

Denis Sinor (Cambridge): NOTES ON A TURKIC WORD FOR "BOAT"

Though water-transport has played but a limited role in the lives of Ural-Altai peoples, it forms a part of their material culture and deserves attention. Over the years I have collected some relevant material which, I think, may be of interest to ethnologists, historians and comparative linguists. The following remarks are meant to give the substance of a paper dealing with one of the Turkic boat-names. A fuller treatment of the subject will be published in the 1961 volume of the «Ural-Altische Jahrbücher», under the title *On water-transport in Central Eurasia*.

The names of various crafts are easily borrowed; words like *corvette* or *caravel* are truly international and are easily recognized as «words of civilization». Very often, the same name can be applied to various types of craft; time and its corollary, the evolution of shipping techniques may cause important semantic changes. Most of the time, however, these are quite unpredictable and fit into no definite pattern. Thus the word *yacht* has, through the medium of English, now acquired the international meaning of a “batiment de plaisance, de ceremonie ou d'appareil” (Larousse), quite irrespective of whether the propulsion of the vessel is by sails or by some mechanical means. No one thinks any longer of the "fast piratical ship" of the Dutch, whose *jaghte* is at the origin of the English name— There is very little in common between, on the one hand, Latin *barca* and, on the other, its English derivatives: *bark* and *barge*, and but the etymologists realize the connection between Hindi or Benghali *dingi*, and the meek little dinghy pulled by English sailing boats.

Perhaps the most common name of a small boat in Turkic languages is *qayiq*. Attested by Kašgarī, it occurs in almost every Turkic dialect and also in Mongol and Tungus. The rare occurrences in these two languages are probably borrowings from Turkic.

It is my contention that Hungarian *hajó* "boat, ship", derives from *qayiq*. As generally known, the Finno-Ugrian etymologies so far proposed do not stand up to closer scrutiny, but, in my view, a Turkic *qayiq* ~ Hungarian *hajó* correspondence fits perfectly into the pattern of the Turkic loan-words of Hungarian. Turkic words ending in vowel + *k*, *g*, *q*, γ are regularly represented in Hungarian by words ending in a long vowel: Hungarian *kapú* "gate" (<*qapuy*), *komló* "hop" (<*qumlaq*), *karó* "stake" (<*qaziq*) etc, etc. There is no need to expatiate on this well-known correspondence.

More difficult to explain is the initial *h-* of *hajó*. There is but one undoubtedly Turkic loan-word in Hungarian showing the same particularity: *homok* "sand" (<*qumaq*). In all the other cases Turkic *q-* remains a stop in Hungarian. The *homok*~*qumaq* correspondence is, however, so obvious that no one has ever thought of rejecting it. We thus have at least one other example of a Turkic *q-* ~ Hungarian *h-* correspondence. But I think the proposed etymology of

hajó could be made acceptable even without the corroborative evidence of *homok*. Initial Finno-Ugrian *k-* followed by a back-vowel regularly developed into Hungarian *h-*. Only in loan-words has *k-* remained unchanged in similar position. One could therefore imagine with a considerable measure of justification, that *hajó* had been borrowed at an epoch previous to the *q- + back-vowel > h- + back-vowel* change. The initial *q-* of *qayiq* changed into *x-* and ultimately into *h-* together with the *q-* sounds of words of Finno-Ugrian origin.

The sphere of distribution of Turkic *qayiq* extends far beyond the limits of Ural-Altai and there is hardly any European language into which it has not penetrated. Yule was the first to think of the possibility of a connection between *qayiq* and Eskimo *qayaq*, a word which in its turn has been adopted by most of the European languages.

But why should the Eskimos adopt a Turkic word to designate a type

of boat which is typically Eskimo? No explanation can be given, but many similar instances can be adduced. The word *caravel* traveled as far as the Jurak-Samoyed and the other typically Eskimo boat, the *umiak*, has in Alaska a name of Russian origin: *baydarka*. Such examples - their number could easily be multiplied - clearly show that semantic and ethnographic considerations favour the linguistically flawless identification of the Turkic and Eskimo words. In view of the wide area of distribution of the Turkic forms and their gradual disappearance towards north and east, I would be tempted to consider *qayiq* as a genuine Turkic word borrowed by Eskimo.