

Some Notes on Altaic Languages and Common Altaic *d*

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The theory of linguistic kinship between the Altaic languages, as you well know, has been established by Ramstedt in the 20th century. Though Ramstedt has apposed the idea of a genetic relationship in this group at the initial stage, subsequently he has defended and elaborated the theory by incorporating Turkic, Mongolian, Manchu-Tungusian and even Korean in the Altaic Family. Later, his prominent supporter N. Poppe, has published these cross-linguistic comparative studies in *Vergleichende Grammatik der altaischen Sprachen, Teil 1, Vergleichende Lautlehre* (Comparative Grammar of Altaic Languages, Part 1, Comparative Phonetics)."

Of course there are opponents and supporters to any theory. Looking at their substantial and serious publications, we can cite the names of G. Clauson and G. Doerfer as immediate antagonists to the theory of linguistic kinship among the Altaic languages. However, in his late publications Doerfer shows signs of change in his ideas on the subject compared with his initial opinions (cf. Clauson 1956, 1958; Doerfer 1975, p. 318-347).

Doerfer, though he did not abandon his fundamental stand, he changed his views in his late publications especially on the "proto

* This article is the my first rejection about the Altaic theory and read at "International Conference on Altaic Studies, 17th-19th August 2002" in Beijing. After 2002 I have devoted about similar topic more two articles: Ölmez 2007; Ölmez 2013.

types" of loan words and their basic phonetic forms. There is a sequence of debates on *zetatism* or *rotatism*, between Doerfer and Tekin in papers published in the Central Asiatic Journal (Doerfer 1984; Tekin 1975).

Ramstedt and Poppe, or, Clauson and Doerfer naturally had their adherents and opponents, but they all tried to interpret the subject within their own specific research domain contributing an enormous amount to the topics of study (Ramstedt 1952, 1957, 1966; Poppe 1960, 1965). Menges for instance analysed the problem within the framework of Asiatic languages while Tekin treated the subject by analysing the old and new sound new patterns of Old Turkish and Mongolian within the data he obtained from these languages (Menges 1968; Tekin 1969, 1975, 1979, 1986, 1991).

Ramstedt also used Korean for his comparisons but, the subsequent researches on the subject proved that a considerable amount of his examples did not actually belong to the lexical inventory of the languages that he intended for (Ramstedt 1949).

Miller took up Japanese and Korean along with the other Altaic languages but his comparisons are more specific and detailed on Korean and Mongolian rather than Turkic and Mongolian (Miller 1971). Miller's recent researches on prefixes etc. has been evaluated by Menges (Menges 1975; later also J. Janhunen).

In short, the languages treated under the title of Altaic languages, were compared phonetically based on the contrasts of lexicological evidence. In their essays Clauson and Doerfer, claim that the references used by Altaists as evidences of linguistic kinship, are in fact quotations from an 'unknown era' before the written records' of that particular language. Or they judge these words as borrowings from the other asiatic languages. In Doerfer's research, one can see examples which describes the titles of social rank under this heading. The words like, *tegin* "prince", *bitigčün* "secretary", *tengirin* "the sky" are included in this group (Doerfer 1993a, 1993b).

These comparisons proved that the closest language to Turkish is Mongolian. Furthermore, it has been discovered that the closest language to Mongolian is Manchu-Tungusian in this group. Whether fostered by linguistic kinship or by borrowing, these comparative

studies revealed important results. The corresponding lexical items in Turkic and Mongolian proved the fact that:

One syllable words in Turkic correspond to two syllable examples in Mongolian, and, two syllable words in Turkic correspond to three syllable examples in Mongolian (mostly from Ölmez 1991).

CT <i>yaş-</i> "to hide, to cover"	=	Mo. * <i>dali-</i>
CT <i>yez</i> "a kind of plant"	=	Mo. * <i>dere</i> + (<i>deresiin</i>)
CT <i>yég</i> "better"	=	Mo. <i>degedü</i> (<i>degeü</i> + <i>dü</i>)
CT <i>yayür</i> "a saddle-gall"	=	Mo. <i>dayari</i> (MM <i>da'ari</i> + <i>tu</i>)
CT <i>yüz</i> "face"	=	Mo. <i>düri</i>

Though very few, there are nevertheless some conflicting examples to this rule, like, a single syllable Turkic word corresponding to a single syllable Mongolian word or a double syllable Turkic word corresponding to a double syllable Mongolian word.

CT <i>yaqu</i> "a rain-coat"	=	Mo. <i>daqu</i>
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In the phonetic studies, the Common Turkic *š* and *z* sounds have been compared mostly with Mo. *l*, *lʃ*, *r* sounds and the proto forms of these sounds have been referred in general as *lʔ* ve *rʔ*.

The other "common altaic" or "proto altaic" sound that has been investigated in these comparative studies was, word-initial, medial and final **d*.

It is a well known fact that the word-initial *d-* does not exist in Old Turkic texts and this word-initial *d-* sound which exists in contemporary Turkic languages, is considered to have developed from Old Turkic *t*. Furthermore, out of a total of 20 Turkic languages, this word-initial *d-* sound is more frequent especially in the Oghuz group Turkic languages (namely Turkish, Azerbaidjani, Gagauz and Turkmen), Tuva and Salar (→ Salır) languages.

The word initial and word final *d* of Old Turkic, which is seen in various different forms in contemporary Turkic languages, is used as an important criterion for classifying these languages.

I, as a student who has devoted all his university years for

studying and doing research on the subject, have noticed some socio-cultural reverberations this theory and I would like to point out a few aspects of it. Most of the scientists who are the native speakers of Altaic languages, especially the Turks, had a relatively sentimental approach to these problems. They genuinely hoped that the linguistic kinship between these languages might prove true. So they always tried to answer the most intriguing phonetically and lexical puzzles of these languages in their own impartial fashion. If I have to tell my own judgement about the Japanese linguists whose language is always compared and contrasted with the South Eastern Tamil, Tibet and Oceanian languages, they have a very sceptical approach towards the idea of kinship of their own language with the other Altaic languages. Statistically speaking, there would be no more than a handful scholars who would cherish the Altaic idea in Japan. In Korea however, at least according to my own observations, their approach is similar to the situation in Turkey. A part of the Korean scholars are more inclined toward the idea of forming linguistic kinship with the other Altaic languages and they are willing to base it on scientific grounds.

As for myself, having been a disciple of Prof. Talat Tekin since my university years, I had been an ardent defender of the theory of Altaic languages. Therefore, I have especially concentrated on Proto-Altaic or, with a less biased term, on Common-Altaic languages. At the end of my research I have published the data I gathered on initial *d* in 1991. Of course, there were some items that I was not totally convinced on the ‘word medial-*d*’ at that time so I did not include them in that publication (Ölmez, unpublished).

From 1992 on, I took Classical Mongolian courses for 2 years under Prof. Gerhard Doerfer. I took up the lexicology of (Secret History / **Mangᡤol un Niuča Tobca'an**) to be able get my certificate for that seminar. During my research, I tried to compare the lexicon of the Secret History prepared by Haenisch, with Old Turkic, and I tried to identify the mutual loan words in both languages. Finally, I have classified the common items under four headings.

1. Turkic loan words in Mongolian
2. Mongolian loan words in Turkic

3. Common words

4. Common borrowings

Now I would like to give you a few well known examples (Ölmez, mostly from unpublished study, partly published 2013):

1. *tü.* → *mo.*

ayil 'Lager, Jurtenlager'

basa 'auch, weiter, sodann'

belcir 'Talschlucht; Fluß(austritt?)'

erde 'früher'

erdem 'Fähigkeit'

jil 'Jahr'

mung 'Schwierigkeit'

ulus 'zugehöriges Volk'

2. *mo.* → *tü.*

alacuh 'Zelt'

arḥamji 'Leitstrick'

ayimah '(Volks-) Stamm'

jebe 'Kriegsgerät'; kämpfen'

maral 'Hirschkuh'

narin 'fein, genau'

olke 'Vorderseite des Berges'

šulen 'Suppe'

3. Gemeinsame Wörter (Common Words in Mongolian and Turkic)

ahta 'Wallach, Pferd', atü. *at*

ajirḥa 'Hengst' = atü. *adyir*

bi 'ich' = atü. *bän*

cilao'un 'Stein' = atü. *taš*

daiyin 'Feind'; **dayin** 'Feind' = atü. *yaγi*

huker 'Rind' = atü. *öküz*, özb. *hokiz*

seregu, *serigu* 'zweifeln, argwöhnen, etwas merken, sich Gedanken machen' = atü. *sez-*

šidu, *sudu* 'Zähne' = atü. *tış*

taolai, *ta'ulai* 'Hase': TMEN § 966 = atü. *tavišγan*

4. Gemeinsame Entlehnungen (Common Borrowings in Mongolian and Turkic)

darhan 'frei, unabhängig' = atü. *tarqan*, *tarxan*

gungju (= chin. *gong-zhu*) Prinzessin = atü. *qunčuy*

ha'an, **hahan** 'Kaiser, Herrscher' = atü. *qaγan*

hadun, **hatu(n)** 'Frau, Gattin' = atü. *qatun*

hamuh 'alle, die gesamten' ≈ atü. *qamaγ*

han 'Kaiser' = atü. *qan*

ordo 'Palast' = atü. *ordu*

tume(n) 'zehntausend' = atü. *tümän*

During my research it was especially the common words in the third category that made me think about the origin of the "proto Altaic" words. If I have to admit, these mutual words in a way, made me feel like sharing the views of Clauson and Doerfer about their objection on "Proto-Altaic" constructions. My starting point of rejection is not one of a religious motivation but it is purely scientific and phonetic. Please look at the common words in the 'Secret History', starting with the first MM *ahta* and the *at* words in Old Turkish.

Common Turkic-Mongolian Words (According to MM and OT from an unpublished study, in German)

(Haenisch's edition: *Wörterbuch zu Mangḡol un Niuca Tobca'an*)

Mangḡol un Niuca Tobca'an	Old Turkic and Middle Turkic (gtü. 'Common Turkic', MK 'Maḡmūd al-Kāšgarī, Middle Turkic')
ahta 'Wallach, Pferd'	= gtü. <i>at</i>
ajiraḡu 'heimkehren, sich trennen'	= atü. <i>adīr-</i>
ajirḡa 'Hengst'	= atü. <i>adȳr</i>
aman 'Mund': amasar chin. <i>kou</i> 'Auslaß, Paß, Talöffnung': amatu 'einen Mund habend'	= atü. (MK) <i>am</i> 'die weiblichen Geschlechtorgane'
ani 'sie, jene'	= atü. <i>ol</i> , aber Akk., Gen. usw. <i>anī, anīḡ</i>
ara'ar 'großer Zahn'	= atü. <i>aziγ</i>
arḡal 'Ortsname; trockener Mist'	= MK <i>arq</i> , Xalač <i>harq</i>
*aṡuḡu (= <i>hatxuxu</i>) 'greifen, halten'	= atü. <i>adqa-</i>
*bayan 'der Reiche, als Beiname'	= atü. <i>bay</i>
bi 'ich'	= atü. <i>bān</i>
bolḡu 'sein, werden'; boluyi 'es geht'	= atü. <i>bol-</i>
boro 'grau'	= atü. <i>boz</i>
bura'u 'zweijähriges Rind'	= atü. <i>buzayū</i>
cilao'un 'Stein'	= atü. <i>taš</i>
daḡaḡu 'hintergehen, folgen'	= atü. <i>yaγu-</i> 'sich nähern'
daḡu 'Pelz'	= atü. (MK) <i>yaγqu, yaqu</i> 'Regenmantel'
daiyin 'Feind'; dayin 'Feind'	= atü. <i>yaγī</i>
dalda 'Schirm, Schutz'; daldariḡu 'sich der Pflicht entziehen, sich 'drücken'; daldatḡu 'sich verbergen, sich decken'	= atü. <i>yaš-</i>
daruḡu 'drücken, unterdrücken'	= atü. <i>yaz-</i>
darun 'immer, ständig nacheinander'	= atü. (MK) <i>yarīn</i> 'Morgen, Morgenfrüh' < <i>*yaru-</i>
de'ere 'hoch'	= atü. <i>yeg</i>
del 'Mähne'	= osm., ttü. <i>yele</i> , jak. <i>sīel</i> (< <i>*yēl</i>)

Mangħol un Niuca Tobca'an	Old Turkic and Middle Turkic (gtü. 'Common Turkic', MK 'Maħmūd al-Kāšgari, Middle Turkic'
deresun 'Mattenschilf, Pfriedengras'	= atü. <i>yez</i>
ħa'alħa 'Tür'	= atü. <i>qapıy</i>
ħalbuħa 'Löffel'	= atü. (MK, Heilkunde) <i>qaşuq</i>
ħara 'schwarz'	= atü. <i>qara</i>
ħonici(n) 'Schafhirte'	= atü. (Kültegin, Miran C 5) <i>qoñ</i> , <i>qoñči</i> , später <i>qoy</i> und <i>qoyči</i>
*ħuduh, ħutuh 'Segen, heilig'	= atü. <i>qut</i>
ħudurħa 'Schwanzriemen (am Sattel)'	= atü. <i>qudruq</i>
ħuriħa(n) 'Lamm'; ħuriħaci 'Lämmerhirt'	= atü. <i>qozi</i>
ħuker 'Rind'; ħukerci(n) 'Rindehirt'	= atü. <i>öküz</i> , özb. <i>hokiz</i>
jada 'Regensturm' TMEN § 157, 1823, 1834; insb. I, 288-289.	= gtü. <i>yad</i>
jilo'a, jilu'a 'Zügel'	= ttü. <i>yular</i> , tuv. <i>čular</i> , jak. <i>sular</i>
ke'urğe (= ko'urğe) 'Trommel, Pauke'	= atü./uig. <i>kiivriig</i>
kigu 'machen, tun'	= atü. <i>qıl</i> -, jak. <i>gün</i> - < * <i>qı</i> -
kilħasun 'Schwanzhaar (des Pferdes)'	= atü. <i>qıl</i>
o'er 'selbst' ?	= atü. <i>öz</i> ?
sa'ahu '(pressen) melken'	= atü. <i>saγ</i> -
*sayi, sayin 'gut, schön'	= atü. <i>saγ</i>
seregu, serigu 'zweifeln, argwöhnen, etwas merken, sich Gedanken machen'	= atü. <i>sez</i> -
seri'utgu 'kühl, fieberfrei werden'	= ttü. <i>serin</i>
sün 'Milch'	= atü. <i>süt</i>
śidu, sudu 'Zähne'	= atü. <i>tiś</i>
śira 'gelb (goldfarbig)'; śiral 'gelb'; śiramal 'gelb'	= atü. <i>sariy</i>
taolai, ta'ulai 'Hase': TMEN § 966	= atü. <i>tavişyan</i>
urtu 'lang, entfernt'	= atü. <i>uzun</i>
yadaħu 'nicht können': TMEN § 403 (I, 550-51)	= atü. <i>yadaγ</i> < * <i>yada</i> -?

For the defenders of Altaic Language Theory, this corresponded constitutes a plausible evidence for the language kinship and they are trying to improve on the evidences for 'Mo. *-kt-* = CT *-t-*'. (You can look at the article of T. Tekin on the 'Consonant lack in Pre-Turkic' (1978).

The mutual common words are interpreted as borrowings by the apponents of this theory. For instance, the third example *ajırha* 'stallion' = atü. *adyir*. According to Clauson this old Turkic word existed in Mongolian as *acirğa* [i.e. *aĵirγa*] a since the very early period [A very early (First Period) l.-w. in Mong. 1972: 47b].

Actually, as long as we go back, the common elements increase, but when we come to contemporary times they decrease.

In order to support the idea of Altaic Language Theory, one must establish trilingual examples as T. Tekin emphasized in his lectures. Bilingual examples only reveals the weak points of the theory. In the case of Mo., Tu. and Manchu-Tungusian languages, whenever a 'seemingly' common word appears, it usually seems to be a loan word in Manchu-Tungusian borrowed from Mongolian. Perhaps the weakest point of the theory is the situation that the common words exist in Turkic and Manchu-Tungusian but not in Mongolian. The situation can be formulized as follows,

Mo.	Manchu-Tung.	Turkic
∅	+	+

Under the circumstances we can summarize the data on "word medial and word final *-d*" as follows,

I. Common words that can be traced back to a more archaic source.

The phonetic and semantic relationship in this group of words gives us the impression that these lexical items evidently go to a common origin. I can include the following four examples in this group and leave out the fifth example with a question mark:

1. **adīrgă* "stallion", 2. **gedě* "back; after", 3. **ñidurkă* "fist",
4. **tīdă-* "to detain" 5. **adugŭ*.

- ***adırgä**: OT *adγir*, ~ Mo. (Kow.) *aǰırγa*, ~ Ma. *aǰırγan*, *aǰırgan*, ~ Tung. *adırga*
 ***gedē**: OT *keđin*, ~ Mo. *gede*, ~ Tung. *gêdêmu*k
 ***ñidurka**: CT *yudruq*, ~ Mo. (Kow.) *nıdurγa*, ~ Ma. *nuǰan*, ~ Tung. *nurka*
 ***pad-**?: OT *adut* < **ad-ut*, ~ Mo. *adqu* < **patku*, *adqu-*, MM *hadqu-*, ~ Ma. *fatḥa*
 ***tida-**: OT *tıd-*, ~ Mo. *čida-*
 ***adugū**: OT *adıγ*, ~ Mo. *adıγusun*, ~ Tung., Ew., Barg. *awdū*

II. Here again I give a list of words which were probably borrowed inter linguistically but they still need a plausible and convincing phonetic-semantic explanation.

CT <i>ant</i> “oath” [<i>and ič-</i> “to swear”]	~ Mo. <i>anda</i>
OT <i>bedük</i> “big; high”	~ Mo. <i>büdügün</i> , <i>bidügün</i> ‘big’
OT <i>bediz</i> “ornamentation, decoration; form”	~ Mo. <i>bider</i> , <i>beder</i> ‘decoration’
OT <i>bod</i> “stature, the size of a man”	~ Mo. <i>boda</i> (-mal) ‘big, bigger’
OT <i>bodu-</i> “to dye”	~ Mo. <i>budu-</i>
CT, Alt. (Oyrot, Gorno Altay) <i>pyıras</i> ‘crisp, curly’	~ Mo. <i>buǰıyi-</i>
OT <i>yad-</i> “to spread out”	~ Mo. <i>ǰada-l-</i>
CT Oyrot, Teleüt <i>yilek</i>	~ Mo. <i>ǰigde</i>
OT <i>ed</i> “a manufactured article”	~ Mo. <i>edege-</i>
OT <i>idi</i> , <i>édi</i> , CT <i>iye</i> “master, owner”, in Moslem texts often “the Lord”	~ Mo. <i>eǰen</i>
OT <i>élet-</i> (? <i>élt-</i>) “to carry”	~ Mo. <i>elde-</i>
OT <i>kentü</i> , <i>kendü</i> , <i>kenti</i> “self”	~ Mo. <i>gendü</i> , <i>gende</i> ‘dog’ (masculine)
OT <i>ıd-</i> “to send”	~ Mo. <i>üde-</i> ‘to send etc.’
OT <i>ediz</i> “high”	~ Mo. <i>ider</i> ‘active, energetic, powerful’
CT <i>qaya</i> ‘kaya’ “rock”	~ Mo. <i>ǰada</i>
OT <i>qadyu</i> “sorrow, grief, care”	~ Mo. <i>qadu-</i> ‘(for lams) to bleat

OT <i>qadın</i> "related by marriage"	~ Mo., OMo. <i>qadum</i>
OT <i>kedim</i> "garment"	~ Mo. <i>keřim</i>
CT (Middle Turkic) <i>kenč</i> "young"	~ Mo. <i>kenje</i> , Bur. <i>henze</i>
OT <i>qıdıγ</i> "edge; border"	~ Mo. <i>kiřaγar</i>
OT <i>qudruq</i> < * <i>quduruq</i> "he tail of an animal"	~ Mo. <i>ħudurγa</i> 'la croupiere'
OT <i>küdegü</i> "son-in-law"	~ Mo. <i>kiři degüü</i>
OT <i>adaq</i> "foot"	~ Mo. <i>adaγ</i>
OT <i>adın</i> ; <i>adır-</i> "other, another"	~ Mo. <i>ařımaγ</i> 'part, moutful', <i>ařıra-</i>
OT (Middle Turkic) <i>sıdır-</i> "to strip, peel, scrape"	~ Mo., Klm. <i>sudr-</i> < * <i>sıdr-</i>
CT <i>sig-</i> "to urinate"	~ Mo. <i>sige-</i>
OT <i>ud-</i> "to follow"	~ Mo. <i>udum</i> 'afters; chest'
OT <i>üid</i> "time"	~ Mo. <i>üide</i> 'evening'
OT <i>yadaγ</i> "pedestrian"	~ Mo. <i>yada-</i> 'to be unable'

References

- Alt. : Altai language (from Gorno-Altai)
atü. : alttürkisch/Alttürkisch, Old Turkic
Barg. : Barguzin dialect
Bur. : Buryat language
chin. : chinesisich/Chinesisich, Chinese
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CT : Common Turkic
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- gtü. : gemeintürkisch, Common Turkic
- Haenisch's edition → MNT
- jak. : jakutisch/Jakutisch, Yakut language
- Klm. : Kalmyk language
- Ma. : Manchu language
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- MNT II: *Mangḥol un Niuca Tobca'an (Yüan-ch'ao pi-shi), Die Geheime Geschichte der Mongolen*, Teil II: Wörterbuch, Erich Haenisch, Leipzig 1939.
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- MK : 'Maḥmūd al-Kāšgarī, Middle Turkic
- MM : mittelmongolisch/Mittelmongolisch, Middle Mongolian
- Mo. : Mongolian language
- osm. : osmanisch/Osmanisch, Ottoman Turkish
- OT : Old Turkic
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- ttü. : türkeitürskisch/Türkeitürkisch, Turkish
- Tu. : Turkic
- Tung. : Tungusian
- tuv. : tuvinisch/Tuvinisch, Tuvinian
- tü. : türkisch/Türkisch, Turkic

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