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HENRYK JANKOWSKI

BASKAKOV'S CLASSIFICATION OF NOGHAI DIALECTS REVISITED

The aim of this paper is to demonstrate that the classification of the Noghai language into dialects based upon phonetic features proposed by Baskakov (1940) and repeated in his later works is inaccurate. An attempt will also be made to correct some other inadequacies in Baskakov's studies on the Noghais.

1. Inadequacy in establishing principles of classification

Firstly, Baskakov's classification is not comprehensive, for it ignores a few groups of Noghais. In fact, Baskakov has only visited and studied the Kuban Noghais, whom he termed Ak Noghais, the Noghais inhabiting western settlements of so-called Noghai Steppe between the rivers Kuma and Terek, whom he called Proper Noghais, and the Kara Noghais of eastern settlements of the Noghai steppe. This steppe was in 1957 administratively divided between Stavropol country of the present-day Russian Federation, Daghestan Autonomous Republic, also part of Russian Federation, and Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Republic. There are a few other Noghai groups that fell outside the scope of Baskakov's study: the Noghais of Astrakhan, Crimean Noghais, and so-called Kumuk Noghais of Daghestan¹, who should not

¹ The Kumuk Noghai (Qumuq Nogay), according to their habitation places, are subdivided into Targu, Yaḡsay and Köstek Nogay (Gadžieva 1976: 8). In the past, they were subjected to Kumuk landowners. It is true that many

be confused with the Kara Noghais. Although Baskakov did mention the first two groups, he maintained that they had changed their language for Tatar and Crimean Tatar, respectively, (Baskakov 1940: 3). Now it is evident that in the Astrakhan region there are a few Noghai groups which preserved their language (Arslanov 1992, 1997a, 1997b; Arslanov, Viktorin 1995)². Although it is true that now the Noghais in the Crimea speak Crimean Tatar, those who have emigrated to Dobrudja maintain their language quite well, see Kowalski 1939, Mahmut 1975, Jankowski 1993³.

Secondly, Baskakov's classification, as tested by the validity of phonetic markers he established to distinguish three dialects, does not turn out to be well-founded. I believe that in fact Baskakov has distinguished three dialects not on the basis of the analysis of his study, but on geographical grounds. It must be noted that in most territories the Noghais were compelled to abandon nomadic life and settle down very late and the process was not completed until 1929. The emerging villages, then forced to become co-operative farms, were in many cases ethnically mixed (Gadžieva 1976: 36)⁴. This implies that the language

of those Noghais speak now Kumuk with some Noghai substrate, and the problem of the Kumuk Noghai dialect is complicated (Xangišiev 1989: 66).

² These are the Karaghash, the Kondraw, and the Alabugat Tatars (the language of so-called Yurt Tatars is a mixture of Tatar and Noghai). After obtaining new evidence of the language of these ethnic groups, Baskakov modified his view and confirmed that Noghai was also spoken in Astrakhan district (Baskakov 1997: 328).

³ In addition, there are at least two Noghai groups in Turkey with some command of the Noghai language. The representatives of one of them, who inhabit a few villages in Eskişehir district, are still able to recall some remnants of their language, and the other group, the residents of eleven villages near Şereflikoçhisar, although at present undergoing rapid Turkization, still continue to use their mother language (Jankowski, to appear). Naturally, Baskakov could not study these groups in 1934 and 1936 when he carried out his fieldwork.

⁴ Especially after constructing new industrial centres such as Neftkumsk and Zatorechniy. Estimates are that in the years 1932-33 nearly half the nation died out of hunger in the aftermath of forcible collectivisation.

used in these localities must also have been mixed, which is supported by the revision of Baskakov's texts.

Thirdly, Baskakov has not only created Noghai dialects, but also new Noghai ethnic groups. In 1940, he said that there were three dialects: Ak Noghai, Proper Noghai and Kara Noghai (1940: 4). Although he confirmed that Ak Noghais formerly called themselves Noghais of Kuban (Quban Nogaylar, at present in the Karachai-Cherkes Autonomous Republic of Russian Federation), in 1963 he claimed straightforward that the Ak Noghai dialect is called so by the speakers of this dialect (Baskakov 1963: 497)⁵. The Proper Noghai is also Baskakov's product. However, it has more legitimacy, for it includes representatives of great tribal units, such as Yetisan/Ėetisan, Yedişqul/Ėedişqul and Yemboyluq/Ėemboyluq, which once formed a relatively coherent Horde. Only the Kara Noghais are indeed an ethnic subdivision among the other groups. However, there may have been close interrelations also between the Kara Noghais and their relatives, neighbours, in fact, since in 1904 Ramstedt said that the Yetisan Noghais who inhabited Achikulak were Kara Noghais (see Halén 1991: 106).

It is to note that in the territory where Baskakov carried out his fieldwork Gadžieva (1976: 8) distinguishes one group of Noghais more, Beshtaw-Kum Noghais, who live in two villages: Kangli and Karamurza near the present-day Mineral'nie Vodi. Baskakov recorded texts from four speakers of Kangli, but included them in the Ak Noghai dialect (Baskakov 1940: 4)⁶.

Fourthly, Baskakov's 1940 publication reveals one methodological inaccuracy. Notably, he writes that in his fieldwork he applied a questionnaire, but no unique questionnaire is reflected in the publica-

⁵ By then this could turn true. Since Baskakov's dictionary became a standard dictionary, it is possible that not only scholars, but also some Noghais, under the influence of this dictionary, really began to use the Ak Noghai name. However, my Noghai colleagues supported my suspicions saying that there was never anything like Ak Noghai, and the term (meaning White Noghai) was invented by Baskakov by analogy to Kara Noghai (that is Black Noghai).

⁶ Now the Noghais inhabit only one village, Kangli, out of former forty (once called *qırq awul*), see *Poloveckaya Luna* 2 (1991), 10.

tion. The words provided vary from informant to informant; therefore, they cannot be compared.

Lastly, at some informants we see essential diversification in texts according to style. For example, inf. 21 (in Baskakov's classification PN), Bagdad Mustafaieva, 66, whose texts should have a *ğ*- initial, pronounces *ğ*- only in the sample of words, whereas in proverbs only *y*- initial is present. Quite interestingly, *ğaman* 'wrong, bad' in the wordlist corresponds to *yaman* in the proverbs (8 occurrences, beautifully alliterating with *yağsı* 'good').

2. Revision of the validity of phonetic features

Baskakov has selected twelve phonetic features. In the following, we shall closely test all these features one by one. We refer to Baskakov's three dialects by the abbreviations AN (Ak Noghai), PN (Proper Noghai) and KN (Kara Noghai). As Baskakov said, texts 1 – 19 reflect AN (more exactly, texts 16 – 19 pertain to the Kangli sub-dialect), texts 20 – 37; 39 – 42; 44 – 45 and 60 PN, and texts 38; 43 and 46 – 49 KN. It is to note, that the numbers point in fact to the informants, not texts; in the case of some informants more than one text was recorded⁷.

1. *AN* *u* > *i*; *ü* > *i*, in contrast to PN and Kara Noghai where this change does not occur.

This is a weak argument for, as Baskakov affirms, this change occurs in only a few words. In fact, in the samples recorded from the first two informants, we find only one occurrence of this at each: *tırna* 'crane'. In addition, the same word in this form is present in PN texts (inf. 28, p. 178, and inf. 31, 180). An opposite change *i* > *u* is visible in the speech of inf. 1 (*uryaşı* < *ıryaşı* 'female'). At inf. 1, there is *žumaq* 'riddle', but the same is demonstrated at informants from the other dialects (p. 191; 195). It seems that there is instability in the quality of this vowel which has nothing to do with dialect difference. Both variants are optional (see inf. 35, p. 187).

⁷ There is no text recorded from inf. 18 and the narrator of the texts on pp. 199–201 is not clearly indicated.

2. *AN* and *KN* *uwu* > *ü* in contrast to Proper Noghai in which it is preserved. This feature is also wrongly established, for there is only one word *ül* 'son' in the pronunciation of two informants (3 and 4). Other words which have the *-uwu-* sound sequence in these dialects, e.g. *žuwuq*, *yuwuq*, *tuwul*, are as in PN.

3. *KN* *y*- : *AN* *ž*- : *PN* *ğ*- (Baskakov 1940: 34; 98–99).

The *y*- initial is also evident from Ramstedt's texts. There is not a single *ž/ğ*- word in the texts recorded by Ramstedt⁸. However, Baskakov's texts demonstrate significant variability. In Proper Noghai, the *y*- ~ *ž*- ~ *ğ*- figures are the following:

- 20th (wordlist) *y*- 11, *ž*- 1
- 21st (wordlist) *y*- none, *ğ*- 11; in texts only *y*-
- 22nd (wordlist) *y*- 12, *ğ*- 1 (in Per. *ğan* 'soul'); in texts *y*- ?⁹
- 25th (wordlist) *y*- 1, *ğ*- 4
- 26th (texts) *y*- 16, *ž*- 1 (and one *ğ*- in *ğumaq* 'riddle' as a heading')
- 27th (texts) *y*- 8, *ğ*- 1 (in *ğummaq* 'riddle' as a heading')
- 28th (wordlist) *y*- 17, *ğ*- 2; in texts only *y*-
- 29th (wordlist) *y*- 13, *ğ*- none (even *yan* 'soul')
- 30th (wordlist) *y*- 11, *ğ*- none; in texts *y*- 5, *ğ*- 5 (but one in the word *ğimaq*)
- 31st (wordlist) *y*- 3, *ğ*- 12; in texts *y*- 31, *ğ*- 3 (all in Ar. *ğawap* 'answer')
- 32nd (wordlist) *y*- 5, *ğ*- 6 (one in *ğan* and one in *ğimaq*)
- 33rd (wordlist) *y*- none, *ğ*- 6; in texts *y*- 1, *ğ*- 18
- 34th (texts) *y*- 8, *ğ*- 6
- 35th (wordlist) *y*- 9, *ğ*- 4; in texts *y*- 15, *ğ*- 10
- 36th (wordlist) *y*- 11, *ğ*- 2; in texts *y*- 16, *ğ*- 6
- 37th (wordlist) *y*- 1, *ğ*- 7; in texts *y*- 10, *ğ*- 11
- 39th (wordlist) *y*- 7, *ğ*- 1 (in *ğimaq*); in texts *y*- 20, *ğ*- 1 (in *ğimaq*)
- 40th (wordlist) *y*- 13, *ğ*- none
- 41st (wordlist) *y*- 10, *ğ*- 2 (including Per. *ğan* 'soul')
- 42nd (wordlist) *y*- 6, *ğ*- none; in texts *y*- none, *ğ*- 2 (one in *ğimaq*)
- 44th (wordlist) *y*- 11, *ğ*- none; in texts *y*- 2, *ğ*- 1
- 45th (wordlist) *y*- 10, *ğ*- 1; in texts *y*- 38, *ğ*- 1.

⁸ Although we find a remark that there is "dž/j" change in the speech of Yedishkul Noghais (p. 106).

⁹ In my copy of Baskakov's book, pp. 170–171 with the texts 23–24 and part of 22 are lacking.

In KN, the *y*- initial really prevails, but there are also *ğ*- words, e.g. *ğazdī* 'he wrote' (49, p. 210).

Among AN samples, there is not a single informant who would exclusively use *ž*- words¹⁰. Some even prefer *ğ*- to *ž*- (e.g. inf. 3 who prefers *ğ*- to *ž*- in the questionnaire, at the rate 11 to 1, and *y*- to *ž*-, at the rate 3 to 2 (both in *žīmaq*) in the texts).

4. AN *p*- in contrast to PN and KN *b*-. This is a property encountered in not more than three words. In addition, we also find *p*- words in PN, e.g. *pītaq* (and not *butaq*, inf. 35, p. 188).

5. AN and PN *š* ~ *s* in contrast to KN. It is not true since there is a range of words in KN in which this variation also take place, e.g. *asliq* 'wheat' (inf. 48, p. 209), *basqaya* 'to another', *sisesi* 'the glass of' (inf. 46, p. 208), *qasīna* 'to him' (inf. 38, p. 194).

6. AN *χ* in contrast to PN and KN *q*. This distinctive feature is also doubtful for, on one hand, there is evidence of *χ* in KN, e.g. *χatun* ~ *χatīn* 'woman, lady' inf. 48, p. 209), and on the other, there is *q* in AN, e.g. *qatīn* 'id.' (inf. 7, p. 158).

7. AN *-nl*- in opposition to KN *-ll*- and PN *-nn*-. This is probably the best distinctive feature, although incidentally we find *-nn*- in all dialects, e.g. *künnör* 'days', *tonnar* 'dresses', *yasaıannar* 'they did' (inf. 43, p. 202, KN); *künnör* 'id.' (inf. 1, p. 145, AN).

8. AN *pm* > *pp* is in fact included in the following feature.

9. AN *m* > *p* after a voiceless consonant and *m* > *b* after *z*, *r*, in contrast to KN in which this is not the case, and PN in which *m* > *b* occurs only after *z* is also doubtful, for there are KN *yazba* 'do not write' (and not *yazma*, inf. 43, p. 202), *kespe* (and not *kesme* 'do not cut' (id.).

10. AN possessive noun and verbal person suffix *-mIz* in contrast to PN and KN *-mIs*. This claim is not convincing for there are *-mIz* suffixes in PN and KN as well, e.g. PN *közlörimiz* 'our eyes', *üzirle-nemiz* 'we are preparing' (inf. 22, p. 172), KN *künlörimiz* (infs 47 and 48, p. 209); KN inf. 52 has pronounced *islejmis* 'we are working', but *küllörimiz* 'our days' (217; 222).

¹⁰ In the short sample of inf. 10, there is no *y*- ~ *ž*- ~ *ğ*- initial word.

11. Frequent AN and PN *-ls* > *-s*- in contrast to KN where it occurs exceptionally. This deletion is difficult to evaluate in Baskakov's texts, since he usually notes *-(l)s* (e.g. KN 194, 210), so it is not clear whether *-l*- was really deleted or not.

12. In this point, Baskakov provides a few cases of metathesis, see also a list on p. 24. As in the other cases, there are exceptions, i.e. instead of the expected AN *tezere* 'window', we find the regular *tereze* (p. 24, 32).

3. Conclusion

Baskakov said that Proper Noghai and Kara Noghai were closer to each other than either of them to Ak Noghai (p.4). He also said that "as for particular features, there are similarities and differences within any pair of dialects" (ibid.). Despite this restraint, Baskakov, a scholar well-known for his taxonomic approach to language, decided to set up three dialects on doubtful grounds, in my opinion arbitrarily.

Texts published by Baskakov in 1940 demonstrate a great variability in phonetic form even in identical settlements, and in the pronunciation of the same informants. Although we do not always know the nature and the cause of this, we may try to draw some conclusions. Firstly, in most cases phonetic variability is optional and, in AN and PN, weakly motivated by the areal factors. Secondly, some informants used different forms in common speech and in oral literature, in particular with regard to *y*- ~ *ž*- ~ *ğ*- initial. For example, except for informants 33, 37 and 42, all the others, especially informants 21, 28, 31, 35, 36 and 45, predominantly uttered words with the *y*- initial in oral literature, in contrast to colloquial language with more significant representation of the *ž*- ~ *ğ*- initial. Thus, the *ž*- ~ *ğ*- initial seems to be a new tendency in the areas of AN and PN. In other cases of variability, we probably have to do with individual adaptation to the dominating local standard. The influence of Karachai on AN and Kumuk on PN is not clear and should be studied. The differences, aside from their optional nature, seem to be gradual and quantitative rather than qualitative. We should speak of preferences rather than of isophones. On the whole, not only ethnic, but also linguistic situation among the Noghais is very complicated and can not be solved by setting up sharp dividing lines.

The aim of this short paper is not to discredit the contribution of the late Baskakov to the study of Noghai. We have only attempted to point out a few methodological inaccuracies. That Baskakov's conclusions contrast with the samples he collected and published is an argument in favour of reliability of language material. Baskakov certainly did not forge the texts and did not change them so that they could adhere to his findings. One must also keep in mind the fact that the Noghai language was little known and studied at the time he worked on it. Baskakov's texts are a good starting point for further work, but much work is still to be done. The same holds true for Baskakov's dictionary, which is good but does not include many words used by the Noghais. In short, the problem of Noghai dialects is still unsolved. Unfortunately, the political situation in the Caucasus is not very suitable for dialect investigations, since a number of Noghais inhabit territories adjacent to Chechnya and in Chechnya¹¹. Since the Noghais do not have their own administration and they are dispersed between several political units, there is little chance to stabilize the language standard they developed. Now the Noghai language has shrunk to the use at homes and between relatives, friends and colleagues. Its position is better in Daghestan and Karachai-Cherkesia than in regions where they do not have any educational or cultural institutions. For this reason, Baskakov's texts recorded in the 1930s, especially those from the villages of Achikulak, Kara Töbe, Kaiasuli, Irgakli etc., are of a great historical value.

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¹¹ Shelkovskiy region of the former Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Republic.