

## Turkic: Probing the Frontiers of a *Lingua Franca*

### Programme

**Wednesday, 17 November, 05:00pm–07:30pm CEST via [ZOOM](#)**

05:00 – 05:10	Paolo Sartori (Vienna): <i>Welcome</i>
05:10 – 05:30	Evrin Binbas (Bonn): <i>An Epistolary Manual for Turkic Scribes?: Dar Bayān-i Khaṭṭ-i Mogholī wa Signaqī</i>
05:30 – 05:50	Ulfat Abdurasulov (Hokkaido): <i>Revenge of the Vernacular: Muscovy's Turkic Engagement with the Persianate World</i>
05:50 – 06:10	Discussion
06:10 – 06:30	Selim Güngörürler (Vienna): <i>The Rise of Turkic as the Ottomans' Language of Diplomacy</i>
06:30 – 06:50	Sándor Papp (Szeged): <i>Ottoman diplomatic practices with the East and the West</i>
06:50 – 07:10	Benedek Péri (Budapest): <i>Navāyī as a lingua franca in the Persophone Turkic world</i>
07:10 – 07:30	Discussion

**Thursday, 18 November, 05:00pm–07:30pm CEST via [ZOOM](#)**

05:00 – 05:20	Jin Noda (Tokyo): <i>Tribute or Foreign relations ? A role of Turkic correspondences in the Qing dynasty's diplomacy (18th-20th centuries)</i>
05:20 – 05:40	Devin DeWeese (Bloomington): <i>Between Abū'l-Ghāzī and Mu'nis: Writing 'History' in Turkic in Eighteenth-Century Central Asia</i>
05:40 – 06:00	Ferenc Csirkes (Istanbul): <i>Notes on the Periodization of Turkic Literature in Iran</i>
06:00 – 06:20	Discussion
06:20 – 06:40	István Vásáry (Budapest): <i>Turkic as a Lingua Franca in the Diplomatic Correspondence of the Russian and Mughal Empires in the 17th Century</i>
06:40 – 07:00	Michael Kemper (Amsterdam): <i>Tatar Biographies and Biographical Tatar: Language and Exposition from Marjani to Fakhreddinov</i>
07:00 – 07:20	Danielle Ross (Salt Lake City): <i>A Vernacular Century: Tatarskii/Bulgharchi as a Language of Bureaucracy and Local Literary Culture in the Eighteenth Century</i>
07:20 – 07:40	Discussion and Further Publication Plans

# An Epistolary Manual for Turkic Scribes?: *Dar Bayān-i Khaṭṭ-i Mogholī wa Signaqī*

Evrin Binbaş

University of Bonn

Starting in the late fourteenth-century, Turkic gradually emerged as a language of diplomacy and administration in documents. Given the increasing prominence of Turkic literatures in the late medieval and early modern periods, this might seem like a ‘natural’ development. However, proper contextualization of various extant documents in Central Asia, Iran, and Anatolia, especially when the topic is considered together with the use of Uighur script in diplomatic and administrative documents, complicates our perceptions of the original intent of those political actors who preferred Turkic as opposed to Persian (or Arabic), which were already a well-established languages for diplomacy and administration by the late fourteenth century. Why would the Jöchid ruler Toqtamish Khan (d. 1406) send a *yarliq* to Władysław II Jagiełło (d. 1434), King of Poland, in Turkic written in Uighur letters in 1393? Why would Timur (d. 1405) send letters to the Mamluk sultan Barqūq (d. 1399) in Turkic in 1396? Why would his son Shāhrukh (d. 1447) sign a *soyurghal* written in Turkic and Uighur script in Herat in 1422? Or why would the Ottoman sultan Mehmed II (d. 1481) issue his victory declaration (*fathnāme*) in Turkic and in Uighur script after he defeated Uzun Hasan at the Battle of Bashkent in 1473? In all these instances, one would expect to see Persian instead of Turkic language documents in the Arabic rather than the Uighur script. These examples suggest that the Turkic language as well as the script were part of the diplomatic and political discourse in the early modern period.

This paper argues that the use of Turkic and Uighur script in diplomacy and administration was a result of conscious political acts by various rulers in the late medieval period. However, the intellectual roots of this political act have yet to be understood properly. The *Dar Bayān-i Khaṭṭ-i Mughulī wa Signaqī*, a recently discovered text on the use of Turkic in administrative practices dated to the 1430s, sheds light on this question. A close reading of this

text suggests that in the late medieval period the use of Turkic was something more than mere diplomatic posturing – such as Mehmed II trying to show that his credentials in Turkic culture was as strong as that of Uzun Hasan's: It was about finding a new language for a new politics. In my paper I will compare the structure and language of extant documentary evidence from the fourteenth- and fifteenth century to the *Dar Bayān-i Khaṭṭ-i Muḡhulī wa Sighnaqī* and argue that the search for a new political, and indeed a new constitutional, identity was the motivation behind the use of Turkic in diplomatic and administrative documents.

# Revenge of the Vernacular: Muscovy's Turkic Engagement

## with the Persianate World

Ulfat Abdurasulov

SRC, Hokkaido University

Over the course of the seventeenth century the missives which the Central Asian rulers sent off to Moscow more often than not were written in Persian. In their written response to these letters, however, the Muscovite authorities drafted replies in two versions, one in in Turkic (*tatarskim pis'mom*) and the other in Russian (*russkim pis'mom*), or on some occasions in Turkic alone. Similar dynamic can be observed not only with the Central Asian principalities, but also in diplomatic communications with Safavid Iran and Mughal India.

The question thus presents itself: what was the rationale behind such linguistic inconsistency? Why, in diplomatic correspondence with the Central Asian rulers and diplomats of the time, was Muscovite diplomacy conducted in Turkic, even when fielding communications and enquiries that had originally been written in Persian?

The paper sets out to explore the languages of diplomatic exchange between Muscovite Russia and Central Asia in the early modern era to highlight the diplomatic implications of language choice. Throughout all these exchanges, Persian was an important language of diplomatic interaction, but it was not the *only* language of exchange, a fact which allows me to assess the nature of Persian's constant negotiations with Turkic and Russian languages within the diplomatic register. In doing so, I hope to be able to show that the Muscovite diplomatic bureaucracy conceptualized the territories to south, from the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth to the Central Asian principalities and, perhaps, further to India, as a frontier not of the Persophone world but of the Turkic one, whereby Turkic vernaculars were considered the paramount linguistic medium in the diplomatic communication across that vast territory.

# **The Rise of Turkic as the Ottomans' Language of Diplomacy**

**Selim G ng r rler**

**Austrian Academy of Sciences**

This paper first surveys the rise of Turkic as the exclusive language of diplomatic composition by the Ottoman chancery, and contrasts this phenomenon with the Ottomans' earlier writings in a multiplicity of non-Turkic languages in its foreign relations. Correspondence with Hungary, the Mamluks, Poland, Venice, and pre-Safavid Iranian polities will serve as references. It will be argued that this transition from multilingualism to Turkic-only practice went hand in hand with what the author observes to be the Ottoman state's transition from royal to imperial age. The paper will then handle Ottoman-Safavid diplomacy as a specific case and establish the place of Turkic in it, not only in official correspondence but also in non-written talks between host governments and visiting missions.

# The Instruments of the Eastern Diplomacy of the Ottoman Empire

**Sándor Papp**

**University of Szeged**

The starting point of my presentation is a statement by Edward Luis Keenan, who in 1967 articulated his vision about the language and custom of the steppe diplomacy. In an article published in the *Slavic Review*, Keenan noted that the Mongol-Turkic tradition informed diplomatic practices in the early modern period, and that the common language of diplomacy was a Turkic dialect inherited from the Golden Horde. Further, Keenan notes that the Ottoman Empire followed such diplomatic practice, an observation that warrants sustained reflection. Having cultivated an interest in the Ottoman western policy (Habsburg Monarchy, Hungarian Kingdom, Moldavia, Wallachia, Crimean Khanate), I have assembled a representative collection of documents (around 80-90 items), which allows me to make some remarks about Ottoman chancellery practices in the eastern diplomacy. After reviewing published and unpublished document collections (such as Feridun Bey's *Münşe'atü s-selaṭīn* and Şarı 'Abdullāh's *Desūrü l-inšā'*), I would like to turn my attention to two almost untouched official Divan Register books (*Nāme-i hümāyūn defteri*) in Göttingen, which include foreign correspondence of the Porte between 1648-1686. The questions, which I would like to address in my presentation, are the following: Which language was used in the diplomatic correspondence between the Ottomans and Samarkand, Bukhara, the Moghul Empire, Iran, Armenia, and the eastern Arabic speaking countries? Is there any change observable in the order of the usage of the diplomatic languages; could there be significant differences between the beginning of the 15th century going into the end of the 17th century in terms of style, structure of the documents, introduction forms (*elqāb's*)? What are the similarities and differences between the eastern and western diplomatic practices of the Sublime Porte?

# “Navāyī as a Lingua Franca” in the Persophone Turkic World

**Benedek Péri**

**Eötvös Loránd University**

Mīr ‘Alī-šīr Navāyī is usually referred to as the founder of the Central Asian Turkic classical literary tradition often called Chagatay. However, Navāyī’s activities had an impact well-beyond the geographical region where Chagatay was used as a literary language. Though research on the topic has just begun, it has soon become clear that Navāyī’s oeuvre exerted an enormous influence on the development of the Ottoman classical tradition, his works were imitated by many poets in Safavid Iran and read by literary connoisseurs in Mughal India. Manuscripts of his works, some of them illustrated, often travelled thousands of kilometres and were highly valued assets in libraries from the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The present paper, which is based on a plethora of sources, manuscripts, historical accounts, and literary texts, is meant as a first step in a series of articles. As such it has a two-fold goal. It aims both at giving a general picture of the role Navāyī played in the Persophone Turkic world and at defining the possible directions further research should take.

# Tribute or Foreign relations ? A role of Turkic correspondences in the Qing dynasty's diplomacy in the 18-20 centuries.

**Jin NODA**

**Tokyo University of Foreign Studies**

After its invasion of Jungharia and Kashgaria, the Qing dynasty began to pursue diplomatic relations with Central Asian groups/powers such as the Kazakhs, the Kyrghyz, and the Khoqand Khanate. For their communication, it appears that documents in various languages were used, example of which were Tod (Oyirad), Persian and Turkic. Investigating the Turkic documents used in the relations between the Qing and the Central Asian powers can shed light on the characteristics of their relationships. Indeed, it is noteworthy that texts in the original Turkic documents were frequently different from the translated texts (mainly in Manchu) circulated in the Qing Palace. Later, when the Russian Empire conquered Central Asia in the 19th century, the local Russian administrations began to negotiate with the Qing's local counterparts by making use of Turkic, especially which discussing the border demarcation between empires. To analyse these records and documentary practices enables us to reflect further upon the status of Turkic as a lingua franca in Central Eurasia by focusing on Qing China.

# Between Abū'l-Ghāzī and Mu'nis: Writing 'History' in Turkic in Eighteenth-Century Central Asia

Devin DeWeese  
Indiana University, Bloomington

This paper is a preliminary exploration of two groups of manuscripts that feature, among other works, two distinct examples of Central Asian history-writing, in Turkic, that appear to date between the early 18<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup>; they thus bridge the long gap, of a century and a half, between the Turkic historical works of Abū'l-Ghāzī Khān (d. 1663) and the historical writing of Mu'nis (d. 1825), the initiator of the explosion of Turkic history-writing under the patronage of the Qongrat *khāns* of Khiva. The two Turkic 'histories' produced in between these two 'bookends' of Turkic historiography are not, however, what we might expect; they are not chronicles of recent events or retrospectives on the early days of a dynasty in power or even collections of chronograms with some narrative commentary. Rather, one—produced in Khwārazm in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century—is a collection of legendary narratives focused, though quite loosely, on the historical figure of Timūr, similar in content and tenor to the Persian (and later Turkic) '*Tīmūr-nāmas*' explored recently by Ron Sela; the other—evidently produced in Bukhārā in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century—appears to be an adaptation of material drawn ultimately from the rare Chaghatay historical work compiled for Muḥammad Shībānī Khan at the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the *Tavārīkh-i guzīda-yi nuṣrat-nāma*, with other material added from unidentified sources (a version of the latter work was published long ago by Berezin, and was characterized in the 1960s simply as an "abbreviated" version of the 16<sup>th</sup>-century work). In addition to their Turkic language, then, the two works share an apparent focus on historical figures and 'events' from many centuries before they were written, whether in a Timurid or a Chinggisid framework; in at least one case they also share space in the same manuscript. A brief discussion of the known manuscript corpus will be followed by a review of the scholarship that has touched upon them and a consideration of what the works, their contents, and the context for their compilation might

tell us about the expanding 'reach' of Turkic, during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, at some internal Central Asian 'frontiers' of genre and of attention to the historical past.

# Notes on the Periodization of Turkic Literature in Iran

Ferenc Csirkés

Sabancı University

The paper is a broad-minded discussion of problems in periodizing the history of Turkic literary culture in late medieval and early modern Iran, focusing on the Safavid era (ca. 1501-1722). While a periodical framework is an important aspect of any historical treatment, as it broadly reflects its intellectual and ideological foundations, it is missing from the majority of the relevant literature on the subject. In most cases we can only glean crude assumptions informed essentially by dynastic and political history, more often than not reflecting modern ethno-nationalist bias and a top-down model of literary or more broadly, cultural production. Another problem is the neglect Turkic literature is subject to in scholarship, most texts being either unpublished or available in poorly edited formats, which is a further obstacle for a more elaborate scholarly discussion to emerge.

Setting out from recent scholarship on the Golden Horde and medieval Anatolia that emphasizes religious conversion as a key component in the broader Turko-Persianate world in general, I will demonstrate, on the one hand, that Turkic literary production in Safavid Iran is the continuation of west Oghuz/Turkmen literature and the Timurid/Chaghatay tradition, and that its development reflects the political, religious, and cultural separation of Iran from Anatolia and Central Asia, on the other hand. I will also claim that the first continuous period of Muslim Turkic literary culture in the Iranian sphere rose from the social and religious fermentation following the conversion of Ilkhanid Iran and its decline in the first half of the fourteenth century. This period likely ended with the centralization and bureaucratization of Iran during the reign of Shah 'Abbas (r. 1588-1629) when the social basis and the patronage available for Turkic literature fundamentally changed, starting a period that, in terms of patronage, reception, and the social and cultural status of Turkic in Iran, likely continued until modernization, centralization and westernization in the nineteenth century.

# Turkic as *Lingua Franca* in the Diplomatic Correspondence of the Russian State with the East in the 16th–17th Centuries

István Vásáry

Eötvös Loránd University

Although Russian statehood goes back to the tenth century, it was under the reign of Ivan III (r. 1462–1505), Grand Prince of Moscow that the foundations of the unified Russian State were laid: he refused to pay tribute to the Great Horde, a symbolic gesture to express complete sovereignty, and tripled the territory of Muscovy. From his reign onward the central governmental offices, the so-called *prikazy* appeared that addressed various administrative, judicial, territorial, or executive problems. One of the most important of them was the *Posol'skii prikaz* “ambassadorial department/ foreign office”, was founded later, in 1549 as the central organ of Muscovy’s foreign affairs, until its abolishment in 1720. A *prikaz* was led by a *d’iak* “chief clerk” whose work was aided by the *pod’iachii* “scribes”. During its existence for 170 years the *Posol'skii prikaz* produced an enormous quantity of official documents, now preserved in the Russian State Archives of Ancient Documents (RGADA).

Dozens of scribes and translators worked in the chancelleries of the *Posol'skii prikaz* who compiled the documents written in Russian and provided the Russian translations of incoming documents written in foreign languages. A considerable part of the scribes and translators, in charge of correspondence with the Asian states, were Tatars or of Tatar descent, in consequence of the 250-year subjection of the Russian lands to the Golden Horde and its successor states. After 1480, the Tatar successor states of Kazan, Astrakhan, Siberia, Crimea and the Nogay Hordes survived, and they pursued diplomatic correspondence with Moscow in the Eastern Turkic literary language (now called Chagatay, then termed simply as Tatar). The Tatar literati in the Russian chancelleries were totally bilingual, they translated the incoming Tatar documents into Russian and the outgoing documents into Tatar.

Understandably, because of the former practice, the *Posol'skii prikaz* continued employing Tatar scribes when later expansion of the Russian state in the East necessitated their expertise. Edward L. Keenan’s assertion that Turkic “was the language of diplomacy in the Eurasian Steppe for half a millenium” is fully justified if one closely examines the diplomatic material of the RGADA. Turkic (Tatar) was widely used in the diplomatic correspondence of Muscovy with the eastern world, not only with states in which some form of Turkic was the dominant language (Crimea, Nogay Hordes, Turkey, Khiva, Bukhara) but also with states of a non-Turkic literacy such as the Kalmucks, Persia and India.

In this paper a few documents of RGADA, written in Turkic (Tatar) and connected to the mercantile and diplomatic mission of Semen Malen’koi, the Russian envoy to Persia and

India in 1695–1696, will be subjected to investigation. It becomes apparent that not only the language but the style and the diplomatic formulae also followed the tradition once formed in the chancelleries of the Golden Horde.

# **Tatar Biographies and Biographical Tatar:**

## **Language and Exposition from Marjani to Fakhreddinov**

**Michael Kemper**

**University of Amsterdam**

This paper is about the language and style of Tatar biographical dictionaries from the late 19<sup>th</sup> to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, focusing on Shihabaddin al-Marjani's *Mustafad al-akhbar* (vol. II, Kazan 1885) and Rida'addin b. Fakhreddin's *Athar* (vol. III, ms., ca. 1908-1934). Fakhreddinov saw Marjani as his great model in Islamic scholarship and Muslim historiography, admiring him in terms of both methodology and judgment. But when reproducing documents and information from Marjani's *Mustafa al-akhbar*, Fakhreddinov made careful selections and also introduced adaptations, about which he was transparent to the reader. Writing several decades after Marjani, Fakhreddinov developed a different form of the Tatar language for the biographical genre, and used new techniques for elucidating and enlivening his and Marjani's material. In this paper I will focus on Fakhreddinov's selective and transformative use of Marjani's texts.

# **Layers of Lingua Franca: The Intersecting, Dynamic Worlds of Turkic Language in the Eighteenth-Century Volga-Ural Region**

**Danielle Ross**

**Utah State University**

The 1680s-1780s has long been portrayed as a period of anti-Muslim oppression and cultural stagnation in for the Muslim communities of the Volga-Ural region. Historians' tendency to focus on missionary activity, conversion decrees, and Catherine II's toleration policies has led them to ignore the region's considerable body of eighteenth-century Turkic-language writings. Turkic served as: (1) a medium for teaching and proselytizing about Islam; (2) a language through which educated people participated in an early modern Turkic-language literary world that included Ottoman and Central Asian lands; (3) a mode of communication between the Russia imperial government and its subjects in its eastern and southern territories; (4) a language of daily use for correspondences, wills, and local historical records. While all these activities took place in Turkic and often involved the same writers, the kinds of language employed in each of them (style, vocabulary, grammar) varied. By mapping out language use through Turkic texts, it becomes possible to reconstruct the different cultural processes underway in the eighteenth-century Volga-Ural region: the waning Chingisid political order, the binding of the Volga's Muslim elite to a Central Asian-based early modern literary-scholarly milieu, the intertwining of Tatar-language use with Islamization, and the carving out of Muslim spaces within an Orthodox Christian empire. Far from a period that was either stagnant or unknowable, the eighteenth century was the century in which the defunct Kazan Khanate became the nineteenth-century land of Bulghar. Turkic-language use played an integral role in that process.