Article

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Károly, László

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DigiZeitschriften e.V.
Papendiek 14
37073 Goettingen
Email: info@digizeitschriften.de

The case of Altaic and West Old Turkic

László Károly

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The voluminous work *An etymological dictionary of Altaic languages* by Starostin *et al.* (2003) opened a new chapter in the research of the Altaic languages. Although its results were questioned and criticized by very many scholars, a visible outcome of the work is that it could reveal several methodological and subject-specific problems facing the researchers that must be solved by the participants of the 'Altaic' society.
The present paper will contrast the results of this etymological dictionary with those of the monograph *West Old Turkic. Turkic loanwords in Hungarian* by Róna-Tas and Berta (2011) in order to point out some of those most crucial problems which might hinder progress in Altaic studies.

László Károly, Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz, Seminar für Orientkunde, Hegelstr. 59, D-55122 Mainz, Germany. E-mail: karoly@uni-mainz.de

1. Introduction

Altaic studies have a relatively long history. It was first proposed by G. J. Ramstedt and N. N. Poppe, i.e. the founders of modern Altaic studies, that the Turkic, Mongolic and Tungusic languages form a genealogical family.[1] Ramstedt immediately added Korean to the discussion and later Japonic was included as a fifth member of the hypothetical language family.[2] They then analysed these language groups and reconstructed proto-Altaic as the oldest stratum of the family. Ramstedt's ideas were published already in 1924, but his whole reconstruction of proto-Altaic was published in a systematic fashion much later in 1952 and 1957 (only after his death in 1950). Poppe had started to analyse the problems already in 1926, but his crystallized system was also published some decades later in 1960 and 1965.

Besides the supporters of the Altaic hypothesis, a group of so called anti-Altaists has appeared on the scene. The most prominent representatives of this enterprise

1 I do not touch the much older and conceptually different Ural-Altaic hypothesis in this paper at all, see further Georg *et al.* (1999: 74–75).

2 Since scholars do not agree on the number of language groups belonging to Altaic, the very term is confusing. Some use 'micro'-Altaic for Turkic, Mongolic and Tungusic, and 'macro'-Altaic for anything broader. Additionally, a new term 'Transeurasian' was coined by Johanson and Robbeets for the five branches, but it has not been able to gain ground in the literature as yet.

were Clauson (1956, 1962) and Doerfer (1966, 1993). Their primary concept was that the similarities between the compared language groups (focusing mainly on the Turko-Mongolic relations) are due to long-term areal influences, and that they cannot be attributed to genealogical inheritance. Although these scholars sometimes formulated unfounded critiques against the Altaic hypothesis,[3] they added very useful and thought-provoking remarks to the discussion.

Another group of scholars also has to be mentioned here who represent the enterprise of sceptics. Just to mention a few of them, I refer to Róna-Tas (1974) and Sinor (1963, 1988). They expressed their critical attitude about the Altaic hypothesis. Sinor furthermore questioned the methods of historical-comparative linguistics.[4]

Since the scholars working on Altaic could not agree, the discussion has never been settled and the Altaic hypothesis remained an open question. After decades had passed, a new publication appeared on the horizon: Starostin and his research team put an extremely voluminous dictionary entitled *An etymological dictionary of Altaic languages* (hereinafter EDAL) into the very centre of the discussion in 2003. The appearance of this publication not only revitalized the research interest but early voices announced that it delivered, after all, proof of the Altaic hypothesis. After a short period of time, there appeared however some very critical reviews about the dictionary that either criticized the methodology applied in the research, or straightforwardly declared the book itself to be the disproof of the hypothesis.[5]

Although significant research has been done on the very topic since the appearance of EDAL, I end the description of the research here because EDAL is at present the *de facto* dictionary of the hypothetical Altaic language family.

The research on Turkic elements in Hungarian also has a relatively long history. Without analysing its initial phase, I start with Gombocz and his book entitled *Die bulgarisch-türkischen Lehnwörter in der ungarischen Sprache* (1912). Gombocz was the first Turcologist who analysed and presented the topic in a scientific fashion. The generations after him were able to obtain new results by applying the same methodology. Ligeti's work *A magyar nyelv török kapcsolatai a honfoglalás előtt és az Árpád-korban* (1986) is the second monographic presentation of the research results.[6] Following the paths opened by Gombocz and Ligeti, Róna-Tas and Berta

3 See, for example, Clauson's (1969) very controversial lexicostatistical analysis.

4 This is of course a very brief presentation of an extremely complex history of the research, but it is enough for our present aim. The reader can consult Georg *et al.* (1999) for a more detailed description.

5 Though not exhaustive, see the following reviews: Miller (2003–2004), Georg (2004, 2005), Vovin (2005) and Stachowski (2005).

6 This book of Ligeti has been published only in Hungarian, unfortunately; thus a great many scholars of Turkic studies could not profit from it. Instead, they had to rely on Gombocz (1912), which was written in German and at that time, 1986, was already significantly out-dated. A Russian translation of Ligeti (1986) is under preparation.

published their two-volume monograph entitled *West Old Turkic. Turkic loanwords in Hungarian* (2011; hereinafter WOT), which now provides an up-to-date tool for the international community in English.

Scholars working on Turkic elements in Hungarian always had an eye on the advances of Altaic studies. Although the very question of the genealogical relatedness between the three to five branches is not at all relevant to the question of Turkic elements in Hungarian, research on Turko-Mongolic and partially on Tungusic relations could provide invaluable results to better understand the Hungarian–West Old Turkic contact settings and situations. As a scholar of Altaic comparative linguistics, Gombocz not only used the results of Altaic studies but himself published on this topic; see, for example, the article *Az altáji nyelvek hangtörténetéhez* (1905), which is one of the first systematic analyses of the Turkic, Mongolic and Tungusic sound systems. Ligeti was a prominent scholar of the Altaic languages and devoted several publications to this question; see Ligeti (1934, 1953, 1961, 1971). In an invaluable article published in 1941 he discussed the debated question of Mongolic elements in Hungarian. Róna-Tas' significant contribution regarding certain questions of Altaic has already been mentioned.

Accordingly, the WOT monograph has also extensively used the results of Altaic studies, and thus the outcomes presented in EDAL. The authors sum up their general view about this etymological dictionary as follows: "The rich material, collected under a reconstructed 'Altaic' heading, offers in several cases an interesting insight into the history of a Turkic word and its reflexes in Mongolic. This material can be used for Turkic etymology even if one disagrees with the further connection of the word." (WOT 16). Although EDAL is considered a useful tool, a general disagreement with its concept and methodology is clearly visible in WOT: "In many cases, the authors correctly acknowledge the loan character of a Mongolic word, but suggest a second Mongolic word which would be an 'Altaic' cognate to the Turkic word. In none of the latter cases dealt with in our present book could we accept such a claim." (WOT 16)

Since there are a significant number of examples in which EDAL and WOT stand for completely different opinions, it is worth analysing and presenting the differences. The present article therefore aims at making such a comparison from the point of view of WOT. After a general description of the problems, single etymologies will be given by means of which the methodological weakness (or sometimes fallacy) of EDAL can be demonstrated. It was already expressed in the reviews on EDAL that every single etymology must be reconsidered and re-analysed. This is however something that nobody can do.[7] Therefore the reviewers systematically

7 See, for example, the rather critical view of Vovin (2005: 92) which I completely share: "Among the 2,800 etymologies presented in the book, the majority represent just comparanda generated by the faulty methodology [...], and the rest are mostly etymologies that existed before EDAL that can be explained away as mutual borrowings.

selected words or word groups from the dictionary in order to express their general view or critique. I too will do the same i.e. I will compare all the Turkic words discussed in WOT to the corresponding entries in EDAL. Of course, all of the parallels cannot be discussed in this short article, but every aspect of the problems and different views will be presented by means of examples.

In the interest of full disclosure, I must say that I actively took part in the edition of WOT, and therefore the reader can feel that I am strongly biased. It is true that EDAL and WOT represent two enterprises, and I belong to the later one, but I will try to prove my proposals and reconstructions with scientific argumentation. This may clarify that my position is neutral and not influenced by premises.

Before jumping into the very analysis, I will shortly summarize those facts about EDAL and WOT which I consider extremely important.

1.1. EDAL

The authors of EDAL state in the preface of their book, "After a critical evaluation of the problem we came to the conclusion that Altaic should be still characterized as a genetic unity, probably forming a branch of the larger Nostratic macrofamily, but certainly a separate family on its own. The very fact that it is possible to compile a dictionary of common Altaic heritage appears to be a proof of the validity of the Altaic theory." (p. 9) In my view it is very problematic to think that an etymological dictionary on its own can prove the genealogical relatedness of a group of languages.[8] A. Dybo, one of the co-authors of EDAL, argued (personal communication) that EDAL is proof of the Altaic language family similar to the way that the dictionary of Pokorny (1959–1969) is proof of the Indo-European language family. This is of course not a correct comparison: the Pokorny's dictionary[9] is based on extensive research done on Indo-European, the likes of which, for the most part, has yet to have been done in the case of the Altaic languages. Since there is a complete lack of research on many questions of the Altaic languages in general, such an etymological dictionary cannot successfully be written for the time being.

The methodological problems of EDAL, or at least the most important ones, were already summarized by Vovin (2005: 73–85). Since I do not want to repeat them, I mention here only those which are relevant for the present discussion.

First, the most crucial point is doubtless the oversimplified presentation of the data. Each entry provides only a very brief list of words seemingly based on some

Of course, it is impossible to invalidate all 2,800 etymologies in one review article: it would be necessary to write a treatise at least five times longer than EDAL itself, which would present all criticism with supporting textual data and references to relevant literature."

8 The same view can be found in Vovin (2005: 73).

9 It is worth noting that the Pokorny's dictionary is slightly outdated, but as far as I can judge it is still a useful tool.

preselected vocabulary items without taking into consideration the available text corpora in which the analysed words exist. As a result of this simplified presentation, the non-qualified reader can have the impression that the speakers of the proposed Altaic language family had been living in a slow-motion world for some one thousand years. Another side effect of the oversimplification visible in the semantic analysis of the data is that the authors compare almost everything with everything. Some examples such as 'any kind of fish, animal, etc.' were already mentioned by Vovin (2005: 81–82), but the comparison of proto-Turkic **sïčgan* 'rat, mouse' and proto-Tungusic **sužakī* 'cat' under the heading Proto-Altaic **s̯už̯akV* 'a kind of small animal' has opened in my view a completely new chapter in historical-comparative linguistics – unfortunately not a fruitful one.

Second, the morphological analysis of the data is either completely missing or often unfounded: Sectioning off various segments as old suffixes without clearly identifying and describing them is a bad practice in morphological studies (examples of this category will be given below). Additionally, the reader can see that the authors do not always consult the actual literature. As for the Turcological material, it is very problematic that a book published in 2003 relies on the outdated and often completely erroneous analysis of Ramstedt (1952) instead of using Erdal (1991), which is the actual tool that must be used for the description of Turkic derivational morphology.

1.2. WOT

Contrary to EDAL, WOT tries to present a possibly complete set of data from the Turkic languages both from historical and modern sources in order to demonstrate the whole known history of the discussed words. The data are analysed from phonological, morphological and semantic points of view with reference to the relevant and up-to-date literature.[10] Criticism towards WOT can be that its database is dominantly based on dictionaries, especially in the case of the modern languages, and the contextual analysis of the words, their exact usage, etc. is not always analysed.

If Mongolic parallels for the given Turkic words were ever proposed in the literature, they are cited and analysed in a detailed way. Since other members of the hypothetical family do not provide relevant information for the question of Turkic loanwords in Hungarian, they are only partially discussed in WOT. Consequently, the analysis in WOT concentrates on Turko-Mongolic relations and does not broach the question of genealogical relatedness.

10 The literature was systematically consulted until 2006; additional literature of the period between 2006–2009 was sporadically taken into account where important.

2. The comparison

The EDAL database contains exactly 2,787 entries of cognate words from the branches of Altaic. Of these 2,787 entries, 1,970 contain Turkic data. Although the absolute number of Turkic elements in the database is a relative parameter in the reconstruction depending on different factors, this high number is indeed striking and deserves further research because on the one hand, we have 'only' around 1,500 primary stems in the Old Turkic dictionary of Clauson (1972) based on hundreds of records, and on the other hand, EDAL presents almost 2,000 primary stems of Turkic which, according to the authors, can be traced back to the reconstructed proto-Altaic stratum as early as the end of the 6th millennium B.C.

In WOT 419 different Turkic words are discussed. This is the approximate number of lexical elements copied over into Hungarian during the long-lasting contact with various Turkic-speaking peoples.

If we put these two lists together, there are altogether 290 words which are discussed and analysed both in EDAL and WOT. This relatively 'small' corpus of common elements provides the basis for my analysis, that is, I will draw my conclusions exclusively on the basis of these data!

WOT cites the corresponding words of EDAL in every case and adds, though not always but very often, comments, remarks or critiques to the actual cases. I have put these remarks into the following 12 categories:

1. No remarks. The authors of WOT accept the comparison of the given Turkic and Mongolic words presented in EDAL. This does not, however, mean that the authors of WOT acknowledge the genealogical relationship between these words. It only means that there is indeed a kind of relation which is, according to the authors of WOT, to the result of borrowing from Turkic to Mongolic.[11]
2. Acceptable comparisons. The same as under point 1.
3. Further research is needed. The present stage of the research cannot provide a clear answer to the question whether the compared words are related to each other.
4. Borrowing (T → M). This category signifies that the discussed word is without doubt a loanword copied from Turkic into Mongolic.[12]
5. Unacceptable comparisons. It means that unrelated words are featured together in EDAL.

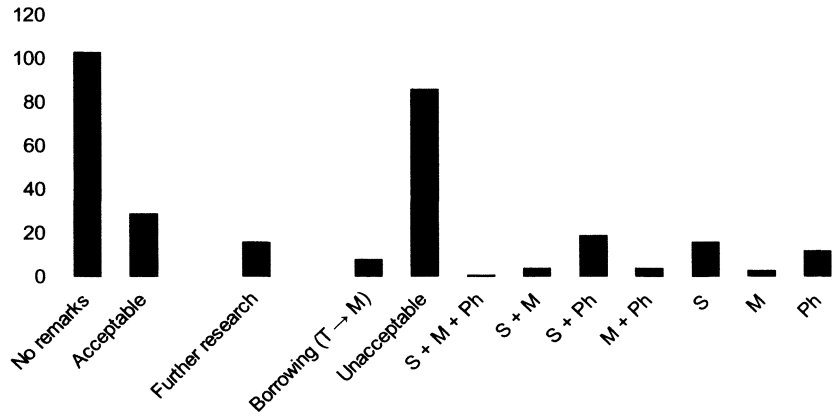
11 As I already mentioned, the very question of Altaic linguistics has no relevance at all in the research of Turkic elements in Hungarian. Basically, the number of Turkic loanwords in Hungarian is not related to the 'attitude' of the researchers towards the Altaic hypothesis.

12 Borrowings from Turkic to Mongolic fall into two categories: (1) early loanword before Old Turkic times, and (2) later borrowings. See, for example, the case of Turkic *ekkiz* 'twin' below.

The following seven categories include those cases which WOT marks as problematic. Three fundamental pillars of an etymological explanation are considered important in the qualification: the semantic (S), the morphological (M) and the phonological (Ph) ones. If one or more raise uncertainty, the etymology is considered uncertain, problematic or unacceptable. The authors of WOT state where the weakness of the etymologies can be seen:

6. Semantic + morphological + phonological problems
7. Semantic + morphological problems
8. Semantic + phonological problems
9. Morphological + phonological problems
10. Semantic problems
11. Morphological problems
12. Phonological problems

In the following table I present a simple statistic of the number of cases falling into each category:



Although this diagram already shows that there is a big discrepancy between WOT and EDAL, a summarized version can better illustrate it. On the left side we see two bars representing the total number of accepted comparisons. On the right side there are nine bars which all represent the unacceptable etymologies. Between these two big categories there is a bar of open, unsettled etymologies. All in all a three-stage design can ideally summarize the magnitude of the discrepancy:

1. Acceptable comparisons (132 etymologies)
2. Uncertain cases of 'further research' (16 etymologies)
3. Unacceptable comparisons (153 etymologies)

In light of the already quoted negative reviews of EDAL, it is no surprise that more than half of the etymologies were not accepted by WOT, but this high ratio is noticeable and deserves more detailed analysis. In the following section of the article I will analyse no more than five words in order to present the general problems seen and expressed by the authors of WOT.

3. Example etymologies

The first two examples are chosen in order to present some methodological principles that have universal validity for the whole field of etymological studies and are considered as a basis of serious research.

árpa 'barley, Hordeum' (WOT 77–79)

The Hungarian word *árpa* [ārpå] 'barley, *Hordeum*'[13] has been considered by all prominent scholars to be a loanword of Turkic origin. It appears in the written sources as a proper name already in around 950, cf. *ἀρπαδή* [ārpā-dī]. WOT defines the way of borrowing as Hungarian *ārpå* < **arpa* ← West Old Turkic **arpa*.

EDAL 312–313 reconstructs proto-Turkic **arpa,* which is identical with the form given in WOT. According to EDAL, Tungusic **arpa*, Mongolic **arbaj*, Turkic **arpa* and Japanese **àpá* make it possible to reconstruct a proto-Altaic form **àrp ä* 'barley, millet'. We see in the otherwise short description that the proto-Tungusic reconstruction is based on one single and isolated word from Manchu, i.e. *arfa*, which makes the reconstruction very dubious. Furthermore the Manchu word is most likely a borrowing from Mongolic as already presented in the literature (see Rozycki 1994: 20).[14]

WOT criticizes the Japanese side of the reconstruction as well because "[t]he connection with OJpn *apa*, ModJpn *àfá* 'millet' is problematic since this is the only word in the whole corpus where PA **-rp-* would have lost its *-r-* in Jpn and we have to suppose a semantic change 'barley' > 'millet'."

Contrary to the view of EDAL, it has been proposed in the literature that the Turkic word *arpa* is most likely a word of foreign origin. Doerfer (1963–1975/2: 24–25) argued for an Indo-European origin with Iranian mediation. Clauson (1972: 198) suggested Tocharian as a possible mediating language with a question mark. The Indo-European proto-form is reconstructed as **albhi-* and the supposed intermediate Iranian word would be **arba.* There are however phonological problems with the Iranian reconstruction, cf. Pokorny (1959–1969/1: 29) for the details.

13 The word *árpa* has been connected with the proper name *Árpád,* postulating that it is a diminutive derivative in *+d*, cf. further WOT 78–79.

14 EDAL 312 cites Rozycki's monograph, but rejects this interpretation without any argumentation.

Although both hypotheses raise problems, EDAL's proposal is very unlikely since (1) the isolated Manchu word seems to be a loanword from Mongolic, (2) the Mongolic word is clearly of Turkic origin and (3) the Japanese forms must be ruled out firstly because of semantic problems. It is than more likely, though the donor language cannot be defined with certainty, that it is a cultural, migratory word of foreign origin in Turkic.

ug(u) 'owl' (WOT 968–969)

The archaic, obsolete Hungarian word *ug(u)* [ug(u)] 'owl, *Strix*' appears in the Old Hungarian sources in the compound *ugufa* 'owl-tree'.[15] The first constituent is of Turkic origin and most likely represents a Turkic form *ugu*, cf. Hungarian *ug* < *ugu* ← West Old Turkic **uɣu*. In the Turkic languages different counterparts exist which cannot be drawn back to one common proto-form. Tenišev (2001: 170–171) has reconstructed for example two alternating forms, i.e. **ügi* and **ükki*.[16] Besides other things, this alternation of the shape points to the onomatopoeic origin of the word, a fact which is extremely important in the analysis. Since the word is scarcely documented in Hungarian and is of onomatopoeic origin, the etymology is considered problematic. This does not however make it impossible to discuss the history of the Turkic word in a broader context.

EDAL 1485 reconstructed Altaic **uge* 'owl' on the basis of Tungusic **oksari*, Mongolic **uɣuli* and Turkic **ügi* with a short remark that it is "[a]n onomatopoetic Western isogloss, which does not exclude its antiquity."[17] Although the authors of WOT do not comment on EDAL, it is worth reviewing this comparison:

1. As already mentioned, it is not possible to give one single proto-form for Turkic. The data point to at least two different variants, i.e. **ügi* and **ükki*.
2. The Mongolic word *uɣuli* raises morphological problems. In order to make a credible comparison between Turkic and Mongolic, the word-final segment °*li* must be explained. In the Mongolian dictionary of Lessing (1960) there are thirty some nouns of any kind which end in °*li*.[18] If we rule out the deverbal nominals in *-li*,[19] the number is much lower, and there is hardly any

15 Additionally, it appears in some geographical names from the 11th century such as *Huger* [ug-ēr] 'Ug stream(let)'.

16 To complicate the matter further, some modern words may point to an original /ö/ in initial position, see, e.g., Turkish *öğü* 'great owl'.

17 Tenišev (2001: 170–171) goes further and adds Korean **púhəŋ* and Japanese *puku* to the list of parallel words.

18 Such modern words as, for example, *anggili* 'England', are of course not considered.

19 See the following action nominals in *-li*: *sagali* 'milking' ← *saga-* 'to milk' and *sačuli* 'libation' ← *sačʉ-* 'to strew, to spurt' (Poppe 1954: 47).

word with a clear etymological background.[20] See the following four words which can form a semantic group with *uguli*: *argali* 'argali, mountain sheep (female)', *xotol(i)* 'two-year-old marmot; young dear', *kür(ü)meli* 'sedge, carex' and *sibeli* 'equisetum, shave grass, scouring rush'. As far as I know, none of these words has a clear etymological explanation. Accordingly, the segmentation *ugu-li* is very dubious and cannot be supported by clear examples. The morphological background of the Tungusic word **oksari* is obscure as well.

3. If we consider the onomatopoeic character of the above stated words, it is most likely a mere chance that they look similar to each other, and thus the reconstruction of a Western isogloss is not only impossible but it is methodologically questionable.

The following three words are chosen to illustrate different kinds of semantic, morphological and phonological difficulties in the analysis presented in EDAL.

***dara* 'grist, groats, soft hail' (WOT 287–291)**

The Hungarian word *dara* [dåra] is most likely a copy of Turkic **tarï* or **darï,* which goes back to Old Turkic *tarïg*. The word *dara* appears relatively late, only in the middle of the 16th century in the written sources, see, e.g., 1545 *semledarát* [žemle-dårā-t], which may point to the Cuman origin of the word. As commonly accepted by Turcologists, the Turkic word *tarïg* 'crops, millet, sowing' is a derivative of *tarï-* 'to cultivate (the ground)' in *-(X)g*.

EDAL 1356 discussed the Turkic word *tarïg* together with Tungusic **daragan* 'quitch; reed, cane', Mongolic **darki* 'brushwood' and Korean **tār* 'reed'. On the basis of these forms an Altaic proto-form *tăra* 'a k. of plant, reed' was reconstructed. Similar to other already mentioned cases, this comparison poses serious semantic problems: reed and millet are two completely different plants that are easy to tell apart.

Additionally, EDAL 1438 separated the Turkic verbal stem *tarï-* from *tarïg* and treated it as an etymologically independent word under the Altaic heading *t i̯òra-* 'to cultivate (earth)' together with Mongolic *tarija-n* 'crops' and Japanese *tà* 'field (cultivated)'. As usual practice in EDAL, the authors do not provide an explanation for the morphological side. Is Japanese *tà* a back-formation from the Altaic verb? Or, are Turkic *tarï-* and Mongolic *tarija-n* derivatives from a nominal base? What kind of suffixes are they in this case? Everything remains unclear and open.

If we look at the Turkic side, there is evidence that *tarïg* and *tarï-* belong together. The two different meanings of *tarïg* given by Clauson (1972: 538) as 'culti-

20 Maybe the words *büküli* 'whole, entire, complete' and *bükü* 'all, whole, everything; general, common' provide a clear case, but the functional is still unclear.

vated land' and 'the produce of cultivated land' can be understood as objects, i.e. primary and cognate ones, derived from the base verb *tarï-* 'to cultivate (ground)'. Erdal's description gives the exact relation between the verb and its derivative: "*tarı-g* 'crop, cultivation, agriculture, cultivated land, grain, millet' [...] is both action and object noun." (1991: 206) It fits well within the functional palette of the Turkic suffix *-(X)g*.

Additionally, Doerfer (1963–1975/1: 244–245; 1963–1975/2: 480–482) has already clarified the relation between the Turkic, Mongolic and Tungusic forms. Just looking at Mongolic, *tari-* is a loanword from Turkic; *tariyan* < **tarigan* is most likely an inner derivative (cf. Poppe 1954: 45).[21]

balkány 'soggy place, moor, swamp, marsh' (WOT 86–87)

The word *balkány* [bålkāń] appears in Hungarian as a geographical name as early as the end of the 12th century. It goes back to a reconstructed West Old Turkic form **balkan*.[22] According to the authors of WOT, the word *balkan* may be a derivative of the verb **bal-* 'to become wet, marshy' with the suffix *-gAn* (WOT 86). They added that there is a corresponding nominal form **bal* 'mud' which is the base of several Turkic words such as "*balk*, *balïk* 'mud, wall made of mud, village', *balčïk balïk yogrulur* 'clay and mud pile up' (AK), and also *paluk üy* 'dom iz syrcovyh kirpičej' (YUygM)."[23]

EDAL 344–345 reconstructed a Proto-Altaic base *bi̯ălu* 'dirt, mud' and added the following cognate forms: Tungusic **bul-* 'snuff; swamp, marsh; become dull, colourless', Mongolic **bul-* 'dreggy, muddy, turbid', Turkic **bạl-* 'mud, clay', Japanese **pu-* 'dandruff' and Korean **piro* 'dandruff; mange'.

Looking at the real words behind these reconstructed forms, we can detect serious problems. For example, Mongolic *bulaŋgir* 'disturbed lees or sediment in liquids, turbid' does not belong together with the Turkic nominal stem **bal*, but it is a derivative of *bula-* 'to conceal, to plant, to bury'. The Mongolic word *balar* 'dark, obscure' also has nothing to do with our Turkic forms; it is related to Mongolic *balay* 'dark, obscure, ignorant'.

21 The word *tarimal* 'sown, planted' can be mentioned, too, as a derivative in *-mAl* (Poppe 1954: 48).

22 Real Turkic parallels are first attested only in the Middle Turkic sources.

23 Moreover they suggest that the word *balïk* 'fish' may also belong here. This is however a very problematic comparison. EDAL 1076 mentions proto-Turkic **bālïk* and connects it with Mongolic **bilagu* 'carp, a kind of salmon'. The authors of WOT 86 pointed out that "[t]his word, however, does not exist. In the expression *bulū cagān* 'a kind of carp' (Khal), it comes fr *bilagu* 'club, cudgel', denoting the club-like head of the fish. The Bur word *bulūsxay* 'jaz', soroga (krupnaja)' has the same background, see *bulūsxay tula* 'tajmen' (v metr i bolee veličinoj)' fr *tula* 'tajmen''."

iker 'twin' (WOT 450–452)

The Hungarian word *iker* [iker] 'twin' is a loanword of Turkic origin, see Hungarian *iker* < *ikir* ← West Old Turkic **ikir* < **ekir*. It appears in the Hungarian sources very early, see, e.g., 1095 *ikirbucur* [ikir-bukur] 'gemina frutice (quod uulgariter vocatur)'.

The Turkic word *ekkiz* 'twin' is analysed by most of the Turcologists as a derivative of the numeral *ekki* 'two'.[24] EDAL 1153 discussed the Turkic word *ekki* 'twin' under the proto-Altaic heading **p'i̯ok'e* 'pair, couple' and added the following reconstructed cognates: proto-Mongolic **(h)ekire* 'twins', proto-Japanese **pə̀ká* 'other' and proto-Korean **pə̀kí-* 'next, following'.

This comparison raises several problems:

1. An initial *h-* cannot be reconstructed for Mongolic.
2. The final segment of the Mongolic form, i.e. °*re*, cannot be interpreted.
3. The Japanese and Korean forms must be ruled out for phonological and semantic reasons.

On the basis of the traditional explanation, according to which Mongolic *ikire* 'twins' is a loanword from Turkic, the relation between the Turkic and Mongolic words can easily be explained. Turkic *ekkiz* was copied twice into Mongolic: the earlier form is *ikire*, the later one is *egis* 'placenta'.[25] Mongolic °*re* in *ikire* is not an inner segment, or a kind of formative, but a regular reflex of a proto-Turkic form.

4. Conclusions

The present article has intended to show that two enterprises, i.e. the authors of EDAL and WOT, using the same data can reach completely different results and conclusions. Through the non-compatible eyeglasses of EDAL and WOT, different worlds of the Altaic languages are reconstructed and presented for the readers. The differences are caused by the very fact that they use different methodology. Even for non-qualified readers the oversimplification of the descriptions found in EDAL is clearly visible. If the detailed history of one single Turkic word can take 2 to 4 pages (data and analysis) in WOT, it is hard to believe that the complete history of an Altaic word with its cognates can be given in a half-page-long description.

As for the methodology used in EDAL, the above cited Hungarian words *árpa* and *ug(u)*, and their Altaic background are chosen as good examples: cultural migratory words such as Turkic **arpa* and onomatopoeic ones such as Turkic **ügi* and **ükki* cannot be used with certainty in the reconstruction of proto-languages or of

24 The status of the final segment °*z* is dubious. It was traditionally described as a suffix of duality (see, e.g., Gabain 1941: 64), but that is surely not the case.

25 It is always given in the literature as an argument for the loan character of Mongolic *ikire* that the number 'two' is *koyar* in Mongolic. This is however not a strong argumentation since the word for 'twin' must not necessarily come from the base 'two'.

any kind of proto-stages. See further Hock (1991: 558) about the problematic of the onomatopoeic words in general: "The chance of unrelated vocabulary items being similar is especially great in the area of onomatopoeia. [...] As a consequence, it is entirely possible that languages independently create (or re-create) phonologically similar expressions for similar noises in the 'real word'." Accordingly, words of onomatopoeic origin and cultural migratory words do not fit into a regular genealogical pattern, and they must be excluded from the reconstruction of a proto-language.

All the five examples presented under point 3 provided cases for the 'mishandling' of phonology, morphology and syntax. For instance, if 'millet' and 'barley' or 'reed', 'brushwood' and 'grain' can be compared without any remark, if it is not important how the Mongolic word *uguli* can be morphologically segmented, it is easy to create a world which fits well within our dreams and wishes.

Although EDAL has an important place in the history of Altaic studies, all of its etymologies and research results must be tested by means of a real and consistent methodology. In the initial phase of the revision those entries must be dropped which present untenable semantic and morphological analyses and explanations. Thereafter the remaining set of etymologies must be worked out in detail in order to provide plausible and reliable descriptions for each word in the dictionary. As long as this research is not done, many questions about the hypothetical family cannot be settled. And the floor is open...

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