

## Werk

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## Conference on Areas of Iranian-Semitic-Turkic Convergence

Éva Á. Csató

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The following is a report on the Turcological presentations at the conference *Areas of Iranian-Semitic-Turkic Convergence. Linguistic Contact in Western and Central Asia in Past and Present*, held in May 18-20, 2001, at the Department of Asian and African Languages of Uppsala University.

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Contact linguistics in recent years has been given particular emphasis in linguistic studies. Several projects, conferences and publications have been devoted to the analysis of contact-induced phenomena, and to discussions of issues and concepts of areal linguistics from both diachronic and synchronic perspectives. New theoretical frameworks have been proposed for analysing and interpreting the processes involved in language contact, e.g. Lars Johanson's code-copying model. Traditional terms, such as *Sprachbund*, have been challenged by new concepts accounting for the features of areas in which languages converge. The questions raised by contact linguistics have proven fruitful and have inspired a good deal of theoretical work, often on the basis of new data collected in field-research.

Scholars in the field of Iranian, Semitic and Turkic linguistics also have responded to this challenge. They have undertaken comprehensive interdisciplinary projects in order to gain new insights into the linguistic contacts between—and the resulting changes in—the languages of these three language families, spoken in overlapping and adjacent areas.

A conference on *Areas of Iranian-Semitic-Turkic Convergence. Linguistic Contact in Western and Central Asia in Past and Present*, convened by Éva Á. Csató and Bo Isaksson, was held in May 18-20, 2001, at the Department of Asian and African Languages of Uppsala University. The conference was organised with financial support from the Swedish Research Council.

The conference aimed at giving a summary of the present results in this dynamic field of research. The invited speakers were persons engaged in the study of language varieties spoken in convergence areas in which speakers are multilingual in languages of at least two, but sometimes of all three, language families. Several talks presented

new data collected in fieldwork. The geographic areas covered were Western and Central Asia.

Varieties of Iranian, Semitic and Turkic languages have entered into many different types of contact. They have functioned, in various historical periods and geographical settings, as adstrates, superstrates or substrates inducing changes in their contact varieties and, at the same time, undergoing changes themselves. The convergence of Iranian and Turkic languages is a well-known phenomenon, which has not been studied previously with sufficient linguistic scrutiny. The intricate linguistic contact situations between Iranian and Turkic varieties spoken, e.g. in Iran, Turkey and Central Asia, demonstrate highly interesting convergence phenomena. Standard Arabic enjoys a high status as the language of Islam and Muslim scholarship. Many of its features have been copied into the standard languages of the area. On the other hand, the Arabic dialects spoken in certain language islands in Southern Anatolia and Central Asia have converged with the Turkic varieties dominating there.

The conference focused on several areas in which linguistic contacts are of special interest. The talks showed how and to what extent the standard languages and their varieties converge with members of other language families. Some contributions discussed convergence between dialects or varieties of the same language family.

This report will present some Turcological contributions of particular linguistic interest. They can be grouped into the following thematic units: (i) theoretical issues in Turkic language contacts, (ii) the multilingual Ottoman Empire as a convergence area, and (iii) converging Turkic dialects in Iran.

Lars Johanson's lecture *On defining converging codes* commented on certain theoretical issues dealt with in the following contributions and addressed some theoretical questions of crucial importance for studying converging codes, e.g. the problems of pinpointing specific sources of influence, such as standard vs. non-standard varieties, particularly in cases of bidirectional influence and areal diffusion of linguistic features.

Hendrik Boeschoten's contribution *Intra-Turkic language mixing and the code-copying model* focused on another theoretical issue. Turkic-speaking groups are known for their great mobility over the centuries. Political units have been based on the coexistence of groups speaking different, often historically not closely related Turkic dialects. Boeschoten discussed how the tenets of the code-copying model can account for the specific problems faced when analysing intra-Turkic copying processes.

Bernt Brendemoen, in his contribution entitled *Some remarks on the phonological status of Greek loanwords in Anatolian Turkish dialects*, studied how Turkish dialects have been influenced by a non-Turkic, in this special case Greek, substrate. He dealt with phonological phenomena and discussed the theoretical issue of how substrate influence differs from other kinds of contact.

In his talk *Vowel harmony – areal or genetic?*, Jan-Olof Svantesson addressed the much-discussed question of whether or not shared typological properties can be taken as evidence for a genetic relationship between languages. Since many West and

Central Asian languages exhibit vowel harmony, its acquisition and loss is of great interest for the question of whether the shared typological properties are due to a common proto-language or to areal convergence.

The topic “The multilingual Ottoman Empire as a convergence area” was introduced by Geoffrey Lewis in a general account of the high-copying structure of the Ottoman language under the title *The strange case of Ottoman*. His presentation filled a general need for a brief overview of the contact influences on the Ottoman literary language. It also served as a necessary background for the lectures dealing with specific issues.

In her paper *Traces of Turkish-Iranian language contact in Pietro della Valle's Turkish grammar (17th century)*, Heidi Stein studied a so-called transcripion text. Dealing with historical aspects of language contact between Ottoman Turkish and Persian in the area of Eastern Anatolia and Iran, she put the question addressed by Johanson into another perspective and showed what evidence can be gained from historical contact linguistic data about the dialects spoken in a given contact situation.

Two participants dealt with central issues of Ottoman syntax.

Claudia Römer investigated *Right-branching versus left-branching subordinate clauses in 16th century Ottoman historical texts*, addressing the question of whether the use of the two clause types is haphazard or serves stylistic functions. It is a well-known fact that the Ottoman language copied Persian subordinate clauses of the right-branching type. However, the stylistic value of the copied structures have not been studied previously. On the basis of samples from three well-known 16th-century Ottoman prose texts, Römer focused on the issue of whether right-branching constructions, i.e. mainly subordinate clauses copied from Persian, could be used in the Middle Ottoman period deliberately as an adornment, or whether it was rather the left-branching Turkic constructions that were preferred. The speaker showed that the frequent use of copied *ki*-clauses was regarded as bad style and that the quality of a text depended on the skillful mixture of these and the left-branching constructions.

Mark Kirchner's lecture on *Adverbial clauses in an early Ottoman interlinear translation of the Qur'an* focused on the typological properties of adverbial clauses, discussing to what extent classical Arabic has influenced the Turkish syntactic structures in an interlinear translation and how syntactic copying from Arabic and from Persian can be distinguished. Kirchner argued that Arabic strategies did not exercise any major influence, whereas Persian strategies appear to have been integrated rather firmly into the code of early Ottoman Turkish.

The papers dealing with converging Turkic dialects in Iran presented new data, gained in fieldwork, on lesser-known varieties of Southwestern Turkic dialects.

In her talk on *Iranian influence in Sonqor Turkic*, Christiane Bulut gave an account of contact phenomena in the Turkic dialect of Sonqor spoken in a small Turkic linguistic island surrounded by different Kurdish dialects and Luri. The isolated position of the Sonqor dialect within a dominantly Kurdish-speaking area is unique. The Iranian contact languages have influenced it heavily. Kurdish has left some traces

in morphology and syntax which probably belong to an older stratum. The survey of the characteristics of the Sonqor dialect served as a good general introduction into processes of Iranisation that also have taken place in many other Turkic varieties in Iran.

Éva Á. Csató described *The aspecto-temporal system in a Kashkay dialect*, spoken in the town of Shiraz. Although Kashkay has been known to Turcologists for a long time, a detailed description of its structure is still not available. Csató presented the aspecto-temporal system of the Kashkay speakers living in the Bulverdi district, which exhibit heavy Iranian influence.

In her presentation of *Analytic modal constructions in Iran-Turkic*, Filiz Kiral dealt with modal categories in Turkic languages, demonstrating what kinds of strategies, analytic and synthetic, may be applied. Comparing Iranian and Turkic expressions of necessity, ability, possibility, volition, etc., she showed how properties of the Persian language are copied onto Turkic material in order to create translational equivalents.

The contributions on Iranian languages dealt with issues of linguistic convergence inside and outside Iran, discussing how copied Turkic and Arabic lexical elements have adapted to the phonological, morphological and lexical structure of Persian and other Iranian languages. Some papers presented data on Georgian and Iranian contact phenomena. Several papers given by scholars working in the field of Semitic studies demonstrated how Semitic languages and dialects spoken in Central Asia and in Southwest Asia have converged with Turkic and Iranian languages. The contents of these highly interesting non-Turcological contributions cannot be summarised in this brief report.

A volume containing a selection of the contributions to the conference is being planned with the publishing house RoutledgeCurzon, London.