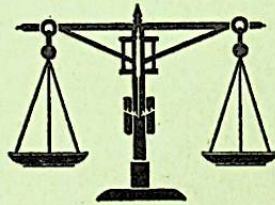


**THE TURKIC LANGUAGES OF CENTRAL ASIA :
PROBLEMS OF PLANNED CULTURE CONTACT**

The Turkic Peoples of the USSR ; The Development of their Languages and Writing. A translation of Professor N. A. Baskakov's original article in *Voprosy Yazykoznaniiya*, June 1952, with notes and comments.



Issued by the Central Asian Research Centre in association with
St. Antony's College (Oxford) Soviet Affairs Study Group.

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P R E F A C E T O 1 9 5 4 E D I T I O N

The article which forms the main part of the present work appeared in the June 1952 issue of VOPROSY YAZYKOZNANIYA (Problems of Linguistics) published by the Moscow Academy of Sciences of the USSR. So far as Turkic languages are concerned, it was the first authoritative reaction to Stalin's pronouncements on linguistics made in June 1950. However open to objection its political implications may be, it constitutes an important contribution to the study of a vital world problem, that of the readjustment for technical, political and modern cultural purposes of languages which have so far been little used in these respects.

The author of the article, Professor N.A. Baskakov, is a well known Soviet turcologist and the author of several scholarly works on Turkic languages, notably Karakalpak. Dr. Stefan Wurm, the author of the comments, formerly Lecturer in Altaic Languages at Vienna University is now Senior Fellow (Linguistics) in the Research School of Pacific Studies of the Australian National University. He specialized for many years in general linguistics with special reference to Turkic and other native languages and language-groups, and he is the author of a number of monographs on these subjects.

The importance attached by the Soviet regime to the many languages spoken inside the Soviet Union is well known, and the Soviet Government has instituted linguistic research and publishing on a scale unequalled in any other country in the world. Its special object is the regimentation of various languages of the USSR in order to bring them into line with Soviet political, technical and cultural requirements. On the one hand they aim at preserving the elements and mechanics of existing languages, and on the other at "enriching" and "developing" them, a process which involves overlaying them with, or rather infusing into them, as many elements of the Russian language as seem to them to be practicable. Combinations of the kind which these aims envisage can be found in other languages, but they are the result not of deliberate linguistic policies, but of a gradual process involving many different factors, either political or cultural, or both. Whether the same result can be achieved in a short space of time by synthetic means still remains to be proved. Professor Baskakov's article indicates some of the difficulties which are being encountered by the official linguistic architects, and perusal of the current press of Central Asia shows that these include considerable opposition. Contemporary writers are

constantly criticized for harking back to the past in the subject matter of their writing and for persisting in the use of the archaic forms of their languages and of Arabic and Persian loan-words rather than Russian ones.

The Soviet Government evidently hopes to achieve by russification an effect similar to that produced by the "arabization" of the indigenous languages of the peoples who came under Arab Islamic domination. The adoption of the Arabic script and of numerous Arabic words and phrases was a powerful factor in the perpetuation of Islam, and thus of Arab culture, even after the tide of Arab conquest had receded. But it was the result of conversion to Islam, not the cause, and while the Arabs may have insisted on the use of Arabic for official purposes, just as Tsarist Russia and Britain insisted on the use of Russian and English, there is no evidence that they ever instituted a policy of arabization of existing languages. The Soviet Government is attempting to achieve the same end by arbitrary means: it cannot be said to have insisted on the substitution among the Turkic peoples of Communism for Islam as a religion: but it is insisting on the russification of Turkic languages by the introduction of the Cyrillic script and Russian loan-words; and it even envisages the modification of grammar and phonetics.

As Dr. Wurm has pointed out, the most remarkable feature of Professor Baskakov's article is his criticism of the existing alphabets on the grounds that certain sounds which are the same in two or more languages are represented by different symbols. There can be little doubt that these differences were created deliberately for the political reasons given by Dr. Wurm. Their removal would mean that the Turkic languages in their written form would become more mutually intelligible. This might conceivably have the effect of accentuating the strong cultural affinities which still persist among the Turkic peoples, but it might also facilitate and speed up the infiltration of Russian culture on the lines desired by the Soviet Government.

It is hoped that the translation of the work of a scholar of such standing as Professor Baskakov, and Dr. Wurm's penetrating comments, will prove of interest to all experts in this field in spite of the essential modernity of the subject with which they deal. Whatever the merits or demerits of the aims of the Soviet authorities in their plans for linguistic regimentation, the wide scope of their research and the material at their disposal cannot be ignored, even though, as in parts of Professor Baskakov's article, political considerations seem sometimes to transcend those of pure scholarship.

The translation of most Soviet treatises of this kind presents a difficult problem: a compromise must be aimed at between readable English and the faithful rendering of a style and atmosphere which are

often irksome to western readers; and the temptation to introduce lucidity into the translation where it seems to be lacking in the original must be resisted. In the endeavour to achieve these requirements in the present translation, readability has occasionally been sacrificed to exactness. This seemed preferable to the reverse, and it is hoped that the essential significance and interest of the article will not thereby be obscured. The only adventitious aid to easy reading which has been employed is that of sub-titles which are not present in the original.

G. E. W.

April, 1954

P R E F A C E T O T H E R E V I S E D E D I T I O N

The revision of the original edition, which contained some mistakes in translation as well as many typographical errors, has been carried out by Natalie Waterson, Lecturer in Phonetics in the University of London. The Editors have also thought it useful to include the following:

- (i) Some comments on the original edition taken from a review by Natalie Waterson in the BULLETIN OF THE SCHOOL OF ORIENTAL AND AFRICAN STUDIES (London University), 1955, Vol.XVII, No.2,
- and (ii) An article on Recent Changes in the Orthography of the Soviet Azerbaydzhan Language by C.G. Simpson, Reader in Turkish in the University of Durham, reprinted from CENTRAL ASIAN REVIEW, 1959, Vol.VII, No.2.

G. E. W.

August, 1960

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CENTRAL ASIAN RESEARCH CENTRE

Other Publications

CENTRAL ASIAN REVIEW: A quarterly review of cultural developments in the six Muslim Soviet Socialist Republics of Azerbaydzhan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tadzhikistan, Kirgizia and Kazakhstan. The subjects treated include history, geography, demography, the arts, education, irrigation and communications. In addition The REVIEW analyses past and current Soviet publications on the countries bordering on or adjacent to these republics, namely, Persia, Afghanistan, the Indian sub-continent, Tibet and Sinkiang. Subscription rate: Thirty Shillings per year, plus two shillings postage; single copies: Seven Shillings and Sixpence, plus sixpence postage.

+ TURKIC PEOPLES OF THE USSR: Their historical background, their languages and the development of Soviet linguistic policy, by Dr. Stefan Wurm. 51 pp. large post quarto. Price: Ten Shillings.

7. SOME FEATURES OF THE MORPHOLOGY OF THE OIROT (GORNO-ALTAI) LANGUAGE by C.G. Simpson, Reader in Turkish at the University of Durham. 68 pp. large post quarto. Price: Seven Shillings and Sixpence.

A concise description of the main features of the noun, pronoun, postposition and verb of the Oirot language spoken in the Gorno-Altai Autonomous Oblast of the USSR.

+ ISLAM AND RUSSIA: A detailed analysis of "An Outline of the History of Islamic Studies in the USSR" by N.A. Smirnov (Moscow 1954), with an introduction by Ann K.S. Lambton, Professor of Persian in the University of London. Bibliography. 87 pp. large post quarto. Price: Twelve Shillings and Sixpence.

THE TURKISH LANGUAGE OF SOVIET AZERBAIJAN by C.G. Simpson, Reader in Turkish at the University of Durham. 120 pp. large post quarto. Price: Twenty Shillings.

A summary of the grammar of the current literary language of Soviet Azerbaijan together with passages of contemporary literature and extracts from the press.

o TURKESTAN IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY: A Brief History of the Khanates of Bukhara, Kokand and Khiva, by Mary Holdsworth. 81 pp. large post quarto. Map. Price: Fifteen Shillings.

Based largely on Russian sources, both Tsarist and Soviet, this monograph describes the state of the Khanates before, during and after the coming of the Russians.

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE TURKMEN LANGUAGE: A brief summary of the grammar of the Turkmen language with selected extracts in prose and verse by G.K. Dulling. 47 pp large post quarto. Price: Fifteen Shillings.

RUSSIAN WORKS ON AFGHANISTAN. 12 pp. large post quarto. Price: Five Shillings.

A bibliography compiled for the most part from bibliographies and references found in Russian publications in the course of the Centre's study on Afghanistan (CENTRAL ASIAN REVIEW, Vol. IV, No. 2). It does not claim to be exhaustive, but is believed to be the only one of its kind in existence.

+ RECENT SOVIET SOURCE MATERIAL ON SOVIET CENTRAL ASIA AND THE BORDERLANDS (including the Middle East): Issued as a biannual supplement to CENTRAL ASIAN REVIEW. Approx. 50 pp. large post quarto. Price: Seven Shillings and Sixpence.

This bibliography is limited to certain specific periodicals, about 50 in number, and to new books. Highly technical source material is not included.

+ MAP OF SOVIET CENTRAL ASIA & KAZAKHSTAN: In the form of four folded Sheets in booklet cover with Introduction, Gazetteer and Glossary. Price complete: Forty-two Shillings post free.

The Map is based on a Russian map on scale 1: 5M in the ATLAS MIRA of 1954. It has been brought up to date (1958) as far as possible. Scale: 1: 3,750,000. It is printed in six colours; heights, depths and contour values are given in metres.

THE MIZAN NEWSLETTER: A monthly review of Soviet writing on the Middle East (first issue January 1959), comprising articles on Soviet opinion about Middle East affairs, relations between the USSR and Middle East countries, and Soviet newspapers' presentation of Middle East developments. From July 1960 the scope of the Newsletter has been extended to include Soviet writing on Africa. Subscription rate: Four Pounds per year, post free; single copies: Seven Shillings and Sixpence.

CARC's publications are available from Messrs. Luzac & Co. Ltd., 46 Great Russell Street, London, W.C.1, or Messrs. Collet, 45 Museum Street, London, W.C.1, with the exception of the MIZAN NEWSLETTER which is available direct from CARC.