

RECENT RESEARCH ON THE TURKIC LANGUAGES OF AFGHANISTAN

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Due to its turbulent history Afghanistan has a very varied language mixture. There are approx. 20 languages, and only two of them — Pushtu and Dari — are recognized as official languages. For this reason many Afghans are bilingual.

Our interest here is to deal with the Turkic linguistic groups in Afghanistan. The first overview of the Turkic languages in Afghanistan was written by Gunnar Jarring in 1939, and later books by Louis Ligeti in 1954 and H. F. Schurman in 1962 followed. Besides the Uzbeks, the most numerous Turkic group, there are also Turkmens, Afshars, Kazaks, Kirghiz, and possibly Khorasan Turks and Karakalpaks. There are, however, no specific figures as to the exact size of each language group. Afghanistan has no census, and the official records at the regional governmental offices do not state the ethnicity of the population. Therefore we are entirely dependent on the estimates made by researchers in the west. Unfortunately most of these differ considerably from each other (possibly because they were made at different times). In 1939 Jarring estimated the Uzbek population between 200,000 and 800,000. In 1962 Schurmann estimated it between 500,000 and one million. Rawan Farhādi, on the other hand, in his lecture entitled *The Linguistic and Ethnic Distribution in Afghanistan* — held in the South Asia Institute in Kabul on August 1st, 1976 — mentioned 1.5 million Uzbek speakers. We have, however, somewhat more exact information on the Turkmens. Erhard Franz, a geographer from Berlin, had the opportunity to carry out field research in the northern provinces from May till October 1970, and also collect general information on the distribution of the Turkmens. He was unable to visit the border areas or the province Jawz Jān, and for that reason could not determine the exact population size of the Afghan Turkmens. He reported approx. 390,000 Turkmens in Afghanistan. Farhādi, on the other hand, thought that there were about 500,000. This could be correct because Franz could not count all the Turkmens. Heinz Kloss and Grant D. Mc Connell made a very good overview of the estimations from different authors of such Turkic languages as Karakalpak, Kazak, Kirghiz, Turkmen and

Uzbek in their book *Linguistic Composition of the Nations of the World : vol. 1 Central and Western South Asia* (Quebec, 1974, pp. 53-62).

This sparsity of information is by no means confined to estimations of numbers. We do not know exactly in which areas some of the groups live, and even the existence of others is not certain. This is why Charles M. Kieffer in a report (1974) said that only 11 of the 252 included villages (points) had a Turkic speaking population (5 Uzbek, 5 Turkmen, and one Afshar). He simply did not have more information on the Turkic populations, especially on the Kirghiz in the Wākhān Corridor, the Kazaks (for example between Kunduz and Tashkurghan), the Kizilbash and the Karluks. It was first in 1979 that Shahrani published detailed information on the Kirghiz in the Wākhān. But it is still impossible to say whether there are really Karakalpaks in Afghanistan. According to Humlum (1959) they live to the north of Jalālābād in the region of Bazarak. The conclusion of my field research is that there are Khorasan Turkic speakers in Afghanistan (Wolfram Hesché, *Turksprachen in Nord-Afghanistan*, to be published) which is indirectly confirmed by the research of Franz (1972). Not all of the groups studied by Franz were considered "real" Turkmens by the other Turkmens in the area; this leads me to the conclusion that these must have been Khorasan Turks (for example Mukri and Khatab). I have also found instances of Khorasan Turkic influence in Turkmen and Uzbek during my research in Andkhoy in the Fāryāb province. Although both languages show this influence, there is considerably more in Turkmen. Unfortunately no one has done research as to the existence of Khorasan Turks in the Andkhoy region. It would certainly be an interesting task to follow the traces of Khorasan Turks further.

As we have seen, a Turcologist who wants to conduct linguistic fieldwork in Afghanistan, first has to go searching for clues. Max Klimburg wrote in his book on Afghanistan in 1966, that "the Turkic peoples living in Afghanistan are almost totally unstudied". This proclamation still holds true to a great degree today, even when we take into consideration the sparse research done in the past few decades.

More than 50 years ago, Gunnar Jarring published the first *Uzbek Texts from Afghan Turkistan*. Almost 20 years later, Louis Ligeti wrote about the language of the Afshars from Kabul (1957). It took almost another 20 years for the Soviet Turcologist Abbasov's short article on the Afshars to appear (1975). Shortly thereafter followed a whole series of publications on the oral tradition of the Kirghiz in the Pamir (Rémy Dor), the Uzbeks in Badakshan (Rémy Dor), and the Uzbeks in northwestern Afghanistan (Ingeborg Thalhammer). Finally, linguistic analyses of individual dialects emerged (Boeschoten, Bozkurt, Hesché/Hildebrandt/Thermann).

Fall 1988 saw the release of volume I of the *Atlas de l'Afghanistan* (Redard et alii). In December the publication of *Südghusische Materialien aus Afghanistan und Iran* (Doerfer/Hesche) is expected. The importance of the last book is that it names Afshar (Southern Oghusic) as the fifth Oghusic language next to the previously known four Oghusic languages (Turkish, Azeri, Khorasan Turkic and Turkmen).

There is at present in the Department for Turcology and Central Asian Studies of the University of Göttingen (W. Germany) an on-going research project, *Afghan - Iran - Turkish* (Doerfer/Hesche), which is supported by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft in Bonn. This project will sponsor the publication of information on Uzbeks and Turkmens in Afghanistan, etc.

Given the linguistic situation in Afghanistan and Iran, I had to deal with the interference phenomena. The leading role in this field is held by the International Center for Research on Bilingualism of the Laval University (Québec, Canada), I attended the Center for five weeks. The insights I received during my stay at the Center shall be most beneficial for my research on the bilingualism of Turkic peoples living in Afghanistan and Iran.

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