

THREE VOLGA KIPCHAK ETYMOLOGIES⁺

by

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The complicated ethnogenetical processes of the Volga peoples are well-reflected in the relationship of their respective languages. Especially complicated is the connection between Volga-Kipchak (VK) (i. e. Pashkir and Kazan Tatar) and the Chuvash language. Before the 14th century a highly important people, the Volga Bulgarians (VB) lived on their territory and even today the debate about the historical relationship of the present Volga Turkic people and the Volga Bulgarians has not been concluded. It is obvious that Chuvash is the nearest to the language of the Volga Bulgarians, i. e. the Volga Bulgarians spoke a language of Chuvash type, while the present Kazan Tatar and Bashkir belong to the Volga branch of the Kipchak group of Turkic languages. According to this it would be an over-simplification to conclude that the modern Chuvash population and language are direct descendants of the Volga Bulgarians and that the whole body of Volga Kipchaks moved to their present dwelling-place after the 13th century during the time of the Golden Horde, and that their connection with the Bulgarians began only here and at this time. This is contradicted not only by the majority of the historical sources on the Bashkirs but by several other facts, too.

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The complicated ethnogenetical processes are well-reflected in the Volga Kipchak languages. In the following I shall examine three words of VK religious terminology. The majority of the VK religious terms are of Arabic-Persian origin, but a few of them are of Turkic origin and these are extremely valuable from an ethnogenetical point of view.

Tat. izge 'svjaščennyj, svjatoj, blagoj, dobryj, blagočestvyj, asket, svjatoša', Bashk. izge 'svjatoj, svjaščennyj, blagočestvyj, početnyj, dobryj, horošyj'.

The basic meaning of the word is 'holy, good' and in the light of VK phonology we can reconstruct an earlier ⁺ezgi form. This form can actually be found in Kazakh where it came from the Volga Kipchak languages together with many other words. The word ezgü 'good' recorded among the Anatolian-Turkish dialects comes most likely from the language of an immigrant ethnic group (Derleme Sözlüğü V, p. 1829).

Radloff (I, c. 1543) took notice of this word and he properly connected it with the Old Turkic word edgü 'good'. According to him the Tatar and Kazakh data: "...durch die Schriftsprache erhaltene und der dschagataischen Orthographie nach gelesene Uigurische Wort ätkü (properly edgü)".

Räsänen (1969, p. 36; here reference to Poppe 1927,

p. 95) agrees with Poppe's opinion: "z- Formen aus irgendwelchem z-Dialekt". At present there are two Turkic languages in which there is a -z- in the place of Old Turkic -d-, these are Khakass and Yellow Uighur but for historical and geographical reasons both are out of the question.

The standard Kipchak form of Old Turkic edgü exists in the VK languages as well, Cf. Tat. igelek, Bashk. igelek 'good'. They underwent the development edgülik > eygülik > igelek and their stem ⁺eygi > ⁺ige would be the regular and expected form.

The Turkic literary languages played an important role in the life of the Volga Turkic peoples. From among the three phases of Eastern (East) Turkic languages, the Kharakhanide, the Khwarezmian and the Chagatay, the second and the third can be detected in the Volga-district where they were soon influenced by the local languages. That means that local versions developed which were later considerably influenced by Osman Turkish as well. In eastern literary Turkic we can actually find the form in question: Kāšğarī: eḍgü, Kutadgu Bilig: eḍgü, Yugnaki: eḍgü, Rabḡūzī: eḍgü, ezgü, Nahčul al-Farādīs: eḍgü, Husrav and Šīrīn: eḍgü, Tefsīr: eḍgü, ezgü, eygü, At-tuhfat: eḍgü, Ibn Muhanna: eḍgü, (Turkmān) eygü ("in our country"), Chagatay: edgü, eḍgü, ezgü, Qisay Yusuf: eḍgü, eygü.

It is obvious that the possibility of a literary borrowing did exist. The word occurs, however, in Chuvash as well. In modern Chuvash we come across the word ira indicating 'good ghost, good', which Egorov (1964, p.344) rightly associated with the Old Turkic word edgü. The Chuvash -r- developed through -z- (Cf. adaq 'foot' Chuvash ura), the -g- regularly dropped out and the present form came into being from the original edgü through a previous form [†]irě < [†]ezgi.

The VK ezgi could be both a literary adoption and a borrowing from the Volga Bulgarian language. Now let us examine two other words belonging also to religious terminology.

Tat. böti, Tat. dialect bötü 'amulet, talisman', Tat. Paasonen bätü 'Geschriebenes Gebet das am Hals getragen wird', Bashk: beteü 'amulet, talisman'. The word occurs in Chuvash too: pětü (in Viryal there is no ö!) 'amulet' The Chuvash word is the equivalent of the Old Turkic bitig 'writing'. In Chuvash it is a regular development bitig > [†]bitix > [†]bitiü > [†]bětěü > pětü (declination stem pětěvě). As we can see, Bashkir has retained the last but one Chuvash form. The semantic development from the denotation 'writing' to 'amulet' can be fairly understood from Paasonen's data. It should be noted that in a Tatar dialect there happens to be also a word

betek 'talisman' while the form 'writing' in every Tatar dialect is beteg. The labial vowel of the first syllable of the Tatar data is secondary in all cases.¹

Tatar: tāre 'krest', Tat. dialect: tāre tamga 'rodinka' Tat. Radlov: tāri 'ikona, obraz', Bashk: tāre 'krest, ikona, obraz'. The word is of the same origin as Tatar tāñri 'god' which is a very old inheritance in Tatar. In tāre we cannot explain the dropping of the -ŋ- from Tatar itself. In Chuvash we can find the form tură, dial. tūrě. This goes back to an earlier [†]tūri < [†]teūri < [†]tegrī < teñri. Tatar borrowed the form teūri and the long ā recorded by Radlov; reflects an eū or perhaps even an ey sound-combination.

These two words have undoubtedly come to the VK languages from Bulgar-Turkic and therefore it is quite likely that Tat. izge may belong to them.

As to the chronology of the borrowing we can state that according to Russian sources the z > r change had already taken place at the beginning of the 13th century, and it is reflected by the Volga Bulgarian inscriptions from the 13th century on. The borrowing must have taken place before the end of the 12th century, i. e. before the Mongol period. The above words could theoretically have been borrowed between the 9th and the 13th centuries, because in the loan-words dating from before the Hungarian

Conquest - - at least in certain phonetical situations - - the -z- sound (Cf. túzok, búza) had already appeared. At this time the Volga Bulgarian empire was in its glory.

From all this we can conclude that Turkic--Kipchak contacts in the middle Volga-region began earlier than the Mongolian era.

Notes

- There are two possible explanations for the labial vowel of the first syllable. There is a word bútek 'little idol' in Osman Turkish (Redhouse) which is the originally Persian bút with a diminutive suffix. (About the latter, see G. Doerfer I, pp.261-262). If the Tat. böti, bötü were connected with this word then the disappearance of the final -k- could be explained only by a Bulgar-Turkic transmission. That is highly improbable for the simple reason that the voicing of the -k- in Bulgar-Turkic is very early. It is, however, not impossible that the influence of the basic word bút, frequent in Turkic might have strengthened a labilization that could have appeared as an effected of initial b-. Paasonen's data and the Baskhir equivalent makes the relationship of the Tatar -ö- and -e- forms obvious. At the same time, the fact that there is no reduced labial sound in the Viryal dialect of the Chuvash language precludes the existence of an original labial sound in the first syllable.