



18 *Shirdag* from Inner Mongolia, stitched with cotton. Swastika-fret in the field, meander in the border.

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Zetacism/Sigmatism Plays No Rôle

by

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My answer to Prof. Tekin's article Zetacism and Sigmatism (CAJ 30, 1986, 141–160) must be short: if I expressed all my disagreeing opinions, along with correcting all weak points of my esteemed opponent's statements and equations, this, I am afraid, would become a very long article. In some points Tekin forces open doors: just as he, I am convinced that, not *z, but *f is the older Turkish phoneme (but, as I wish to repeat, a phoneme clearly distinguished from *r, since there are many minimal pairs r vs. z).

As to the five words which I have mentioned and which Tekin has discussed in full length my aim was quite simple: to give my dear colleague an impulse for *reflection*. Alas, he has not taken profit of this opportunity. For the sake of brevity I wish to confine myself to three words (1, 4, 5).

Word (1) CTu. *biz* 'awl' = Yakut *bürgäs* id. (?). But the Yakut word is a clear deverbal derivation from Yakut *bür* "obšivat" (to hem), with the well-known nomen instrumenti suffix -GAs. Regard the fact that the Russian translation *bürgäs* 'šilo' clearly shows the etymological connection with *bür* "ob-ši-vat".

Word (4) CTu. *öz* 'to crush' = MK *ärklä*-. (?) Recte: (graphic) "ärklä." ~ "irklä". Such variants as contain *fäḥa* and *kasra* in MK normally represent an e, just as in the Orkhon inscriptions (*yäl* ~ *yil* = *yel* 'wind', etc.). But ä and e are two *different phonemes*.

Word (5) MTu. *öz* 'to scrape' = modern Turkish of Turkey *ärsin*, *ärsün*, *äršün* 'an iron tool used to scrape dried pieces of dough from the trough'. (?). As to 'dough-scraper' we find the following forms in the modern dialects (and similar forms are found in Old Osmanli): *ersin*, *ersani*, *ersön*, *ersun*, *ersün*, *erşin*, *erşün*, *evsün*, *eğsiran*, *eğsiren*, *eğseren*, *eğsiran*, *eğsiranı*, *eğsiren*, *eksiran*, *eksiranı*, *ekşısiran*, *elsaran*, *elsiranı*, *eñsiran*, *eñsiren*.

ren, esirani, esiran, esirani, esiren, esran, eyisran, eyseran, eyseren, eyseren, eyseri, eystran, eysiran, eysiren, eysisiran. (In Old Osmanli we also find *egistiren, egsiaeren, ekister, egister*.) To everybody acquainted with dialectology it is obvious that this overwhelming plenty of forms must go back to some bowdlerized loanword. I think this is Greek ζύστρογος 'dough-scraper' – [ksis-tron] was, of course, unpronounceable for a Turkish tongue; at least such a form as, e. g., **eksistira/in* was necessary. But even such a form could not be preserved. The result of this odd situation was just the plenty of forms mentioned above.

I do not wish to discuss all the other weak points in Tekin's article. (E. g., the circular conclusion on pp. 146–147 – a clear proof that Tekin loses all logical reflection when his bias is concerned. His remarks say nothing but: "Doerfer's reconstructions cannot be labeled Proto-Turkic, because they are quite different from what in my = Tekin's view Proto-Turkish ought to look like.") Tekin's everlasting fault is that he compares two words when they are a bit similar. But SIMILARITY PROVES NOTHING.

But to say this, to "debunk" Tekin, was not my aim. For the sake of clearness I wish to explain two points which apparently have escaped my esteemed opponent's attention:

(1) In contrast to Sir Gerard Clauson and Prof. Ščerbak I do not think (and have never thought) that Turkic loanwords have entered Mongolian during the 5.–7. centuries. These are loanwords of a pre-Christian era, may be, many centuries before Jesus Christ, so to say loanwords *between the proto-languages*. And this is the reason why so many intelligent and skillful scholars (highly esteemed by me) formed the opinion of the original genetic relationship of these languages. Therefore Tekin's explanations on pp. 144–147 do not concern me. In my view, *r (still older: * -rj-) is the *Common Turkic* (including Bolgar-Chuvash) sound. (Originally this may have been an r + a diphthong -jV-). Needless to repeat the fact that the loss of final vowels is so common a phenomenon in so many languages that such an internal Turkic development as **borja* > **borjā* > *boz* is by no means astonishing: we find similar developments in French, many Semitic languages, etc., etc. There are, so to say, universal diachronic laws/tendencies; the loss of unstressed final vowels is one of them; it may happen *always and everywhere*.

(2) The second point is much more important for me: it concerns (excuse the pathos) my heart. On p. 144 Tekin explains: "Doerfer has tried to refute all the Altaic equations established by Ramstedt, Poppe, and other scholars." And on p. 148 Tekin explains that concerning, e. g., such equations as Trk. **kök* 'blue' = Mo. *köke* I regard "all these etymologies as 'unwahrscheinlich' or 'zweifelhaft'." (As to Mong. *sira* = PTu. **sjārag* cf. TDAY-B 1975/6, 22–4.)

I wish to explain: I think that many sound laws and many etymologies found by Ramstedt and Poppe (the *majority* of them) are correct (not so Tekin's). We have to be grateful to these great explorers, none of us would be able to work without their achievements. May be, all of us are, in relation to them, dwarfs. But – to repeat Fénelon's picture –: we are dwarfs standing *upon* the shoulders of giants. And it is our good right to see further, to find new methods, to explore what they could not explore, and – to say when we disagree. To say it so: What I deny is not the older explorers' equations but the interpretation of these equations.

All my statements are founded upon the achievements of these explorers; I would not be able to work without them. However, I must admonish my opponent to regard a rule: sound laws are, not a sufficient, but only a necessary condition for proving the genetic relationship of languages. We find sound correspondences also when investigating Persian and Arabic (e. g., Arabic q- > Persian back g-, but Arabic q- > Persian -γ-). And a mere regard of sound laws and word parallels does not prove anything (if it did, it would be easy to show that Persian, containing about 80% Arabic loanwords, is a Semitic dialect). Hence, I ask Mr. Tekin to read my article "Conditions for proving the genetic relationship of languages", The Bulletin of the International Institute for Linguistic Sciences, Kyoto 2:4.38–58. As Confucius has said "People may only discuss when they have a common basis"; this common basis is lacking to us so far.