"DEVONI LUG'OTIT TURK" AND TURKISH INTERLINGUAL RELATIONS: AREAL TYPOLOGY AND LEXICAL LAYER

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Annotation

This scholarly article analyzes the role of "Dīwān Lughāt al-Turk", created by the great 11th-century linguist Mahmud al-Kashgari, in the history of Turkic languages, with particular emphasis on the issue of mutual interaction among Turkic languages from areal and lexical perspectives. The study examines, on the basis of academic sources, the words belonging to various Turkic tribes and dialects recorded in the work, their geographical distribution, and their common Turkic as well as local (areal) features. In addition, through the lexical units presented in "Dīwān Lughāt al-Turk", the article elucidates issues of interaction, exchange, and common roots among Turkic languages. Employing methods of areal linguistics and historical-lexical analysis, the paper substantiates the significance of Kashgari's legacy in contemporary Turkology. The research findings demonstrate that regional factors and interlingual lexical connections play an important role in the formation and development of Turkic languages.

Keywords

"Dīwān Lughāt al-Turk," Mahmud al-Kashgari, Turkic languages, dialectology, classification of dialects, lexical units, linguogeography, areal-linguistic analysis, Karluk, Kipchak, Oghuz dialects, Common Turkic lexicon, historical linguistics, ethnolinguistics, lexical-semantic relations, interrelations of dialects, development of Turkic languages, areal linguistics, lexical influence, historical linguistics, Common Turkic vocabulary.

Devoni lug'otit turk is an unparalleled and unique scientific source in the study of the history of Turkic languages. This monumental work was written between 1072–1074 by the great scholar and linguist Mahmud al-Kashgari. In it, the languages of the 11th-century Turkic tribes—Oghuz, Kipchak, Karluk, Chigil, Yag'ma, and others—are comprehensively described on a scientific basis. The work extensively presents the lexical richness, phonetic features, grammatical structure, word formation processes, and semantic layers of Turkic languages.

In addition, the Devon provides valuable information about the geographical distribution of Turkic tribes, their mutual relations, and cultural interactions. Mahmud al-Kashgari distinguishes himself by explaining linguistic phenomena not only lexically, but also in connection with historical, ethnographic, and areal factors. Through poetic excerpts, proverbs, and samples of oral folklore included in the work, the worldview, social life, and intellectual culture of Turkic peoples are also reflected.

This work is not merely a dictionary but a fundamental scientific source for studying the interrelations, historical development, and mutual influence of Turkic languages. Even today, it

serves as a solid theoretical and practical foundation in Turkology, historical linguistics, and comparative language studies.

Therefore, the Devoni lug'otit turk functions as a primary source for reconstructing the historical image of Turkic languages. Kashgari does not limit himself to providing simple definitions of words; he also indicates the tribe or dialect to which each word belongs. This makes the work an important source not only for historical lexicography but also for dialectology and linguistic-areal research.

Mahmud al-Kashgari scientifically systematizes the internal classification of Turkic languages, dialectal differences, and their linguistic interrelations. He divides Turkic tribal languages into major dialect groups such as Karluk, Kipchak, and Oghuz, clearly demonstrating their phonetic, morphological, and lexical distinctions with precise examples. This classification is recognized as one of the earliest scientific approaches to identifying genealogical and areal connections among Turkic languages.

The special value of the work lies in its rich lexical material, which serves as an essential methodological basis for studying the formation process, dialectological differentiation, and historical development dynamics of modern Turkic languages. The vocabulary recorded in the Devon clearly depicts Common Turkic lexical layers, local dialectal strata, ethnonymic and toponymic units, and cultural-spiritual concepts existing in the 11th-century Turkic world. This enables scholars to determine lexical-areal similarities and differences among modern Turkic languages and to conduct historically grounded linguistic reconstruction.

In this regard, the Devon is valued not only as a dictionary but also as a comprehensive scientific corpus forming the foundation of Turkic linguistic history, dialectology, and linguistic-areal studies. The data in the work remain among the principal sources for research in Turkology, historical linguistics, ethnolinguistics, and cultural studies.

Mahmud al-Kashgari, in classifying Turkic languages, considered not only lexical distinctions but also geographical, ethnic, genealogical, and phonetic-normative features, creating a comprehensive scientific system. He carefully observed the habitats, ethnic composition, and dialectal characteristics of Turkic tribes and sought to provide scientific explanations of their linguistic features. For its time, this classification was exceptionally advanced and continues to retain its significance in modern Turkology.

For example, the languages of the Karluk, Chigil, and Yag'ma tribes are identified as belonging to the Karluk dialect group. Kashgari explains their phonetic and morphological features with specific examples. He notes, for instance, the soft pronunciation of certain consonants and the prevalence of phonetic assimilation in Karluk speech. The alternation q → g' appears in the Karluk variant of "qağu" (crow) as "ğağu," while the alternation t → s is observed in the verb "otlan-" (to prepare) appearing as "oslan-."

Lexically, the word "yalma" in the Chigil dialect is used in the meaning "soft, delicate," while "aruq" in Karluk pronunciation denotes "riverbed, watercourse." Modern Uzbek and Uyghur languages are considered direct descendants of the Karluk dialect tradition. For example, Uzbek "yo'l" and Uyghur "yo'l" (road) share identical forms, reflecting their common Karluk origin. Similarly, Uyghur "öy" (house) corresponds to the Karluk pronunciation recorded by Kashgari.

The linguistic system formed in regions inhabited by Kipchak and Oghuz-Kipchak tribes constitutes the Kipchak layer of Turkic languages. Kashgari precisely documents phonetic changes observed in this dialect. For instance, the alternation y → j is reflected in the word "yig" (to cry), pronounced as "jig" in Kipchak speech. This phenomenon survives in modern Kazakh "jıla-" (to cry).

Similarly, the alternation q → k appears in "qara" (black) pronounced as "kara" in Kipchak. This feature persists in modern Kazakh and Kyrgyz. Lexical examples such as "sarıg" (yellow) and "kök" (blue/sky) are recorded in Kipchak in these forms. Kazakh, Karakalpak, and Kyrgyz are considered full successors of the Kipchak dialect tradition. For example, Kazakh "jıl" (year) reflects the y → j shift noted by Kashgari, while Kyrgyz "köl" (lake) preserves the ancient Kipchak pronunciation.

In the Devon, Kashgari presents the Oghuz language as an independent and well-developed dialect within the Turkic language system. He compares its phonetic, lexical, and partially morphological features with other Turkic dialects, demonstrating similarities and differences with clear examples. According to Kashgari, the Oghuz dialect had already spread widely by the 11th century and possessed a stable linguistic system.

One of the most characteristic phonetic features of Oghuz is the alternation k → g. Kashgari records "köl" (lake) pronounced as "göl" in Oghuz speech—a form fully preserved in modern Turkish. Another significant feature is the alternation t → d, as in the Old Turkic "tağ" (mountain), pronounced "dağ" in Oghuz. Kashgari highlights the predominance of voiced consonants in Oghuz pronunciation. Modern Turkish, Azerbaijani, and Turkmen forms such as "dağ/dag" demonstrate the historical stability of this phonetic feature.

Lexically, the Oghuz dialect also possesses distinctive units. For example, "yağru" in Oghuz denotes "a boatman's oarlock," a word rarely found in other dialects. The verb "barmaq" (to go) is recorded in its Oghuz pronunciation, and modern Turkmen "barmak" directly continues this ancient tradition.

According to Kashgari's data, Turkish, Turkmen, and Azerbaijani developed on the Oghuz dialectal basis. For instance, Turkish "dağ," Azerbaijani "dağ," and Turkmen "dag" derive from a common root with minimal phonetic variation. Likewise, Turkish and Azerbaijani "göz" (eye) reflect the historical k → g phonetic change.

By presenting dialectal speech features side by side, Kashgari reveals both differences and commonalities among them. This comparative approach is regarded as one of the earliest scientific examples of the comparative method widely used in modern dialectology.

Below is a table constructed in the form of a conditional reconstruction based on the comparative approach found in Kashgari's work:

Meaning	Qarluq	Kipchak	Oghuz
tog'	tağ	taw	dağ
yil	yil	jıl	yıl
so'z	söz	söz / süz	söz

2410

ko'l	köl	köl	göl

Devoni lug'otit turk contains dozens of comparative examples such as the table above. Mahmud al-Kashgari explains the differences among Turkic languages on the basis of synchronic (within his own historical period) and areal (territorial) criteria, thereby presenting the historical state of Turkic languages on a scientific foundation.

Importantly, in the Devon, Mahmud al-Kashgari not only collected more than 9,000 lexical units, but also carefully classified them according to tribal, territorial, phonetic, and semantic criteria. The origin of each word, its sphere of usage, its phonetic form in a particular tribe's speech, and its cultural significance are explained. For this reason, the work is not merely a dictionary, but an encyclopedic source reflecting the linguistic landscape, social life, and cultural worldview of the 11th-century Turkic tribes.

As a result, Devoni lug'otit turk remains a fundamental scholarly source for reconstructing the linguo-areal map of the Turkic world of that period and continues to hold its significance in modern Turkology, historical linguistics, and dialectology.

Areal linguistics is a branch of linguistics that studies the geographical distribution of language phenomena and the influence of territorial, ethnic, and social factors on their formation. This approach allows scholars to determine not only the historical origins of linguistic units, but also how they developed in specific regions and how they changed through interaction with neighboring languages and dialects. From this perspective, Mahmud al-Kashgari's Devon represents an invaluable source for areal linguistics.

In his work, Kashgari not only lists Turkic tribes—Oghuz, Kipchak, Karluk, Chigil, Yag'ma, and others—but also connects them to specific geographical regions. By indicating which lexical items belong to which tribe or territory, he demonstrates the territorial differentiation of Turkic languages and dialects. For example, he often notes: "This word belongs to the Chigil; the Oghuz pronounce it differently."

Such observations confirm both the existence of territorial (areal) distinctions among Turkic languages and their strong mutual interaction based on a common linguistic foundation. The use of different forms of the same word across tribes, while preserving semantic unity, highlights both the historical unity of Turkic languages and their internal processes of development.

Moreover, the famous world map drawn by Kashgari is of particular importance for identifying the areal distribution of Turkic languages. Through this map, one can draw important conclusions about the settlement areas of Turkic tribes, their proximity to one another, and their linguistic contacts. The map is evaluated not only as a geographical representation but also as a unique scientific source reflecting the interaction of language, culture, and ethnic history.

Kashgari's method of collecting lexical material is scientifically rigorous. He traveled among various tribes, listening directly to their speech, comparing forms, and recording them through real communication. Therefore, the data in the work are based on empirical observation and are of exceptional importance for modern dialectology, ethnolinguistics, and historical lexicology.

A large portion of the lexical units found in the work have Common Turkic roots. For example, "ot" (horse), "teg" (to touch/reach), "kün" (day/sun), "yağmur" (rain), and "tağ"

2411

(mountain) occur in almost all Turkic dialects and languages. This shared vocabulary indicates that Turkic peoples formed within a unified cultural-regional space from ancient times. Words related to pastoral life, hunting, nature, and social relations are used in identical or closely related forms, reflecting an ancient system of socio-economic unity and interaction.

At the same time, Kashgari also records lexical differentiation. For example, "jıl" among the Kipchaks and "yıl" among the Oghuz; "köngül" in Karluk dialects and "gönül" among the Oghuz. These differences demonstrate the independent developmental trajectories of Turkic languages in later historical periods.

Thus, the lexical material in the Devon reveals not only the common roots of Turkic languages but also the process of territorial differentiation over time. For this reason, the work remains a primary reference source in the study of Turkic linguistic history.

One of the most important features of Turkic languages is their shared ancient lexical layer, widely reflected in Kashgari's work. Although phonetic variations occur across dialects, the basic meaning and root are preserved. For example:

"Yïgït" — 'brave man, fearless youth.'

This unit appears with phonetic variation across Turkic languages: "yigit," "yiğit," "jigit."

"Köngül / Könül / Gönül" — 'heart, soul.'

Karluk: köngül; Oghuz: gönül; Kipchak: könil. Despite phonetic differences, the semantic core remains identical.

"Bulut" — 'cloud.'

Karluk: bulut; Kipchak: bolıt; some Oghuz variants: bulıt.

"Tağ / tog'" — 'mountain.'

Present in all Turkic languages, with phonetic changes (ğ/g/q/k) that do not affect meaning.

Such examples demonstrate the early cultural-linguistic unity of Turkic peoples, while later geographic separation led to phonetic, morphological, and semantic divergence.

Kashgari also identifies lexical units specific to certain tribes. For example:

"Taluy" — meaning "lake" in the Yag'ma language (Karluk group), not found elsewhere.

"Jıl / Yıl" — Kipchak: jıl; Oghuz: yıl; Karluk: yil.

"Ben / Men" — Oghuz: ben; Kipchak and Karluk: men.

These differences reflect phonetic developments influenced by tribal, geographic, and social factors.

The Devon also allows for the study of semantic development. For example:

"At" — universally meaning "horse," but among Kipchaks also "mounted warrior."

2412

"Yurt" — among Karluks and Oghuz: "homeland"; among Kipchaks: "fortress, military camp."

"Orun" — "place," and in some contexts "rank" or "position."

Cultural vocabulary in the work further reflects a shared spiritual space:

"Toy" — feast, celebration.

"Tamğa" — tribal mark.

"Yaylaq / Qışlaq" — seasonal settlements.

"Qut" — divine fortune, political legitimacy.

These units provide rich ethnolinguistic insight into ancient Turkic worldview, social organization, and economic systems.

Kashgari systematically documents internal lexical distinctions among Karluk, Kipchak, and Oghuz groups. His famous map represents one of the earliest examples of linguistic cartography and forms the basis of later classifications in Turkology.

Modern scholars such as Gerard Clauson, Talat Tekin, Lars Johanson, A.N. Baskakov, and E. R. Tenishev recognize the Devon as one of the most reliable early sources for the historical-geographical typology of Turkic languages. They emphasize that Kashgari's documentation of phonetic alternations (y/j, k/g, ben/men) represents the earliest recorded isoglosses in Turkic linguistics.

Clauson, for example, demonstrates that phonetic processes such as y/j alternation and consonantal softening had formed well before the 11th century. Tekin regards Kashgari's tribal classification method as an early model of modern dialectological methodology. Baskakov considers his cartographic approach one of the first foundations of linguistic areal studies.

Thus, modern Turkology views Mahmud al-Kashgari not only as a great lexicographer but also as the founder of Turkic linguistic geography and an early dialectologist. His Devon continues to serve as a methodological foundation for comparative-historical grammar, etymology, dialectology, areal linguistics, ethnolinguistics, and cultural studies.

In conclusion, Devoni lug'otit turk is not merely a historical dictionary but a comprehensive scientific monument reflecting the linguistic, cultural, social, and geographic portrait of the 11th-century Turkic world. It remains an enduring scholarly school for young linguists and Turkologists and an invaluable heritage for Turkic peoples seeking to understand and preserve their linguistic and cultural identity.

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