

Two Turkish Loanwords in Swedish

 Af [Wolfgang Scharlipp](#) 11. marts 2011 • I kategorien [Ord](#)

The Turkish loanwords "kalabalik" and "dolma" are words of the lexicon of the everyday language in Swedish. They are used in the spoken as well as in the written language. Although the average Swedish speaker is not aware that these words are loanwords and thus naturally knows nothing about their origin, linguists of Scandinavian are well aware of their Turkish origin.

In this article we will have a look at the use of these words in Swedish and compare it to their semantics in Turkish, looking for possible semantic changes. We will also give a short account of the historical background, as it is supposed to be. Turkish loanwords in other languages are rather well researched (Tietze 1990, p. 19). Most of these words are found in languages which are spoken in areas geographically adjacent to Turkey or in areas of the former Ottoman Empire. Nevertheless there are exceptions, cases in which one wonders how a Turkish word has become part of a vocabulary of a language spoken relatively far away, unless we can prove that these words had been transported via intermediary languages, such as "coffee, kiosk" etc.



Káldolmere, fylde hvidkálsruller; på tyrkisk: 'lahana dolması'

But the case becomes more complicated if we are not (or hardly) aware of any direct contact between those speakers of a language that uses words of a language which is geographically far away and obviously not having any intermediary. Nevertheless we find two words in the Swedish language which are of Turkish origin without having had a language in between them that transported them into Swedish: *kalabalik* and *dolma*. The latter one is also present in the vocabularies of various languages close to Turkey or in areas of the former Ottoman Empire, for example in Greek. *Kalabalik* exists only in Turkish and Swedish as far as we were able to trace the word. In the following lines we want to cast a glance on the semantics of both words in these two languages.

Kalabak in Turkish

The Turkish dictionary of Redhouse from 1890, as well as the new edition give the following meanings: crowd, confused mass, throng; as adjectives also crowded, thickly peopled; as a verb with the auxiliary *et-* 1. to be in the way, to be superfluous, 2. to crowd.

The voluminous dictionary of Püsküllüoğlu gives less definitions: 1. çok sayıda insanın bir araya oluşan insan topluluğu (a crowd of people who have come together in a great number), 2. gereksiz ve karışık bir biçimde yığılmış şeyler topluluğu (a collection of things which are too many and superfluous). He adds the word in a sentence giving an example as an adjective: Delikanlı kalabak bir ailedendi (The young man came from a big family).

Redhouse gives two orthographical variants in the Arabic alphabet, one of which starts with the guttural fricative *ğ*, giving the pronunciation of the word as *yalebek*. He also adds that is is a "vulgar" word. The spelling with *ğ* gives a hint to the etymology which goes back to the Arabic word *yalabe* meaning "victory, superiority", also used with this meaning in Ottoman. The development to the modern meanings with the suffix *-lik* as mentioned above is not easy to explain, because the meaning of the suffix *-lik* is not obvious.

Kalabalik in Swedish

Checking different dictionaries, we find the following meanings: tumult, sammandræbning (encounter, clash), våldsamt upptræde (violent scene, disturbance), upptræde, uppløp (riot, tumult), uppståndelse (excitement, fuss), folktummel, slagsmål (fight, row); see also [woxikon](#). We will look at casual examples of the word in Swedish publications:

1. *Total kalabalik i Frankrike*. Total chaos (?) in France (Headline in newspaper). An article about the reaction in France after the soccer player Nicolas Anelka was sent back to France from the World Championship in South Africa. (Hufvudstadsbladet 22.6.2010)
2. *Kalabalik i Norge efter gripenaffären*. (Headline in newspaper). An article about the vivid discussions in Norway after the parliament had decided to buy the American warplane JSF, instead of the Swedish plane "Gripen", as was decided before. (Ny Teknik 22.6.2010)
3. *Kalabalik efter Turkiet-Schweiz*. (Headline in newspaper). The following article starts with the words: "Et våldsamt slagsmål utbrødt..." "A violent skirmish broke out..." The word *kalabalik* is specified in the text, because the semantic field of *kalabalik* is broad, as we shall see. (Svt 17.11.2005)
4. *Kalabalik i Knesset*. (Headline in newspaper) Also here „kalabalik“ is specified by the word

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Yunus til Two Turkish Loanwords in Swedish

Sonstige til Den Danske Ordbog på nettet

„handgemäng“ „fight/blows“. In an article about the Israelis attacking boats in the Mediterranean. (Expressen 22.6.2010)

5. *Kan bli kalabalik* (Headline in newspaper) An article about a biography in which the author accuses the present King Carl Gustav XVI to have betrayed his wife. In this text „kalabalik“ is not specified. It continues: “Det er möjligt att det blir kalabalik, säger S.D.” „It is possible that it comes to unrest(?) says S.D.“ (Resume 4.11.2010)
6. *Ny kalabalik när Lars Vilks skulle föreläsa* (Headline in newspaper). “New tumult when L.V. was supposed to give a lecture.” L.V. who is called an artist, had published a drawing of the prophet Mohammed as a dog. (Sydsvenskan 12.12.2010)
7. *Han skapar kalabalik...* He creates enthusiasm...“ and some lines further: “*Samma kalabalik utspelar sig sen i "Kom ihåg mig"...*”The same enthusiasm breaks out later with (when he sings) “Do remember me!” (Aftonbladet 27.10.2007)
8. *Kalabalik Bokkafé*. In Umeå existed a coffeshop where one could read books while drinking coffee.

As we see in the examples of *kalabalik* given in the quoted dictionaries the semantic spectrum focuses on the meaning “being crowded, being many, or even too many, people or things together”. There is no connotation pointing at the meaning “being violent, fighting physically”. In the sentence, Püsküllüoğlu gives as an example, we can translate the word simply as the adjective “big”, meaning here „a family with many members“.

Looking at the meaning of „kalabalik“ in the Swedish sentences we can state that the semantics of it focus on the meanings „chaos, unrest, uneasiness“. In the examples 3 and 4 it stands even for a physical fight as is expressed clearly by quasi-synonyms used in the text in order to specify „kalabalik“. Example 7 also renders the meanings „unrest, chaos“, but not necessarily in a negative way, as the sentences concern the enthusiasm that a musician creates with his performance.

We have to state that in none of the examples „kalabalik“ is used in a neutral way as in Turkish, just meaning „crowd, crowded, being in big numbers“. The mainly negative, often violent connotation is dominant, as most examples show. The explanation for this semantic shift of this loanword can easily be explained by the negative event in the connection of which it came to Sweden and which will be explained in the paragraph about the historical background.

Dolma in Swedish

The word “dolma”, also “dolme”, as such is not used in Swedish and nobody understands it. Instead we have the rare case here that it only exists in the compound “kåldolma”, almost always used in the plural form “kåldolmar”. “kål” means “cabbage”, German „Kohl“.

By Swedes they are regarded as a typical Swedish national dish, although most people are aware that filled cabbage rolls are widely known and eaten in various countries whether as cabbage rolls, Krautrolladen or Kohlrrolladen, depending on the country and within certain countries on the geographical area. Kåldolmar are a very popular dish and can be found deepfrozen in every supermarket. The word “kåldolme” and the dish are also known in Denmark. Nevertheless the historical circumstances seem to indicate that at least the word was introduced from Swedish. In no Swedish dictionary the word “dolma” can be found except in the compound “kåldolma”, despite the fact that it is [mentioned](#) in “Svensk Etymologisk Ordbok”.

Nevertheless while talking with Swedish native speakers about this word, a young person told me that the word in fact is used without being part of a compound, as a slangword for „penis“. Asking older people about this information I learned that nobody had ever heard of this use of „dolma“. Asking again younger persons I was told that this way of using this word would only be very recent. One informant gave even the exact time by saying that it was not older than about one year, which is rather doubtful.

But the fact that the word with the meaning „penis“ is of a recent origin seems to indicate that it does not go back to the „dolma“ which was introduced to Swedish in the 18th century but has come into Swedish together with other words of meals of the Mediterranean kitchen like „döner“ etc. , be it by having visited Southern countries as tourist or by foreigners from Mediterranean countries. In this case the word would have been introduced into Swedish twice. Also in Turkish „dolma“ is used as a slang word, but not with the same meaning. Neither Devellioglu mentions it nor Laut has it in his long list of sexual expressions in Turkish. Instead it stands for „lie, trick“.

According to the „[Svensk Etymologisk Ordbok](#)“ this word was mentioned for the first time in a cooking book by Cajsa Warg „Hjelpreda i hushållningen för unga fruentimbar“ 1755. The same source has also one example for the word „dolma“ not being part of a compound: „Emin Effendi ätt Dolma med handen“ (E.E. ate the dolma with the hand). The etymological dictionary gives only the author as a source, Björnsthål, a traveler, who also visited Turkey and who published a book about his journeys in 1777. This fact does not give us an answer to the question whether the word had really been known by Swedish readers or whether the author had introduced the word before. Unfortunately I was not able to get hold of the book.

That scientists are aware of the origin of the word is shown by the „[Svensk Uppslagsbok](#)“ (the Swedish Encyclopedia) of 1955 which gives the etymology: „kåldolmar (till turk. Dolma, ”fyllning”, inkommet i svenskan direkt från Turkiet med Karl XII:s hemvändande krigare) köttträtt med kål.“ (cabbage roll, to Turkish dolma, filling, came into Swedish directly from Turkey together with the soldiers of Charles XII coming home.) A meatdish with cabbage. Then follows the description of how they are prepared. We will leave the explanation of the introduction of “dolma” to Swedish open until the chapter about the historical background.

We will not end this chapter without mentioning a rather curious event in connection with “kåldolmar”. The Swedish Church in cooperation with „kåldolmens vänner“ (the friends of stuffed cabbage rolls) and others organised 2010 a “[Kåldolmens Dag](#)” in order to celebrate the 30th November, the day of the death of Charles XII. This was done in order to demonstrate the manifold background of the Swedish cultural heritage (det mångbottnade svenska kulturarvet). The reaction to this decision was not very positive in the public. As one can read in the commentaries in the internet, some commentators regarded this idea even as the expression of „antivenskhets dag“ (the day of anti-Swedishness).

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"Kalabaliken i Bender" 1. februar 1713. Litografi af Johan Cardon efter maleri af H. Mörner

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History

The historic background is supposed to be found in the beginning of the 18th century. The events of the "**kalabaliken i Bender**" (the skirmish of Bender) are well known and can be read in many places. [Bender](#), today also Beneri, Rumanian „Tighina“, is a town of ca. 100 000 inhabitants, located in the buffer zone between Moldova and the break-away state of [Transnistria](#). It is today populated by more than a dozen ethnic groups.

We will here give a short version: When during the Swedish-Russian war the Swedish army was defeated in June 1709, the Swedish king Charles XII fled with his soldiers to the Moldova which at that time was part of the Ottoman Empire. Hoping to convince the Ottomans to fight the Russians on his side he remained with his men in the Ottoman Empire until 1714. When Sultan Ahmet III got tired of Charles XII intrigues he took him prisoner and forced him to stay in a camp in Edirne. This decision was done by the Sultan, after Ottoman forces had tried on 31 January in Moldavian Bender, to force the Swedish king to leave the Ottoman Empire.

The fight between – as the sources say – 40 Swedish and some hundred Turkish soldiers lasted only for some hours and ended after Charles had by mistake set fire to his own fortification. Charles gave up after a small number of soldiers had died. But he and his soldiers were later released from the camp near Edirne, when the Swedish army regained power in Northern Europe.

„Kalabaliken i Bender“ (the skirmish of Bender) had a surprising effect not only on the Swedish language, but also on culture. The expression „Kalabaliken i Bender“ has also become a familiar quotation for badluck that is self-produced. Thus we read a commentary about the politically right extremist party „Sverige Demokraterna“ „Vi kan bara hoppas att de, liksom Karl XII vid kalabaliken i Bender 1713, snavar“, „We can only hope that they will stumble like Charles XII during kalabaliken i Bender“ (Kommunisternas Blogg 18.8.2008).

What remains unsolved is whether both words being the topic of this short article really came to Sweden with king Charles. As far as „kalabalik“ is concerned the news of his defeat in Moldavia will have spread before his return to his home country. Still there does not seem to be a possibility to find out who used the word „kalabalik“ in this context first. However the historical way was exactly, here we find the explanation for the word „kalabalik“ having a negative, violent connotation. We can also not be sure whether the word „kåldolma“ came to Sweden with him and his soldiers as the Swedish Encyclopedia says. We know that Charles XII made obviously a lot of debts while staying in the Ottoman Empire. During the years 1716 and 1732 creditors came to Sweden in order to get the debts payed back. It might well be that the cabbage roll was introduced in Sweden by them and that it was first the aristocracy, which had contact with the probably rich visitors, discovered the delicious meal.

Literature

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Tagget med: arabisk, betydning, etymologi, In English, låneord, Moldova, Ord, ordhistorie, osmannisk, svensk, Sverige, Tyrkiet, tyrkisk

13 kommentarer



Skye Løfvander

11. marts 2011 • 09:25

We don't use the term kalabalik in danish so for me it was an exotic surprise to hear my swedish friends using it.

I chose it as a title for my piece of overtone singing recorded in the virtual acoustics of the Hagia Sophia Cathedral (auralization), made available by field work, research and programming by the danish acoustic engineers Odeon who lead the world market (acoustic design of The Opera and the National Radio Concert Hall in Denmark).

Watch the video here:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IH5_9NO9awM

... but please be aware that the sound quality here only gives you a hint of the experience.

Svar



Laurits

11. marts 2011 • 09:35

Jeg har altid undret mig over hvor ordet kalabalik kom fra. Nu er det opklaret.

Det er et af de der svenske ord der ikke har formået at bevæge sig over den botniske bugt. Jeg er i hvert fald aldrig støt på det her i Finland.

Svar



Gustav Rangsjö

11. marts 2011 • 14:52

vad finns det för arabiska låneord i det danska språket?

/Gustav

Svar

**Per-Åke Lindblom**

11. mars 2011 • 15:23

Som kuriosita kan nämnas att två svenska ord på senare tid har exporterats till turkiskan, eller rättare sagt kuludialekten. Den största gruppen turkiska invandrare i Sverige kommer från Kulu, en tätort i centrala Turkiet, och invandringen därifrån inleddes på 60-talet. Det betyder att förbindelserna är täta mellan Kulu och Sverige och många turkiska immigranter återvänder till Kulu på somrarna och kanske t.o.m. har sommarhus där. De två ord som det gäller är "hiss" och "hej då". Det första ordets intrång beror säkert på att det inte fanns några hissar i Kulu på 60-talet – det vanliga turkiska ordet är annars inlånat från franskans ascenseur. Det andra ordet används då ett telefonsamtal avslutas.

När det gäller kreditorerna, som omnämns i artikeln, har en turkisk vän berättat för mig att delegationerna hade mycket svårt att få tillbaka några pengar av den svenska kronan. En av delegationerna skulle enligt samme sagesman ha uppgått till 500 janistjärer (i så fall den andra. Hellre än att återvända tomhänta till Turkiet, valde åtminstone den första delegationen 1716 att stanna i Sverige. Hur frågan till sist löstes, vet jag inte.

Sverige var också mycket tidigt ute med att upprätta diplomatiska förbindelser med Turkiet. Om jag inte missminner mig, var Sverige det första kristna europeiska landet som gjorde det. Det berodde naturligtvis på att Turkiet var en allierad i kampen mot Ryssland.

Svar**Ole Stig Andersen**

11. mars 2011 • 16:36

@ Gustav.

Der er en hel del arabiske låneord i dansk, fx olé (det er min favorit!), ramsjang, kaffe, sukker, alkohol, hash, sofa, madras, magasin, kalfatre, havari, admiral, algebra. Jeg skrev en gang en lille liste over låneord fra arabisk og andre 'eksotiske' sprog. <http://www.olestig.dk/dansk/laaneord.html>

Men det er vist ingen af disse låneord der er kommet direkte fra kilden til dansk. De er allesammen kommet via de store europæiske kultursprog. I den henseende er 'dolmer' og 'kalabalik' i svensk noget særligt. Der har ikke været noget formidlersprog.

To globaliseringsprocesser, indvandringen og den globale 24/7 nyhedsformidling/underholdningsmaskine på talrige platforme bringer nu alle mulige sprog i direkte kontakt, med og uden mellemsprog. Derfor optager både dansk og svensk nu ord fra arabisk og tyrkisk ved direkte kontakt. Fx arabisk shawarma. Og i 'Rinkebydansk' som i Danmark nedsættende kaldes perkerdansk, er der naturligvis også en række arabiske ord, fx wallah og jalla.

Svar**Gustav Rangsjö**

11. mars 2011 • 16:56

Tack Ole Stig!!

Vi håller på med ett nytt svenskt TV program om det arabiska språket i Europa. Ett av programmen kommer att vara i Danmark

Svar**Ole Stig Andersen**

11. mars 2011 • 19:55

أهلا وسهلا

Svar**Anders Lotsson**

14. mars 2011 • 14:02

"Dolma" is not used by itself in Swedish, but it is used in compounds, such as "vinbladsdolmar" (vine leaf dolmas).

Svar



David

21. december 2011 • 23:25

Vad gäller användningen av "dolme" i betydelsen "penis" så kan den beläggas åtminstone till första hälften av 90-talet. Se <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=daFY17Z8shQ>, som är ett inslag från humorprogrammet "Hassan" i Sveriges Radio P3 från 1994.

Svar



marianne andersen

26. januar 2012 • 09:27

jeg står og skal lave dolmas, gik på nettet for at finde en god opskrift og fandt så denne ordveksling – interessant. lad mig deltage med ordet köşk. vi bruger ikke det tyrkiske ord, men har omskrevet det til vores dages kiosk, endnu et tyrkisk låneord.

Svar



Wolfgang Scharlipp

6. februar 2012 • 19:44

Marianne is right of course. Also kiosk is a Turkish loanword in Swedish. The reason why I did not mention it was that it is a loan in many European languages, like in French, English, German, Danish and even Greek, where it is used side by side with "periptero". This situation is different to kalabalik and dolme/dolma which cannot be found in other languages (except dolmades in Greek). Turkish "köşk" is itself a loan from Persian, written kushk in transcription. As Turkish is a strictly sound harmonious language the palatal k in the Persian word had to be followed by a palatal vowel in Turkish, thus: ö.

Svar



Gül Öztürk

29. oktober 2012 • 17:44

in Finnish fish → KALA
in Turkish fish → BALIK

and I find it really interesting as they two together makes another Turkish word which means crowded and it is KALABALIK = fishfish, like a mass of fishes :)

Svar



Yunus

8. januar 2016 • 18:27

"because the meaning of the suffix -lik is not obvious"

The suffix -lik is quite common in Turkish. It is used to produce a noun from a base word (root), ie it functions to derive new words. In Turkish, we, even rarely, say for example, "odam çok kalaba" which means my rooms is very crowded. But in general, "kalabalık" as derived from "kalaba", is used both as a noun and adjective.

Svar

Skriv en kommentar

Navn (kræves)

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Hjemmeside

Send mig en e-mail når der kommer flere kommentarer.