

ANCIENT POPULATION OF TURAN: THE FORMATION OF LANGUAGES AND WRITTEN CULTURE

ДРЕВНИЕ НАСЕЛЕНИЕ ТУРАНА: ФОРМИРОВАНИЕ ЯЗЫКОВ И ПИСМЕННОЙ КУЛЬТУРЫ

B.N.Abdullayev
National Pedagogical University
of Uzbekistan named after Nizami, PhD

Б.Н.Абдуллаев
Национальный педагогический университет
Узбекистана имени Низами, PhD

Abstract: This article analyzes the ancient population of Turan, speaking "Old Iranian" and "Middle Iranian" languages, as introduced into European and global historical linguistics. It also points out that the languages that emerged in Turan are ancient tribal and people languages, and proposes treating them as "Ancient and Early Medieval Turanian languages," based on the name of their territory. It also suggests that these "Turanian languages" are the result of historical processes of separation between the Indo-European and Altaic language families.

Key words: Written culture, linguistics, Turan, Iran, peoples, tribes, ancient Iranian languages, ancient Turanian languages, early Middle Ages, Avestan language, Sogdian language, Khorezmian language, Bactrian language, Parthian language, alphabet.

Аннотация: В данной статье анализируются древнее население Турана говорящие на «древнеиранских» и «среднеиранских языках», введённые в европейскую и мировую историческую лингвистику. Также указываются что языки, возникшие на территории Турана, являются древними языками племён и народов, и предлагается трактовать их как «древние и раннесредневековые туранские языки» по названию их территории. Приводятся соображения о том, что «туранские языки» являются результатом исторических процессов разделения индоевропейской и алтайской языковых семей.

Ключевые слова: Письменная культура, лингвистика, Туран, Иран, народы, племена, древнеиранские языки, древнетуранские языки, раннее средневековье, авестийский язык, согдийский язык, хорезмийский язык, бактрийский язык, парфянский язык, алфавит.

The process of language formation, its core, and the composition of its additional terms requires in-depth historical-linguistic research. The organization

of human speech and language is characteristic of all societies. There is not a single tribe or people in the world without language or speech. The presence of various dialects among speakers, no matter how similar they may be, and the complex "cultural process" of the linguistic phenomenon over several centuries since its inception, proves that it has undergone a complex period of formation [6, 182].

The fact that peoples living in the same geographic area can coexist symbiotically for centuries, speaking related languages or languages belonging to different language families, can be seen in the example of representatives of the Altaic language group and speakers of the Indo-European language group, who lived together for millennia in the vast expanses of Central Asia, which in ancient times was called Turan. Many researchers tend to refer to this territory by its geographical name, Central or Middle Asia. We propose referring to it by its historical name, Turan. Undoubtedly, this territory played a key role in the formation of ancient human civilization, where ancient peoples and their languages developed.

The majority of the population of the northern steppes and oases of the region belonged to the Turkic layer of the Altaic language group, while the eastern part of the region, the central and southern coast of Mesopotamia (Amu Darya and Syr Darya) and the oases were inhabited by tribes and peoples belonging to the Indo-European language group, which most scholars tend to call "Iranian".

The division of languages into similar groups, into related and foreign languages, was a "conditional" classification of linguists in the second half of the 19th – early 20th centuries.

In particular, the ancient Iranian languages include Old Persian, Avestan, and the Scythian languages and dialects [10, 12-13]. However, in addition to Old Persian, the classified languages are considered to be related to the Turanian peoples and tribes. Therefore, the question currently arises as to the scientific validity of such a classification. In particular, the question is raised as to the scientific validity of the division and alienation of Proto-Turkic and Proto-Turanian languages.

However, by the early Middle Ages, these ancient languages had become even more diverse, giving rise to the term "Middle Iranian languages" in linguistics. The tribes and peoples inhabiting the vast territories of Turan, divided into dialects and vernaculars, geographically dispersed and undergoing radical changes in their lexicon, grammar, and morphology, maintained a sense of common brotherhood. Tribes and peoples speaking different languages enriched the lexicon of their languages with new terms over the centuries through migration and integration. This is why, in the early Middle Ages, language classifications included Middle Persian, Parthian, Sogdian, Khwarezmian, and Bactrian [10, 14–17]. Here, too, all languages except Middle Persian are considered languages of the Turanian

peoples. The languages of Iran, Afghanistan, and Tajikistan are considered Neo-Iranian languages. Thus, the Old Iranian and Middle Iranian languages introduced into science are Turanian languages, and only after the Iranian part of the Turkic languages became Turkic, the New Iranian languages were preserved in their territories.

Another aspect of the problem is the frequent occurrence of ancient Sogdian and Khwarezmian terms in the lexicon of modern Turkic-speaking peoples. Although European scholars called the languages that developed in Turan at that time "Iranian," we rightly consider them to be Turanian languages of the Indo-European family (Sogdian, Khwarezmian, Bactrian, Parthian, Dahae, and Saka). The preservation of Proto-Turkic and Turkic words in these languages indicates that they were closely interrelated. Another aspect is that until the mid-1st millennium BC, a common Turanian linguistic environment existed. The administrative language and writing system that emerged as a result of the Achaemenid invasion undermined this commonality. As a result, between 558 and 330 BC. The languages of the peoples under the Achaemenid rule were enriched with many ancient Persian terms of administrative-political, socio-economic and cultural-spiritual significance that penetrated into Iran, and their significance was significantly increased by terms in the original Sogdian, Khorezmian, Bactrian and Parthian languages, which had a significant impact on the linguistic environment of the region.

Ancient Iranian terms became more prominent at the level of spoken language. Furthermore, the linguistic environment in central and southern Turan was further strengthened by the influence of the written culture brought by the Achaemenids [7, 5].

The Northern Sakas, unlike their southern relatives, enriched their language at the expense of the Sarmatians, Ugrians and other neighboring tribes.

As a result of the rupture of the unified linguistic environment in the region, southern and northern branches of the common Turanian language emerged. These branches began to develop independently from the second half of the first millennium BC.

Territorial, political, and social isolation made these languages even more incomprehensible. That is, the southern Turanian languages developed a phylexical method of word formation (word formation through internal root changes), while the northern Turanian languages developed an agglutinative method (word formation through the addition of prefixes and posteriors).

The Proto-Turkic languages of the northern branch of the Turanian languages remained dialectal languages of various tribes and peoples across a vast territory until the formation of the Turkic Khaganate and the establishment of its dominance in the region (second half of the 6th century AD), that is, they became part of the Altaic language group. This phenomenon formed the scientific concept of the

Altaic language group (Turkic, Mongolian, Manchu, and other languages). The Proto-Turkic languages interacted with the Mongolian languages, on the one hand, and the Ugric languages, on the other. This resulted in the emergence of the Bulgar language. Furthermore, it is known that, as a result of political, economic, and cultural contacts, the Proto-Turkic languages exchanged terms with Chinese, Tocharian, Proto-Yeniseian, and even Paleo-Asiatic languages [5, 65–198]. Another interesting aspect is the study and restoration of purely Turkic terms that are now forgotten in the Turkic languages, but were once borrowed from the Proto-Turkic language into other languages.

The situation in the southern branch of the Turanian languages developed within the context of the languages that influenced it. In particular, as noted above, during the Achaemenid period, the ancient and early medieval Avestan, Saka, Sogdian, Khwarezmian, Bactrian, and Parthian languages were influenced not only by terms borrowed from Old Iranian but also by Aramaic loanwords—heterograms—that penetrated and became established through writing. Although these heterograms are written in Aramaic and read in local languages, it cannot be denied that they represent new expressions that added to the vocabulary of these languages.

A unique feature of the Turanian languages, which were used from the 2nd to 1st millennia BC and which are not specific to Iran or Azerbaijan, is the "Avestan" language, which was used during the spread of Zoroastrianism. "The language in which the Avesta was created is the oldest core of the Turanian languages, and after the Achaemenids occupied most of Turan, starting in the 6th century BC, this language fell out of circulation and became a dead language. However, the Zoroastrian priests, who were the representatives of this language, continued to use the language in which the Avesta was created in religious practice [13, 129–136]. However, the ancient language of Turan was replaced by elements of the Old Persian language, which came from Persia [14, 234–241]. At the same time, the language known as Old Iranian borrowed many terms from the peoples and tribes it occupied or neighbored (Middle Eastern (Sami), Arabic, Greek, Caucasian, Indo-Aryan, Dravidian, Proto-Turkic (Saka), and Finno-Ugric) [10, 38–51]. This process likely led researchers to the erroneous notion that Iranian-speaking tribes lived there from the Altai to the Black Sea. In fact, the lexical layer of Old Iranian itself requires scientific analysis. Therefore, it is necessary to reconsider the term "Iranian languages" used in current scholarly usage in relation to the ancient and early medieval languages of the Turanian land, and introduce the following clarifications: "the ancient Indo-European and Aryan layer of the Turanian language" in relation to the Avestan and Saka languages; "the early medieval Indo-European layer of the Turanian languages" is related to the Khwarezmian, Sogdian, Bactrian, and Parthian languages; "the Proto-Turkic layer of the Turanian languages" is related to the Saka language; and finally, "the early medieval Turkic

layer of the Turanian languages" is related to the Turkic language of the Turkic Khaganate. This approach, in our opinion, is more objective.

In this regard, the views of the Uzbek academician A. Askarov deserve attention. According to him, the nomadic Saka-Scythians were Iranized under the influence of ancient Iranian languages [2, 58]. In our opinion, the ancient original texts of the Avesta were written in this language (the Turanian branch of the Indo-Aryan or Indo-European languages). As a result of this Iranization, the sedentary Scythians gave rise to the Sogdians, Bactrians, Khwarezmians, and Parthians. Based on this idea, the ancient peoples of Turan and their languages have no direct connection with Iran or the Iranians, and the origin and localization of the Avesta relates to the territories of Turan. Moreover, the language of the Avesta and its alphabet are found nowhere else except in Turan itself.

The Achaemenid and Greco-Macedonian invasions of Turan left a negative mark on the peoples who spoke the Avesta. The language itself was on the verge of extinction. Zoroastrian priests, the mobeds, preserved elements of their language by memorizing texts orally and passing them on from generation to generation. However, the language and its speakers limited themselves to memorizing the texts of the Avesta. One of the ancient Turanian languages, once a lingua franca, was relegated to the status of a "dead language." Initially, by decree of Vologases I (51–78), a representative of the Arsacid dynasty in Parthia (250 BC – 227 AD), the Avesta was restored in Parthian script. However, this text, too, has not survived. This work was resumed during the Sassanid era (224–651), when Zoroastrianism was adopted as the state religion. To preserve the original Avestan pronunciation of the texts, attempts were made to reconstruct the ancient Avesta script in form and phonetics using the Middle Persian-Pahlavi alphabet, which was based on the Aramaic script. This resulted in an alphabet with 48 independent signs (14 for vowels, 34 for consonants) and 3 ligatures [9, 102–103]. However, by this time, the ancient language of Turan had been supplanted, and the population had already entered the stage of formalizing the Middle Turanian languages.

In the 8th-7th centuries BC, the Aramaic language and script had spread across vast lands. They enjoyed global significance at this time. From the 7th to the 6th centuries BC, and then from the 6th century BC, the Aramaic script and language were used for official documents in the Median Kingdom. As a result, all satrapies in the territories occupied by the Achaemenids from Egypt to Turan (including Khorezm, Bactria, and Sogdiana) were conducted in Old Persian and the Aramaic script, which borrowed many terms from Aramaic [7, 11–24]. However, by the 3rd-2nd centuries BC, the need arose to develop a local Turanian written language based on the Aramaic script, driven by the needs of the language's native speakers—the Turanian-speaking peoples.

Another point should be noted here. The question arises as to why, during the Achaemenid conquest, the local peoples created a writing system suitable for their

own language, rather than using the original Aramaic script, which had come directly with the Old Persian administration. Thus, since Old Persian differed in many ways from the Turanian languages, the Khwarezmians, Sogdians, Bactrians, and Parthians began to develop an alphabetic system suitable for their own language. Although this system preserved the quasi-alphabetic tradition of the Aramaic alphabet (short vowels are not reflected in the writing), it did not violate the strict canonical order of the alphabetic system, consisting of approximately 22–24 letters (consonants and long vowels) – ’, b, g, d, h, w, z, ḥ, t, y, k, l, m, n, s, ‘, p, ṣ, q, r, š, t. As a result, this system manifested itself in the form of Eastern Aramaic written alphabets – Arabic, Middle Persian, Khwarezmian, Sogdian, Bactrian, Parthian. Its western branch gave rise to the Greek, Latin and Cyrillic alphabets [3, 6–23].

Having created their own alphabets, the Turanian languages began to displace the ancient Iranian languages in administrative governance. It is appropriate here to consider the scripts adapted to the languages of the Turanian peoples, some sources of which have survived to this day. In particular, the Khwarezmian script was adapted to the language of the ancient Khwarezmians and was used primarily in the Khwarezm oasis, that is, in the lower reaches of the Amu Darya. This language was the official language of Ancient Khwarezm, which ruled from the late 4th century BC to the 8th century AD, and of the Afrighid dynasty in Khwarezm (305–995). Information on these linguistic patterns can be found in Abu Rayhan Beruni's *Al-athar al-baqiyya an al-qarun al-khaliya* (The Monuments of Past Generations), in Mahmud Zamakhshari's 12th-century *Muqaddimat al-adab*, and in Mukhtar az-Zohidi's *Qunyat al-munya*, written around 1260 [12, 47–52].

The Khorezmian script, which developed in the 5th–3rd centuries BC based on the Aramaic script, is considered one of the most ancient scripts of the Khorezmians, one of the most ancient Turanian peoples. In the 1930s–50s, the Khorezmian archaeological and ethnographic expedition led by S.P. Tolstov and Academician Ya. Gulomov discovered samples of Khorezmian written sources at the archaeological sites of Koy-Kyrylgan-kala, Toprak-kala, Tokal, Govurkala (Mizdakhkan), and Khumbuzkala. These sources use 20 of the 22 Aramaic alphabets and are enriched with additional signs characteristic of the Khorezmian language. Written materials that have survived to this day are represented mainly by fragments of ceramic vessels, copper and silver coins, remains of a stele, pieces of leather, and a stick tip [3, 38–43]. After the conquest of Central Asia by the Arab Caliphate, the ancient Khorezmian language began to be supplanted by Arabic and the Turkic languages [4, 69–70]. They preferred to adopt the language of their ancient ancestors, the Turks, rather than Persian, like the Sogdians.

The Sogdian language, one of the most ancient Turanian languages, related to the Khwarezmian language and script, acquired significant significance not only for the Turanian lands but also for the Turkic peoples of the northeast. Specifically,

in antiquity and the early Middle Ages, the Sogdian language and script, the most widespread and long-used in the Central Asian region (from the 3rd-2nd centuries BC to the 10th-12th centuries AD), were first spread in Sogd, located in the oases of Zeravshan and Kashkadarya, then in Ustrushana, Chach, and parts of Fergana, in the historical and cultural lands established by the Sogdians along the Silk Road, in the regions of Semirechye and East Turkestan, and in the territory of modern-day Mongolia. Due to its importance, it became widespread among the Turkic peoples as a language of interethnic communication. The Western Turkic Khaganate (603–742) and the Turgesh Khaganate (699–766) were formed in the western part of the First Turkic Khaganate (552–603) and received the status of an official language of the state along with Turkic.

In addition to the regions listed, monuments of the Sogdian language have been discovered in Khorezm, the Merv oasis, the Urals, Altai, and even in Kashmir, Shatial in the upper reaches of the Indus, in the gorges of Ladakh in Tibet, Western China, and Manchuria.

Examples of writing have been preserved on leather, paper, wood, fabric, ceramics, stone tablets, coins, metal objects, and weapons [11, 58–59]. The Sogdian alphabet consists of 23 characters, 22 of which are based on Aramaic. Eighteen characters of this alphabet were used in writing. In addition, the Sogdians used a 29-character script based on the Aramaic script of the followers of Mani (216–277), and a Syriac script based on the Aramaic alphabet of the Christian patriarch Nestor, who was exiled from Constantinople in 428–431. Although the works were written in Mani and Syriac scripts, the language was Sogdian. Therefore, other peoples who effectively used the Sogdian language and writing capabilities also used this script in the formation of their written cultures.

As a result, alphabetic writing systems such as Old Turkic Runic, Uyghur, Mongolian, and Manchu emerged in the East [7, 59–77]. Representatives of these languages migrated to various regions after the conquest of the Arab Caliphate. This was the third migration of Sogdians after the Achaemenids and the Greco-Macedonians. Some of the Turanians who remained in Sogd were forced to adopt the Persian language, which came from Iran, primarily from Khorasan, and call themselves Tazi – Tajiks (Arab-Muslims). The rest switched entirely to the Turkic language they were familiar with. Some who migrated adopted the Uyghur and Chinese languages. Thus, the Sogdian language, having lost its significance, became a "dead language." However, in the villages of Eastern Turkestan, Samarkand, and Bukhara, the Sogdian language remained spoken until the 10th and 12th centuries [8, 349–350]. Sogdian elements are widespread in modern toponyms and dialects [11, 61–62]. In addition, the last descendants of the Sogdians, the Yagnobis, survived in the villages of the Yagnab Valley in the Sogd region of modern Tajikistan and still use a Tajik-Uzbek mixture of the Sogdian language [1, 354].

The lexical layer of the Sogdian language contains not only ancient Aramaic and Persian elements, but also elements of languages such as Sanskrit, Hindi and Chinese [18, 517].

Bactria, one of the eastern satrapies of the Achaemenid Empire, developed in a unique linguistic environment. The development of this language in the southern Turanian group was influenced by the languages of the Indians, Greeks, and the Kushans (Yuezhi).

A written culture also developed on this basis. In 329-327 BC, it was occupied by the troops of Alexander the Great. After the collapse of the Greco-Macedonian state, around 256 BC, the Bactrians, who were under the rule of the Greco-Bactrian Kingdom (256-55 BC) under the Bactrian satrap Diodotus I (256-248 BC), in 140 BC fell under the rule of the nomadic Yuezhi tribes, close in origin to the Turonians [17, 219-225].

Within the Greco-Bactrian Empire, alongside the Khwarezmian and Sogdian scripts, the Aramaic script, adapted to the local Bactrian language, was used. From the 3rd century BC, under the influence of Hellenistic culture, a new Bactrian script, based on Greek, was used for public affairs. Certain modifications were also made to the use of this 25-letter script. This script was considered official not only in the Greco-Bactrian Empire but also in the Kushan Empire (1st-4th centuries), particularly during the reign of Kanishka (78-123), as well as in the Hephthalite Empire (420-579) and the Tokharistan Confederation (6th-8th centuries). Samples of Bactrian writing using the Aramaic alphabet have been found at the sites of Aykhanum and Jigatepa in northern Afghanistan and Fayoztepa in southern Uzbekistan, while samples based on the Greek script have been found at the sites of Surkhkotal and Dilbarjin in northern Afghanistan, Dashtinavur in central Afghanistan and Ayritam in southern Uzbekistan [3, 47-72]. These finds represent a unique stage in the development of Turanian languages in antiquity and the early Middle Ages, confirming the possibility of choosing one or another script depending on the characteristics of the language.

Furthermore, the Bactrians, influenced by the close cultural and economic ties between Buddhism and Hinduism, also used the Kharoshthi script. This script developed from Aramaic and the ancient Indian Brahmi script and was used in the 5th-3rd centuries BCE and the 3rd-5th centuries CE. Scholars also refer to this script as Bactrian, Indo-Bactrian, Bactropalian, Northwest Indian, and Kabuli.

The earliest monument, dating to approximately 251 BC, is the inscription of King Ashoka (Priyadarshi, 272-251 BC), found on the Shahbazgarh rock in Pakistan. Epigraphic examples from later periods have been found in Afghanistan, southern Turan (the Surkhan oasis), and the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of China. This script was used in Bactria under the Kushans in the 1st century AD and was considered the official script of the Kushan Empire, along with the Greco-Bactrian script. Monuments with the Kharoshthi script have been found in the Kara-

Tepe, Fayoz-Tepe, and Dalvarzin-Tepe monuments of Old Termez in southern Uzbekistan. Examples of the Kharoshti script are also found on the coins of the Indo-Bactrian and Indo-Scythian kings from the 3rd century BC to the 1st century AD. At first, the script was written from right to left on the Aramaic basis, and later from left to right on the Indian basis. It can be concluded that although the Aramaic script was the basis for the formation of this script, its development was influenced by the Brahmi script, which was used in the Achaemenid satrapy in northwestern India. From the 3rd century AD, the Kharoshthi script was supplanted by the Brahmi script [9, 103-104]. The linguistic characteristics of the Bactrians allowed them to use various scripts in the office, such as Aramaic, Greek and Kharoshthi.

The Parthian Kingdom in the southwest of Central Asia is also an integral part of the Turanian people. These peoples left a significant mark on the history of the Middle and Near East. The Parthians, like their fellow tribesmen, made productive use of written culture, preserving the characteristics of their language in their state traditions. Parthian writing existed in the 4th–5th centuries BC and also developed from the Aramaic script. At the same time, as in Bactria, in Parthia, in addition to Parthian, Pahlavi (Middle Iranian) and Greek were spoken. The Parthians inhabited the territory of modern-day southern Turkmenistan and the Khorasan province of Iran. It was initially under the influence of the Achaemenid Empire, then the Greco-Macedonian Empire, and finally the Arsacid Parthian Kingdom (250 BC–224 AD). During this time, changes in language and reforms in written culture were taking place. The official script, based on Aramaic, a more familiar language for scholars, consisted of a standard 22-letter sign. As in the Khwarezmian and Sogdian scripts, Semitic terms – heterograms – were used in writing. The Parthians were accustomed to expressing these heterograms in their native language.

The number of Parthian written monuments is approximately 3,000. Although these were initially fragments of ceramics found in Kumys, Iran, and Avroman parchment monuments found in Western Iran, the largest number was discovered in the ruins of ancient Nisa in Turkmenistan – the center of the Mihrdatkirt fortress (more than 2,700), as well as in the ruins of the city of Merv and the monument of Kushtepa. The inscriptions are applied to the surface of ceramics. Even this inscription, which includes individual parts of the Avesta, dating from the 2nd–1st centuries BC, contains the book "Zarirnamek", which formed the basis for the book "Ayadgari Zariran" in Middle Iranian – Pahlavi [3; 19]. It would be appropriate to recognize the Parthians as representatives of the ancient Turanian languages. Because their origin and the territory where they founded their state is ancient Turan.

In conclusion, we would like to note that the ancient roots of the Turanian languages are preserved in all modern Turkic languages, as well as in Yagnobi, a neo-Sogdian language preserved by the inhabitants of the village of Yagnob in the Sogd region of Tajikistan, and in the Ossetian languages of the descendants of the

ancient Alans, who originally spoke Turanian. At the same time, the roots of the Turanian languages are also preserved among the Pamir peoples—the Wakhans, Yazghuls, Ishkashims, Shughni-Rushans, Khufas, Bartangs, and Orashoaras. Studying the lexical layers in the Sarykul languages, which have survived to this day, can serve as a source for historical linguistics and for uncovering the roots of the ancient Turanian languages.

Furthermore, searching for terms from Old Turanian languages preserved in Uzbek and other Turkic languages, as well as in Tajik, in dialects is a topic for new research. After all, dialects, unlike literary languages, transmit the terms they use from generation to generation. At the same time, the toponyms studied today also contain countless elements of Old Turanian, and these are interpreted in various ways. In some cases, terms are adapted to the sounds in which they are expressed, interpreting them with entirely different meanings. Researchers studying historical linguistics, source studies, and history itself would do well to pay attention to these aspects.

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