



# CHAGHATAY LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

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*Development of Chaghatay.* Languages from three different Turkic language groups were spoken in Central Asia before the Russian conquest. Chaghatay is the common designation for a language belonging to the Western Uighur, or Eastern Turkic, language group, the easternmost of the three. The other two groups were the Oghuz (including Turkman, Khorasani Azeri and Turkish, and Turkish in Turkey) and the Kipchak (Qipcaq/Qepčāq). Uighur and Kipchak have retained such archaic features as initial *t* and *k*, which became voiced *d* and *g* in the languages of the Oghuz group. (For general surveys of the distribution of the Turkish languages see Poppe, Menges, Benzing and Menges.)

Western Uighur developed in three stages: K̅v̅ārazm (Choresm) Turkish or Early Chaghatay (7th-8th/13th-14th centuries), Classical and Late Chaghatay (9th-13th/15th-19th centuries), and modern Uzbek (see [central asia xiv. turkish-iranian language contact](#)). There are variations in the labels for these stages, however (cf. Eckmann, 1966, pp. 1-10). Soviet scholars (e.g., Shcherbak) refer to both the first two stages as Old Uzbek, whereas most other Western scholars label the first stage “K̅v̅ārazm Turkish.” The term Early Chaghatay, which was introduced by M. F. Köprülü (*İA* III), will be used here (linguistically, what is labeled “K̅v̅ārazm Turkish” is the direct predecessor of



Classical Chaghatay, and it is better to reserve the term for Turkish spoken in K̄vārazm). Comparison of certain forms and words from these three linguistic stages in Central Asia (as in Eckmann, 1957) reveals a sharply declining percentage of words inherited from Old Turkish (8th century): 67.9 percent in the time of the Qarakhanids (or Ilek Khans; 388-607/998-1211), 51.8 percent in Early Chaghatay, but only 14.3 percent in Classical Chaghatay, which may thus also be regarded as an early stage of Uzbek.

Of all the Turkic languages Chaghatay enjoyed by far the greatest prestige. Ebn Mohannā (Jamāl-al-Dīn, fl. early 8th/14th century, probably in Khorasan), for instance, characterized it as the purest of all Turkish languages (Doerfer, 1976, p. 243), and the khans of the Golden Horde (Radloff, 1870; Kurat; Bodrogligeti, 1962) and of the Crimea (Kurat), as well as the Kazan Tatars (Akhmetgaleeva; Yusupov), wrote in Chaghatay much of the time. Even Old Ottoman literature is characterized by many attempts, not always successful, to write in Chaghatay, for instance, a decree of Moḥammad II Fāteḥ (Mehmet II Fatih, 855-86/1451-81) dated 878/1473 (Arat), the “Takmīs” of Foḏūlī (ca. 885--963/1480-1556; Fuzūlī, pp. 462-64), and the works of many lesser authors (Sertkaya, 1970-76). Chaghatay exerted a strong influence on Kipchak and Oghuz, whereas grammatical forms from these two languages occurred more rarely in Chaghatay, being limited mainly to poetry, where they were adopted in order to satisfy the constraints of the ‘arūḏ meters (e.g., *qalmiš-am*, long-short-long, instead of *qalmiš-man*, long-long-long).

János Eckmann has provided a general survey of the development of oriental Turkish (1957; for more detailed expositions, see Eckmann, 1959a; idem, 1959c; Shcherbak; Brockelmann). The best Chaghatay dictionary has been compiled by Moḥammad Mahdī Khan (d. 1160/1747); the most useful grammars are those by A. M. Shcherbak and Eckmann (1966).

*Iranian linguistic influence on Chaghatay.* As the cultural centers of the Turks shifted from the northeast to the southwest, Iranian influences increased proportionately. Inscriptions from the 2nd/8th century, when the center of the Old Turkish empire lay in Mongolia, contain only a few Iranian loanwords, particularly titles (Aalto; Rossi). With the blossoming of Uighur culture in Khocho in the 3rd/9th century an increasing number of Sogdian and early Persian words found their way into the Uighur dialect of Old Turkish (see [chinese turkestan viii](#)). When Qarakhanid literature began to develop in southwestern Xinjiang ([Kāšġar](#) and [Balāsaġūn](#)) in the 5th/11th century and at the same time Islam spread through the area, Persian words, including



borrowings from Arabic, became more common. In the 8th/14th century K̄vārazm, where the Persian influence was much stronger, became a cultural center. Under the Timurids Herat (capital of Šāhroḡ, r. 807-50/1405-47), Samarkand (capital of Oloḡ Beg, r. 850-53/1447-49), and Shiraz (seat of the prince Eskandar Mīrzā, d. 827/1423-24) were the main literary centers in the first half of the 9th/15th century, and Herat remained so through the reign of Sultan Ḥosayn Bāyqarā (875-912/1470-1506). After the Timurids were succeeded in Transoxania by the Shaibanids in 906/1500 (see [central asia](#) v, vi), Bukhara, Samarkand, K̄vārazm, Balk (Šaybānīkān), and Farḡāna became the Chaghatay cultural centers. The Timurid Bābor founded the Mughal dynasty in 932/1526, after which Afghanistan and India also played an important role. With the formation of the Central Asian khanates in the 11th/17th century Chaghatay continued to be written only in K̄iva and K̄okand; in Bukhara the written language was generally Persian (cf. Eckmann, 1959b; idem, 1959c).

A number of Persian grammatical features were adopted in Chaghatay, for example, postpositions (e.g., *tā* “until,” *ṭaraf* “towards”), conjunctions (e.g., *ägār* “if,” *ki* general subordinating conjunction), *eżāfa* (*jism i nātuvānim* “my weak body”), *yā-ye ešārat* (*oq-ī ki yadīn čīqtī* “the arrow which flew from the bow”), and *yā-ye waḥdat* (*köprüg-ī gā yātār* “he comes to a bridge”; see Brockelmann, pp. 159-60, 186-87, 196-97, 393-427; Kales, pp. 13-15; [central asia](#) xv). Beginning in the 9th/15th century a large number of Persian loanwords also came into use (see [Table 35](#)).

Even when Chaghatay authors deliberately set out to write in Turkish they were not able to avoid using Persian words. For example, when the vizier and poet ‘Alī- Šīr Navā’ī (844-906/1441-1501), encouraged by Sultan Ḥosayn Bāyqarā, wrote *Moḥākamat al-loḡatayn* in order to prove the superiority of Turkish over Persian (See [CENTRAL ASIA iv. HISTORY UNDER THE MONGOLS AND TIMURIDS](#)), he used a language that contained 62.6 percent Persian and Arabic words (sample: 122 of 195 words).

Throughout history Turkish words have also entered Persian (Doerfer, I, pp. 3-5, 37-44). In the 5th/11th century the primary source was Saljuḡ Turkish, in the 7th-9th/13th-15th centuries Mongolian and Chaghatay, and beginning in the 10th/16th century Azerbaijani Turkish. The Chaghatay vocabulary in Persian was, however, generally limited to macaronic verses (e.g., Qurašī, beg. 14th cent.: *čandān bezī ay šāh ke gūyad tork-ī/yavlaq qarī bolmiš Münmiš tegin* “live so long, o king, that a Turk may say: very old has Münmiš tegin become!” where the first part is Persian, the second Early Chaghatay; cf. Doerfer,



*Elemente* I, p. 20); formulas in decrees (e.g., *sözümüz* “our word”); names of years in the duodecimal animal cycle (See [calendar](#)); and terms for hunting and animal husbandry, matters of state and administration, and warfare (e.g., in the work of the historian Mirkvānd, 836/903/1433-98, another protégé of Sultan Ḥosayn Bāyqarā). Persian literature from Central Asia, on the contrary, contains very few Turkish elements. For instance, Navā’ī’s contemporary, the poet ‘Abd-al-Raḥmān Jāmī (817-98/1414-92), still another protégé of Sultan Ḥosayn, used no Turkish words. (For Turkish influence on the Iranian languages spoken in Central Asia, especially Tajiki Persian, see [central asia xv](#); Doerfer, *Elemente*; idem, 1967).

*Mutual literary influences.* The first important monuments of Early Chaghatay literature, from the 8th/14th century (Eckmann, 1964a; Köprülü, *ĪA* III, pp. 280-85), all exhibit strong Persian influence. Iranian influence in Central Asian Turkish literature can be traced even farther back, as can perhaps also Turkish influence in Iranian and Persian literature. Analyses of Middle Persian poetry and modern popular literature in various Iranian dialects have revealed structural similarities with Old Turkish literary patterns (Benveniste; Bertel’s, pp. 53, 74-75; Boratav, pp. 112-13; Köprülü, *ĪA* I, pp. 637-40; idem, 1986, pp. 137-41; idem, 1934, p. 219; Mann, pp. 32, 36; Massé, *Croyances*, p. 492; Pagliaro and Bausani, pp. 132, 527-35; Rempis; Rypka, *Hist. Iran. Lit.*, pp. 49-52, 74, 92, 134, 694-97). The structure of Old Turkish poetry can be reconstructed from a comparison of the oldest Turkish literature with modern forms that have not been influenced by Persian poetry (Bang and Gabain; Birtek; Bombaci, 1969, p. 35; Boratav; Dilçin, pp. 39-58; Doerfer, 1964b, pp. 867-70; idem, forthcoming; Gandjei, 1958b, esp. pp. 144-52; Köprülü, *ĪA*, pp. 645-48; idem, 1919, p. 7; Kowalski, esp. pp. 157-64; Radloff, 1870; Stebleva, 1965, pp. 29-37; idem, 1971a; idem, 1971c, pp. 86-87, 296-98; idem, 1971b, pp. 80-81; idem, 1970; idem, 1976; Tekin; Zhirmunskiĭ, 1965; idem, 1970, pp. 40-48, 50-52; Yesevî). Meter depended on the number of syllables (often seven or eight), rather than on stress or quantity; caesuras occurred naturally between identical structures of meaning. The strophe normally consisted of four verses, more rarely two. Rhyme was usually effected through identical grammatical endings, the end of each verse being stressed on the last syllable; suffixes were assonant. The most frequent rhyme schemes were *aaab* and *aaba*. Alliteration was only occasionally used, but both parallelism and repetition of words were common.

These patterns survived in the works of Aḥmad Yasawī (d. 562/1166) and his



successors, who wrote in simple language (Bodrogligeti, 1974; Bombaci, 1969, pp. 113-14; Eckmann, 1964b, p. 365; Eraslan, p. 193; Gandjei, 1958b, pp. 151-53; Köprülü, *İA* III, pp. 283, 285, 288, 311; idem, *İA* I, pp. 644-46; idem, 1919, pp. 102, 119-21; Kowalski, p. 162; Yesevî). On the other hand, 'arūz had been adopted by Turkish writers in its Persian form in the 5th/11th century (Köprülü, *İA* I; idem, 1919, p. 15; idem, 1986, pp. 134-35; Rypka, *Hist. Iran. Lit.*, p. 923). The oldest Turkish example of 'arūz is to be found in the *Qutadgū Bilig* of Yūsof Kāşş Hājeb (written 462/1070), a *maṭnawī* in the *motaqāreb* meter (Bombaci, 1969, p. 110; Gandjei, 1958b, pp. 149-50; cf. Yūsof, tr. Dankoff). Contrary to previous assumptions (Köprülü, *İA* I, pp. 644-46; Stebleva, 1971c, p. 287; idem, 1976, p. 158), Yūsof used it quite correctly (Tekin, 1967). Maḥmūd Kāşgarī (d. after 476/1094), on the other hand, used the 'arūz imperfectly, relying on the number of syllables and sometimes resorting to graphic devices (e.g., omitting letters marking long vowels) in order to simulate a perfect 'arūz (Stebleva, 1971c). This lack of facility in the use of the 'arūz remained typical of Turkish literature for some time afterward (Bombaci, p. 53; Eckmann, 1964b, p. 134; Gandjei, 1958b, p. 153; Köprülü, *İA* III, p. 249; idem, *İA* I, pp. 645-46; Rustomov, p. 129; Stebleva, 1971c, p. 287; 1976, p. 158; see also Doerfer, forthcoming, b).

The question of the origin of the *robāʿī* (quatrain), which was popular in both Iranian and Turkish literatures, is controversial. E. E. Bertel's (p. 88), Tadeusz Kowalski (pp. 161-63), and L. Z. Rustomov (pp. 77-81) suggested that in Iranian literature it was borrowed from Turkish folk literature. On the other hand, Alessio Bombaci (p. 54), Köprülü (*İA* I, p. 646; 1919, p. 15), and I. V. Stebleva (1970, pp. 137-38) have argued that in Turkish literature it was a borrowing from Iranian. Paul Horn (apud Kowalski, p. 37), Gerhard Doerfer (1964a, pp. 839-40), and V. M. Zhirmunskii (1970, p. 39) have taken the view that the Iranian and Turkish forms developed independently. Finally, Köprülü (1934, pp. 115-22) argued formerly that the similarities resulted from mutual influence in ancient times. The four-line strophe has a long history in Turkish literature (Köprülü, 1919, p. 7; 1986, pp. 137-41; 1934, p. 113; Stebleva, 1970, p. 147), the earliest known examples being from Turkish songs partially quoted by the poets Abu'l-Najm Aḥmad b. Qūs Manūchehrī (d. 432/1041), Badr-al-Dīn Qawwāmī Razī (d. ca. 560/1165), and Jamāl Qurašī (fl. 7th/13th century), and a *robāʿī* composed by Faḫr-al-Dīn Mobārakšāh in 602/1206 (Köprülü, 1934, pp. 28-32, 113-22). In Persian literature, on the other hand, it took a highly original form (Bertel's, p. 88).



During the period 710-70 (1310-1369 a series of poetic, juridical, linguistic, and religious works, including translations of the Qur'ān, were written in Chaghatay. Most were based to some degree on older works, for instance, Qoṭb's *Kosrow o Širīn* (written ca. 742/1341; ed. Hacıeminoğlu; idem, ed. Zajączkowski), composed after Neẓāmī's work under the rule of the Golden Horde, and an anonymous translation of *Tadkerat al-awlā'* by Farīd-al-Dīn 'Aṭṭār (Eckmann, 1964a; Köprülü, in *ĪA* III, pp. 280-85). In the first half of the 9th/15th century there were also several less distinguished writers like 'Aṭā'ī, Sakkākī, and Lotfī (Rustamov; cf. Eckmann, 1964b, pp. 306-26; Köprülü, in *ĪA* III, pp. 290-94). The apogee of Chaghatay literature was reached during the reign of the Timurid sultan Ḥosayn Bāyqarā, in the work of Mīr 'Alī-Šir Navā'ī, whose style remained a model for the ensuing period (Bombaci, 1969, pp. 130-83, esp. 145-63; Eckmann, 1964b, pp. 329-57; Köprülü, 1934, pp. 257-66; idem, in *ĪA* III, pp. 289-302; Navā'ī, ed. Alpay; idem, ed. Devereux; idem, ed. Dmitrieva; Levend). Persian influence was also strong at that time. Particularly admired were the poets Ferdowsī (d. 411/1020), Neẓāmī Ganjavī (d. 599/1203), Sa'dī (691/1292), Ḥāfeẓ (d. ca. 792/1390), Amīr(-e) Ḳosrow Dehlavī (q.v.; d. 725/1325), Salmān Sāvajī (d. 778/1376), and Jāmī. Bilingualism must have been widespread among Islamic peoples in Central Asia (Pagliaro and Bausani, p. 752), for many Turkish-speaking Chaghatay poets composed works in Persian (Bombaci, 1964, p. xxvii; Eckmann, 1964a; idem, 1964b; Köprülü, 1919, pp. 113-22; Rypka, *Hist. Iran. Lit.*, p. 500; Togan, p. 231). In Persia itself there was a nucleus of Chaghatay writers in Shiraz, and Chaghatay was also written in Qazvīn and Isfahan (Eckmann, 1964a, pp. 295-96; idem, 1964b, p. 326; Gandjei, 1971a; idem, 1971b; Köprülü, in *ĪA* III, pp. 278, 305). In India Bābor wrote in Chaghatay (Köprülü, in *ĪA* III, pp. 314-316).

Translation of Persian works into Chaghatay was common, for instance, Navā'ī's translation of works by Jāmī (Eckmann, 1964a, pp. 293-96; idem, 1964b, pp. 309, 366-69; Köprülü, in *ĪA* II, pp. 296, 301, 321), while, in comparison, translations of Chaghatay works into Persian were rare. The earliest are of relatively late date, from the reign of Tīmūr (771-804/1370-1405); among later translations note, for instance, that by Faḳrī Herātī and Ḥakīm Šāh Moḥammad Qazvīnī's of Navā'ī's *Majāles al-nafā'es* in the 10th/16th century (Eckmann, 1964b, pp. 355, 370, 374-75; Gandjei, 1969; Köprülü, in *ĪA* III, pp. 279, 316; Rustamov, pp. 85, 131-32; Rypka, *Hist. Iran. Lit.*, pp. 634-39); some earlier Persian authors did, however, effect Turkish terms (Gandjei, 1958b; Minorsky; Pagliaro and Bausani, pp. 480-81).



Turkish poets of the 9th/15th century used meters based on *‘arūz*, especially in the important *tuyuġ* (quatrain), for which the meter *ramal-e mosaddas-e maqṣūr* (long short long long/long short long long/long short long) and the rhyme scheme *aaba* (as in the *robā‘ī*) were used; an important example is Navā‘ī’s *Mizān al-awzān* (Eckmann, 1964b; Köprülü, in *ĪA* III, p. 292; idem, in *ĪA* I, pp. 647-49; Köprülü, 1919, pp. 204-56; Navā‘ī, ed. Devereux, pp. 14-15; Pagliaro and Bausani, p. 534; Rustamov, pp. 75-81; Stebleva, 1970).

Under the Shaibanids (832-1007/1429-1598) Chaghatay became the predominant literary language of Transoxania and was used by some of the great khans themselves (Šibānī Khan and ‘Obayd-Allāh Khan [see [central asia vi](#)] both left *dīvāns*; cf. Eckmann, 1964b, p. 361; Köprülü, in *ĪA* III, p. 318), except in the khanate of Bukhara, where it gradually disappeared (Eckmann, 1964b, p. 387). The Chaghatay literature of the 11th-14th/17th-20th centuries seems largely epigonic; so far, however, little research has been done on this literature (cf. Eckmann, 1964b, pp. 377-402; Kāleṣ).

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