

# Perso-Arabic Orthography for the Polish Language

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## I. Introduction

This paper presents an adaptation of the Perso-Arabic script for the Polish language. Although based on a linguistically, historically and geographically foreign script, the following orthography is actually very “Slavic” in essence, the uniform marking of soft (*miękkie*) and hard (*twarde*) consonants being at the core of the writing system. Being based on an *abjad*, the soft/hard distinction is made by altering the consonant glyphs, whereas the Cyrillic script does so through different vowel glyphs (and the use of “soft/hard signs”).

The orthography borrows heavily from Persian, especially in how it represents vowels; the way it distinguishes between soft and hard consonant can be (rightfully) likened to how Pashto indicates the retroflex equivalents to dental consonants. However, some technical constraints (namely the lack of glyphs in the Unicode standard) have prevented us from achieving consistency in how the soft version of a letter is derived.

We will first present the consonants (in the *abjadi* sense) signs, then the diacritical vowel marks and how vowel sounds can be combined. After this, we shall go over some exceptions created by the Latin orthography, present the process of loaning words from Arabic and provide some examples.

## II. Consonants

We present the orthographic consonants in the traditional order of the Perso-Arabic script, along with what letter (or digraph) they correspond to in the “standard” Latin Polish orthography between strokes. Letters that are only found in foreign words are indicated by a star.

There are 39 letters and 12 soft variations, as follows: ا /a/, /o/ (word-initially)<sup>1</sup>; آ /a/, /o/, /e/; ب /b/; پ /p/; ت /t/; ث\* /s/; ج /dʒ/; چ /cz/; ح /ch/; خ\* /ch/; ح /c/; خ /dz/; د /d/; ذ\* /z/; ر /r/; ز /z/; ژ /ʒ/; س /s/; ش /sz/; ص\* /s/; ض\* /z/; ط\* /t/; ظ\* /z/; ع\* /ʔ/ before or after vowels, nothing word-initially, word-finally and in other positions; ه /h/; ف /f/; ق\* /k/; ك /k/; گ /g/; ل /l/; م /m/; ن /n/; و /a, e/<sup>2</sup> and /w/, /u/; ؤ /a/ (word-finally), /u/; ه /e/ (word-finally), /ch/ (in loanwords); ة /e/ (word-finally); ی /i/, /y/, /j/; ئ /i/, /y/<sup>3</sup>.

There are 12 hard/soft pairs: ب /b/ and ب /bi/, پ /p/ and پ /pi/, ت /t/ and ت /ć/, د /d/ and د /dź/, ر /r/ and ر /rz/, ز /z/ and ز /ż/, س /s/ and س /ś/, ف /f/ and ف /fi/, ل /l/ and ل /l/, م /m/ and م /mi/, ن /n/ and ن /ń/ and و /w/ and و /wi/.

Softness being indicated on *all* consonants allows for more etymological precision than the standard Latin orthography. For instance, words such as *żuraw* (crane) have a soft ending, which is not displayed by the standard orthography, but is by this writing system: ژوراو.

<sup>1</sup>Word-initially, ا can be twritten as آ (*alef z maddem*) when representing /a/ to avoid ambiguity. This letter is also found in loanwords.

<sup>2</sup>The letter و (*nun nosowy*) is used to represent a nasal consonant, similarly to what was done in older Polish texts, e.g. *zqb* (tooth) being written as *zomb*.

<sup>3</sup>For an explanation of the role of ئ (and conversely, of آ and ؤ), see Section IV



Tam z dala błyszczący obłok? tam jutrzeńka wschodzi?  
To błyszczący Dniestr, to weszła lampa Akermanu.

Stójmy!... Jak cicho!... Słyszę ciągnące żurawie,  
Których by nie dościgły źrenice sokoła;  
Słyszę, kędy się motyl kołysa na trawie,

Kędy wąż śliską piersią dotyka się zioła.  
W takiej ciszy — tak ucho natężam ciekawie,  
Że słyszałbym głos z Litwy. — Jedźmy, nikt nie woła!

وېلینلم نا سوځگو پرستور اخانو،  
وز نوراً بنه وېلنېب ای یاک لدکا بردی؛  
نبرد فالې لک شوېمخېچ، نبرد کواتو پودی،  
امبیام کړالوه استروی بورانو.  
يوژ مرک زاپادا، نېگېه درگی فی کورغانو،  
پاتړه و نېو، گوازد شوکام، پرودنیچک لدی؛  
تام ز دالېا بلیشچی ابلک؟ تام یوترنکا وسخېدی؟  
تو بلیشچی دلستر، تو وشلا پلامپا اکرمانو.  
ستیمی!... یاک تیخو!... سلېشه ټگنځه ژوراوه،  
کترېچ بی نه دښتیگی برنیځه سکلا؛  
سلېشه، کدی بنه متیل کلیسا نا تراوه،  
کدی وژ ښلېسکو یرښو دتیکا بنه ړلا.  
و تاکی تیشی — تاک اوحو ناتېرام ټکاوه،  
زه سلېشالېم گلېس زلیتوی. — یدی، نیکت نه ولا!