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## The Turkic Etymology of the Word *Qazaq* ‘Cossack’

OMELJAN PRITSAK

CONCERNING THE TURKIC ETYMOLOGY of the word *Qazaq*, there is no consensus among scholars. While the historians (Hruševs’kyj 1909, 76; Stökl 1953, 31) and the etymologists of the Slavic languages (Berneker 1924, 496; Brückner 1957, 262; Vasmer and Trubačev 1967, 495; as well as Mel’nyčuk 1985, 495–96) accept without any reservation—but also without proof—the Turkic etymology of this word, some leading Turkologists have their doubts. Räsänen (1969, 243), in his etymological dictionary of the Turkic languages, gives no etymology in his entry *qazaq*, and Doerfer (1967, 462–68) states flatly: “eine sichere Etymologie für das Wort [*qazaq*] existiert nicht.” The same opinion was expressed by Menges (1979, 196, nos. 11, 12).

From the formal point of view the word *qazaq* can be easily explained. It is a deverbal noun in /-AK/ from the verb *qaz-*, as are *käsäk* ‘piece’ from *käs-* ‘to cut’, *jatak* ‘bed’ from *jat-* ‘to lie down’, *qonaq* ‘palace; guest’ from *qon-* ‘to pass a night’, and *süräk* ‘runner’ from *sür-* ‘to run’ (Zajączkowski 1932, 61–63).

As we can see, the suffix /-AK/ forms nouns expressing the result of the action, instruments and the actor. The problem is that the verb *qaz-*, which is also attested in the older Turkic literary languages, has the meaning ‘to dig, to dig out’. Also the noun *qaz-aq* theoretically must have had the meaning ‘the digger’ (Clauson 1972, 680). And in fact such meaning is attested to in 1395 (Sreznevskij 1893, cols. 1173–74; cf. Doerfer 1967, 468). It means that there existed some Turkic languages where the said meaning was the basic one. It appears especially in Eastern Europe. But I shall not dwell on it here since Larysa Pritsak dealt with it in a recent paper (2006).

But I would like to propose the following hypothesis concerning the word *qazaq*. The given meaning of the word *qazaq* entered the given Turkic language at the time when it commonly used that particular meaning. It became “existent” when the literary language of the time included it in its vocabulary.

Hence one Turkic linguistic group preserved the words *qazaq* and *qaz-* in the meaning ‘the digger’, ‘to dig out’, and this meaning of *qaz-* has been preserved in the majority of the old and new Turkic literary languages.

Annemarie von Gabain (1960) has convincingly proven that the verb *qaz-* had in the Old Turkic language of the Orkhon inscriptions (8th century) the same meaning as the verb *qazyān-* 'to gather, conquer'. This meaning had remained in the Eurasian steppe, but since it was connected with the nomads, who were replaced as rulers by the sedentary dynasties of the Ujyurs (740–840) and thereafter with the sedentary Karakhanids (840–1220), it was not included into the Turkic literary language of that time. We have an excellent comparative dictionary of the Turkic languages from 1077, but it neglects the languages of the nomads. It was compiled by the Karakhanid prince Maḥmūd al-Kāšyarī (1985, 135). Hence the meaning of *qaz-* and *qazaq-* from the nomadic era was not included into his *Divān luyāt at-Turk*.

In the Muslim world there were two types of slaves. The first type was called *ʿabd* (pl. *ʿibād*), 'slave, son of the slaves',<sup>1</sup> who were usually black and were customarily used for heavy work and as domestic servants. The second were *mamlūks* ('purchased slaves'), purchased from the slave market. They were children of free white people who originated from the Polovcian (Qipčaq) steppe. Ethnically they were Polovcians, Cherkes, or the ancestors of the Ukrainians. They were purchased at a young age and kept in special barracks where they were instructed in military arts. The Muslim rulers who employed the *mamlūks* were the dynasties of the Fāṭimids (907–1171) and Ayyūbids (1169–1250). In 1250 the *mamlūks* dethroned the last Ayyūbid and their commander took for himself the ruler's title *ṣultān* and ruled over Syria and Egypt. The rule of the *mamlūks* lasted until 1517, when the Ottoman sultan Selim conquered both Syria and Egypt.

In order to communicate with the *mamlūks*, the Arabs of Egypt and Syria compiled several Arabic-Polovcian glossaries. One of the oldest such glossaries, written in AH 643/AD 1245, was published by Martin Houtsma in 1894. There is one lexeme *qazaq* which is translated into Arabic as *al-muǰarrad*, i.e. 'free'.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately both Hruševs'kyi (1909) and Stöckl (1953) had no knowledge about the existence of the Arabic-Polovcian dictionary, published in 1894, and even contemporary historians repeat that the lexeme *qazaq* first occurred in the *Codex Cumanicus* of 1303.

Concerning the date of the *Codex Cumanicus*, one has to mention the special study of the Hungarian Turkologist György Györffy (1942), which also remains unknown to historians. Györffy established that the *Codex Cumanicus* was a collection of several texts, all from the 13th and 14th centuries (ibid., 1–30). The first of them (where the word *Cosac* appears) was written in 1294/95. It is a Middle-Age Latin, Persian, Polovcian glossary. It was probably written in Solchat in the Crimea.<sup>3</sup> In 1303 a copy of it was made, probably in the monastery of St. John in Sarai, the capital of the Golden Horde. Between 1300 and 1340 a new copy of it was made that was ultimately owned by the compilers of the *Codex Cumanicus*, who included it in the collection at the beginning.

Thus on fol. 50v, l. 5 the Medieval Latin gloss *guayta* 'guard' has the Persian correspondence *naobat* 'guard' and the Polovcian correspondence *Ghasal Cosac*. The first word (an attribute?) has not yet been deciphered; the second is 'Cossack'.<sup>4</sup>

In New Persian literature of the period of the Golden Horde (ca. 1240–1500) there can be found a Turkic loanword *qazaq*. I should quote here just one case of its usage. I am quoting from the work of the Persian writer Naṭanzī (the "Anonymous of Iskander"), written ca. 1412.<sup>5</sup> He wrote: *dar ān navāhi dar šurāti qāzāqi me-gardad*, 'in this region he roamed in the manner of a *qāzāq*'. These three examples clearly testify that the Polovcians (Qipčaqš) had and used the institution of *qazaq*. But since the Polovcian literary language never developed, the Polovcian lexeme *qazaq* was not included into the vocabulary of the Turkic literary languages, and did not "exist" until the sixteenth century.

But the word *qazaq* and its original meaning came down to us in the notations of foreigners: Arabs in 1245, in the Latin of the Genoese 1294–1295, and in the New Persian literary language which, on par with the Chinese, was the official language of the Mongolian empire (1206–1500).

Bābur (d. 1526) the great Cossack, an excellent statesman, the conqueror of India as well as a beautiful man of letters who wrote his memoirs (*Bābur-nāme*) even during a battle became the leading classic of the Turkic Chayataj literary language.<sup>6</sup> This literary language often used the lexeme *qazaq* in its meaning as 'freebooter, one who takes possession.' I quote here three passages from his *Bābur-nāme*: "Tulun xvāja moyōlni eki üç jüz qazaq jigittlār bilā ilyar ajirdük [We sent the Mongol Tulun with two-three hundred of young *qazaq* on the raid]" (1:59, ll. 9–10); "mäniñ bilā qazaqlıqlarda vā mihnätlärdä bolyan kişiler bilā jaman ma'āš qıla kirişti [we have undertaken Cossack raids with the people who were with me suffering and in want of means of sustenance]" (1:110, ll. 19–20); and "özüm bilā qazaqlıqlarda bilā bolup kälgän bäglärgä vā jigittlärgä a'zisiyā kent vā jatal dök bērildi [To those princes and warriors who were with me on the Cossack raids were given cities as well as possessions]" (1:223, ll. 10–11). The analytical method in the etymologization of Turkic words was elaborated in the first third of the 20th century in Berlin by two German Turkologists, Prof. Willy Bang and his student (and my teacher) Prof. Annemarie von Gabain.

In 1960 Prof. Gabain published a very important study dealing with the Cossacks. I shall not discuss the sociological part of her theory, since this has already been done by Larisa Pritsak (2006), but I will limit myself to the philological theory. According to Gabain the word *qazaq* already existed in the language of the Old Turkic inscriptions of the eighth century. But it suffered a change after the denominal verbal suffix /a/ was added and its voiceless *q* changed into voiced *γ* so that it became *qazaya-*. The deverbal reflexive suffix /n/ was added to this so that the form became *qazayan*. With the Turkic Mit-

telsilbenschwund it became *qazyan*. Some Turkic languages, e.g. Polovcian (Qipčaq and Chayataj), retained the simple form *qaz-*, whereas the others, e.g. Orkhon-Turkic, preferred the reflexive form *qazyan-*, apparently because they regarded it as more expressive. The new lexeme became attractive and took the meaning of the word *qaz-*. The new verb *qazyan-* now received the meaning 'to be engaged in raids, to conquer'.

This word *qazyan-* now played an important role in the political structure of Old Turkic political life. The excerpt from the inscription of the "Bismarck of the Steppe," the minister Bilgä Toñuquq, from 716 testifies to it. It runs as follows:

İltäriş qayan qazyanmasar, joq ärti ärsär, bän özüm, bilgä Toñuquq,  
 qazyanmasar, bän joq ärtim ärsar,  
 Qapayan qayan Türk sir budun jirintä bod jämä, budun jämä, kisi jämä  
 idi joq ärtäçi ärti.  
 İltäriş qayan, bilgä Toñuquq qazyantuq üçün Qapayan qayan Türk sir  
 budun joryduqy (bu...)  
 Türk bilgä qayan, Türk sir budunuy Oyuz budunuy igidü olurur.  
 (Malov 1951, 64)

(N1) If Il-teriş Qayan [682–691] had not won, or if he had never existed, and if I myself, Bilgä Toñuquq had not won, or if I had never existed.  
 (N2) in the political organizations of Qapayan Qayan [691–716] and in the land of Türkic and Sir (Sogdian) there would have been neither tribes nor political body nor human beings at all since Il-teriş Qayan and Bilgä Qayan have won the political organization of Türk and Sir of the Qapayan Qayan has flourished this much. (N4) Türkic Bilgä Qayan (716–734) presently rules and is taking care of the political organizations of Türk, Sir and also Oyuz.

The lexeme *qaz ~ qazyan* came into being in the territory of the Old Turks around 550, at the beginning of the new Türk dynasty, which was originally a body of the *Qazaq* type. After the fall of the Old Turkic nomadic empire, their successors, the Manichaeen Ujyurs (740–840) and the Muslim Karakhanids (840–1220) became sedentary states and the designation *qazaq* was no longer in use.

And only after Bābur (d. 1526) established his empire of the *Qazaq* type did the word *Qazaq* reenter the Turkic literary languages, beginning with his Chayataj.

The history of the Turkic word *qazaq* presents an example of the inclusion of a given lexeme into the literary language provided there is real need of including it in the lexicon. In this way, the word *qazaq* from 740 until the

16th century was beyond the boundary of a Turkic literary language, so that even the modern Turkologists presented the view that the word did not exist in Turkic.

### CONCLUSION

Let me now summarize the results of this investigation. There were in nomadic Proto-Turkic at least two verbs designating 'to be engaged in raids, to conquer': *qaz-* and *qazyan*. The Polovcians (Qipčaq), a nomadic group active in Eurasia since the twelfth century (Golden 1992, 216–83), used the "simple" verb *qaz-*. The same was the case with the semi-nomadic Chayataj who emerged in the fifteenth century and became sedentary over the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (ibid., 309–17). On the other side the Imperial Orkhon-Turks, as well as the sedentary Central Asian Karakhanids (Clauson 1972, 682–83), preferred to use the more attractive reflexive variant of the same verb, *qazyan-*, for 'to be engaged in raids, to conquer'. Hence there can be no doubt that the East Slavic etymon *kazak* > *kozak* was borrowed from the Polovcian *qazaq* (< *qaz-*) some time after the fourteenth century. In this way the etymon *kazak* in Eastern Europe is of nomadic Turkic origin.

### NOTES

1. Concerning Arabic *'abd*, see *Islam: Ėnciklopedičeskij slovar'* 1991, 6–7.
2. See Wehr 1966, 120. Houtsma (1894) translates the Arabic word *al-mujarrad* as 'Landstreicher' [=vagabond], but in our context it is not accurate; see Doerfer 1967, 462.
3. The Genoese occupied Kaffa in 1261; see O. Pritsak 1991.
4. I am quoting the newest edition by Vladimir Drimba (2000), fol. 50v, dipl. ed., p. 101 [=commentary p. 221]. Doerfer (1967, 466–67) rejects any connection between the notation in *CC cosac* with the Turkic *qazaq*, because in the notation's first syllable the vowel is /o/, a form under the influence of the Ukrainian *kozak*, and not /a/, i.e. *qazaq*. But a sporadic change of /a/ into /o/ is attested in the text of the *CC*; see Gabain 1949, 51. The same sporadic change appears in some old and new Turkic languages; see Räsänen 1949, 60, 79; Brockelmann 1954, 49, 61.
5. AK 816–817 = AD 1413–1414; see *Muntaxab at-tavārixi* 1336/1957, 87.
6. I am quoting the newest and the fullest edition of *Bābur-nāme* (1995), prepared by my former student Eiji Mano. It consists of four parts in five volumes: part 1, the Turkic text of *Bābur-nāme*; part 2 (vols. 2–3), an index of all words in all forms appearing in the text; part 3 (vol. 4), a Japanese translation; part 4 (vol. 5), Japanese commentary.

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