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'Āšūr Beg's Eastern Turkic Grammar and Conversational Book

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1 Introduction and the Background of the Manuscript

The manuscript the dissertation is based on is an Eastern Turkic textbook, the title of which is *The Foundation of the Turkic Language*. The author ʿĀšūr beg wrote this book for his pupil Mīr Muḥsin ḫān, so that he can learn Turkic with the help of it. The book, being itself a copy, consists of five sections. The first one is a grammar of the Eastern Turkic language written in Persian (f. 2v–20v.), the second one contains short dialogues and stories (f. 21r–61r.), the third one is a part of an epic poem (f. 62r–73v.), the fourth one is a Turkic–Persian dictionary (f. 74v–86v.), and the fifth one is a versified dictionary (f. 87r–104r.), however, the author of this last one is certainly not ʿĀšūr beg. The manuscript originates from North India and currently, it is in the possession of the British Library. The time it was written is unknown, and only the date of the copy is given (1837).

Since one can only assume the time of writing, a larger framework is applied in the dissertation to draw the historical background and to find the place of the manuscript in it. It is not only a matter of chronology, but the importance of ʿĀšūr beg's book as a monument of the Turkic languages can shine out in this way.

Firstly, a summary of the history of the Eastern Turkic language area is provided, especially following the history of West Turkestan from the Turkification of Transoxania beginning in the 8th century until the present-day Republic of Uzbekistan. During this summary, an important viewpoint is to demonstrate the political and ethnic processes. Thus, it can be revealed how the legacy of an era inhered to the next one, as well as the innovations and turning points of the new periods.

As for the manuscript, the epoch of the Khanate of Bukhara from the 16th to the 19th century is of remarkable importance. At this time, Central Asia is well after Amir Timur's powerful empire, but before Russian conquest and the loss of independence. Due to the Age of Discovery in the 15th century, Central Asian trade routes connecting the East and West saw a loss of significance. Longtime functioning routes towards India gained strength instead. The dissertation refers to the importance of these tendencies in the summary.

The development of the Eastern Turkic language and literature is closely related to the history of West Turkestan. A short overview is given about the certain periods (11–12th century: Karakhanid, 13–14th century: Khwarezmian, 15–20th century: Chagatay, 20–21st century: Modern Uzbek), but at the same time, transitional periods are also emphasised.

Regarding the manuscript, the period of Chagatay is the most relevant. Mīr ʿAlī Šēr Navā'ī's (1441–1501) literary work hallmarks the cultural florescence of Timurid courts. His oeuvre consists of several anthologies, epic poems and prosaic works, which made a huge impact and his language became a literary standard for centuries. Lots of dictionaries and linguistic works aimed to make his writings available. Navā'ī's purpose was to inspire poets and authors to write in their Turkic mother tongue. His popularity can be attested by the fact that his works was not only known in the later Uzbek khanates but also in the Ottoman Empire, India, East Turkestan, Crimea and the Volga area, establishing the prestige of the Chagatay literary language.

At the beginning of the 16th century, Bābur of the Timurid dinasty founded the Mughal Empire in India, and as a result, interest toward the Turkic language grew significantly in the subcontinent. During the three centuries of the Mughal dinasty, the knowledge of Turkic was part of the basic literacy for the members of the royal and noble families. Since very few people knew this language in India, more and more grammars and dictionaries were written in the 17th century in order to satisfy the ever growing demand for language learning. ʿĀšūr beg's textbook, too, originating from India, is most probably one of these works.

From the 18th century onwards, local characteristics started to appear in the Chagatay standard and thus, the distance between the literary norm and the spoken language grew remarkably. On the one hand, spoken Turki differentiated during the centuries, on the other hand, Oghuz and Kipchak elements emerged because of ethnic migrations. Nomads and settled people living side by side and amalgamating left its imprint in the language of the Turkic population in Transoxania. The Chagatay literary standard appeared to be archaic in comparison with the colloquial variant coexisting with it. Chronologically, ʿĀšūr beg's manuscript belongs to this late period of Chagatay. The textbook does not follow Navā'ī's literary standard, but it intends to introduce the everyday spoken language. Because of this, this is a representative piece of work and a great source of the transitional stage between late Chagatay and modern Uzbek. What is more, it was written in India and thanks to this, it is an impressive contribution to the history of Turkic languages in India, which is a relatively new area in Turkology.

The dissertation discusses the manuscript in two chapters. First, it presents and analyses the grammar and then the conversational chapter. This way, it reveals the background of

'Āšūr beg's textbook and investigates the reasons, circumstances and the goal of the its writing. The manuscript has not been examined thoroughly yet. Charles Rieu prepared a catalogue for the Persian and Turkic manuscripts of the British Museum, in which 'Āšūr beg 's manuscript has the index number Or. 404. József Thúry, Henry F. Hofman and Ayhan Tergip mentions the book based on the description of the catalogue. Benedek Péri discussed a passage of the grammar, and most recently, Fikret Turan published a short summary of the grammar, furthermore he investigated some aspects of the dictionary and the versified dictionary.

Since the manuscript has not been published yet, the dissertation attempts to prepare this process. The appendix contains the English translation of the grammar and the Persian text of the conversational chapter, and also the Latin transcription of the Turkic texts of the same chapter.

2 The Grammar

'Āšūr beg's grammar follows the tradition of the Arabo-Persian grammar writing. The origo of this tradition is the Arabic language of the Qur'ān or Classical Arabic. Spoken Arabic differentiated from the language of Muḥammad by the 9th century, therefore it became necessary to lay down its grammatical rules, so that false reading and interpretation of the Qur'ān could be avoided. First grammarians provided explanations to the Qur'ān verse by verse, and the method of describing the language became a coherent system later on.

This tradition – which can be considered Persian, too, because of the Persian grammarians' contributions ever since the beginnings – can be traced back to the 9th century from now, because grammars of the Arabic language were written for educational purposes for the sake of the new generation and those having a mother tongue different from Arabic.

This grammatical system, completely fitting for Classical Arabic, was later used for other languages (eg. Persian, Ottoman Turkish), however, grammarians struggled to apply the scheme of the description due to the different typological characteristics of those languages. Many examples can be observed in 'Āšūr beg's grammar (system of tenses, dual number etc.). It is very common in grammatical descriptions that from the viewpoint

of the language redundant or non-existent features are discussed, while essential ones are being ignored. The grammatical framework however arranges linguistic knowledge into a systematic order, and it applies categories to them. Thanks to this, similarly described languages can be compared to each other more easily. Also, for one who learns a language, well-known categories make it more simple to understand the grammatical description.

Many (mainly Eastern) Turkic grammars were written in India. ʿĀšūr beg's book belongs to them, too, and his work fits well into the movement pertaining to the Turkic language in the Mughal Empire. In the analysis, the dissertation follows the order of the topics seen in the grammar. It investigates the approach coming from the Arabo-Persian tradition with its characteristics, preferences and its viability for practical usage. Besides, the analysis uses comparison in many aspects (other works embedded in the same tradition, texts of the conversational chapter, modern description of Chagatay, modern Uzbek language and dialects). Through this, the place of the grammar can be established in the tradition, and the transitional nature of ʿĀšūr beg's Turkic language between Chagatay and modern Uzbek might become more evident.

Although ʿĀšūr beg's grammar is not divided into sections, it can be detected that the structure is based upon the three traditional divisions: verbs (*fiʿl* in Arabic), nouns (*'ism*) and particles (*ḫarf*).

At the beginning of the grammar, the author introduces the Turkic verbal system. First, he describes some types of verbal derivations (noun to verb, intransitive to transitive, active to passive), touches on the topic of polarity (affirmative and negative), then gives a lengthy account about tenses (near, distant and continuous past, simple present and aorist, future), and finally, he discusses moods (imperative, optative and conditional). Examples are given with the verb *kel-* 'come'. Generally, all grammatical persons and numbers are presented, and sometimes, alternatively formed or pronounced variations are also noted. For example, for the second person singular of the imperative mood, four forms are given: *kelgin, kel, kelġil* and *kelgil* 'come!' (the latter two differs in their orthography), or for the third person plural of the verbal tense formed from the gerund *-b*: *kelibtürlär* and *kelibtülä* 'they have come'.

Unlike the traditional method, discussion of the nouns comes only after the verbs. The reason behind this might be the inapplicability of the Arabic system of endings (*'iʿrāb*) – that also concerns noun cases – to Turkic. As a result, Turkic do not have a case system

comparable to Arabic, therefore it is not discussed in the grammar either as such. Hence the description of nouns begins with participles derived from verbs (active and passive participle), but many other derivational endings are referred that have an agentive or patientive meaning. Other kinds of nominal types are defined according to Arabic, too (nouns indicating a place, time or an instrument, nouns expressing comparison). The topic of connecting nouns (*'iżāfat*) also belongs here, just like the system of demonstrative and personal pronouns.

The category of particles is somewhat malleable. A great variety of such endings appear in the grammar: case suffixes (accusative, lative, locative and terminative), postpositions (expressing places and comparison), affirmative and negative particles, copulas, gerundial suffixes (temporal), deverbal suffixes, as well as auxiliary verbs (eg. *al-* 'take' ~ 'can, be able').

In the analysis, it is concluded that 'Āšūr beg follows and uses the formula of the tradition of the Arabo-Persian grammar writing. It can be observed that the author applies the typologically different categories of Arabic to the Turkic language, ie. he elaborates similar structures that are irrelevant to or completely absent from Turkic (eg. dual number, nouns indicating places). At the same time, specific features that are present in Turkic but missing from Arabic are labelled under other terms (eg. case suffixes). Although many elements are being overlooked due to this, 'Āšūr beg's work satisfies the requirements of the Arabo-Persian tradition, moreover, it even exceeds them with its innovative approach. It often refers to the forms of other Turkic varieties, as well as to colloquial forms, which is not typical of grammars of Arabic that are based on the language of the Qur'ān. This confirms the fact that 'Āšūr beg's intention was mainly to introduce the everyday, spoken language.

3 The Conversational Chapter

One of the basic assumptions of the dissertation in this chapter is that textbooks made for practical usage reflect life and circumstances of the users of that language. Through the investigation of the dialogues and stories used as illustrations, one can get an insight into the life and social settings of the community pictured in them. More information about 'Āšūr beg's book, the reason of writing and factors motivating the author can be obtained

by examining the textbook from a sociographical viewpoint. The conversational chapter of the manuscript with its texts serves as a great source for this.

The characteristics of the community depicted in the texts are investigated from the following aspects: 1. Geographical and other circumstances regarding localities (cities, geographical areas, distant areas, places of events and conversations); 2. Languages, peoples and ethnic groups appearing in the texts; 3. Occupations and financial conditions of the people; 4. Issues of social structure (men and women, age, titles and ranks), religion. Considering the data, the dissertation attempts to define the social identity of the target audience of the textbook, and in the end, what could have been the practical goal of this work.

In the texts, cities and geographical places (Kunduz, Yarkand, Bukhara, Tashkurgan, Samarqand, Qarabagh, Tashkent, Kokand, Khujand, Pul-i Malan, Balkh and Shirabad, Khorasan, the Alay Mountains and Badakhshan) can refer to the living space of the community in many ways. Place names can mark destinations, places of origin or the place where a person is coming from. Names of cities often occur as an attribute next to one's name (eg. Murād bay of Yarkand, Mavlānā 'Abū 'Ismā'īl of Samarqand, Davlat bay of Tashkent). According to the variety and dynamism of the geographical places in the stories, the cities and towns of the area were interconnected in a vivid network, and altogether, they outline the territory inhabited by the community. This area belonged to the Khanate of Bukhara between the 16th and the 18th centuries.

The city of Yazd in Iran, China and India also appear in the texts, however, these distant places never occur as the settings of the events – they are only mentioned by people.

It is difficult to give a comprehensive overview of the locations of the events. This clearly shows that during the edition of his work, 'Āšūr beg paid attention to cover a large part of the people's living space with the illustrating texts of his book.

Events can occur outside of the city: on the road, in the meadow, in the steppe or on the battlefield, but the primary location is the city. There are public places like the bazaar, the mosque, the school, the street, the well or the cemetery. People often go to the house of the washerman, the pack-saddle maker or the doctor and even to local noblemen, in castles or in the khan's camp. Nevertheless, events most often take place in private locations – at home, in the neighbourhood or in other people's houses. The variety of places makes the picture lively and gives dynamism to the events.

After this overview, the dissertation takes into account the languages and peoples appearing in the manuscript. According to ʿĀšūr beg, there are seven varieties of the Turkic languages: Turanian, Uzbek, Iranian, Qizilbash, Rumi, Kashgarian and Nogai. From these, he considers Turanian and Uzbek to be the most eloquent. Sometimes, the grammar also refers to the characteristics of certain Turkic varieties. Based on this, the main focus of the textbook is the introduction of Turanian Turkic, and the people of the conversational chapter also use this language, which can be identified as the Karluk-type Turkic language of West Turkestan. According to the data given in the grammar, the Uzbek language ʿĀšūr beg is referring to is a Kipchak-type Turkic language. The Turkic languages mentioned above do not appear in the conversational chapter. Instead, there are some other ethnic groups like Iranians, Hazaras and Kalmaks. However, Uzbeks are the most frequently mentioned group. They often appear in the stories as horsetraders.

The community is not homogeneous: "Turanians" and "Uzbeks" live together in it. The differences between the Turkic variations described in the grammar do not seem to be a difficulty in mutual intelligibility, but at the same time, the author finds it important to indicate the Uzbek identity in contrast to the other members of the community. Thus, the textbook records the historical process of the mixing of nomad Kipchaks and settled Turkic elements that began in the 16th century.

Just as the locations, a wide spectrum of occupations can be seen in the texts. People are generally employees – servants, messengers, people taking care for horses and sheep, armed soldiers, as well as intellectual workers like home teachers. In the same way, imams and doctors can also be counted as intellectuals who serve the wealth of the whole community – just like artisans: washermen, tailors and pack-saddle makers. Hunting appears as a form of supplement to living, just like some illegal activities: robbery, fraud, misappropriation, gambling or stealing. The poor make their living by begging.

Businessmen must be mentioned particularly, especially horsetraders, who are by far the most prosperous people of the community. Traffic passed through the largest urban centres of the area (eg. Samarqand, Bukhara or Tashkent) from the East to West, and also from the North to South. In the community depicted, horse is one of the main indicators of prosperity and horsetrading is a definitive attribute of its profile.

After the occupations, the dissertation investigates the financial conditions of community members. Plenty of data is provided in the texts regarding this topic. Some

people do not even have money to obtain their daily food. Among the people who earn money, there is a huge dispersion in their income: a home teacher can earn 11 rupees, while a businessman can have a stock of 10000 rupees, which makes a great difference. The average monthly wages are between 100 and 200 rupees. Certain prices mentioned in the texts are informative in relation with the wages, especially the frequently referenced prices of horses. At the lowest, it can be 200 rupees, but expensive ones can cost up to 1000 or 2000 rupees, too. This means that a horse is an unaffordable possession for many. It is a sign of one's good financial conditions, vital and essential for the community members. It is a property, a means of transportation, warfare and work, subject of business activities, a status symbol.

Quite interestingly, women are scarcely mentioned in the texts and they almost never appear as actors. People are only speaking about them in their conversations – generally in connection with wedding and sometimes, female members of the family are referred. There is only one dialogue, in which a woman plays an active role (a man escapes from the khan's camp with her), but in this dialogue, too, two men are discussing the news. This rough and vague portrayal of women reflects the manliness of the community's profile. The distribution is not so one-sided in respect of people's ages. It ranges from two-year old children to old men beyond ninety. In connection with this, many stages of a person's life can be followed in the stories: attending school, arranging marriage, work, and in the end, weakening, death and funeral. Elders are generally greatly appreciated and respected in the community.

Among the titles and ranks occuring in the texts, the beg 'mister' is the most common, but there are also bay 'lord', khan 'member of the royal family' and mirza 'prince'. These titles not always denote actual ranks, many times, it is only an expression to address someone. Sporadically, military and administrative ranks appear, too, like beglerbegi 'beg of begs', yuzbashi 'captain' and mingbashi 'colonel'. On one occasion, the honorific title nawab 'prince' can also be found and this title was especially used by Indian Muslims. Titles related to religion are mullah 'master', mawlana 'our master', hajji 'one who completed the Hajj to Mecca' and sufi 'one who follows Sufism'.

According to the texts, Islam defines every aspects of the community's life (personal names, oral expressions, customs). People gather to the mosque to pray, but some people spend their time there voluntarily studying the teachings of Islam. In the community,

Islamic sciences (eg. tradition, logic) are considered to be a part of basic knowledge. ʿĀšūr beg himself also finds it necessary to summarise the teachings of Islam. In fact, this is indeed beneficial for the language learner who wants to confess the faith in the newly acquainted language.

The dissertation assumes that the target audience of the textbook is similar to the community depicted in it. Based on this, ʿĀšūr beg wrote his book for urban, not so wealthy people generally employed by lords and rulers. Travelling is a part of their life, it is common to migrate between cities and travel long distances. In close connection with this, horses have an important role in their life as a property and a means of transportation. The system of personal relations is fundamental in the community (family, friendships, business relationships, flow of information).

As for the practical objective of the textbook, the dissertation assumes that usually, language learning in general has some kind of motivation, and textbooks are trying to satisfy these wishes. In this case, one can make supposed implications about the language learning motivations of ʿĀšūr beg's pupils based on the texts, the topics and the depicted characters.

Regarding the author's identity, it is possible that he was also from India, just like the manuscript itself. India is considerably far from the Turkic linguistic area but not completely locked away from it. At the same time, looking at the place names, he must have been familiar with the territory of the Khanate of Bukhara. His ethnic identity is an open question, too. ʿĀšūr beg might have been either from the khanate or the subcontinent, and his ethnicity could have been either Turkic, Iranian or Indian.

If he was from India, then he could have travelled to the Khanate of Bukhara easily using the trade routes connecting the Deccan and Central Asia. The most important goods on these routes were horses, because there was a huge demand in India for high-quality animals bred in the steppes of Turkestan – mainly for military purposes. Nomadic horse breeders sold their horses to traders in the Central Asian urban centres (Bukhara, Samarqand, Balkh, Herat), who then moved southward with their goods. As horses changed hands several times from town to town, their price increased gradually. In the meantime, lean horses were fattened, so that their appealing look would make them sell even better. Until the 18th century, the volume of the Indian horsetrade was enormous, and

people who could take part in this profitable business gained not only great riches but sometimes also political influence and power.

It is possible that 'Āšūr beg, as an Indian, reached the Khanate of Bukhara using these trade routes. After his pupils asked him to make a textbook from which they could learn the Turkic language, he wrote firstly a grammar in accordance with the Arabo-Persian tradition, then he attached texts of various stories and dialogues, so that his pupils can learn the application of the rules described in the grammar. He could obtain language materials easily from the Turks living in the Khanate of Bukhara. Thus, horsetrade and routes could have been the means for the author to write the textbook, as well as a motivation for the pupils to learn the language and join the business. It is not referenced that 'Āšūr beg travelled to the khanate to collect materials, however, there are some narrative elements and interjections in the texts that indirectly imply this method and procedure.

Although the time when the original work was written is not referenced in the copied manuscript, considering certain aspects, the estimated date can be either the end of the 18th century, or perhaps the beginning of the 19th century.

4 Summary

Among Turkic linguistic works written in India, 'Āšūr beg's textbook is particularly remarkable with its great amount of prosaic texts specifically recording the colloquial language. It can be considered as an historical monument, in which the everyday life of a community can be observed in its timelessness, and in this way, it preserves the imprint of the historical settings. A picture of the life of the urban population can be seen in the Khanate of Bukhara. The texts illustrate the process of the formation of the modern Uzbeks inhabiting this area, the present-day Southern Uzbekistan and Northern Afghanistan. This community can be characterised by the equestrian nomadic way of living, as well as the urban, settled lifestyle at the same time. From a linguistic viewpoint, this means the mixing of the Karluk-type "Turanian" and the Kipchak-type "Uzbek" variety that led to the appearance of the Modern Uzbek language. Therefore, this manuscript can be an important source of the spoken language variety preceding the modern national language. Besides, these materials are also valuable in respect of the history of Turkic in India.

It should be emphasised that the dissertation makes only preliminary steps in connection with the first two chapters of the manuscript. This means that – by the introduction of newer aspects – there can be further possibilities for the analysis of both the grammar and the conversational chapter (linguistic features of the conversational chapter, peculiarities of the Persian translation, new aspects in the sociographical analysis). Research can be extended by the elaboration of the third, fourth and the fifth chapters of the manuscript. In addition, the Indian context of the textbook should also be investigated further (comparison with other works, eg. grammars written in India, Turkic grammars, conversational compilations, other linguistic monuments of the Turkic languages from India).

5 Appendices

The appendices of the dissertation include the English translation of the grammar, the Latin transcription of the Turkic texts of the conversational chapter, the English translation of the conversational chapter, a few facsimile pages of the manuscript, as well as a map showing the places that can be found in the texts.

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