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# OLD TURKIC POLITICAL TERMS USED IN THE ALTİN ORDA KHAN'S EDICT

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**Abstract.** Altın Orda, also known as the Golden Horde or Jochi Ulus, was a regime founded by Chingis Khan's oldest son, Jochi, and then established by his son, Batu, in the early and middle of the 13th century. Although the Altın Orda was of Mongol origins, the state had been rapidly assimilated by the local Turkic-speaking people. Therefore, the political terminology of the Altın Orda has been heavily affected by the Turkic culture. For the extant written materials during the age of Altın Orda are not so many, the surviving manuscripts and monuments are essential to nowadays history and linguistics studies. In this article, the author takes Tokhtamish's yarlig (edict) as an example and tries to semantically analyze the political terms which derive from the Old Turkic era to outline and understand the inherited relations between Old Turkic Khaganate and Altın Orda in terms of political culture.

**Keywords:** Old Turkic, Altın Orda yarlig, Golden Horde edict, Political terms, semantic analysis, Middle Kipchak, Tokhtamish

## *Introduction*

Turkic political terms can be traced back to the Turkic Khaganate, and those terms were recorded on the surface of Old Turkic steles. The society of Turkic Khanate was a feudal hierarchy state. The nation (or tribal confederation) was called *el*, the people were called *bodun*, and the laws regulating the nation were called *Törü*. The Turkic Khanate's supreme ruler was called *qagan*, also known as *qan*, and his wife was called *qatun*. *Qagan's* son or brother was called *tegin*. The leading general was called *shad*, and the minister was called *buyruq*. Among the high ranking officials, there are also *chor*, *irkin*, *tutun*, *apa tarqan*, *iltabar*, *tarqan*. Those official positions are hereditary. At the same time, there are also a large number of tribal leaders beg. [1: 13-14].

Turkic Khaganates' political culture has significant influence to the following steppe powers, for example the Uighur and Kipchak Khaganates both inherited the Old Turkic's political structure. After the Mongol invasion of the Eurasian Steppe, a new political power was established by Chingis Khan's offsprings on the ruin of the Kipchak Khaganates, which was nowadays known as Altın Orda or the Golden Horde. Altın Orda or Jochi Ulus, was a regime founded by Chingis Khan's oldest son, Jochi, and then established by his son, Batu, in the early and middle of the 13th century. The state stretched from the Kazakh Steppe in the east to Eastern Europe in the west and to the Caucasian ranges in the south, then it became a transportation hub between the East and the West. [2:17] Although Altın Orda had Mongol origins, it was quickly assimilated into the Turkic-speaking tribes (Kipchaks) within its realm. Then, many court letters and decrees were also written in Kipchak. [3: 101-102] For instance,

Tokhtamysh's *yarliġ* (edict) is written in the Old Uighur scripts and the language is Middle Kipchak. The manuscript is now preserved in the Central Archives of Historical Records of Warsaw. [4: 97].

### *Methodology*

The study of political terms holds significant importance in Turkic studies as it offers a fresh perspective to understand the historical context and cultural aspects of that period. Consequently, the application of appropriate scientific methodologies becomes crucial in order to achieve the study's objectives.

To fulfill these objectives, a combination of synchronic and diachronic semantic analysis methods is indispensable. The study primarily focuses on providing a detailed description of the semantic field encompassing political terms, enabling the observation of semantic changes and relationships between the past and present. The diachronic analysis allows for tracing the evolution of words and phrases and comparing them with modern Turkic languages. This approach facilitates a comprehensive presentation and examination of the structure, extended meanings, and other semantic features of politics-related words in Old Turkic.

In addition, the utilization of etymological and comparative methods plays a vital role in studying the semantic system of political terms in Tokhtamysh's *yarliġ*. Through comparisons between the terms found in the *yarliġ* and related materials from earlier and contemporaneous periods, the author aims to identify similarities, differences, and derive valuable conclusions.

### *Analysis*

#### *Oġlan*

Originally *oġlan* is the plural form of *oġul* 'son', and *-n* is the ancient plural suffix which is not used in modern Turkic languages. In old Turkic, the word *oġul* more likely implies 'offspring, child' and applies to both genders, see Old Turkic inscriptions, e.g. ....*urī oġlīn qul boltī, silik oġlīn kūñ boltī*.....[Inscription of Kultegin (abbreviated as I in the following), the East side (abbreviated as E in the following) 7th line(abbreviated as number in the following)] '.....the noble sons became slaves, the innocent girls became slave girls...' [1: 122]. However, the word, *oġlan*, loses its plural function in the later centuries and becomes singular. For example, in DLT (abbr. for Diwan Lughat at-Turk) the word is noted as 'son', or 'malechild' [5: 53]. Further, in Tokhtamysh's *yarliġ*, the word carries the specific meaning of 'prince', e.g. *Hoca M'DYN bašli bir neče oġlan-lar*....., translation: the headman Hoca M'DYN and several princes [6: 105, 135].

#### *Beg*

The word is an ancient Turkic title with a long history, and first seen in old Turkic inscriptions, e.g. *bāglāri yāmā bodunī yāmā tüz ārmiš ārinč* (I: E 3) 'both begs and people were loyal.' [1: 121] G. Clauson believes the word is a loanword from the ancient Chinese word 伯 (*pāk/p'øk/po*) [7: 323], which is convincing if we review Bernhard Karlgren's work, *Grammata Serica Recensa*. B. Karlgren denotes the Chinese word 伯 (*pāk/p'øk/po*) as feudal lord or chief [8: 207]. Both the word form and the semantic meaning of 伯 (*pāk/p'øk/po*) is coordinated with the Old Turkic Beg 'the head of a clan,

or tribe, a subordinate chief'. [7:323] In DLT, Mahmud Kashgari notes that beg has a metaphoric meaning of 'a wife's husband' because 'a husband is like a beg in a family [5: 216]. In Tokhtamysh's *yarliġ*, beg is still an official and honorary title, i.g. Dawut bařli begler..... and the person name, begbolat. [6: 106] In the later centuries, the word survives several phonetic changes (-e>-i; -e/-e- ; -g/-y) and develops similar meanings in alternative societies; for example, bey in the Ottoman Empire came to mean 'a junior administrative officer' [7: 323]; and biy in Kazakh, who is an eloquent judge who thoroughly knows the customs and traditions of Kazakh society, and who is both a lawyer and a judge who determines the merits of cases [9: 332].

## *Il*

Another variation of *il* is *el* due to the phonetic change (i>e). The original meaning is 'a political unit organized and ruled by an independent ruler'; the most convenient short term is 'realm' [7: 835]. In DLT, Mahmud Kashgari records several definitions of the word. The first meaning is 'country', and Kařgari records a phrase, *Beg eli*, 'the realm of *Beg*'. The second meaning is 'emptiness, void', which seems not semantically linked to the original meaning. An example of it is *qapuġ eli* 'the empty field in front of a gate'. The third meaning is an alternative name for horses. The fourth meaning is 'to make peace', which is semantically related to the original meaning. In this case, Kařgari gives the example as *eki il birlä el boldi* 'two countries become peace together'. This meaning is still preserved in modern Kazakh, which can be observed in the traditional Kazakh idiom, *eldestirmek elřiden* 'the mission of envoy is to make peace between realms' [10: 248]. The last meaning he records is 'ignorable', which seems not semantically related to the original meaning [5: 77-78]. In Tokhtamysh's *yarliġ*, the phrase, *il qiriġ*, whose direct translation is 'the edge of the realm', denotes the meaning of 'border' [6: 135].

## *Ulus*

The original form of the word is *ulus* in old Turkic, meaning 'country' [7: 153]. The meaning later changes into 'city' in the 11th century, according to DLT [5: 91]. Mahmud Kashgari mentions that *ulus* is the synonym of *řahr* ('city' in Persian). The word *ulus* was borrowed to Mongolian and became *ulus*. *Ulus* in Mongolian preserves the original meaning of 'country, nation' and is used for the largest political unit during the era of the Mongol empire (e.g. the official name of the Mongol empire is *Yeke Monggol Ulus* 'the nation of the great Mongols' in Mongolian or *kür uluġ ulus* 'the whole great nation' in Turkic) [11: 169]. Similarly, Tokhtamysh refers to his empire (i.e. *Altin Orda*) as *uluġ ulus* 'the great nation' in his *yarliġ*.

The word only survives in the north-western language group of Turkic languages [7: 153]. For example, the corresponding word in modern Kazakh is *ulıs* (orthotopically *ulus*), and there is little semantic change. It gives the meaning of 'confederation of tribes' and the extended meaning of 'the whole nation' or 'the whole people' [12: 723].

## *Ordu*

The word originally means 'royal residence' or 'palace' in old Turkic [7: 204]. Since Turks are nomadic people, *ordu* also suggests the meaning of 'royal camp', which depends on the circumstance. For example, *qan olurupan ordu yapmis* [Irk Bitig, 28th line] 'the khan sits on the throne and erects a palace' [9: 293]. In DLT, Mahmud Kashgari

records several meanings of the word in his book. The first one is the original meaning 'palace'; the second is 'Khan's city'; the third is the name of a city where near *Balasagun* (located in nowadays Kyrgyzstan); the fourth meaning is 'a nest of mice-like or cricket-like insects. The word was then borrowed into Mongolian as *ordo*. The word remains in the North-Central group of Turkic languages, *ordo* in Kyrgyz, *orda* in Kazakh, *ürda* in Uzbek, *orda* in Nogay [7: 204]. *Orda* in Kazakh, after undergone phonetic changes, retains its original meaning of 'palace, a royal residence'. Moreover, The word is used to refer to a special grand yurt where royals are used to treat guests. In addition, *orda* is also described as a central place for arts or academics [13: 735].

### Conclusion

Based on the aforementioned analysis, it is evident that following the complete Turkification of the Golden Horde, the political terminology inherited from the ancient Turks remained largely intact. Notably, terms such as *el* "state", *beg* "tribal leader", *ordu* "royal residence", and *ulus* "nation" retained their semantic range without significant alteration. Furthermore, certain words that previously lacked political connotations gradually acquired political implications over time. An illustrative example is the word "oglan," which now signifies a prince. In summary, the political vocabulary rooted in old Turkic language played a significant role within the context of the Golden Hordes, and its influence can be observed extensively in modern Kipchak languages.

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## ДИАЛЕКТОЛОГИЧЕСКАЯ ЭКСПЕДИЦИЯ: ИЗ ОПЫТА ПРОВЕДЕНИЯ<sup>1</sup>

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**Аннотация.** В статье рассматриваются некоторые вопросы по организации и проведении диалектологических экспедиций в Республике Саха (Якутия). Были изучены существенные факторы, которые могут повлиять на результат исследования: изучение архивных данных о ранее проведенных диалектологических экспедициях; о подготовке маршрутов поездок; о техническом оснащении; об особенностях сбора языкового материала. Предлагается расширить понятие языковой экспедиции в плане направлений – терминологическая, лексикографическая, лингвокультурологическая и т.д.

**Ключевые слова:** тюркские языки, якутский язык, диалектология, диалектологическая экспедиция

**Abstract.** The article deals with the problems of dialectological expeditions. The author describes the essential factors influencing the result of the research. Before the trip, the staff member should study the archival data on dialectological expeditions. The expedition is accompanied by a detailed plan. The dialectologist records the informant's speech on a dictaphone or fills out a questionnaire. The author of the article