

BOOK REVIEW

Károly, László 2022. *Modern Turkic Languages. An Introduction with Accompanying Audio*. [Bibliotheca Turcica 2.] Uppsala – Budapest: Uppsala Universitet – Molnar & Kelemen Oriental Publishers.

Reviewed by *Béla KEMPF**

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A very special material on Turkic languages was published as the second volume of the quite new series *Bibliotheca Turcica*. The book appeared as a joint publication of the Uppsala University and the Molnar & Kelemen Oriental Publishers. The link between these two is the author of the book. László Károly is a Professor of Turkic Languages at Uppsala University, but he defended his degree in Szeged, Hungary. The volume is dedicated to the memory of his master, Árpád Berta.

The specialty of this book lies in the fact that it was written mainly for educational purposes, mostly to help students of Turkology get a broader picture of present-day *Turcia*. Researchers in linguistics, however, will find the book highly useful and informative as well.

Apart from the preliminaries and *Preface* (pp. xvii–xviii), the book is organized into three parts: *Introduction* (pp. 1–18), *Languages* (pp. 19–236), and appendices with a list of *Informants* (pp. 237–242), *Bibliography* (pp. 243–247) and *Indexes* of languages (pp. 249–254) and of geographical names (pp. 255–261).

From the *Preface*, we learn, that the volume is a result of ten years of work (2012–2022).

The main part of the book consists of descriptions of 28 modern Turkic languages. Somewhat differently from the existing handbooks, the languages are arranged in alphabetical order “rather than being arranged to reflect any hierarchy or order of importance”. (p. 2)

The volume under review has two special features. The first of them is that each language is pictured by a text sample in the given language, and transcription and interlinear glosses are provided for each of the presented texts. Accordingly, the different language samples are made easier to comprehend. The second specialty is meant by audio files easily accessible with the aid of QR codes. The audio files contain the language samples presented in the book, read out by native speakers of the given language. Thus the teaching material becomes much more alive.

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Language data throughout the book are presented in original orthography, or a transcription using the IPA system.

The structure of each language description follows a strict system, which furnishes the additional benefit of using the volume for comparative purposes. This system is built as follows:

The head of the section consists of the name of the language, and a language code, as defined by the ISO. A list of possible names of the given language in original orthography follows. The status of the language is also given, and the basis of the literary language is defined, if one exists. The list of countries follows, where the language traditionally is spoken, and also that of the diasporas that have resulted from relatively recent migrations. A concise classification of dialects follows, and statistical data on the speakers of the language is given, that is based on census data. Accordingly, these data are not free of ambiguity. Under the title *Alternative names*, all those names and interchangeable variants under which the given language is mentioned in the earlier literature have been collected.

The next heading is in each case the *Special features*, under which all lexical, phonological, and grammatical aspects are summarized, that are peculiar to the given language, and that allow students to carry out some research in comparative historical linguistics. As the university curriculums in Turkology usually contain some studies in Old Turkic and Turkish, such data are regularly quoted for comparative purposes and, if needed, other contact language data as well.

Under the title *Alphabet*, the writing systems currently used by the speakers of the given language are presented, and the time of their introduction, as well as the time of the latest revision is also provided. Here we also get a table of the official alphabet.

What follows is the *Language sample*, together with the QR code that navigates to the location of the audio file. These audio files are stored on the DiVA portal of Uppsala University. Their importance is manifold. Teachers and students greatly contribute to the learning and comprehension of the language, while researchers will also appreciate that these files facilitate the measurement of the period and value of different sounds.

Their genres are varied: fairy tales, heroic epics, and other folklore materials, as well as modern novels have been used.

The text samples are provided in the official alphabet. All of them come from earlier publications. Their sources are provided at the end of the *Bibliography*, under the title *Text materials* (pp. 246–247).

The section on *Interlinear analysis* provides the first ten sentences (titles included) of each text in the form of interlinear glosses, creating a pattern for further classroom activities.

This analysis consists of (1) the text line in transcription; (2) a morpho(phono)logical segmentation; (3) interlinear morphological glosses; and (4) English translation.

The *Bibliography* sections contain the most important grammars, dictionaries, and other materials touching upon the given language. One just regrets that chapters of handbooks, like those of the volume *Turkic languages* (Johanson – Csató 2022) are not listed in these bibliographies. They would certainly contribute to the “big picture”.

As the last part of the *Introduction*, we also get a very useful section on the classification of Turkic languages (pp. 12–18). It is very welcome, that in this section methodological questions, like types of classifications, or that of language vs. dialect (p. 12) are discussed as well, and the focus is directed toward linguistic, sociolinguistic, cultural, geographical, and historical problems, that should be pondered when classifying languages. The difficulty concerning the unbalanced



quantity of previous research on certain languages is mentioned as well. It is also a value of this part, that the author emphasizes, that such classifications are never definite or free of ambiguity.

The classification used here concentrates on modern languages, with South Siberia as the center of departure. Accordingly, the classification features 7 main branches (1) Central (or Siberian) branch, (2) North-eastern (or North-east Siberian) branch, (3) Southern (or Turkestan) branch, (4) South-western (or Oguz) branch, (5) Khalaj, (6) Chuvash and (7) Western (or Kipchak) branch. Indeed the classification of the author has many curiosities for those interested in the history of language classification. Just to mention one of these examples, which is listing Altai among the Kipchak languages.

The audio material of the volume is really a novelty in the field, during the collection of which an enormous work has been done. If one considers the map of *Turcia*, finding 28 willing native speakers covering 28 Turkic languages is almost impossible, even in the age of the internet.

The volume for sure will replace introductions used in university curriculums, and accordingly is warmly recommended for linguists, teachers, and students of Turkic, and, of course, also for the broader audience.

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