



## ECKMANN, JÁNOS

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**ECKMANN, János** (b. Keszthely, Hungary, 21 August 1905; d. Santa Monica, California, 22 November 1971), a Hungarian Professor of *Chaghatay*. After elementary and high school he studied Hungarian, German, Turkic, and Semitic linguistics and literature at the universities of Budapest and Vienna. In 1930 he received his teacher's certificate and taught Latin at a high school in Szeged until 1942. In 1937 he obtained the Ph.D. in Semitics, Turcology, and Hungarian linguistics from the University of Budapest. In 1942 he was nominated to head the newly established Hungarian Institute in Ankara. In December of the same year he went to Berlin to study at the renowned Institute of Turkic Studies. Forced by wartime hardships, in August 1938 he returned to Budapest only to find out that his nomination for directorship was changed into a lectureship to teach Hungarian under Tibor Halasi-Kun, the appointed director of the Institute. In 1948 the Hungarian Government closed down the Hungarian Institute in Ankara and called home its personnel. Eckmann and his director chose not to return. Their insubordination made headlines in the Hungarian papers. Between 1948 and 1951 he was on the editorial board as coeditor of the *Türk Ansiklopedisi* (Turkish Encyclopedia). In 1951 he moved to Istanbul and taught Turkish philology at the University of Istanbul from 1952 to 1961. His rank was *uzman* ('specialist'), and that remained unchanged, as the Turkish government did not grant academic degrees to foreigners. Since about 1956 he was one of the co-editors of the Turkish-English Redhouse Dictionary. In 1961 he joined the Department of Near Eastern Languages at U.C.L.A., first as a Visiting then as an acting Associate Professor. In 1966 he became full professor of Turkology with



specialization of Eastern Turkic language and literature. At the age of 66 his life ended following a serious cancer operation. In his biography by Sertkaya (p. 4), one statement must be corrected: Eckmann was never deprived of his Hungarian citizenship. His merits were valued at home; in 1969, on the invitation of the Hungarian Ministry of Culture, he spent a week in Budapest as the guest of the Institute of Cultural Relations.

Eckmann's scholarly interest was centered on the analysis and description of various stages of the development of the literary languages of Central Asia: Khaqani, Khorasmian, and Chaghatay. He prepared critical editions of medieval texts (the *divān* of Gadā'ī, the *Nahj al-farādis*, selections from Navā'ī, Loṭfī, and others) and put together comprehensive histories of the Khorasmian and Chaghatay literatures. His works are masterpieces of philological precision based upon classical erudition and meticulous research of primary sources.

The relevance of Eckmann's scholarship for Iranian studies rests partly in his treatment of the lexical and cultural content of Middle Turkic languages and partly in providing philological apparatus for Middle Turkic documents making them ready to serve as primary sources for research not only in Turkish, but also in classical Persian. Eckmann considered the Persian and Arabic elements as indispensable constituents of the Middle Turkic lexical-semantic system, having the same rank and value as the native words. In his opinion, only this perception of the vocabulary can enable one to assess the intensity and depth of the formative Persian influence on the Turkish literary expression. This was a daring view in a period when most philologists of Turkish, still under the spell of Atatürk's purism, would exclude Arabic and Persian words and phrases from Turkish linguistic and literary inquiry.

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Abbreviations: *PTF*—*Philologiae Turcicae Fundamenta*, ed. Jean Deny et al.

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Osman F. Sertkaya, “János Eckman,” *Istanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Türk Dili ve Edebiyatı Dergisi* XX (1973), pp. 196-198.

Idem, “János Eckman,” *Istanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Türk Dili ve Edebiyatı Dergisi* XXI (1975), pp. 4-12 (with a detailed bibliography of Eckmann’s works).