represented by their own letters. Transcription that uses this standard does not distinguish between the short and long *a*.

Double vowels are not used in modern Norwegian, which means that long vowels cannot be expressed by doubling the same vowel. An example would be the name نور, which is often written as *Noor*, but becomes *Nur* when transcribed into Norwegian, and فرنوش, which is often written as *Farnoosh*, but becomes *Farnush* in Norwegian.

Proper names

A great deal of variation is seen when transcribing proper names from Persian, particularly with names of Arabic origin.

First names originating from Arabic that consist of two parts, where the second part is preceded by the Arabic definite article, are transcribed as one word to indicate that they are a single name. Examples include جمال الدين (Jamaloddin), عبد الكريم (Abdolkarim), عبد الله (Abdollah) and روح الله (Ruhollah). Most other first names are considered independent and are separated in transcription. Examples include محمد على (Mohammad Ali), حميد رضا (Hamid Reza) and سيد احمد (Seyyed¹ Ahmad). Exceptions are where these ‘independent’ names are written as one word, such as غلامحسين (Gholam-Hossein), where the names are hyphenated and both are written in capital letters.

When transcribing surnames, the guiding principle is that, unless it is obvious that a person has two surnames (for example if they have taken both their mother’s and their father’s name), the surname should be written as one word. Example include: احمدی نژاد (Ahmadinezhad), علی پور (Alipour), علی زاده (Alizadeh) and نیازفر (Niazfar).

¹ Seyyed and Mir are titles that show that the person is a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad. This is actively used as the first part of a name, including in identity papers. The feminine form of Seyyed is Seyyedeh (سیده).

When reading Iranian proper names aloud, the first and last names are often linked with the suffix *-e/-ye*. This should not be rendered in the transcription. Also, for example, the name *داریوش هوشمند* should be transcribed as *Dariush Hushmand* and not *Dariush-e Hushmand*.

Names that are neither of Persian nor Arabic origin are often used in the Persian-speaking countries. Names that are specific to linguistic minorities should generally be transcribed based on the form registered by the authorities in their home country. However, names originating from European languages should follow the spelling in the European language from which they are borrowed. For example, *جورج* should be transcribed as *George* and not *Jurj*.

Place names that have acquired an established spelling in Norwegian are on an equal footing with the spelling derived from this standard. For example, *تهران* can be written as both *Teheran* and *Tehran*, *افغانستان* as both *Afghanistan* and *Afghanestan*, and *قندهار* as both *Kandahar* and *Qandahar*. Where there is no established form in Norwegian, the transcription rules of this standard should be used.

Standard for transcription

The alphabet, in the order of the first letter of the name

Norwegian character	Example		Persian character
a	Arash	آرش	آ
a	Afshar	افشار	أ
e	Ebrahim	ابراهيم	إ
u	Ursia	اورسيا	او
i	Iraj	ايرج	اي
b	Behruz	بهروز	ب
p	Pegah	پگاه	پ
t	Turaj	تورج	ت
s	Sorayya	ثريا	ث
j	Jamshid	جمشيد	ج
ch	Changiz	چنگيز	چ
h	Hamed	حامد	ح
kh	Khashayar	خشاپار	خ
d	Dara	دارا	د
z	Zaki	ذكي	ذ
r	Rostam	رستم	ر
z	Ziba	زيبا	ز
zh	Zhila	ژيلا	ژ
s	Sudabeh	سودابه	س
sh	Shohreh	شهره	ش
s	Saber	صابر	ص
z	Zia	ضيا	ض
t	Taher	طاهر	ط
z	Zaffar	ظفر	ظ
Not indicated	Aref	عارف	ع
gh	Gholam	غلام	غ
f	Fereydun	فريدون	ف
q	Qader	قادر	ق
k	Karim	كريم	ك
g	Giti	گيتي	گ
l	Laleh	لاله	ل
m	Majid	مجيد	م
n	Negar	نگار	ن
v (Persian) / w (Dari)	Vahid / Wahid	وحيد	و

h	Hanieh	هانیه	ه
y	Yasaman	یاسمن	ی

Long vowels within and at the end of words and names

Norwegian character	Example		Persian character
a	Dara	دارا	ا
i	Amir; Giti	امیر؛ گیتی	ی
a	Musa	موسی	ی
u	Hushang; Arezu	هوشنگ؛ آرزو	و

Short vowels within words and names

Norwegian character	Example		Persian character
a	Faraj	فرج	اَ
e	Neda	ندا	اِ
o	Bahador	بهاذر	اُ

Diphthongs at the end of words and names

Norwegian character	Example		Persian character
ou	Khosrou	خسرو	و

Other characters

Norwegian character	Example		Persian character
-ye	Khane-ye Kargar	خانه کارگر	ه
Not indicated	motaassef	متأسف	
-an	zaheran	ظاهراً	ئ
Double consonant	Mohammad	محمد	م