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## THE IMPORTANCE OF TURKİSTANI DIALECTS FOR THE STUDY OF TURKİSTANI CULTURE

*Presentation*

by

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# **THE IMPORTANCE OF TURKISTANI DIALECTS FOR THE STUDY OF TURKISTANI CULTURE**

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Turkistani studies comprises one of the oldest and most important parts of the general Turkish studies which is designated as Turkology in the scientific field. However, there is no scientific study field under the name of "Turkistan" in the universities of Turkey or other countries as a result of Turkistan's present status as being divided into more than one colonial regions under both Russian and Chinese rule in our century in which even several primitive tribes in Africa managed to form independent states after the World War II. Even if Turkistan's name is not directly used, there are many university department units, research institutes and centers under the title of "Central Asia" in several West European countries, the US, and Japan. The courses on the history and culture of Turkistan is being taught as well as Master essays and Ph.D dissertations are being prepared in the Central Asian units of those universities. Moreover, the Turkistani Turkish dialects such as Uzbek, Uyghur, Qazaq, Kirghiz in addition to the Tajik language is being taught in those Central Asian units.<sup>1</sup>

The Turkistani studies are being conducted in the universities of Turkey in the Faculty of Letters' departments of History, Turkish Language & History, Art History, and Geography under the fields or chairs such as "General Turkish History," "General Turkish Language," "General Turkish Art," and "General Turkish Geography." As a matter of fact, the Turkistani studies in the Turkish universities have been carried out by the personal initiatives of Turkish scholars such as the deceased historian Prof. Zeki Velidi Togan and the young historian Associated Prof. Mehmet Saray. Recently, the addition of the courses "Contemporary Turkish World" in the History Department, "Modern Turkish Dialects" in the Department of Turkish Language & Culture is a promising development for the future of the Turkistani studies in Turkey. Because, the Turkish historians are now able to teach the modern history of Turkistan under

both Russian and Chinese rule within the course, entitled "Contemporary Turkish World" and the Turkish linguists can teach modern Turkistani Turkish dialects under the course, entitled "Modern Turkish Dialects." We hope that in the near future the modern literature of Turkistan would be taught in the Turkology Departments of the Turkish universities. Turkish universities are also behind in the teaching of modern Turkistani literature compared to the West European and the US universities. For instance, my Ph.D advisor Prof. Edward Allworth has been teaching modern Turkistani literature at the Central Asian Languages and Cultures of the Columbia University for the last 23 years.

As is mentioned above, the Turkistani studies do comprise the oldest and the most important part of the studies on the general Turkish culture. There is a need to know many foreign languages for the studies on Turkistani culture. Chinese, Sanskrit, Sogdian, Arabic, Persian, Russian, English, German, French, and Japanese are the most important ones among those foreign languages. A knowledge of these foreign languages are a necessity for the study of the works and sources written in those languages on the Turkistani culture (i.e. history, language, literature, geography, anthropology, arts, etc.). In other words, foreign languages are required to study the impact of the Turkistani culture on various foreign nations, cultural exchanges, and the opinions of foreign nations on Turkistani culture.

A knowledge of the Turkistani Turkish dialects and Tajik language is important as much as a knowledge of the above mentioned foreign languages for the studies on Turkistani culture. Learning Turkistani Turkish dialects in addition to the Tajik is significant for the following two points: First of all, we can only understand better the Turkistani culture by the oral and written mother-tongues of the Turkistanians. Secondly, the political, social, and cultural changes in Turkistan in the last two centuries have been occurred in close connection with the language issue as well as in the both Soviet Russian and Communist Chinese policy toward Turkistan, the language issue comprises a significant place.

There was a common literary language based on the Arabic alphabet in Turkistan prior to Chinese and Russian invasion of the region. The Turkistani Turkish literary language which is designated by the Turkologists as the "Common Central Asian Turkish" had been a national heritage for at least nine centuries between the eleventh and twentieth centuries. This Turkistani Turkish literary language which goes back to the Old Turkish literary language of the Korkut and Uyghur periods (8th-11th centuries)

can be divided into these periods: Karakhanide era of the Hakaniye Turkish literary language (11th to 12th centuries), Kharezmiyan Turkish literary language (13th to 14th centuries), and the five-century long Chaghatay Turkish literary language (15th to 20th centuries). Although the term "Chaghatay" is not appropriate to use for the designation of the Turkish literary language developed after the Timuride rule in Turkistan, we can use the term Turkistani Common Turkish dialect as a synonym of Chaghatay instead of changing the later.

The tsarist administration was concerned about the closeness in the literary languages of the Turks living under the tsarist Russian rule. In the middle of the nineteenth century, the figures like the Russian missionary Nikolay Ivanovich Ilminskiy (1822-1892) were advocating the replacement of the Arabic alphabet with the Russian alphabet as the first step for the Christianization of the Turks under tsarist Russian rule and were also making the first examples of such Russian alphabet adaptations to the Turkish dialects.<sup>2</sup>

The Christianized Tatar Turks (Kreshen Tatars) started to use the Russian (Cyrillic) alphabet in 1862 and the Chuvash Turks in 1871, and later the Yakut Turks. Under the influence of Ilminskiy, the Kazak Turkic intellectual Ibray (Ibrahim) Altinsarin (1841-1899) prepared the first Kazak alphabet based on the Russian (Cyrillic) alphabet and a reader in 1879.

Thus, the Soviet government following those first examples in the tsarist Russia replaced the Arabic alphabets of the all Turkish nationalities of the USSR with the Latin alphabet in 1927. The Soviet leaders, however, concerned with the possibility of strengthening of the cultural ties between the Anatolian Turks and the Turks in the USSR because of Turkey's adaptation of a Latin alphabet in 1928, and imposed Russian Cyrillic alphabets which were very different from each other to various Turkish languages from 1939-1940. By this measure, the historical closeness and commonness among the Turkish dialects in the Soviet Union and among the Turkistani Turkish dialects were attempted to be destroyed. In the Eastern Turkistan under the rule of the People's Republic of China, the nine-century old common Arabic alphabet was replaced by the Russian (Cyrillic) alphabet 1953 and this new alphabet was imposed until 1956. When the relations between Peking and Moscow were broken, the Russian alphabet was replaced with the Latin-based alphabets for the Uyghur and Qazaq dialects in after 1956 in Eastern Turkistan. After 1981, however, Latin alphabet was replaced with the old Arabic alphabet once more.

Thus, there are seven different alphabets (Uzbek, Qazaq, Kirghiz, Turkmen, Qaraqalpaq, Uyghur, and Tacik) used in the Western Turkistan under the Russian rule in contrast with the Arabic alphabet used in Eastern Turkistan under the Chinese rule for the same Turkish dialects.

These more than once alphabet changes in the near history of Turkistan have obviously caused a cultural crisis in the utilization of the national culture of Turkistan by the young generations, as well as have also created serious orthographical and pronunciation mistakes in the contemporary Turkistani Turkish literary languages.<sup>3</sup> Studying these matters is also one of the important subjects in front of the Turkologists.

Because of the political reasons and other goals in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, the nine-century old common Turkish literary language in Turkistan was replaced and the new Turkish literary languages which were based on local dialects were begun to develop. Today in Turkistan there are six Turkish literary languages which have great differences among themselves because of their different writing systems and their different development paths. The Turkish literary languages in Turkistan are as follows: Uzbek, Uyghur, Qazaq, Kirghiz, Turkmen, and Qaraqalpaq. In addition, the Crimean Tatar of the Crimean Turks who are in Turkistan as exiles and the Tajik literary language which is the Persian language of Turkistan.

In the last 80 years, many important works have been published in the fields of language, literature, culture, history, and arts in the modern Turkish dialects and Tajik of Turkistan. In order to comprehend the entire culture of Turkistan which is divided by China and Russia, we have to study carefully the works in the modern Turkish dialects and Tajik of Turkistan and which are continued to be written with a strong national consciousness.

As a person who has been following the publications in both Western and Eastern Turkistan in the Turkish dialects for the last fifteen years, I can say this with a great confidence that the Turkistani Turks (i.e. Uzbeks, Qazaqs, Uyghurs, Kirghiz, Turkmen) whom the Russians and Chinese attempt to separate from each other do have a deep consciousness of Turkish identity and the Uzbek, Qazaq, Uyghur, Kirghiz intellectuals do express this Turkish consciousness in their writings on every opportunity. I would like to demonstrate by a small example how this Turkish consciousness of the Turkistani intellectuals is deep and strong. The Uzbek Poet Rauf Parfi in an interview published in the literary journal Ozbekistan Adabiyati va San'ati (Tashkent) of January 29, 1988 says the following when commenting on the "Glasnost"

(Openness) and "Perestroika" (Reconstruction):

« Yaqin-yaqinlarda "vatan," "millat," "Ana-tili" kabi sozlarni aytish unchalik asan emasdi. Bu sozlarni taqrarlagan kishini millatchilikda ayblashlari mumkin edi-da.

Ozbek xalqi, oz vatani uchun canini fida qilishga tayyar xalq. Biz bu kun Vatanimizning qaravulu emas, egasi bolmagimiz kerak. ...Oz ma'naviy menbalaridan ayrilgan adamda shahsiyatni tarbiyalab bolmaydi. Milliy ildizlaridan uzilgan zatlar sahta internatsionistlar, sahta ish bashqaruvchilardir...

Ma'lumki, 40 asrlik tarixga ega bolgan madaniy-adabiy yadgarliklar faqat Ozbekniki, faqat Qirgizniki, faqat Qazaqniki, faqat Azerbaycanniki, faqat Turkmenniki emas, balki butun Turkiy xalqlarning mushtarak merasidir. Ularni organish uchun Birlashgan Ilmiy Markazini tashkil qilish vaqti kelgandir. »4

Rauf Parfi's above words can be translated into English as follows:

« It has not been easy to say the sacred words such as "fatherland," "nation," "mother-tongue" until recent days. Because it was possible to put the charge of nationalism upon a person who had repeated such words.

The Uzbek people are a people who are ready to sacrifice themselves for their Fatherland. Today, we should not be the guard of our Fatherland, but the owner. ...It is not possible to educate the personality of a person who has departed from his spiritual sources. The persons who have been disconnected from their national roots are false internationalists, false leaders...

As is known, the cultural and literary monuments which have a history of 40 centuries do not belong only to the Uzbeks, only to the Kirghiz, only to the Qazaqs, only to the Azerbaijanians, only to the Turkmen, but they may be the common heritage of all Turkish peoples. The time has come to establish the Unified Scientific Center for the study of them. »

I would like to stop here with the Turkistani intellectual's these conscious words which do not require an interpretation.

NOTES:

1. In order to locate which universities in the world do have programs on Turkistani culture, one should look to the following reference work: Ismail Soysay & Mihir Eren, Türk İncelemeleri Yapan Kuruluslar, Ankara, Turk Tarih Kurumu publications, 1977.  
The gap in the study of Turkistan in the universities of Turkey is also discussed in Mehmet Saray's article "Turkiye'de Turkistan Arastirmalari," in Turkistan (Istanbul), No: 1, 1988, pp. 12-13.
2. Nikolai Ivanovich Il'minskiy, Iz perepiski po voprosu o primieneni russkago alfavita k inorodcheskim yazykam, Kazan, 1883.
3. Ibray Altinsarin, Kirgiziskaia xrestomatiya, Orenburg, 1879.
4. Timur Kocaoglu, "Çağdaş Türk Lehçelerinde İmlâ ile Telaffuz Bozuklukları ve Transkripsiyon Meselesi" (A paper read at the international "Symposium on the Turks in the World" at the Dil-Tarih Coğrafya Faculty of Ankara University in April 1987).
5. Rauf Parfi, "Ashkaralikdan Taraqqiyatga," Ozbekistan Adabiyati va San'ati, January 29, 1988, p. 1.