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Titel: In memoriam Talat Tekin (1927-2015)

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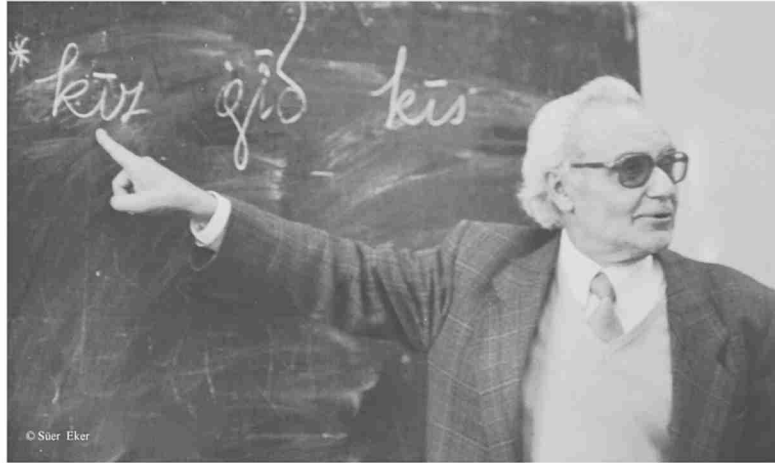
Obituary

In memoriam Talat Tekin (1927–2015)

Emine Yılmaz

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Talat Tekin's life

Prof. Talat Tekin, one of the most prominent scholars in the field of international Turcology, passed away on November 28, 2015.

Talat Tekin was born in Gebze/Tavşancıl on July 16, 1927. In 1951, he graduated from the Department of Turkish Language and Literature at Istanbul University. In August 1961, he was appointed research assistant in the Near Eastern Languages Department at the University of California, Los Angeles, and began his doctorate studies with János Eckmann. After two years he passed the proficiency exam and worked as a Turkish instructor for two years at Indiana University Bloomington. In June 1965, he received a doctoral degree from the University of California with a

thesis entitled *A Grammar of Orkhon Turkic*. Between 1965 and 1972, he worked as a professor of Turkish language and literature at University of California Berkeley. In 1970 at Istanbul University, he defended his thesis *Ana Türkçede Aslî Uzun Ünlüler* 'Primary long vowels in Proto-Turkic', which he had written in the USA, and was appointed associate professor. In 1972, after returning to Turkey, he started working at the Department of Turkish Language and Literature at Hacettepe University, where he was appointed professor in 1976 after publishing his book *Volga Bulgar Kitabeleri ve Volga Bulgarcası* 'The Volga Bolghar inscriptions and the Volga Bolghar language'.

In 1977, Talat Tekin was awarded a DAAD scholarship to conduct research in the field of Turcological and Altaic studies at the Central Asian Institute, University of Bonn, Germany. In 1981 and 1991, he conducted research on Japanese in the context of Altaistics at the Institute of Asian and African Languages and Cultures in Tokyo. In 1994, he retired from Hacettepe University.

Talat Tekin's oeuvre

From the beginning of his academic career, Tekin was involved in almost every kind of Turcological debate. His first paper, *Türkçesini Aramak* 'To study Turkish', appeared in 1952 in the journal *Türk Dili* published by Türk Dil Kurumu, the Turkish Language Institute. Over the course of forty years, until 1993, he published forty articles in *Türk Dili*.

Tekin's writings can be grouped into five main categories: the Turkish language reform, the classification of Turkic languages, etymology, academic discussions, and reviews. He devoted a great part of his sixty-year Turcological career to the study of the historical periods of Turkic. He also played a pioneering role in Turkish Turcology with his major contributions to scholarly criticism and with introductory works. The articles published in *Türk Dili* between 1954 and 1983 were collected in 1997 in the volume *Türkoloji Eleştirileri* 'Turcological debates'. A review of his writings was published in the 700th issue of *Türk Dili* (Yılmaz 2010).

Apart from the articles published in *Türk Dili*, Talat Tekin is the author of more than 150 articles which appeared in the period 1952–2002 in the most prestigious journals in the field of Turcology, both in Turkey and abroad, such as *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, *Ural-Altaische Jahrbücher*, *Central Asiatic Journal*, *Finnisch-ugrische Forschungen*, *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*, *Voprosy jazykoznanija*, *Journal de la Société Finno-Ougrienne*, *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, *Turkic Languages*, *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, *Varia Turcica*, *Journal of the Altaic Society of Korea*, *International Journal of Central Asiatic Studies*, *Studia Etymologica Cracoviensia*, and *Altai Hakpo*. Tekin was at the center of international Turcological debates for a long time, and published many articles in English. His articles were collected in three volumes under the title *Makaleler* 'Articles', edited by Emine Yılmaz and Nurettin Demir in

2003, 2004, and 2005. The volumes contain 151 publications, 62 in English, 88 in Turkish, and one in Russian.

The third volume of *Makaleler* (Yılmaz & Demir 2005) contains an article which gives a detailed account of the discussion between Talat Tekin and other scholars concerning the terms *dil*, *lehçe*, *şive* ‘language’, ‘dialect’, ‘variety’. This terminological issue was discussed intensively in Turkey for a considerable time. Another paper in the same volume presents Talat Tekin’s thoughts on the Turkish language reform and on *Türk Dil Kurumu*.

Talat Tekin’s articles on topics that are less studied in Turkey, e.g. Altaic etymologies, typical sound features of what he calls Chuvash-Turkic languages, Proto-Turkic primary long vowels, and classification of Turkic languages, constitute main contributions to Turcological research.

Altayistik ‘Altaistics’, the first volume of *Makaleler*, includes Tekin’s writings on the western Altaic languages. As the strongest representative of the Altaic hypothesis in Turkey, he defends the existence of an Altaic language family including the Chuvash-Turkic languages, Mongolic, Tungusic, Korean and possibly Japanese. The genealogical relatedness of these languages has been the object of an ardent discussion for two hundred years outside Turkey. Talat Tekin made important contributions to this topic, for instance, by describing the basic sound correlations and by introducing the argumentation of Ramstedt and his student Poppe into the discussion within Turkish Turcology.

The second volume of *Makaleler* includes writings on the Middle Turkic period. The third volume contains articles on different topics such as the Turkish language reform, contemporary Turkish, the relations between the Turkic languages, and the classification of Turkic languages and dialects. During his active years as a researcher, Tekin paid great attention to discussions of relevant Turcological topics and participated in both academic and popular discussions. The collected articles bear witness to how his views developed over time.

A number of articles published in *Türkoloji Eleştirileri* (1994, 1997) and *Tarih Boyunca Türkçenin Yazısı* ‘Turkic scripts throughout the history’ (1997) as well as the publications *İslâm Öncesi Türk Şiiri* ‘Pre-Islamic Turkic poetry’ and *Karahanlı Dönemi Türk Şiiri* ‘Turkic poetry in the Karakhan period’, both published in *Türk Dili*, were not included in *Makaleler*.

Festschrifts published for Talat Tekin

The first festschrift for Talat Tekin was a special issue of the journal *Türk Dilleri Araştırmaları* ‘Studies on Turkic Languages’, published on the occasion of his 70th birthday. This was a journal that he had founded with his students in 1991. The festschrift includes his list of publications (Ölmez 1993). In 2008, two collections of writings were published by his students on the occasion of his 80th birthday. One is another special issue of *Türk Dilleri Araştırmaları*, published as an e-book. The other is a special issue of the *International Journal of Central Asiatic Studies* (vol-

ume 13), published by Talat Tekin's student Han-Woo Choi in Korea. The most recent bibliography of Talat Tekin's work has been published by Yılmaz (2016).

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