

Werk

Label: ReviewSingle

Autor: Wurm, Stephen A.

Ort: Wiesbaden

Jahr: 1999

PURL: https://resolver.sub.uni-goettingen.de/purl?666048797_0003 | LOG_0024

Kontakt/Contact

Digizeitschriften e.V.
SUB Göttingen
Platz der Göttinger Sieben 1
37073 Göttingen

✉ info@digizeitschriften.de

Stephen A. Wurm: Review of Lars Johanson & Éva Ágnes Csató (eds.), *The Turkic languages*. (Routledge Language Family Descriptions.) London, New York: Routledge, 1998. xxiii + 474 pages. ISBN 0-415-08200-5.

Stephen A. Wurm, Department of Linguistics, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, The Australian National University, Canberra, A.C.T. 0200, Australia.

This book which presents itself as a book on the Turkic languages is in fact much more. It is an excellent compact introductory work on Turcology, including very good concise chapters on the speakers of Turkic languages; a historical sketch of the Turkic peoples, one on Turkic writing systems (to which some of the current alphabets of several Turkic languages are given in the *Appendix* to the book), and general Turkic linguistic chapters on the structure of Turkic; on the reconstruction of proto-Turkic and the genetic question; and on the history of Turkic. It is not before page 138 that, with the description of Old Turkic, discussions of individual Turkic languages begin. The whole book is very well and clearly written, and constitutes an outstanding introductory textbook for students of Turcology and Altaic studies. The table of the speakers of Turkic languages in the various relevant countries, and the list of the large numbers of tables of grammatical and other elements included in the book add to the user-friendly nature of the book. As is stated in the *Preface*, it differs from previous surveys of the Turkic languages by trying to meet the requirements not only of Turcologists, but of a variety of readers, such as those without a previous knowledge of Turcology, among them general linguists, typologists, historical linguists, and others. The theoretical basis is relatively neutral. To this it may be added as an important valuable feature, in which it differs from some other introductions to Turcology, that the descriptions of the various Turkic languages do not follow a general entirely rigid pattern strictly applied to all the languages, but each of them tends to be an individual description in the light of features of each language. However, a similar range of core features is presented in every description, more or less in the same order, which facilitates the comparison of such features in different languages. A commendable feature of the descriptions is the avoidance of excessively technical language and terminology, which will be welcomed by readers who lack specialized knowledge of Turcology and Altaic studies. Another point to be welcomed by non-specialists is the use of names for the various Turkic languages which reflect the common general usage in the world, not the names increasingly

employed in specialist Turcological literature, e.g. Yakut instead of Sakha, Kirghiz instead of Kyrgyz, etc.

Hendrik Boeschoten's general chapter on the speakers of Turkic languages constitutes a good overview. The facts that there is no automatic match between ethnic groups and languages and that boundaries may be very ill-defined are pointed out. The abovementioned table of speakers of Turkic languages is found in this chapter. Boeschoten points out that, while the numbers of speakers mentioned give a fair indication of first-language speakers, they may well be subject to revision. There are gaps in the material, e.g. for Turkey, no statistics exist about small refugee groups who speak Turkic languages other than Turkish.

Peter Golden's historical sketch of the Turkic peoples makes excellent reading as a concise overview of historical events which constitute necessary knowledge for anyone interested in the Turkic linguistic and general world.

Lars Johanson's extensive chapter on the structure of Turkic, which gives a fairly detailed account of the phonological, morphological and syntactic features of the Turkic languages, will be of particular interest to non-Turcologist linguists who look to this book as a source of concise general information on the nature, patterns and typology of the Turkic languages.

András Róna-Tas's chapter on the reconstruction of proto-Turkic and the genetic question is introduced by a definition of proto-language and of proto-Turkic, including its possible original homeland, followed by a well-presented sketch of proto-Turkic. In the section on proto-Turkic and the genetic question, the author adopts a well-argued, very cautious view of the question of a possible genetic relationship between Turkic and Mongolian and even more so of the Altaic hypothesis.

Lars Johanson's very extensive chapter on the history of Turkic consists of a concise first section describing the historical development of the present differentiated picture of several groups of Turkic languages from a proto-Turkic unity, followed by a very detailed long section on diachronic phonology which also includes the phonological adaptation of lexical borrowings. A shorter section deals with the historical development of morphology and a brief section is devoted to the lexicon from a historical point of view. The chapter is highly informative, and together with the chapter on the reconstruction of proto-Turkic preceding it, constitutes an excellent introduction to Turkic historical linguistics.

András Róna-Tas's chapter on Turkic writing systems offers a discussion of systems used for Old Turkic which are of Semitic or Indic origin, of systems used for Middle Turkic, and of systems used for modern Turkic languages. Of the latter, the Arabic script has been almost completely abandoned now. One notable exception is Modern Uyghur in China for which a new system of Arabic script has been developed in which all vowels are written. For most Turkic languages, the Cyrillic script

has been in use during the last half century or more, though some languages (e.g. Turkmen and Uzbek) have now changed to Latin alphabets, and several other republics in the area of the former USSR have plans to adopt the Latin script as well. In the 1920s and early 1930s, several Turkic peoples of the then USSR had developed Latin alphabets but were forced to replace them by Cyrillic. Turkish, for which an Arabic alphabet had been in use, switched to a modified Latin alphabet as from 1928. It might have been desirable to add a few script specimens, especially of those employed for Old Turkic and Middle Turkic.

Then follow descriptions of individual Turkic languages, the first being a fairly detailed description of Old Turkic by Marcel Erdal. This is the Turkic language documented by texts and other materials dating from the seventh to the thirteenth centuries AD, in runiform, Old Uyghur and other scripts. It was spoken in parts of present-day Mongolia, northwest China and the Karakhanid state further west. The second description of Turkic languages no longer spoken today is a relatively brief one of Middle Kipchak by Árpád Berta. It summarizes the major features of Kipchak dialects spoken between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries in the South Russian steppe and in the Near East. This is followed by a somewhat longer description of Chaghatay by Hendrik Boeschoten and Marc Vandamme. Chaghatay can be described as a succession of stages of written Turkic, as the high literary language of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in Central Asia. In its focal area it represents previous stages of the Uzbek and Uyghur written languages, though it had certain special characteristics such as a complex syntax copied from Persian. The chapter describes characteristics of the classical period of Chaghatay, without mentioning too much the variations found in the sources for it. The last chapter dealing with a Turkic language no longer spoken today is the one on Ottoman Turkish by Celia Kerslake. This was the official and literary language of the Ottoman Empire, a variety of West Oghuz Turkic, from about 1300 to 1928. The author gives a survey of its historical development and its subdivision into three diachronic phases: *Old Ottoman*, from the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries—a language clearly different from modern Turkish in some respects. *Middle Ottoman* in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries—a language overloaded with Arabic and Persian lexical elements, morphological elements and sub-clausal syntactic structures, while at the same time, its use of native Turkish subordinate syntactic structures increased at the expense of Persian ones. *New Ottoman*, in structure was in many respects very similar to Modern Turkish, but still abounded in Arabic and Persian elements. The description of the language itself, Persian-type clauses and nominal phrases, the syntactic role of Arabic verbal nouns, as well as the Turkification of Ottoman syntax in the closing years of the Ottoman era, also receive attention.

The first of the chapters dealing with contemporary languages is Éva Csató's and Lars Johanson's excellent detailed presentation of Turkish. This is followed by a chapter on Turkish dialects by Bernt Brendemoen. This chapter certainly adds to the great value of the book, as this subject is rarely dealt with separately in a compendium volume like this one. It is unfortunate, however, that the Balkan and Thracian dialects have not also been dealt with.

The short chapter, also by Brent Brendemoen, on the Turkic language reform, is also a most welcome addition to the book. It is of considerable interest to people who have learned or intend to learn Turkish with the help of older textbooks at their disposal which would make them acquire lexical items which are no longer in general use.

The various language descriptions that follow in the book are in geographical order and at the same time, they very largely follow the classification of Turkic languages into the Oghuz, Kipchak, Uyghur, Siberian and Oghur branches. Therefore, the language descriptions following those of Turkish also belong to the Oghuz branch, i.e. Azerbaijani, the Turkic languages of Iran, and Turkmen.

The description of Azerbaijani is by Claus Schönig. The language is very closely related to Turkish, with a very high degree of mutual intelligibility. It is regarded by some scholars as one of the Turkish dialects extending from the Balkans to the Caucasus and into Iran. Since 1991, Azerbaijani has been written in a modified Latin alphabet. The description of Azerbaijani is followed by a description of Turkmen, also by Claus Schönig. The language is not readily mutually intelligible with Turkish and Azerbaijani, in part for phonetic reasons, i.e. the presence of long vowels and the interdental articulation of *s* and *z*. Both descriptions are concise.

The next description of the Turkic languages of Iran, by Gerhard Doerfer, reports on the findings of the Göttingen expeditions between 1968 and 1976 whose results very substantially changed and clarified the Turkic language situation in Iran. The extent of the Azerbaijani dialects area was clarified, as was that of other Oghuz dialects, now referred to as Southern Oghuz, and previously unknown Turkic dialects of the Khorasan area were discovered. Dialects in Northern Khorasan were previously believed to be Turkmen, but are now known to be Khorasan Turkic (or East Oghuz) dialects, and different from Turkmen. At the same time, the results of the expeditions, which produced good information on the Khalaj language in Central Persia, showed it to constitute an additional branch of Turkic and thus altered the classification of Turkic languages. Khalaj is now regarded as having split off from common Turkic as a separate Turkic branch before the latter split up, but its splitting-off postdated that of the splitting-off of the Oghur branch from common Turkic. In his description, the author briefly presents features of South Oghuz, mentions historical and demographic facts relating to the Turkic languages of Iran, lists differences be-

tween the Oghuz dialects, and finally presents a few features of Khalaj which has been heavily influenced by Iranian and Tati, but has preserved some very archaic Turkic features.

The next description, that of Tatar and Bashkir by Árpád Berta, is the first of five devoted to languages of the Kipchak branch of Turkic languages. Tatar and Bashkir are closely related. The description constitutes a fairly detailed account of both.

The next description is that of the West Kipchak languages, i.e. Kumyk, Karachay-Balkar, Crimean Tatar, and Karaim, also by Árpád Berta. This is a general concise account of these four very similar languages.

This is followed by a description of Kazakh and Karakalpak by Mark Kirchner which essentially deals with Kazakh, mentioning some of the differences of the very closely related Karakalpak on the final half-page.

The next one is a concise description of Noghay by Éva Csató and Birsel Karakoç. The main part of the language is spoken between the Caucasus and the Volga.

The last of the Kipchak branch languages, Kirghiz, is described by Mark Kirchner. Kirghiz is closely related to Kazakh, but has also strong genetic bonds with the Siberian branch of Turkic languages, particularly with the Altay Turkic languages.

The Uyghur Turkic branch languages come next, with Hendrik Boeschoten's description of Uzbek the first of two. After Turkish, Uzbek is the second most important Turkic language. As a literary language, it is the continuation of Chaghatay. Since 1993, a Latin alphabet has been in use for it. The description is fairly detailed, as may be expected, considering the importance of Uzbek.

This is followed by a description of Uyghur by Reinhard Hahn. This is modern Uyghur, formerly known as Eastern Turki. Most Uyghur speakers live in China in Xinjiang where it is the second official language and also a regional inter-ethnic lingua franca. A number of Uyghurs live in the Kazakh republic and elsewhere. Uyghur is very closely related to Uzbek, with a very high degree of mutual intelligibility between them. Uyghur is the only Turkic language today to be written with a modified Arabic alphabet which indicates all the vowels. Dialect differentiation is considerable. The description is rather detailed.

The next chapter deals with Yellow Uyghur and Salar, again authored by Reinhard Hahn. Yellow Uyghur is located in Sunan county in northwestern China and, in spite of its name, belong to the Siberian branch of the Turkic languages. The author points out that there are significant inconsistencies and discrepancies in the few published descriptions of this little studied language, and unfortunately, gives no information on its morphology and syntax, except mentioning that there are some significant morphological simplifications in it. Salar is spoken further southeast in Gansu and appears to be historically developed from an Oghuz Turkic language which during its eastward migration acquired influences from the Uyghur and Kip-

chak branches of Turkic languages and other languages. The author mentions results of such influences, but again provides no details of morphology and syntax except for saying that there are various types of simplification in Salar morphology. This lack of information on the morphology and syntax of these two languages, even if it were highly tentative and pointed out contradictions in sources, is one of the very few shortcomings of this otherwise so highly informative excellent book.

The next chapter, by Claus Schönig, deals with South Siberian Turkic which can be divided into four main branches: Altay, Yenisey, Sayan and Chulym Turkic, each of them comprising several languages and / or dialects. These languages show numerous common features, but differ considerably in detail. Several of the languages exhibit ties with outside Turkic languages, e.g. Altay Turkic has close ties with Kirghiz, Sayan Turkic has features bringing it closer to Yakut, etc. The description is fairly detailed and represents a general account of languages of the four branches of South Siberian Turkic.

The next chapter, by Marek Stachowski and Astrid Menz, is a description of Yakut which constitutes, with the closely related Dolgan language, the North Siberian division of Siberian Turkic. The Yakut language is aberrant in containing a set of phonological and morphological classificatory features that distinguish it from all other Turkic languages, and heavy lexical influences from Mongolic (in particular Buryat), Tungusic and Yeniseian languages, with only about 30 per cent of its vocabulary derived from Turkic. The vowel harmony is very complex, and the consonants undergo progressive and regressive assimilation at morpheme boundaries. The description is rather detailed, especially on the syntactic and sentence levels, and allows good insights into this complex language.

The last chapter is a rather detailed account, by Larry Clark, of Chuvash, the only surviving member of the Oghur or Bulghar Turkic, the first Turkic branch to split off from Common Turkic in the remote past. Chuvash has developed from proto-Turkic through a series of sound changes and replacements which, together with the assimilations of the Finnic Mari language, obscure the Turkic character of its morphosyntax and lexicon. The description is rather detailed and allows good insights into the language.

The descriptions are very informative and present an up-to-date survey of current knowledge in the fields covered. They are followed by an extensive, very useful index.

All in all, this is a magnificent book highly recommended to anybody with an interest in Turkic languages and Turcology.