



CHINESE TURKESTAN VIII. TURKISH-IRANIAN LANGUAGE CONTACTS

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viii. Turkish-Iranian Language Contacts

Contacts between the Iranian peoples and the Turks are known to have occurred at least as early as 552 C.E., when the ancient Turks spread out from their northern settlements and established an empire extending from the Greater Khingan mountains on the western border of Manchuria to the Aral Sea (Herrmann, pp. 31, 35) and including territories of the Choresmians (see choresmia) and Sogdians farther west. Subsequently Buddhism and Manicheism became the predominant religions among both Turks and Iranians in what is now Chinese Turkestan. Three general phases in the development of the Old Turkic language can be distinguished in the area of east of 80° E, where the earliest texts have all been found: the very archaic language of the 8th-10th centuries (Old Turkic A, sometimes erroneously called Uighur), that of the 10th-12th centuries (Old Turkic B, Old Uighur), and the language that has been evolving since the Mongol period in the 13th-14th centuries (Old Turkic C, Late Uighur). The texts in Old Turkic A are predominantly pagan and Manichean, though some early Buddhist influences are apparent; those of Old Turkic B and C are predominantly Buddhist, though



there are some Manichean survivals. Within this framework, however, the language of the documents does vary somewhat with the contents: Even in the third phase religious texts contained a great many archaisms, whereas private documents—for example, sales contracts—were linguistically more advanced, sometimes more advanced than religious documents that are demonstrably later.

In the Tarim basin Iranians were living in and around Khotan on the Southern Silk Road and in the areas of Maralbashi (Pa-chu) and nearby Tumshuq on the Northern Silk Road (see ii, above); in addition, probably as early as the 1st century Sogdian trading colonies had been established along both routes as far east as China (Laut, p. 4; Bazin, pp. 40-41, 44; cf. Pelliot, 1912; idem, 1916-17; Barthold, 1956, p. 88; Gabain, 1961, pp. 15-16; idem, 1974, pp. 245-46; Pulleyblank; Spuler, p. 130; *Hodūd al-‘ālam*, tr. Minorsky, p. 225; Klyashtornyĭ). There were also Manichean refugees from Persia, who spoke Middle Persian and Parthian. Contacts between the Turks and these Iranian groups left traces in the respective languages spoken before the Muslim conquest of the area, which took place shortly after 1000. It is not always certain from which Iranian languages loanwords came into Old Turkic A and B, either because a specific word was common to several Middle Iranian languages (and even non-Iranian languages like Tokharian) or because it is not directly attested in any of those with which the Turks had contact. Recently, however, J. P. Laut has analyzed the features that distinguish Sogdian and Tokharian loanwords in the oldest level of the basic vocabulary found in Old Turkic Buddhist texts.

Old Turkic and Sogdian. The earliest surviving Turkic texts, of the 8th-10th centuries, are in Old Turkic A. The influence of this language on Sogdian appears to have been largely limited to names and titles (e.g., *tu’un*, *qayan*, *tarxan*; cf. Doerfer, II, pp. 460-74), found chiefly in Sogdian documents from Mount Mug and Marv (Mary) in the Tadzhik and Turkmen S.S.R.s respectively; these documents are datable to 712-15 (Freĭman; Livshits; Bogolyubov and Smirnova; Gabain, in *Camb. Hist. Iran* III/1, p. 615). The Turks, on the other hand, received their writing systems (except the runic script, the origin of which is disputed) from the Sogdians, particularly the Old Sogdian and Sogdian cursive (or Uighur) scripts, which, according to W. B. Henning, were developed during the 7th century (“Mitteliranisch,” pp. 55-56; cf. Gabain, 1964, pp. 180-81; idem, 1973, pp. 24-25; Sims-Williams; Laut, pp. 5-6; Bazin, pp. 39-40; cf. Bazin, p. 43). The Turks began by copying Sogdian (and Tokharian) texts (Tezcan, 1978, pp. 286, 315; Gabain, 1974, p. 246). In fact, the oldest surviving



inscription dealing with the history of the Turkish emperors, a funerary stele found 10 km west of Bugut, in North Khangai province of the People's Republic of Mongolia (Klyashtornyĭ and Livshits, 1972; Čağatay and Tezcan; Laut, pp. 3-4; Tezcan, 1978, p. 278; Gabain, in *Camb. Hist. Iran* III/1, pp. 617, 621; Bazin, p. 43), is written, not in Old Turkic, but in Sogdian language and script. It is datable to 581 and thus confirms the statement in one 6th-century Chinese source that the first script employed by the Turks was Sogdian (Bazin, pp. 39-40; Laut, p. 5), rather than runic. The only Turkic words in the inscription are titles (e.g., $\gamma\gamma'n$ = *qayan* "emperor," *tykyn* = *tegin* "prince," *tw'wn* = *tu'un* "commissioner"; see respectively Doerfer, III, pp. 141-79, II, pp. 533-41, III, pp. 207-10; the ending *-n* is characteristic of Tavghach [Tuo-ba, Wei], a Mongolian language). This inscription is also important for revealing the actual forms of the names of the emperors, formerly known only from their imprecise Chinese transcriptions (e.g., T'sp'r = Taspar or Tasbar, Nw"r = Nevar or, according to the Chinese sources, *ñebar*, with the suffix *-bAr*, typical not only of the Old Turkic title *eltäbär* but also of the names of the Juan-Juan emperors).

With the possible exception of a small inscription found near Choyren in Mongolia, which may have been written between 688 and 692, the earliest inscriptions in Old Turkic belong to the first half of the 8th century (Bazin, pp. 43-44). The short and defective inscription datable to 762 on a stele from Sevrey in the southern Gobi desert (Klyashtornyĭ and Livshits, 1971; Tezcan, 1978, p. 280) is in both Old Turkic A (in runic script) and Sogdian. Another, from Karabalghasun on the left bank of the Orkhon, is dated 821 (or 810, cf. Tezcan, 1978, p. 280; or ca. 820. cf. Bazin; or 808-21, cf. Chavannes and Pelliot, 1913, p. 383; Henning, "Mitteliranisch," p. 56) and includes a description of the conversion of Bögü Qağan to Manicheism (see iii, above) in 762-63 (Klyashtornyĭ and Livshits, 1971, p. 14;); it is written in Sogdian in cursive script (text and tr., Hansen, 1932; rev. text and Jap. tr. in Yoshida; cf. *Inscriptions*, pp. xxi-xxiv, xxvii-xxxviii, 24-25, tables 44-63), in Old Turkic A in runic script (Chavannes and Pelliot, 1913, pp. 177-99, pp. 229-31; Orkun, I, pp. 229-31), and in Chinese (Chavannes and Pelliot, 1913, pp. 177-99; Orkun, pp. 240-46).

Certain differences between dialects had already appeared in the Turkic of the runic inscriptions, for example, *bän*, *män* "I," *barđiyiz*, *bardiñiz* "you (pl.) went," and such differences became even more pronounced with the passage of time. The linguistic influence of Iranian, and especially Sogdian, is most apparent in Buddhist and Manichean texts in Old Turkic, for example, a



Manichean text edited by Wilhelm Bang and Annemarie von Gabain, which also describes the conversion of Bögü Qağan; although it is written in archaic Old Turkic A, the specialized Manichean terminology includes some typical Sogdian loanwords, for instance, *dindar* “elect,” *n(i)yošak* “auditor,” *γuan* “sin,” *bačay* “fasting,” *možak* “bishop.” Two words from the old Iranian religions, originally adopted by the Manicheans and transmitted through Sogdian Manichean texts, are *uštmaq* “paradise” (Manichean Sogd. *wštm’x*, cf. Av. *vahištəm ahūm*, lit. “best existence”) and *šimnu* “demon” (Manichean Sogd. *šmnw*; cf. Av. Anra Mainiuš, Mid. Pers. *Ahriman*). In secular contexts there are Sogdian loanwords like *borč* “debt” (< *pwṛč*), *maraz* “hireling” (< *mr’z*), *šük* “silent” (< *šwk*), and *känd* “town” (< *k’n*). Sogdian names for the planets are listed in one Old Turkic text in runic script (Andreas). A significant number of loanwords are actually not of Sogdian origin, though their forms in Old Turkic show that they were borrowed from Sogdian, for instance, *tamu* “hell” (< Sogd. *tm-* < Skt. *tamas*), *nirvan* “nirvana” (< Sogd. *nyṛβ’n* < Skt. *nirvāna*), and *nom* “religious law” (< Sogd. *nwm* < Gk. *nómos*).

Most of the Sogdian loanwords in Old Turkic disappeared with the Islamic conquest of the western Tarim basin in about 1006, and only a few survive in the Turkic languages spoken in the region today (cf. Mansuroğlu, p. 108; Asmussen, p. 127; Menges, pp. 168-72; Gabain, 1977; idem, in *Camb. Hist. Iran* III/1, pp. 617-24; Laut, pp. 89-148). In one Old Turkic Manichean manuscript written in archaic language *č(ä)r(i)g türk uluš Arγu T(a)las* “the warlike noble (or “Turkish”) tribe Arγu Talas” and *altun Arγu uluš* “the “golden” Arγu tribe” are named (Röhrborn, I/3, p. 178). The Arγu were also mentioned in the 5th/11th century by Maḥmūd Kāšgarī (I, pp. 84, 151), who described them as a tribe living between *Asfijāb*, Talas (Ṭarāz), and *Balāsāgūn* and speaking both a special dialect of Turkic and Sogdian, from which he quoted the word *maraz* (I, p. 312). According to Kāšgarī’s information, in the Arγu dialect of Turkic *day* meant “is not” (II, p. 227), and *n* occurred instead of *y* (< Old Turk. *ñ* [I, p. 84], e.g., *qoñ* “sheep” > *qon*). These features appear to have survived in modern Khalach, a group of Turkic languages spoken in western Persian villages lying between Sāva, Qom, and Arāk (Doerfer, 1987) and containing a large number of words of obscure origin, perhaps originally from a dialect of Sogdian (e.g., Khalach *bēšmi* “thread” < **brēšumī* < Sogd. **brēšum* “silk”?).

Old Turkic and Khotanese. In the Khotanese documents of the 9th-10th centuries Turks (*ttrükä*), Uighurs (*hvauhū:rä*), and Oghuz (*ūhūysä*) are mentioned, and Turkic proper names, titles, and ethnics appear frequently



(Bailey, 1939; idem, 1985, pp. 101-09; Hamilton, 1958; idem, 1977a; idem, 1977b; Hovdhaugen). One manuscript (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, Pelliot 2892, ll. 165-84) even contains a Turkic-Khotanese vocabulary of terms for body parts, archery, and horse trappings (Bailey, 1943-46; Hovdhaugen; Clauson, 1973). In contrast to most Old Turkic texts, which were written in runic script, in which not all the vowels were distinguished (with the important exception of the Manichean Turkic texts in Northern Brāhmī script; cf. Gabain, 1954), Turkic words in the Khotanese texts are written in Southern Brāhmī, an Indian alphabet in which minute phonological details are recorded. These texts are thus important in establishing the phonology of Old Turkic, especially the vowel system. For example, Old Turkic *bwdwn* (runic *b1wd1wn1*) “people” was earlier interpreted as *bu’un*, but the Khotanese transcriptions all have *ā* in the first syllable, which in late Khotanese (9th-10th centuries; Emmerick, pp. 215-46) represented /o/, and *ā*, *au*, or *ū* in the second syllable; these features suggest the pronunciation *bo’un* or *bo’on*, with assimilation (Hovdhaugen, p. 182). No Turkic loanwords are found in Khotanese, however, and there are at most only a few Khotanese words in Turkic, which is not surprising, as Turks and Khotanese did not come into direct contact until the late 9th or 10th century (see, e.g., Hamilton, 1986, I, pp. xiv-xvi). Some words previously thought to have been borrowed from Khotanese have now been shown to have other origins, for example, *tōn* “garment, clothing” (Khot. *thauna*-; see, e.g., Menges, p. 171), which is probably genuine Turkic (Clauson, 1972, p. 512; Doerfer, IV, p. 450; Tezcan, 1978, p. 321). Two Buddhist terms, ultimately from Sanskrit, were actually borrowed through Tokharian, rather than Khotanese: *sažan*, *sažin* “religious discipline” (Toch. *śāsaṃ*, Khot. *śāsanā*- [pronounced *žāsana*] < Skt. *śāsana*; Gabain, in *Camb. Hist. Iran* III/1, p. 618; Menges, p. 171; Toch. *łššā*; Laut, p. 138) and *tužit* “one of the heavens” (Khot. *ttužitā*- [pronounced *tuzida*] < Skt. *tuṣita*; Toch. *tužit*, Laut, p. 140).

Old Turkic, Middle Persian, and Parthian. In what is now Chinese Turkestan Middle Persian and Parthian were widely used as ecclesiastical languages, especially among the Sogdians (Henning, “Mitteliranisch,” p. 76; Boyce, 1968, pp. 68, 72; Hansen, 1968, pp. 93-94), and West Iranian religious formulas are found even in Old Turkic texts in runic script (Le Coq). On the other hand, the late Middle Persian Manichean texts (8th-9th centuries) contain many Turkish names and titles; in the so-called *Mahr-nāmag* (Müller), for example, there are long Turkic phrases like *Ay tānridā qut bulmīš alp bilgä Uyyur qayan* “the valiant, wise Uighur emperor who has found hail (grace) from (or at) the moon



god (Jesus)” (cf. the same title in the Karabalghasun inscription; for other texts containing Turkic names and titles see Boyce, *Reader*, text dw; idem, 1960, nos. 158, 1573, I B 6371; for possible Middle Persian loanwords, e.g., *yazd* “god,” cf. Menges, p. 170, though some of those suggested may be Sogdian and *qamay* “all” is genuine Turkic).

H. W. Bailey has proposed Iranian etymologies for a number of Turkic words and names (e.g., 1985, pp. 104-09), though they are somewhat speculative. A mixed group of Taraqči and Kāšğarlık presently inhabiting parts of western China, the Soviet Union, and Afghanistan have been known as “Uighurs” since the 13th/19th century, though they are not descended from the Uighurs of the eastern Tarim basin (Barthold, “Taraqči”; idem, “Turks”). The modern Turkic languages spoken by them contain very few Iranian elements antedating the Islamic conquest.

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