

ON CHUVASH-MONGOLIAN LINGUISTIC CONTACTS

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The Mongolian loan words in Chuvash, investigated by A. Róna-Tas entered Chuvash through the medium of a neighboring Turkic language, such as Tatar, Bashkir, etc. All of the words in question occur also in Turkic and appear in their Turkic forms and with Turkic semantics in Chuvash. Only one does not occur in Turkic, but nor is it Mongolian.

IN HIS INTERESTING PAPER on the history of Ch¹ *usra-* 'to keep up, raise, take care of', A. Róna-Tas discusses a number of Ch words which he defines as borrowings from MMo.² There is no doubt that the words concerned are of ultimate M'origin. Moreover, it has been established that the T languages do have loan words taken from MMo.³ The problem that requires further clarification, however, is whether Ch borrowed the words in question directly from MMo or through the medium of neighboring T languages.⁴

¹ Abbreviations: Ar - Arabic, Az - Azerbaijani, Ba - Bashkir, Bar - Baraba, Bur - Buriat, Ch - Chuvash, Chag - Chagatay, Chin - Chinese, Crim - Crimean Tatar, Cum - Cuman, ET - East Turki, H - *Hua-i i-yü*, IM - Ibn Muḥannā, Kalm - Kalmyk, Kaz - Kazakh, Kh - Khalkha, Kirg - Kirghiz, KKp - Kara Kalpak, Koib - Koibal, Kum - Kumyk, M - Mongolian languages, Ma - Manchu, MMo - Middle Mongolian, Mngr - Monguor, Mo - Script Mongolian, MT - Middle Turkic, Mu - *Muqaddimat al-Adab*, Nog - Nogai, Ord - Ordos, Osm - Osman, P - ḥP'ags-pa Script, SH - *Secret History*, T - Turkic languages, Tat - Tatar, Tel - Telengit, Trkm - Turkmen, Tu - Turkish (in Turkey), Yak - Yakut.

² A. Róna-Tas, "The Altaic Theory and the History of a Middle Mongolian Loan Word in Chuvash," *Researches in Altaic Languages*, Budapest 1975, pp. 201-211. On MMo *vide* N. Poppe, "Das Mittelmongolische," *Handbuch der Orientalistik: Der Nahe und der Mittlere Osten, Fünfter Band: Altaistik. Zweiter Abschnitt: Mongolistik*, Leiden/Köln 1964, pp. 96-103.

³ N. Poppe, "Die mongolischen Lehnwörter im Kommanischen," *Németh Armağanı*, Ankara 1962, pp. 331-340.

⁴ This problem concerns other languages than Ch, because, so far, a distinction between direct and indirect borrowings in Altaic languages has been made only in a few cases. Thus, this problem was not dealt with by Vladimirtsov in his articles on Indo-European and Arabic

Róna-Tas's list of MMo borrowings in Ch contains 33 words. A feature common to all of them, with only two exceptions, is that the respective M etymon words occur not only in Ch but also in other T languages. Such are Ch *upra-* 'to keep, save'; *usra-* 'to keep up, maintain'; *parka* 'healthy, strong, firm'; *pälčav* 'agreement on the date of a wedding'; *pälčäl/pänčäl* 'deadline'; *pusaxa* 'threshold'; *putene* 'quail'; *purlä* 'grey'; *pältärka* 'loop on the handle of a whip'; *čuptar* 'reddish-yellow with a white mane and tail'; *čiper* 'good, excellent, beautiful'; *čät-* 'to endure'; *tilxepe/tilkepe* 'reins'; *tim* 'help'; *ilpek* 'abundance'; *xüxëm* 'handsome, beautiful, good'; *yevečč* 'matchmaker'; *kársaka* 'quick-tempered, nervous'; *mulaxay* 'hat'; **markan* > Chermis *marčan* 'straight'; *mäka* 'blunt'; *narat* 'pine tree'; *näk* 'hard'; *näxta/näktä* 'halter'; *neker* 'the best man of the bridegroom'; *xayči* 'scissors'; *xural* 'guard'; *xurčäka* 'hawk'; *xäta* 'relative of one spouse in relation to the relative of the other spouse'; *sarana* 'Lilium tenuifolium'; *sayä* 'good'; *šäpa* 'dice, lot, fate'; *sältäk* 'subterfuge'.

The two exceptions are Ch *xüxëm/xükëm* 'pretty, good' and Ch *kársaka* 'quick-tempered, nervous'. Of these two, *xüxëm/xükëm* can hardly be connected with the reconstructed MMo form *yoiqan*,⁵ Mo *yoqa* 'beautiful', Kh *gō/goyo* and Bur *goyo* 'pretty, beautiful' because *yoiqan* is nowhere attested, and the only MMo forms known are SH *qo'a* 'beautiful' as part of the name *alan*

words in Mongolian, *vide* B. Ja. Vladimircov, "Mongolica I. Ob otnošenii mongol'skogo jazyka k indo-evropejskim jazykam Srednej Azii," *Zapiski Kollegii Vostokovedov*, vol. I (1925), pp. 305-341; also his "Arabskie slova v mongol'skom", *ibid.*, vol. V (1930), pp. 73-82. Cf. N. Poppe, *Introduction to Altaic Linguistics*, Wiesbaden 1965, pp. 169, 171.

⁵ Róna-Tas, *op. cit.*, p. 203.

qo'a,⁶ P qo'oda 'beautifully',⁷ Mu γo'a 'pretty'/yowa 'handsome',⁸ and IM qohā 'pretty'.⁹ Kh goyoxon 'pretty, nice, rather pretty' represents what is called Modern Mongolian and can not have existed in MMo.¹⁰ Ch xūxēm cannot be a new borrowing from Kalm either because the latter has only γō 'straight'.¹¹ Egorov's comparison of xūxēm with T kōrk 'beauty'¹² is to be rejected because Ch x goes back to *q and occurs only in original back-vocalic words, not to mention the fact that Ch also has the word kērneklēx 'beauty' derived from kurān- 'to appear, to be seen' and etymologically connected with T kōrk 'beauty'. On the other hand, Ch xūxēm can be deduced from an older form *qaygam, cf. Tel

qayγan 'marvel, miracle', KKp qayqan 'elegant, graceful', cf. qayqī 'id.' from qayqa- 'to admire, marvel' < M, cf. Mo γayiqā- 'to be astonished, admire, marvel', cf. Mo γayiqama 'admirable'. Consequently, Ch xūxēm is a borrowing from one of the neighboring T languages but ultimately of M origin. As for the sound correspondence, Ch xū- < *qay-, cf. Ch xū- 'to fence in' = Tat qay- 'to stitch' (the original meaning in both cases is 'to make a border'); Ch xūme 'fence' = Tat qayma 'border, edge, rim, hem'; Ch xūter- 'to chase, to drive, pursue' = T qayt- 'to return, to drive (cattle) back home'; Ch xūxē 'weeping, crying, lament' = Tat qayγī 'grief, sorrow'.

The other exception is Ch kārśaka 'quick-tempered, nervous' compared by Egorov with Bur xirzaga 'nervous, angry'.¹³ This equation has to be rejected because Bur -z- goes back to -*j- which never corresponds to Ch -s-, not to mention that xirzaga occurs only in Bur. The latter form can be connected with Kalm kirjŋnā- 'to creak, grit one's teeth' and Yak kirjŋinā- 'to growl, roar', Tel qiriš- 'to quarrel, fight' from qir- 'to destroy, kill'.

Consequently, neither of the two exceptions proves what they are supposed to prove.

Returning to the above list of words, it should be pointed out that all of them occur not only in Ch, but also in the neighboring T languages. There is not a single word among them that occurs only in Ch, which weakens the assumption that they are direct borrowings from MMo. The fact that the words in question occur both in Ch and neighboring T languages makes it probable that they penetrated a number of T languages at the same time or at different times and were borrowed by Ch from a T language such as Cum (in the XIII-XV cent.) or Tat (in the XV-XVII cent.). Indeed, Mo abura- 'to save, rescue, protect' occurs in Cum as abra-¹⁴ and is regarded by Severtjan as a T loan word in Ch (as upra-) but of ultimate M origin.¹⁵

The other word, Mo asara- 'to nourish, raise, bring up' also occurs as a loan word in various T languages (cf. Cum asra-) and is regarded as a

⁶ Igor de Rachewiltz, *Index to the Secret History of the Mongols*, Bloomington, Indiana, 1972, p. 181. This form corresponds to ho'a in E. Haensch, *Wörterbuch zu Manghol un Niuca Tobca'an* (Yüan-ch'ao pi-shi). *Geheime Geschichte der Mongolen*, Leipzig 1939, p. 64.

⁷ N. Poppe, *The Mongolian Monuments in hP'ags-pa Script*, Second edition translated and edited by John R. Krueger, Wiesbaden 1957, p. 129.

⁸ N. Poppe, *Mongol'skij slovar' Mukaddimat al-Adab*, čast' I-II, Moskva-Leningrad 1938, pp. 179, 258; cf. also γo'atu in ni'ur γo'atu 'having a pretty face'.

⁹ For Ibn Muḥannā's glossary, vide Poppe, *op. cit.*, p. 445.

¹⁰ It has been connected etymologically with Chag goba 'thick', Tel, Koib qōs 'pretty', Bar quas 'dandyish', Ma qobčixiyan 'dandy, poser', cf. B. Ja. Vladimircov, *Sravnitel'naja grammatika mongol'skogo pis'mennogo jazyka i xalxaskogo narečija* (Vvedenie i fonetika), Leningrad 1929, p. 210. Räsänen correctly separates Chag goba = Mo γoaa from *quaš > Koib qōs 'pretty', vide M. Räsänen, *Versuch eines etymologischen Wörterbuchs der Türkisprachen*, Helsinki 1969, p. 295. Speaking of the form qovā 'clean' attested, as a loan word in Persian, Doerfer rightly rejects the above comparisons of M and T forms and is inclined to accept Joki's explanation of Mo γoaa as a Chinese loan word, vide G. Doerfer, *Türkische und mongolische Elemente im Neupersischen, Unter besonderer Berücksichtigung älterer neupersischer Geschichtsquellen, vor allem der Mongolen- und Timuridenzeit*, Bd. I: *Mongolische Elemente im Neupersischen*, Wiesbaden 1963, pp. 421-23. Ramstedt also regarded Mo γoaa as a possible Chinese loan word, vide G. J. Ramstedt, *Kalmückisches Wörterbuch*, Helsinki 1935, p. 152.

¹¹ Ramstedt, *op. cit.*, p. 152.

¹² V. G. Egorov, *Ėtimologičeskij slovar' čuvaškogo jazyka*, Čeboksary 1964, p. 313.

¹³ Egorov, *op. cit.*, p. 101.

¹⁴ K. Grønbech, *Komanisches Wörterbuch, Türkischer Wortindex zu Codex Cumanicus*, København 1942, p. 27.

¹⁵ Ė. V. Severtjan, *Ėtimologičeskij slovar' tjurkskiz jazykov* (Obščetjurkskie i mežtjurkskie osnovy na glasnye), Moskva 1974, pp. 59-60.

T loan word in Ch.¹⁶ Consequently, this word was hardly borrowed directly from M in Ch.

Ch *upra-* < T *abra-* and Ch *usra-* < T *asra-* have *u* < *a* which is a relatively new development in Ch, cf. Ch *ulput* 'lord, landowner' < Tat *alpawit*; Ch *čux* 'time' < Tat *čaq*; Ch *xuška* 'white spot on the forehead of an animal' < Tat *qašqa*, etc. This development is observed in the following Ch words of ultimate M origin: Ch *čuptar* < Tat *čaptar* 'chestnut-colored horse with a lighter mane and tail'; *xural* < Tat *qarawil* 'watch, sentry'; and *xurčka* < Tat *qarčiya* 'hawk'. On the other hand, forms with *a* are also believed to go back to MMo, namely, Ch *narat* 'pine tree', *sarana* 'Lilium tenuifolium', and *sayä* 'good'. However, the forms with *a* are considerably younger than those with *u* < **a*. Such words cannot possibly go back to the MMo period, because **a* is either Ch *u*, *i*, or *ä*, whereas it is Ch *a* only in obvious new borrowings taken from Tat.¹⁷ Indeed, *narat* and *sarana* occur in Tat,¹⁸ and *say* occurs in Osm with the meaning 'pure' and in Kirg 'famous'.¹⁹ Cheremis *sayä* is probably a Ch loan word but Cheremis also possesses direct Tat borrowings.²⁰ One of them is *maryan* 'straight' which is believed by Róna-Tas to be a Ch loan word although it is a borrowing from Tat, cf. Tat *märgän* 'marksman' < M *mergen*. Ch does not have this word.

It is also important to note that some words in the above list have T but not M forms. Such is Ch *pälčav* 'agreement on the date of a wedding'. Final *-av* corresponds to Tat *-aw* < **ay*, cf. Ch *asaw* 'canine tooth' < Tat *azaw* 'molar'; Ch *yalav* 'flag' < Tat *yalaw*; Ch *lav* 'cart, carriage' < Tat *θlaw*; Ch *ultav* 'deception' < Tat *aldaw*, etc. Consequently, Ch *pälčav* can be deduced from **bolčav*, cf. Chag *boljau/boljaw* 'term, deadline'.²¹ It should be added that MMo *boljay* is nowhere attested, and only *boljal* and *boljar* are known. Of these two forms the former is found as a loan

word in numerous T languages, cf. Chag *boljal*, Kaz *bolžal*, Kirg *boljol*.

Ch *pältärka* 'a loop on the handle of a whip' is a T loan word, cf. Kaz *büldürgä*, KKp *büldürgä*, Kirg *büldürgö* 'a loop on the handle of a whip.' The Mo form is *bögöldürge* < *bögeldürge* 'loop on the handle of a whip', Kh *bögöldrög*, Bur *bügelderge* 'id.'. The MMo form *büldürge* reconstructed by Róna-Tas²² is incorrect because *-g-* is in strong position and does not disappear. True, in the dictionary *Muqaddimat al-Adab*, quoted by Egorov,²³ there occurs the form *böldürge* but it is given as a T word without its M equivalent.²⁴

A T loan word is also Ch *yevčë* 'matchmaker' < Tat *yävčë* < M *jaγučü*, MMo *ja'učü*. As for the older Ch form **sausü* reconstructed by Róna-Tas on the basis of Mari (Cheremis) *sauš/savüš*,²⁵ it goes back to *javčü* which form is found in the dialect of the so-called Kräšan-Tatars.

There remains Ch *parka* 'firm, strong, healthy', correctly compared with Chag *berk*, etc., by Egorov,²⁶ although disyllabic *parka* looks as if its etymon word were M *berke*. Ch *a* regularly corresponds to T *e(ä)* and M *e* both in words of common origin, e.g., Ch *ar* 'man' = Az *är*, Mo *ere*, and in loan words, e.g., Ch *arča* 'chest' < Tat *ärjä* 'chest, box'; Ch *ašak* 'donkey' < T *äšäk*; Ch *tantäš* 'a person of the same age' < Chag *täjtäš*, Cum *täjtäš*, etc.; Ch *kanäš* 'counsel, advice' < T *känggäš*, etc. However, it is easy to prove that Ch *parka* is of T origin. This is evident from the semantics. Both in Ch and in T languages the meaning of *parka/bärk* is 'strong, firm', cf. Ch *parka* 'durable, strong, healthy, firmly, strongly' = Chag, ET, Osm, Crim, Trkm *bärk* 'strong, solid', Kaz *berik* 'id.',²⁷ Az *bärk* 'hard, firm, loud, strong, steep, fast, parsimonious, firmly, strongly, loudly, steeply, tightly',²⁸ whereas in M the meaning is quite different, cf. Mo *berke* 'difficult, hard (= difficult but not the opposite of soft), burdensome, troublesome, serious, difficulty, hardship, trouble' (Lessing); Kh *berx* 'difficult, burdensome, cruel, ferocious' (Tsevel); Bur *berze* 'difficult, heavy

¹⁶ Sevortjan, *op. cit.*, p. 194.

¹⁷ Cf. G. J. Ramstedt, "Zur Frage nach der Stellung des Tschuwassischen", *Journal de la Société Finno-Ougrienne* 28:1 (1922), p. 9.

¹⁸ *Tatarsko-russkij slovar'*, Moskva 1966, pp. 394, 469.

¹⁹ Räsänen, *op. cit.*, p. 394.

²⁰ M. Räsänen, *Die tschuwassischen Lehnwörter im Tscheremissischen* (= *Mémoires de la Société Finno-Ougrienne* vol. 50), Helsinki 1923.

²¹ Chagatay was the literary language of the Tatars for a long time.

²² *Op. cit.*, p. 202.

²³ *Op. cit.*, p. 147.

²⁴ Poppe, *op. cit.*, p. 403.

²⁵ Róna-Tas, *op. cit.*, p. 203.

²⁶ Egorov, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

²⁷ W. Radloff, *Versuch eines Wörterbuches der Türk-Dialecte*, Bd. IV, St. Petersburg 1911, pp. 1599, 1601.

²⁸ *Azerbajdžansko-russkij slovar'*, Sostavitel' X. A. Azizbekov, Baku 1965, p. 62.

(= difficult), troublesome, hard (e.g., life, fate), burdensome, complicated, serious' (Čeremisov); Kalm *berkə* 'difficult, demanding too much, evil (of character), difficult to find and therefore rare' (Ramstedt); Ord *Berk^kχe* 'difficult, invincible, a difficult terrain' (Mostaert); Mngr *pⁱerGe* 'difficult, troublesome' (Mostaert and de Smedt); SH *berke* 'difficult, grave'; H, IM, Mu *berke* 'difficult'. The borrowing of Ch *parka* from M is improbable because of the difference in meaning: the meaning of Ch *parka* is the same as that of T *berk* (*bärk*) and different from that of Mo *berke*. It is difficult to accept the notion that Ch borrowed the form of the word in question from M but used it with the meaning taken from T.

As for the fact that the Ch word is disyllabic (as in M) versus the monosyllabic form in T, it is well known that Ch often has an epithetic vowel on words corresponding to T monosyllables,²⁹ e.g., Ch *utä* 'hay' = Tat *ut*; Ch *uxä* 'bow' = Tat *uq* 'arrow'; Ch *alä* 'hand' = Az *äl*; Ch *yiltä* 'dog' = Tat *ət*; Ch *kěvčě* 'melody, tune' = Tat *köy* (cf. MT *kög* < Chin); Ch *sulä* 'raft' = Tat *sal*; Ch *věččě* 'revenge' < T *üč*; Ch *vunnä* 'ten' = Tat *un*; Ch *višä* 'hungry' = Tat *ač*; Ch *yěke* 'spindle' = Kaz, Chag, etc. *ik*; Ch. *külčě* 'lake' = Tat *kül*; Ch *pušä/puš* 'empty' < Tat *buš*; Ch *piytä* 'louse' = Tat *bət*; Ch *samana* < Tat *zaman* < Ar; Ch *sapaka* 'cluster, bunch of grapes, pod' = Tat *sabaq* 'stalk, tendril'; Ch *sasä* 'voice, sound' = Trkm, Tu, Cum *ses*; Ch *sivä* 'healthy' = Tat *saw*; Ch *šanä* 'sleeve' = Tu, Nog *yen*, Tat *jiŋ*, etc.

The general conclusion from the above discussion is that the Ch words examined by Róna-Tas were not directly borrowed from MMo but through one or several neighboring T languages. Some words, namely those with *a* = Tat *a* in the initial

²⁹ M. Räsänen, *Materialien zur Lautgeschichte der Türkisprachen*, Helsinki 1946, p. 52.

syllable are more recent borrowings from T, much younger than the MMo period.

Part of the M words found in Ch probably penetrated some T languages at the MMo time. They were borrowed by Ch from those intermediate languages at different times, some earlier, others later. Chuvash is in this aspect no different from Russian which does not have words borrowed directly from Mongolian at the time of the Mongolian invasion, all respective words as *esaul* 'cossack captain' and other military terms being loan words from T in which they are of ultimate Mongolian origin.³⁰

However, the author of these lines agrees with Róna-Tas's other conclusions, namely, 1. that the presence of a word in all Altaic branches does not prove the Common Altaic origin of the word in question, and 2. that there have been contacts between the Altaic speaking peoples prior to the XIII century and after the dissolution of the Altaic protolanguage. To this should be added the observation that among the numerous loan words taken by one Altaic language from another there are both direct and indirect borrowings. The latter may have penetrated a particular language, e.g., Chuvash, at a time considerably later than the period of borrowing by the intermediate language, e.g., Tatar. Consequently, such Mongolian words in Chuvash should be regarded as Tatar loan words of ultimate Mongolian origin.

³⁰ For this reason works on the history of the Russian language discuss only the Turkic elements in Old Russian, cf. L. A. Bulaxovskij, *Istoričeskij kommentarij k russkomu literaturnomu jazyku*, Pjatoe, dopolnennoe i pererabotannoe izdanie, Kiev 1958, pp. 31-32; L. P. Jakubinskij, *Istorija drevnerusskogo jazyka*, S predislavim i pod redakcij akad. V. V. Vinogradova, Moskva 1953, pp. 346 ff. This does not mean that Russian does not have loan words taken from languages related to Proto-Mongolian.