

A NEW CLASSIFICATION OF THE CHUVASH-TURKIC LANGUAGES

TALÂT TEKİN*

The Chuvash-Turkic languages are generally called "Turkic languages" (Germ. *Türkische Sprachen*, Russ. *Tjurkskie jazyki*) in the Turkic studies circles of the world. This term is not very appropriate if it is intended that it cover also the Chuvash language, because while all the Turkic languages with the exception of Chuvash go back to Proto-Turkic which was a z/š language, Chuvash goes back to Proto-Chuvash (or Proto-Bulgarian) which obviously was a r/l language. In other words Chuvash and the Turkic languages are not the so-called "sister languages", but they are descendants of two sister languages. It is for this reason that we have to assume, for the Chuvash-Turkic languages, a proto-language which is older than Proto-Turkic and Proto-Chuvash. Such a proto-language may be called Proto-Chuvash-Turkic or simply Pre-Turkic (Germ. *Vortürkisch*). The affinity of Chuvash with the other Turkic languages may then be schemed as follows:

Pre-Turkic (*r, *l')	
Proto-Chuvash (*r, *l)	Proto-Turkic (*z, *š)
Modern Chuvash (r, l)	Modern Turkic languages (z, š)

The Chuvash-Turkic languages are spoken today in a vast area stretching from the shores of the Baltic Sea in the west to the shores of the Sea of Okhotsk in the east, and from the shores of the Arctic Ocean

* Professor, Hacettepe University, Faculty of Letters, Head of the Department of Turkish Language and Literature, Ankara.

in the north to the shores of Persian Gulf in the south. It is only natural then for these languages to differ from one another in respects of phonology, morphology and vocabulary.

From the middle of the 19th century to present many attempts have been made to classify the Chuvash-Turkic languages. None of these classifications however is complete and satisfactory. The main defect of the old classifications, as Arat (1953) and Poppe (1965) have rightly put it, is that their authors wanted them to include both the modern and old languages and dialects. A language classification, however, can either be synchronic or diachronic, but not synchronic and diachronic at the same time. In other words, a classification of modern languages cannot include the languages and dialects of the past.

Summarizing the classifications made before him, R.R. Arat, my former professor at the University of Istanbul, offered the following classification for the modern Turkic languages (his term: *Türk şiveleri*, i.e., "Turkish dialects"):

A. Turkish dialect groups (Türk lehçe grupları):

- I. *r*-group, i.e., Chuvash (*r* ~ *z*, *l* ~ *ş*, *s*- ~ *y*-)
- II. *t*-group, i.e., Yakut (*t* ~ *d*, *s*- ~ *y*-)

B. Turkish sub-dialect groups (Türk şive grupları):

- I. *d*-group (*adaḡ, taḡ, taḡlıḡ, ḡalḡan*)
- II. *z*-group (*azaḡ, taḡ, taḡlıḡ, ḡalḡan*)
- III. *tav*-group (*ayaḡ, tav, tavlı, ḡalḡan*)
- IV. *taḡlı*-group (*ayaḡ, taḡ, taḡlı, ḡalḡan*)
- V. *taḡlıḡ*-group (*ayaḡ, taḡ, taḡlıḡ, ḡalḡan*)
- VI. *daḡlı*-group (*ayaḡ, daḡ, daḡlı, ḡalan*)

This classification may be criticised as follows:

1. It is not correct to group together Chuvash and Yakut under the term of "Turkish dialect groups"; because Chuvash and Yakut are two "languages" differing greatly both from one another and from the other Turkic languages.

2. Although Chuvash and Yakut may be considered close to one another in the treatment of initial *y*- (**y*- > Chuv. *ś*-, **y*- > Yak. *s*-), they differ greatly from one another in many other respects, especially in respect of the sound correspondences *r*//*z* and *l*//*ş*. In other words, Chu-

vash, the only r/l language, is separated from all the other Turkic languages, including Yakut; for Yakut too is a z/š language.

3. The term "Türk şive grupları" is not appropriate, because the word *şive* means "accent" in Turkish of Turkey and implies only "difference in pronunciation". Consequently, the term *şive* "accent" cannot be used in language classifications.

4. The third group in the classification contains many languages. Some of these languages, e.g., Kirghiz and Altay, are not *tav* languages; Kirghiz is a *tō* language and Altay is a *tū* language.

5. For the languages belonging to the second group Arat gives only the name Abakan, i.e., Khakas. It is known that the dialect of the Yellow Uighur spoken in the Kansu province of China is also a z- language (Khakas *azax*, Yellow Uighur *azak*).

The most recent attempt to classify the Chuvash-Turkic languages has been made by Nicholas Poppe. Poppe who rightly calls these languages "Chuvash-Turkic" divides them into six groups:

- I. Chuvash (a r/l language)
- II. Yakut (*atax* < *adaḱ*, *ta* < *tag*, *-i* < *-ig*)
- III. Tuva-Khakas (*adaḱ/azak*, *tag*, *-ig*)
- IV. Kipchak (*ayak*, *taw/tu*, *-i*)
- V. Chagatay (*ayak*, *tag*, *-ik*)
- VI. Turkmen (*ayak*, *dag*, *-i*)

Poppe, following the suggestions made by Pritsak, further divides the Kipchak group into the four subgroups:

1. Karay, Karachay-Balkar and Kumuk (**ag* < *aw*);
2. Tatar and Bashkir (**ag* > *aw*, *o* > *u*, *ö* > *ü*, *u* > *ö*, *ü* > *ö*, *i* > *ě*, *e* > *i*);
3. Nogay, Kazakh, Karakalpak (*č* > *š*, *š* > *s* and the occurrence of suffix-initial /l/ as *n/d/t* depending on the nature of the preceding consonant);
4. Kirghiz and Altay (secondary long vowels, labial attraction and the change of the /m/ of the negative suffix *-ma-* into p/b).

This classification may be criticised as follows:

1. It is wrong to classify Tuva which is an *adak* language together with Khakas which is an *azak* language;
2. The development *taw/tu* given as a characteristic feature of the Kipchak group is incomplete and misleading; for the sound group *ag* has resulted in three different forms in this group, i.e., *taw*, *tō* and *tū* (the development *tu* actually appears nowhere).
3. In the classification no mention is made of the Yellow Uighur and Salar.

As is seen, Arat's and Poppe's classifications too have some methodical defects and therefore they are incomplete and unsatisfactory. In addition to this, the discovery of Khaladj, an independent Turkic language with many archaic features, has made things more complicated so that a new and more detailed classification of the Chuvash-Turkic languages has become an urgent necessity.

To classify the Chuvash-Turkic languages the following phonetic criteria have been used:

1. The sound correspondences *r//z* as in Chuv. *täxxär* vs. Turk. *toğuz* "9";
2. The developments of the phoneme /d/ as in the word *adak* "foot";
3. The developments of the sound group *ağ* as in *tag* "mountain";
4. The developments of the sound group *iğ* as in the accusative suffix *-iğ* or in the adjective *taglığ* "mountaineer";
5. The development of the suffix-initial /g/ as in *kalğan* "remained".

The last of these phonetic criteria, i.e., the development of the suffix-initial /g/ has turned out to be useless (see, Poppe's classification). Instead of this the development of the initial /t/ should be used, for it enables us to separate the two last groups of the Chuvash-Turkic languages (see, below).

Finally, to include Khaladj into the classification and to separate it from the other languages we need a sixth criterion. The most characteristic feature of Khaladj is, as is known, the preservation of initial /h/ which is lost in all the other languages including Chuvash.

Thus, the phonetic criteria which we will use to classify the Chuvash Turkic languages are, in their proper order, the following:

1. The correspondences $r//z$, $l//\check{s}$ and $\acute{s}//\check{s}$;
2. The treatment of initial $/h/$;
3. The developments of the phoneme $/d/$;
4. The developments of the final sound group $-i\acute{g}$ in polysyllabic words;
5. The development of the sound group ag in monosyllabic words;
6. The development of the phoneme $/t/$ in initial position.

Using the first phonetic feature we may divide the Chuvash-Turkic languages into two unequal groups: 1. Chuvash (r , l and \acute{s} language), 2. Turkic languages (z and \check{s} languages).

The second criterion we must use to classify the Turkic languages is the treatment of the initial $/h/$. Since initial $/h/$ has been preserved only in Khaladj, Turkic languages (z and \check{s} languages) are divided into two unequal groups: 1. Khaladj (h - preserved), 2. Other languages (h - became null).

In order to classify the remaining z/\check{s} languages we use the third criterion, i.e., the developments of the phoneme $/d/$ in medial and final positions. Using this criterion we have four different groups: 1. $/t/$ or *atax* group (Yakut), 2. $/d/$ or *adaḵ* group (Tuva or Tuvinian), 3. $/z/$ or *azaḵ* group (Khakas literary language and Yellow Uighur), 4. $/y/$ or *ayaḵ* group (remaining languages).

The $/y/$ or *ayaḵ* group of Turkic languages may, in their turn, be classified into five different groups by using the fourth criterion: 1. The $-i\acute{g}$ group (Northern Altay dialects), 2. The $-u$ group (Altay literary language), 3. The $-\bar{u}$ group (Kirghiz literary language), 4. The $i\acute{k}$ group (Uzbek and New Uighur literary languages), 5. The $-i$ group.

The languages and dialects belonging to the $-i$ group may further be divided into two groups by using the fifth criterion: 1. The *aw* group (Kipchak languages), 2. The *ag* group (the Oghuz group and Salar).

Finally, the languages and dialects belonging to the *ag* group may be divided into two groups by applying the last criterion, i.e., the develop-

ment of the initial /t/: 1. The *t-* or *tagh* group (Salar), 2. The *d-* or *dagh* group (Oghuz group).

Thus, by using the above-mentioned six criteria, the Chuvash-Turkic languages are divided into twelve groups. These groups may be shown with their phonetic features in a table like the following:

Features	Languages											
1	r,l	z,š										
2	ϕ	h-	ϕ									
3	r	d	t	d	z	y						
4	-ä	-ux	-i	-ig			-u	-ü	-ı	-ı		
5	u/äv	ağ	ia	ağ			ü	ö	ağ	aw	ağ	
6	t-			d-	t-							d-
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X	XI	XII

By using the key words *täxxär* "g", *adağ* "foot" and *taghğ* "mountain-er" we may name and enumerate these language groups in the following way:

- I. *täxxär* group: Chuvash (literary language)
- II. *hadağ* group: Khaladj
- III. *atax* group: Yakut (literary language)
- IV. *adağ* group: Tuva or Tuvinian, together with Karagas (literary language).
- V. *azağ* group: Khakas (literary language), Middle Chulym, Mrass, Tashtyp, Matur and Upper Tom dialects; Yellow Uighur
- VI. *taghğ* group: Northern dialects of Altay (Tuba, Kumandu, Chalkandu), Lower Chulym, Kondom and Lower Tom dialects
- VII. *tulu* group: Altay literary language (Altay proper, Telengit, Teleut)

- VIII. *tölü* group: Kirghiz (literary language)
- IX. *tagh* group: Uzbek, New Uighur (literary languages)
- X. *tawh* group (Kipchak): Tatar, Bashkir, Kazakh, Karakalpak, Nogay, Kumuk, Karachay-Balkar, Karay or Karaim, Crimean Tatar (literary languages), dialect of Baraba Tatars
- XI. *tagh* group: Salar
- XII. *dagh* group (Oghuz): Turkmen (literary language), Khorasani, Khwarezm, Oghuz dialects of Uzbek, Azeri or Azerbaijani (literary language), Kashkay, Eynallu, Kerkuk and Erbil dialects, Turkish or Turkish of Turkey (literary language), Gagauz (literary language).

As is seen, the V., IX., X. and XII. groups contain more than one languages and dialects. Languages and dialects belonging to these groups may further be divided into subgroups by using different phonetic criteria.

The V. group

To classify the languages and dialects belonging to this group the following phonetic criteria should be used: 1. The treatment of initial *y-*, 2. The treatment of medial *-s-*. By using these two features we may divide this group into the following subgroups:

1. *čazıl* subgroup: Khakas literary language
2. *čazım* subgroup: Middle Chulym, Mrass and Upper Tom dialects
3. *yasıl* subgroup: Yellow Uighur.

The IX. group

Uzbek and New Uighur belonging to this group are separated from each other by many features. The most important features separating these two languages from each other is the labialization of /a/ of the first syllable in Uzbek and the existence of *i-* and *u-* Umlaut in New Uighur:

1. Uzbek: *ăgiz, ăgir, ăçiq, ăriq*
2. New Uighur: *eğiz, egir, oçuq, oruq.*

The X. group

The languages and dialects belonging to this group may further be subdivided by the following features: 1) Treatment of the vowel /o/ of the

first syllable, 2) treatment of the phoneme /s/. If we take the verb *qos̃-* “to unite as an example we get the following three subgroups:

1. *kuš̃-* subgroup: Tatar and Bashkir;
2. *kos-* subgroup: Kazakh, Karakalpak, Nogay; Halic dialect of Karaim;
3. *koš̃-* subgroup: Karachay-Balkar, Kumuk, Troki dialect of Karaim, dialect of Baraba Tatars, Crimean Tatar.

Tatar and Baskir are separated from each other by many features:

1. Word and suffix-initial /s/ is preserved in Tatar, but it changes to /h/ in Bashkir: Tat. *sarı* “yellow”, Bšk. *harı*; Tat. *sul* “left”, Bšk. *huł*; Tat. *bulsa* “if it happens”, Bšk. *bulha* etc.

2. The phoneme /č/ is preserved in Tatar, but it changes to /s/ in Bashkir: Tat. *čap-* “to run”, Bšk. *sap-*, Tat. *čalgı* “sickle”, Bšk. *salgi*, Tat. *öčñ* “for”, Bšk. *öšñ* etc.

3. The phoneme /z/ in medial and final positions is preserved in Tatar, but it changes to interdental fricative /ð/ in Bashkir: Tat. *süz* “word”, Bšk. *hüð*; Tat. *büz* “gray”, Bšk. *buð*, Tat. *sızıq* “line”, Bšk. *hiðiq* etc.

4. The phoneme /s/ in medial and final positions is preserved in Tatar, but in changes to voiceless interdental fricative /θ/ in Bashkir: Tat. *sast* “stinking”, Bšk. *haθı*, Tat. *yassı* “flat”, Bšk. *yaθı*, etc.

5. Bashkir has labial attraction: Tat. *yöldiz̃* “star”, Bšk. *yöndöð*, Tat. *yörıy* “he is walking”, Bšk. *yöröy*, etc.

The *koš̃-* subgroup may further be subdivided on the basis of the treatment of initial /y/:

1. The *žıl/ıl* division: Kazakh, Karakalpak;
2. The *yl* division: Nogay; Halic dialect of Karaim.

Karakalpak, although it is a literary language since the October Revolution, may be regarded as a dialect of Kazakh, because it is very close to it.

The third subgroup of the X. Kipchak group may be subdivided into two divisions on the basis of the treatment of initial /b/:

1. *per-* “to give” division: Dialect of the Baraba Tatars;

2. *ber-* division: Kumuk, Karachay-Balkar; Troki dialect of Karaim; Crimean Tatar.

The languages and dialects belonging to the second division may further be subdivided into two subdivision on the basis of the treatment of initial /y/:

1. *jol* subdivision: Karachay-Balkar; Northern dialect of Crimean Tatar;

2. *yol* subdivision: Kumuk, Crimean Tatar (southern dialect), Khwarezm-Kipchak dialects of Uzbek, Troki dialect of Karaim.

The languages and dialects belonging to the second subdivision may further be subdivided into two groups on the basis of the treatment of initial /k/:

1. *kel-* group: Khwarezm-Kipchak dialects of Uzbek, Troki dialect of Karaim, Crimean Tatar ((southern dialect);

2. *gel-*group: Kumuk.

The XII. group

The languages and dialects belonging to the Oghuz group may be divided into four subgroups on the basis of the following features: 1) The treatment of the initial voiceless velar stop /q/, 2) Preservation or shortening of the primary long vowels:

1. *qāl-* subgroup: Khwarezm-Oghuz dialects of Uzbek;

2. *gāl-* subgroup: Turkmen literary language, Trukhmen dialect of Turkmen, Khorasani or Khorasan dialect of Turkmen;

3. *gal-* subgroup: Azeri or Azarbayjani (literary language), Kashkay and Eynallu dialects, Tabriz dialect, Kerkuk and Erbil dialects, East Anatolian dialects of Azerbayjani;

4. *kal-* subgroup: Turkish or Turkish of Turkey (together with Anatolian and Rumelian dialects), Gagauz literary language.

CLASSIFIED LIST OF THE CHUVASH-TURKIC LANGUAGES AND DIALECTS

- I. The *r/l* group: Chuvash (literary language)
- II. The *hadaq* group: Khaladj
- III. The *atax* group: Yakut (literary language)
- IV. The *adaq* group: Tuva or Tuvinian together with Karagas dialect (literary language)
- V. The *azaq* group:
 1. *čazıl* subgroup: Khakas (literary language)
 2. *čazıl* subgroup: Middle Chulym, Mrass and Upper Tom dialects
 3. *yasıl* subgroup: Yellow Uighur
- VI. The *taghğ* group: Northern dialects of Altay literary language, Lower Chulym, Kondom and Lower Tom dialects
- VII. The *tūlu* group: Altay (literary language)
- VIII. The *tōlū* group: Kirghiz (literary language)
- IX. The *taghğ* group:
 1. *âgiz* subgroup: Uzbek (literary language)
 2. *egiz* subgroup: New Uighur (literary language)
- X. The *tawh* group:
- X. The *tawh* group:
 1. *quš-* subgroup:
 - a. *süz* division: Tatar (literary language)
 - b. *hüð* division: Bashkir (literary language)
 2. *qos-* subgroup:
 - a. *žıl* division: Kazakh (literary language)
 - b. *jıl* division: Karakalpak (literary language)
 - c. *yıl* division: Nogay (literary language), Karaim (Halic dialect)

3. *qoš-* subgroup:
 - a. *per-* division: Dialect of Baraba Tatars
 - b. *ber-* division:
 1. *jol* subdivision: Karachay-Balkar (literary language), Crimean Tatar (Northern dialect)
 2. *jol* subdivision:
 - a. *kel-*: Khwarezm-Kipchak dialects of Uzbek, Karaim (Troki dialect), Crimean Tatar (Southern dialect, literary language)
 - b. *gel-*: Kumuk (literary language)

XI. The *tağh* group: Salar

XII. The *dağh* group:

1. *gāl-* subgroup: Khwarezm-Oghuz dialects of Uzbek;
2. *gāl-* subgroup: Turkmen (literary language)
3. *gal-* subgroup: Azeri or Azerbaijani (literary language), Kashkay and Eynallu dialects, Tabriz dialect, Kerkuk and Erbil dialects, East Anatolian dialects of Azerbaijani
4. *kal-* subgroup:
 - a. *ev* division: Turkish (literary language)
 - b. *yev* division: Gagauz (literary language)

