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PTKC. *JĀ- ~ *JA- 'TO BE NEAR, ...' AND THE QUESTION OF ALTAIC CORRESPONDENCES¹

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Abstract

The paper discusses a group of eleven words with similar phonetic shapes and somewhat similar semantics: *jagu-*, *jak-* 'to come near'; *jan-* 'to turn back'; *jaguk*, *jakŷn* 'close, near'; *jāk*, *jān* 'side'; *jāna-* 'to sharpen'; *jaŋak* 'cheek'; *jaŋy* 'new'; and *jaka* 'edge'. All have been suspected to belong to the same family, at the heart of which, most probably, would be the verbal root **jā-*. Some of the problems associated with this idea were known previously, whereas some are newly identified here. The paper considers various constraints and proposes a scheme centred around **jā* ~ **ja-* 'to be near, ...', which may or may not be connected to MaTung. *daga* 'id.' and Mo. *daga-* 'to follow'.

1. Introduction

The titular verb **jā-* was proposed more than a century ago by Bang to explain TkC. *jāk* and *jān* 'side'. Since that time, many more words have been found that could potentially be derived from the same root, and though they have been etymologized, or at least mentioned in an etymological context in more than forty works, the discussion of the root itself all but stalled after the publication of a further article by Bang in 1934.

The present paper begins with an overview of the existing research (Section 2), as this has by now become much needed. It then proceeds to identify the main

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problems (Section 3), and to discuss them against a broader background (Section 4). The main points are summarized in Section 5.

The words discussed in this paper appear in a multitude of languages and dialects, and in multiple, mostly inconsequential, phonetic variants. Some authors only mention singular forms, others list several forms as examples of a larger, unspecified family, and others enumerate as many as possible. In order to provide a degree of clarity, I grouped various forms into a few main families, and will mostly only refer to them in this paper by these umbrella forms. Note that this grouping primarily reflects how the individual words have been treated by previous authors, and not necessarily their etymology. The groups are outlined below using single examples from each of the major branches of the Turkic family, cited after DS, DTS, ÈSTJa, GJV, KEWT, KirGRS, R III, TofRS, Zenker (1876), Pekarskij (1925), Egorov (1964), Ölmez (2007), and Roos (1998, 2000):

- jagu-** ‘to come near, to approach’ = OTkc. *jagu-*, Az.dial. *javy-*, Trkm.dial. *jovu-t-*, Kyrg. *žū-*, Uigh. *jagu-*, Tlut. *jū-*, Yak. —, Chuv. —, etc.
- jaguk** ‘close, near’ = OTkc. *jaguk*, Tksh. *javuk*, Trkm. *jovuk*, Kyrg. *žük*, OUigh. *jaguq*, Tuv. *čök*, Yak. —, Chuv. *šyväh*, etc.
- jak-** ‘to come near, to approach’ = OTkc. *jak-*, Tksh. *jak-*, Trkm. *jak-*, Kyrg. *žak-*, Uigh. *jaq-*, Tuv. —, Yak. —, Chuv. —, etc.
- jäk** ‘side’ = OTkc. *jak*, Tksh. *jak*, Trkm.dial. *jäk*, Kyrg. *žak*, Uigh. *jaq*, WYu. *jaq*, Yak. —, Chuv. —, etc.
- jaka** ‘edge, border, shore, collar’ = OTkc. *jaka*, Tksh. *jaka*, Trkm. *jaka*, Kyrg. *žaka*, Uigh. *jaqa*, Tof. *ča”ha*, Yak. *saya* ~ *žaya*, Chuv. *šuha*, etc.
- jakÿn** ‘close, near’ = OTkc. *jakÿn*, Tksh. *jakÿn*, Trkm. *jakÿn*, Kyrg. *žakÿn*, Uigh. *jeqin*, WYu. *ja^hqÿn*, Yak. —, Chuv. *jahän*, etc.
- jan-** ‘to turn back, to return’ = OTkc. *jan-*, Tksh. —, Trkm. —, Kyrg. *žan-*, Uigh. *jan-*, Tuv. *čan-*, Yak. —, Chuv. —, etc.
- jän** ‘side’ = OTkc. *jan*, Tksh. *jan*, Trkm. *jän*, Kyrg. *žan*, Uigh. *jan*, WYu. *jan*, Yak. —, Chuv. *šum*, etc.
- jäna-** ‘to sharpen, to whet’ = OTkc. *janu-*, Tksh. *jana-*, Trkm. *jäna-*, Kyrg. *žany-*, Uigh. *jonu-*, Tuv. *čany-*, Yak. —, Chuv. —, etc.
- janak** ‘cheek, jaw, side’ = OTkc. *janak*, Tksh. *janak*, Trkm. *janak*, Kyrg. *žäk*, Uigh. *janaq*, WYu. *janaq*, Yak. *synah*, Chuv. —, etc.
- janÿ** ‘new’ = OTkc. *janÿ*, Tksh. *jeni*, Trkm. *janÿ*, Kyrg. *žanÿ*, Uigh. *janÿ*, WYu. *janÿ*, Yak. *saŋa*, Chuv. *šěně*, etc.

Many of these words, in many of the languages in which they appear, have many further derivatives. Indeed, some of these groups themselves derive from one of the others. Most of the derivatives, however, are quite transparent both morphologically and semantically, and so they will not be discussed here, e.g. Chlk. *jaktalžäk* ‘sticky’ (R III 33), Tksh. *janal* ‘lateral’ (KEWT), or Yak. *sayalā-* ‘to furnish with a collar’ (Pekarskij 1925).

2. Previous research

This overview is partly organized by chronology, and partly by topic, i.e. by the groups of words listed in Section 1. It does not include every work that mentions any of our words in an etymological or comparative context. I followed nearly all the references, but summarized only those which I deemed significant – either for our words as a group, or because of their popularity (hence the inclusion of even those etymological dictionaries which do not discuss them at all). I omitted inconsequential etymologies, such as Vullers' (1864) derivation of *jān* from *jakmak* 'to burn', Budagov's (1871: باق) derivation of *jakŷn* 'near' from *jāk* 'side', but without specifying the suffix, or Munkácsi's (1900: 157) use of the equals sign between Tkc. *jān* 'side' and NPer. *žan* 'direction, side' without any commentary.

To the best of my knowledge, Vámbéry (1878: §§ 122, 123) was the first to link the words listed in Section 1. He does not link all of them, and he also includes clearly unrelated words such as Chuv. *su* 'healthy'. He also fails to provide any decompositions or explanations, with one exception: that the proportion between *n* in *jān* 'side' and *k* in *jāk* id., *jaġuk* 'near', etc., is the same as in *janmak* : *jakmak* 'to burn' and *sanmak* : *sakmak* 'to imagine'.

Subsequently, Gombocz (1905: 268) links some of the words in this study, likewise without decomposition or explanation, but he also adds Mongolic and Manchu-Tungusic parallels. Among the Turkic words, Gombocz mentions only the *k*-forms: *jak-*, *jakŷn*, etc., while *jān*, *jan-*, etc. are missing from the list. The same is true for a later paper by Gombocz (1912: 23) which, so far as the words addressed in this paper are concerned, is effectively a repetition of the earlier collection.

One of the words with extra-Turkic parallels is *jaka* 'edge', perhaps the least clear one of all. Vladimircov (1910: 171) derives this word, together with the Mongolic forms, from *jak-* 'to come near'. Ramstedt (1914–1915) also equates the Turkic and Mongolic forms, and so does Räsänen (1920: 194) who also adds the Chuvash and Yakut counterparts. This etymology is also supported, though with a certain amount of caution because of the semantics, by Levitskaja 1989 (ĖSTJa 82). Doerfer (1971: 308; see below) proposes entirely separate proto-forms for *jaka* 'edge', *jaġuk* 'near', and *janŷ* 'new'. Several years later, Doerfer suggests (TMEN IV § 1802) that the Tkc. *jaka* is the source of the Mongolic words which, in turn, were borrowed to Yakut and the Tungusic languages. This last assertion, namely that Yakut < Mongolic > Tungusic, is supported by ĖSTJa (82).

Returning to our collection as a whole, Bang (1917: § 7) mentions in passing that *jāk* and *jān* 'side' are parallel derivatives **ja-k* and **ja-n*, and thus introduces the idea of the root **ja-* that could act as the common denominator for the words. In the same paper (§ 43), Bang also adds *jakŷn* 'near' to the family when he etymologizes it as the directive-allative form of *jāk*, and in (1921: § 10), he adds *janŷak* 'cheek', which is derived from *jān* 'side'. The latter etymology is subsequently almost universally accepted, though on occasion with minor modifications (Sevortjan 1962: 166; ED 948b; ĖSTJa 123; GJV: § 5.10c; Gülensoy 2007: *yanak*; KEWT: *yanak*). Several years later,

Bang additionally entertains the possibility of *jān* being indecomposable, or alternatively the instrumental of **ja* ‘side’ (1925: 405).

Thus, it is only Poppe (1927: 120), half a century after Vámbéry, who makes an earnest attempt to tie this loose collection of words into a family. Similarly to Bang, Poppe proposes the verbal root **ja-*, and from it three derivatives: *jāk* ‘side’, **jag* > *jagu-* ‘to come near’, and *jān* ‘side’. The structure of the first two seems to be uncontroversial; for *jān*, Poppe suggests either the *-yn* suffix as in *akyn* < *ak-* ‘to flow’, or a petrified instrumental suffix attached instead to a nominal **ja*. Each of these three derivatives has further derivatives of their own, including Tksh. *jak+la-š-* ‘to come near’, **jagu-* > *jaguk* ‘near’, **jan+a-ja* > Tlut. *janaj* ‘by the side, nearby’,² and *jakȳn* as a petrified instrumental form of *jāk*. A family centred around **ja-* also appears later in Bang (1934: 200), Poppe (1960: 22), Ölmez (1991: 170), ĖSTJa and KEWT (see below).

Bang and Poppe’s etymologies of *jakȳn* found few supporters but, in an apparent burst of renewed interest, three alternative explanations were proposed for *jakȳn* in the space of three years, that is between 1932 and 1934.

Firstly, Zajączkowski (1932: 79) lists *jakȳn* among formations with the deverbal *-yn* suffix, alongside Tksh. *čakyn* ‘spark, flash’, Tlut. *tolun* ‘full moon’, etc. This idea is independently revived by Räsänen (1955: 135), Tekin (1971: 358; see below), and later also cited after Zajączkowski in TMEN (IV § 1805) and ĖSTJa (IV 84).

Secondly, Ramstedt (1933: 464) proposes that *jag-* ‘to be near, to follow, to unite oneself to’ > *jaguk* ‘near’, and simultaneously *jagkun* > *jakȳn* id. This is contested by Bang (1934: 200–201) for two reasons, namely that **jagkun* would have yielded **joqun* in Taranchi, and such a form is not attested, and also that the verb **jag-* ‘to come near’ does not exist in Turkic, with only *jak-* and *jagu-* attested.

Thirdly and lastly, in the same paper, Bang (1934: 200) suggests **jagkyn* ~ **jakkyn*. He speculates that the double consonant may have hindered the progress of the Karakhanid umlaut, and so such forms would explain the relative frequency of pre-umlaut forms (*jaqin* in place of the expected *jeqin*). Expanding on his 1917 hypothesis (above), Bang proposes the verbal root **ja-*, and from it the intensive form *jak-* ‘to come near’, together with the nouns *jāk* and *jān* ‘side’, as well as **jag* ‘sich nährend’. It would appear that Ramstedt concurs with Bang’s arguments because later he too proposes **jaggyn* (1949: 250).

The same etymology can be also found in Menges (1968: 102), and it is this iteration that is, in turn, criticized by Tekin (1971: 358). Tekin notes that the initial *g-* in *-gyn* is generally preserved in the Oghuz group, and that *jakȳn* itself is attested in Uighur at a stage in which the *g-* was still present, so the original suffix must have been *-yn* (as proposed by Zajączkowski, see above), rather than *-gyn*.³

A similar decomposition is also proposed by Räsänen (VEWT: 180a), but from the noun *jāk* ‘side’, rather than from the verb *jak-* ‘to come near’. In addition to this,

² Poppe (1927: 121) spells the word ⟨yanai⟩, probably mirroring Radloff’s notation ⟨jahai⟩ (R III 82). Most probably, both spellings represent /janaj/, cf. Stachowski K. / Urban [in preparation].

³ Cf. *jakyn* versus *ämğäk* ‘distress’, *ičğär-* ‘to keep, to protect’, *japyrgak* ‘leaf’, etc. (Karaayak 2021).

VEWT features several potentially related words, but fails to suggest how they might be linked. The adjectives *jakšy* 'good' (180b) and *jany* 'new' (185b) are derived from *jak-* 'to come near' (178b) and *jān* 'side' (184b), respectively, the entry for *jagu-* 'to come near' (178b) mentions *jaguk* 'near' and other derivatives, that for *jāk* 'side' (184b) includes a group of verbs meaning 'to rub, to smear' (Kzk. *žak-* etc.), as well as Altaic parallels, but no further information is forthcoming. Indeed, the entry for *jān* 'side' (184b) includes no etymology, only the reconstruction **jān*, which may intimate Räsänen believes it is not related to the other forms. The same reconstruction can be found in Tekin (1973: 40; 1995: 175; see below).

An entirely different picture is painted by Doerfer (1971: 308) who derives *jaguk* 'near' from **dēgū-*, **dēgūka(n)*, *jaka* 'edge' < **dak(k)ā*, and *jany* 'new' < **daṅē*, i.e. three separate stems (roots?). Doerfer does not expand upon these ideas in TMEN (IV § 1802, 1805, 1816), where he limits himself to rejecting all the Altaic comparisons, and instead proposes borrowing as the mechanism which led to the rise of all the Turko-Mongolo-Tungusic similarities in our words.

Shortly after VEWT was published, Clauson's own general Turkic dictionary became available with the somewhat generous addition of the word *etymological* to the title. ED (1972) includes many of the words listed. It lacks a detailed explanation, but the general scheme can be pieced together from the individual entries: *jagru* 'near' (ED 905a), *jagu-* 'to come near' (898b) < **jag* which has an "obscure" morphological connection to *jak-* id. (896b) > *jakȳn* 'near' (904a) and perhaps also *jaka* 'edge' (898a). For the main *n*-forms, *jān* 'side' (940a), *jāna-* 'to sharpen' (944a), etc. no etymologies are provided. However, an etymology is given for *jana* 'again' (943a), and it is explained to be a gerund from *jan-* 'to turn back' (941b), which is the same etymology that Räsänen had previously proposed (1957: 239).

The final general dictionary, ËSTJa (1989), discusses a number of the words in this study, and does so in such a way that the information disseminated across the individual entries can be combined into an overall scheme (ËSTJa 62, 63, 81, 82, 84, 111, 113, 115): **ja-* 'to pass by, to come near' > 1) causative **ja-gur-* which was reinterpreted as *jagu-r-* > *jaguk* 'near', etc., and *jan-* 'to turn back'; 2) **ja-* ~ **jā-* > *jak-* 'to come near' > *jāk* 'side', (?) *jaka* 'edge', *jakȳn* 'near', *jakyš-* 'to come near, to approach, to suit, to be appropriate'⁴ > *jakšy* 'good'. In addition, *jana-* ~ *jany-* 'to leave, to return' is considered to be derived either from *jan-* 'to turn back', or from *jān* 'side', from which also *jāna-* ~ ... 'to sharpen (by dragging the side of an object over a whetting stone)' (cf. also Sevortjan 1962: 382). It is only the origin of *jān* 'side' that effectively remains unexplained.

The verb *jany-* 'to sharpen' also features in Ramstedt (1935: 466b), alongside a verb which has very similar forms but with the meaning 'to threaten'. Ramstedt separates these into two entries; for the first no etymology is provided but, perhaps rather surprisingly, the latter is viewed as being derived from **jan-ga-*, with the meaning 'to threaten, to shake one's hand'. It would appear that Ramstedt possibly confused two partially homophonous families in this instance; Clark (1977: 163)

⁴ Cf. e.g. Pol. *podchodzić*, Russ. *подходить* where the same semantic extension has occurred.

offers a rather clever explanation of how this might have happened. It is remarkable that Hatiboğlu (1970, after Tekin 1973: 40) also confused these words and she, in turn, is criticized by Tekin who invokes the original vowel length as an argument: *jān* ‘side’ : *jan-* ‘to turn back’ : *jān-* ‘to threaten’. I believe it follows from this that Tekin considers *jan-* ‘to turn back’ and *jān* ‘side’ to be unrelated, and the latter to be unrelated to the other words in this study.

Etymological dictionaries addressing only the Turkish language, in the main contribute little to the discussion. Eyuboğlu (1988) and Gülensoy (2007; see below) equate *jak-* ‘to come near’ with *jak-* ‘to burn’, which is problematic because of the semantics, and neither provides a convincing justification. Eyuboğlu also discusses *jany* ‘new’, which he derives from Indo-European, as well as *jaka* ‘edge’, which he equates with Ar. *jāqaī* ‘collar’ and Pers. *jaqqa* ~ *jāqa* id. but without making a definitive decision as to the direction of the borrowing (see also Section 3.6).

Gülensoy (2007) discusses other words but these can only be partially combined into a general scheme. The *n*-forms are mostly considered to be unrelated: *jān* ‘side’ < *jān*, and *jany* ‘new’ < **jang* ~ **jan* ‘something that needs to be hidden’ > Tksh. *yanılmak* ‘to err’, etc. However, *jan-* ‘to turn back’ is derived from *ja-n-* which appears to be the same root that Gülensoy identifies in *jaka* ‘edge’, *jakyşmak* ‘to suit’, and possibly also *jakȳn* ‘near’. As was mentioned above, in theory this should also be the same root that is present in *jakmak* ‘to burn’ since that verb is equated with OTkc. *jak-* ‘to suit, to come near, ...’, but ‘to burn’ is reconstructed by Gülensoy with a long vowel, **jā-*.

Eren (1999) only discusses *jaka* ‘edge’ from the wordlist for this study, deriving it, following Clauson, from *jak-* ‘to come near’.

It is perhaps somewhat unfair to consider Kabataş’s (2009) dictionary, as it focuses exclusively on the specificity of Cypriot Turkish, but I report that unfortunately it, too, does not cover words from our collection.

Nişanyan ([online]), on the other hand, does discuss several of the words under consideration but his explanations are often sadly lacking in clarity. It seems that *jaka* ‘edge’, *jakȳn* ‘near’, and *jak-* ‘to come near’ are all derived from the Old Turkic (Old, not Proto-) verb *jak-* ‘to come near, to touch, to spread (grease, ointment)’ which, in turn, is thought to be created from another Old Turkic verb *jagu-* ‘to come near’ through the addition of the denominal suffix *+yk-*. Rather surprisingly, the other words were also coined from verbs using denominal suffixes, including such verbs as “*yāk* ‘close, near (adjective)’”.⁵ On the other hand, *jān* ‘side’ and *jany* ‘new’ are both derived from *jan-* ‘to turn back’, though with an annotation that this is not certain. Interestingly, *janak* ‘cheek’ < OTkc. *jan-* ‘to turn back’ + *+(g)Ak* contains no such qualification. I found no indication that Nişanyan believes *jan-* to be related to *jak-*.

⁵ Cf. e.g. sv. *yakın*: “Bu sözcük Eski Türkçe *yāk* ‘yakın (sıfat)’ fiilinden Eski Türkçe +In ekiyle türetilmiştir. [...] Bu sözcük Eski Türkçe *yak-* ‘yanaşmak, yaklaşmak’ fiilinden Eski Türkçe +Uk ekiyle türetilmiştir.” (accessed: 9 October 2022; in the original, “Eski Türkçe” was set in bold).

M. Stachowski (KEWT, 2019), while only discussing a few of the words in this study, does so in such a way that the overall scheme emerges quite clearly. M. Stachowski in the main adopts Poppe's (1927) reconstruction of the root *ja- as the centre of the family, only changing the vowel to a long one, *jā-; for the rationale, see point 1 in Section 5 below. The whole picture is thus as follows: *jān* 'side', *jany* 'new' < CTkc. *jān 'side' ? < *jā± > *jāk ['side'] (> *jagu-* 'to come near'), *jak-* 'to come near' > **jakgyn* > *jakȳn* 'near', as well as **jakguk* [id.] > Tksh. *javuk* 'engagement', etc. However, *jaka* 'edge' is not viewed as being part of the family as M. Stachowski challenges Vladimircov's etymology on semantic grounds (see above). An alternative to this scheme is also possible where the central *jā± is replaced with PTkc. *jāη 'side', which M. Stachowski had proposed earlier (2012: 133–134), whereby the relation between *jāk* and *jān* is not derivational but instead phonetic in nature.

Lastly, Tietze (TETTL) includes all the words under consideration but offers no discussion whatsoever, limiting himself to deriving them directly from Old Turkic forms (not Proto-), and referring to the appropriate entries in ED.

3. Commentary

The last century of research has failed to bring much progress. To the best of my knowledge, Bang (1934) was the last author who made a specific effort to consider the collection of words in this study as a whole. Apart from focusing exclusively on individual words, the majority of authors also only consulted a handful of sources, which resulted in certain ideas being developed independently multiple times. Let us recapitulate below what has been established, and what has been questioned, concentrating on the propositions that I consider to be viable to some extent:

1. *jagu-* 'to come near' either < *ja- or *jag- or *jāk 'side'.
2. *jaguk* 'near' < *jagu-* 'to come near'.
3. *jak-* 'to come near' either < *ja- or *jā-.
4. *jak-* 'to burn' is unrelated.
5. *jāk* 'side' either < *ja- or *jā- or *jāη or *jynak*.
6. *jaka* 'edge' controversial because of semantics.
7. *jakȳn* 'near' either < **jak-gyn* or **jak-yn*.
8. *jan-* 'to turn back' < *ja-.
9. *jan-* 'to threaten' is unrelated.
10. *jān* 'side' either < *ja- or *jā- or *jān or *jāη.
11. *jāna-* 'to sharpen' < *jān* 'side'.
12. *janak* 'cheek' either < *jān* 'side' *jan-* 'to turn back'.
13. *jany* 'new' < *jān* 'side'.

I would like to add my thoughts regarding some of these points.

3.1. & 3.2. *jagu-* 'to come near', *jaguk* 'near'

Four partially overlapping hypotheses have been proposed for *jagu-*: Poppe (1927: 121): **ja-g+u-* | ED (904a): **jag+ū-* | ÈSTJa (62): **ja-gur-* > **jagu-r-* | KEWT (*yan*): **jā+k+ū-*.

Whether intentionally or not, Clauson's reconstruction is effectively the same as that of Poppe, with the only actual difference being that it stops one step short of the root **ja-*. I will, therefore, treat these as a single proposal. This hypothesis requires the assumption of a noun **jag*; generally speaking, every additional assumption diminishes the probability of a scheme but in this case, **jag* happens to simultaneously provide a rather effective explanation for *jagru* 'near' (ED 905a).

The hypothesis presented in ÈSTJa relies on resegmentation which, though a highly irregular phenomenon, is not impossible. However, it is difficult to absolutely evaluate the likelihood of this proposition.

Reconstructions in KEWT assume long vowels in the auslaut of verbal roots as a rule (KEWT 7; GJV § 5.8). Indeed, *jāk* 'side' which is the intermediary step between **jā-* and *jagu-*, is attested in dialectal Turkmen with a long vowel (ÈSTJa 82); however, *jagu-* itself does not appear to bear any trace of an original length (ÈSTJa 62), and neither does its derivative *jaguk* (ÈSTJa 63). This is problematic because if one accepts that all Turkic verbs originally had long vowels in the auslaut, then the other two propositions face the same difficulty. See Section 4.

3.3. & 3.8. *jak-* 'to come near', *jan-* 'to turn back'

In essence only two hypotheses have been proposed for *jak-*: Gombocz (1905: 268), Bang (1934: 200): < **ja-* | ÈSTJa (81): **ja-* ~ **jā-* | KEWT (*yakın*): < **jā-*.⁶ Similarly to *jak-*, *jan-* has appeared in many discussions concerning the words in this study, but there have only really been two attempts at etymologizing *jan-* itself, both with the same result: ÈSTJa (111), Gülensoy (2007 *yan*⁻²): < **ja-*. The middle ground is taken by Ščerbak who reconstructs **ǰāk-* and simultaneously **ǰan-* (1970: 196), unfortunately without any further elaboration.

That is to say, the propositions differ only with regard to the quantity of the root vowel, with the reflexes of both *jak-* and *jan-* in various languages providing no reason to suspect an original long vowel (ÈSTJa 81, 111). It is only when one attempts to connect them to other words in our collection, and to that end to detach from them the final *-k* or *-n*, that such a need arises (see Section 4). We have, therefore, two seemingly mutually exclusive requirements: that *jak-* and *jan-* be reconstructed with a short vowel, and that they be derived from **jā-* with an original long vowel.

3.5. & 3.10 *jāk*, *jān* 'side'

The authors who discussed both these words, generally viewed them in a similar way: Bang (1917: § 7; 1934: 200), Poppe (1927: 120): **ja-k*, **ja-n* < **ja-* | M. Stachowski

⁶ This derivation is not expressly articulated in KEWT but it can be inferred from the entries for *yakın* and *yan*.

(2012: 133): **jāk*, **jān* < **jāŋ* | KEWT (*yan*): **jāk*, (?) **jān* < **jā±*. Furthermore, ÈSTJa (82, 113) derives *jāk* from **ja-* ~ **jā-* and considers that it is connected to *jān*, but does not offer a clear etymology for the latter. Bang (1925: 405), in between the two papers enumerated above, has doubts about *jān* and speculates that it could be derived from **ja* ‘side’, or be entirely indecomposable. It seems that Räsänen (VEWT 184b), Ščerbak (1970: 196), Tekin (1973: 40; see Section 2), and Gülensoy (2007) also consider **jān* to be its own primary root, while Nişanyan ([online]) entertains the possibility of it being derived from *jan-* ‘to turn back’.

The derivations from **ja-* (with a short vowel) are problematic because both *jāk* and *jān* seem as if they had originally had long vowels (cf. ÈSTJa 82, 113ae solved quite easily by deriving them from **ja-gak* and **ja-gan* with a subsequent syncope of **-aga-* > **-ā-*. It should be noted, however, that **jā-gak* and **jā-gan* (with long vowels) would have resulted in the same *jāk* and *jān* attested today. Taking into account the Chuvash reflex *śum* ‘place near something’ (cf. Egorov 1964), the contraction must have occurred before the Proto-Turkic stage.

The derivation of both *jāk* and *jān* from PTkc. **jāŋ* (M. Stachowski 2012: 133), while possible, does not solve the problem, but merely shifts it one step back in time. M. Stachowski notes that with this scenario “[t]here is no necessity to introduce a new root **√ja* [...]” (2012: 134), but then there is also no possibility to elegantly explain our collection of words as a whole.

The proportion of authors who wished to view *jān* as its own primary, indecomposable root is considerably higher than those who considered *jāk* in a similar manner. Possibly, this is because many more authors have written about *jān* than about *jāk*. There is, however, no need to surrender and proclaim indecomposability, as both words can in fact be easily derived from **ja-/jā-*. Potentially, they could be even derived from a nominal **jag* (see Section 3.1 above) with the same syncope of **-aga-* or **-āga-* > **-ā-*.

The majority of the hypotheses above assume that *jāk* and *jān* are sister derivatives but this need not, in fact, be a requirement. One of the anonymous reviewers drew my attention to OTkc. *jyŋak* ‘side, direction’ (DTS) and suggested that it could be the ancestor of *jāk* or a descendant of *jaŋak* ‘cheek’ (see Section 3.12 below). Possibly, it is both; see Figure 1.

3.6. *jaka* ‘edge, bank, shore, collar’

Only two etymologies have been proposed for this word: Vladimircov (1910: 171), (?) ED (898a), (?) ÈSTJa (82), Eren (1999) < *jak-* | Doerfer (1971: 308) < **dak(k)ā*.

The derivation from *jak-* ‘to come near’ has only really been accepted by Vladimircov, who in fact proposed it, and Eren, after Clauson. Clauson himself, together with ÈSTJa, was cautious, while KEWT (*yaka*) outright rejected it. All three cited semantics as the reason.

It is not immediately obvious to me how to interpret Doerfer’s reconstruction. It seems to suggest that the word is not related to *jaguk* ‘near’ or *jany* ‘new’ (Section 2), and elucidates no further.

Nevertheless, *jaka* seems to have been borrowed fairly intensively. According to Doerfer (TMEN IV § 1802) the Mongolic and Manchu-Tungusic parallels are simply borrowings, but a discussion of this matter is beyond the scope of this paper. The word is also present in Yakut, one of only three of the words in this study (in addition to *saŋa* ‘new’ and *synah* ‘cheek’), and it has two phonetic variants: *saya* ‘collar, edge’, and *žaya* ‘edge’ (Pekarskij 1925). Doerfer is certainly correct in deriving at least the latter from Mongolic (TMEN IV § 1802).

Eyuboğlu (1988 *yaka*) also mentions Ar. *jāqai* ‘collar’ and NPers. *jaqqa* ~ *jāqa* id. (He spells the Arabic word ⟨yāka⟩ and ⟨yaka⟩, and the Persian words ⟨yeke⟩; however, see Baalbaki 1995 and Steingass 1892.) Considering the spread and antiquity of *jaka* in Turkic, it seems unlikely that it should be a loanword from Arabic or Persian, but despite this it may still be interesting from the cultural-historical perspective, as to just how readily this word appears to have been borrowed across Siberia and beyond.

Notwithstanding the above, the semantics do indeed seem to pose a serious obstacle with respect to the inclusion of *jaka* in the **ja-/*jā-* family. It seems that the meanings ‘edge’ and ‘shore’ are more likely to have yielded ‘collar’ than the other way round, so it is probably one of these two, or maybe both, that were the original form or forms. Having said that, the expected meaning of **jak-a* ought to be ‘a place for approaching’, ‘a tool for approaching’ or maybe just ‘approaching’ (cf. Güzel 2019: 291), and it is somewhat puzzling how any of these forms could be used to denote ‘edge’. With enough imagination one could perhaps describe ‘edge, border’ as ‘the place where [two sides] approach [each other]’ but it is not clear that the ancient Turks were so poetically inclined.

3.7. *jakȳn* ‘close, near’

This is by far the most discussed word in the collection of words in this study: Budagov (1871: باق), Bang (1917: § 43), Poppe (1927: 120), VEWT (180a), ÈSTJa (84): < *jāk* | Za-jačzkowski (1932: 79), Tekin (1971: 358), ED (904a), TMEN (IV § 1805), KEWT (*yakın*): < **jakgyn* < *jak-* | Ramstedt (1933: 464): < **jagkun* < **jag-* | Bang (1934: 200): **jagkyn* ~ **jakkyn* | Ramstedt (1949: 250; 1957: 92, 128), Menges (1968: 102): **jaggyn*.

Specific issues are repeated across multiple etymologies, so let us address them from a general perspective. Firstly, the attested shapes of *jakȳn* give no indication that the root vowel was originally long. It would seem that the hypothesis **jā- > *jak- > jakȳn* could be only feasible if we assumed that the closing of a syllable shortened its vowel. This does not generally appear to be the case, but it may be true for some words, this word included; cf. point 2 in Section 4. Conversely, a derivation from *jāk* ‘side’ would require us to assume that the opening of a closed syllable shortened its vowel. Such a phenomenon did actually occur, but so far as I can tell, only in Yakut, cf. e.g. CTkc. **ōn* ‘ten’, **ōnuč* ‘tenth’ > Yak. *uon*, *onus*.

Secondly, there is the question of **-k- : * -kk- : * -kg- : * -gk- : * -gg-*. The final option, **-gg-*, can probably be safely eliminated, as it is somewhat unlikely that **VggV* should yield *VkV* in nearly every language (cf. ÈSTJa 84). The same is true for the previous

two examples, *-kg- and *-gk-, because in all likelihood they would have been simplified to either *-kk- or *-gg-. Thus, the problem is reduced to whether the middle consonant was a single *-k- or geminated *-kk-. If it was the former, we should expect that at least some languages would have -g-, and this is indeed the case (cf. ÈSTJa 84); if it was the latter, we should expect that at least some languages would preserve -kk-, and this does not appear to be the case (cf. DS, ÈSTJa 84).⁷ Add to this Tekin's arguments mentioned in Section 2 (preservation of g- in Oghuz and attestation without g- in Uighur), and it seems that reconstructions with *-gk-/*-kk- must be deemed as being untenable.

This is unfortunate because dropping the g- from -gyn could explain the length in the second syllable of Trkm. *jakȳn* and Uzb.dial. *jakyjn* which otherwise cannot be explained, as in the continuation of **jak-yn* both vowels ought to be short (cf. Clark 1998: 524, TrkmRS). This is perhaps not entirely impossible, but also it is not particularly likely that **jak-* would have originally had two derivatives, **jak-kyn* and **jak-yn*, where the former, and only the former was preserved exclusively in Turkmen and dialectal Uzbek, while the latter, and only the latter, in all the other languages.

It is also not clear to which group Turkish ought to belong. On the one hand, we would expect Turkish to preserve the geminated *-kk-, as Tekin (1971: 358) noted, but on the other hand, if the root **jā-* originally had a long vowel, we would expect Turkish to have *⟨yağın⟩, not ⟨yakın⟩. It appears that the most feasible combination is a short **ja-*, and single *-k-.

3.12. *jaŋak* 'cheek, jaw, side'

Technically speaking, three etymologies have been proposed for this word: Bang (1921: § 10), ED (948b), ÈSTJa (123), Gülensoy (2007 *yanak*), KEWT (*yanak*): < *jān* 'side' + *+gak* | Sevortjan (1962: 166), GJV (§ 5.10c): < *jān* 'side' + *+ak* | Nişanyan ([online]): < *jan-* 'to turn back'.

The first two are effectively interchangeable so far as *jaŋak* itself is concerned. There is, nonetheless, a single detail that has been glossed over somewhat, namely the length of the root vowel. Not all, but most sources do provide a reconstruction: Bang (1921: § 10): **jan+kak*, ED (948b): **jānyāk*, GJV (§ 5.10c): **jaŋ+ak*, Gülensoy (2007 *yanak*): *⟨yān[/ng]+(ğ)ak⟩, KEWT (*yanak*): **jaŋak* < **jān+gak*. None, however, explicitly comments on the vowel length, with the exception of Clauson who merely says that *janāk* is a crasis of **jānyāk*, without further elaboration.

The word is attested in all three, Turkmen, Yakut, and South Siberian, which is rare for the words in this study. Unfortunately, no conclusions can be reached based on the latter two languages, because Yak. **ā* would have been shortened in this position (cf. GJV § 4.7), and in South Siberian glottalization would not have occurred (cf. fn. 9). We would, however, expect the vowel length to be preserved in

⁷ Unfortunately, the reflexes of the *-aky- sequence do not seem to be entirely regular, cf. *akın*, *akıntı*, *sakınmak*, *sakız*, *sekiz*, *yukarı*, and perhaps *sakırğa*, but also *korku*, *saksağan*, and *yelken* in ÈSTJa and KEWT.

Turkmen, and yet the Turkmen form has a short *a*. It would seem the only reason to reconstruct a long vowel, is to accommodate *jān* ‘side’.

In this light, Nişanyan’s derivation from *jan-* ‘to turn back’ appears in a more favourable light, but its semantics remains problematic.

3.13. *jany* ‘new’

There have been three propositions for this word: Doerfer (1971: 308): **daŋē* | VEWT (185b), KEWT (*yeni*): < *jān* | Nişanyan ([online]): ? < *jan-*.

Disregarding Doerfer’s reconstruction, as in fact it explains very little (see Section 3.6 above), we are left with two possibilities. The derivation from *jān* ‘side’ faces the same difficulties regarding vowel length that we have already encountered in Section 3.12 above. As with *janak* ‘cheek’, *jany* is also attested in both Turkmen and Yakut, has a short *a* in both languages, and although the Yakut reflex is not conclusive evidence, the Turkmen reflex is. Nişanyan’s proposition solves this problem, but only for *jany* because the short vowel in *jan-* ‘to turn back’ remains unclear (see Section 3.3 above).

Nevertheless, both proposition test the credulity of the reader with regard to the semantics. Nişanyan claims there is an obvious semantic link between ‘new’ and ‘to turn back’,⁸ but he unfortunately fails to elaborate. However, for the etymology of *jān* ‘side’, a cultural explanation exists: when a young horse is being broken in, it is at first not ridden but led alongside a mounted mature horse, so that from the human’s perspective ‘the one by the side’ = ‘the new one’ (M. Stachowski – p.c.). Considering how important horses were in the Turkic culture, perhaps such an evolution is indeed possible.

4. Discussion

Realistically, only two reconstructions could fulfil the role of a root that binds our entire collection together: **ja-* and **jā-*. Not all the words provide an indication as to the original quantity of the vowel but those that do, point to a short one; see the Turkish, Turkmen, Tuvian, Western Yugur, and Yakut forms in Section 1.⁹ There are only two apparent exceptions: *jak* and *jān* ‘side’, together with their derivatives such as *jāna-* ‘to sharpen’, but both can be plausibly explained as contractions of forms with an original short vowel, see Section 3.5 & 3.10.

However, there are also three circumstances that preclude a reconstruction with a short vowel.

⁸ “Eski Türkçe *yan-* fiiliyle anlam bağı bariz olmakla birlikte sözcük yapısı açık değildir.” (accessed: 19 October 2022; in the original, “Eski Türkçe” was set in bold).

⁹ Note that in South Siberian languages, glottalization/preaspiration does not occur before nasal consonants (Janhunen 1980: 26; Roos 1998: 30; 2000: 33; Rassadin 2014: 15), so its absence from the Tuv. *čan-* ‘to return’, the WYu. *jan* ‘side’, etc. is of no consequence.

1. It is thought that originally verbs could only have long vowels in the auslaut. This is the situation found today in Yakut, and to explain it as a Yakut innovation would effectively mean to posit that a phonetic change occurred in Yakut which affected verbs but eschewed nomina (GJV § 5.8). The assumption that those lengths are original, however, does not in fact provide a plausible explanation, but merely places the event one step further back in time and, though more or less speculative, other hypotheses can also be devised to explain it. One such scheme is proposed in point 2 below.
2. Tekin (1995: 165; 2003: 63) observed that in all Proto-Turkic roots with the structure *V* or *CV*, the vowel is long. He surmised that this phenomenon is phonotactic rather than etymological in nature. If so, then we must expect that the long vowels in the (*C*)*V* roots were of two kinds: those originally long, which remained long in all circumstances, as well as those originally short that lengthened only when they were exposed in the final position of a monosyllabic root. Clearly, at some point between Proto-Turkic and modern Yakut, the verbs underwent a secondary alignment resulting in the state described in point 1 above. It is unclear why nomina apparently did not follow the same pattern. At any rate, if we assume that *ja- was from the second group, i.e. that it originally had a short vowel, it would remain short in *jagu-*, *jak-* 'to come near', etc., and only become long if the root was used on its own. Unfortunately, it does not seem to have survived in this form so the hypothesis is not possible to verify.
3. Finally, there is the question of the Altaic background. I have tended to avoid this topic thus far but it can be evaded no longer. Multiple authors have cited and discussed Altaic parallels for the words under consideration,¹⁰ but I will adduce only two forms here as symbols for entire families: MaTung. *daga* 'close, near' (Benzing 1955: 99; Cincius 1975 *daya*), and Mo. *daga-* 'to follow, to chase' (ËSMJa *daya*⁻¹; Nugteren 2011: 311). Regardless of whether they came into being as a result of inheritance or borrowing, there can be little doubt that multiple words which display the same sound correspondences exist across the three families. Certainly, Tkc. *j-* : MaTung., Mo. *d-* is one such correspondence (e.g. Ölmez 1991). I was, however, unable to find triples, or even pairs, such that Tkc. *ā* : MaTung. or Mo. *aga*. Similar correspondences, however, are documented, e.g. Tkc. *ē, õ, ū* : Mo. *ege, öge, ugu*, etc. (Tekin 2003: 59f.), so a comparison between PTkc. *jā- on the one hand, and MaTung. *daga*, Mo. *daga-* on the other, is not groundless, but it is also not certain. Indeed, Ölmez (1991: 171f.) lists three cases of varying degrees of confidence, in which PAlt. *agy would have been preserved in Proto-Turkic: **dagy(n)* ['enemy'], **dagyry* ['(?) wound'], and **dagyř* ['brown'].

I should also note that some of the other Altaic parallels that have been proposed for our words display other correspondences, e.g. Tkc. *jāk* 'side' : Mo. *žüg* id. (EDAL:

¹⁰ Cincius (1975: 187b), Doerfer (1971: 308; 1985: 142), EDAL (*dágá, dák'í, diáno, niáke, nána, zèjña, zìáni, žjòke*), Egorov (1964 *çeně, çuxa*), Miller (1971: 85), Ölmez (1991: 170), Poppe (1924: 310; 1927: 121; 1955: 149; 1956: 210; 1960: 22, 120), Ramstedt (1933: 464; 1957: 51), TMEN (§§ 1802, 1805, 1816), VEWT (180a, 184b, 185b).

žióke), or Tkc. *jaŋy* ‘new’ : Mo. *sine* id. (Egorov 1964 *čěňě*; Dybo 2013: 404). In order to address this problem, EDAL posits different Proto-Altaic reconstructions (**ǰ-* for *jāk*, **z-* for *jaŋy*, etc.; see fn. 10), leading to the rather ironic outcome that all the words which I am attempting to combine into a single Proto-Turkic family, EDAL views as unrelated on the Proto-Altaic level.

This situation, disheartening though it may be, is of course not conclusive proof that the words under consideration are unconnected to MaTung. *daga* or Mo. *daga-*. If we assume that they are, and further that this means the Proto-Turkic reconstruction must have a long vowel, then I cannot envisage how they can be derived from **jā-*. Alternately, if we assume that they are connected but the nature of this connection is such that it does not necessitate an original long vowel at the Proto-Turkic level, then the scheme proposed in point 2 above appears to be viable.

5. Conclusions

For more than a century, at least twenty-six authors in more than forty publications have discussed various words from the collection studied in this paper, yet they have failed to reach a satisfactory conclusion. More than a century ago, Bang proposed to derive those words from the root **ja-*, but it seems that twenty years of rather lethargic discussion that followed, exhausted the interest completely. Subsequently, only individual authors proposed etymologies for individual words (Section 2).

The main obstacle to combining our words into a family is vowel length. The majority of examples point to a short vowel in the root, but two words, *jāk* and *jān* ‘side’, indicate a long vowel. However, since an alternative derivation can be proposed for this pair, this difficulty can be resolved (Section 3).

Nevertheless, this is somewhat puzzling because the reconstruction suggested by the data, i.e. **ja-* ‘to be near, ...’ faces three constraints of a more theoretical nature. The requirement for the final vowel of a verb to be long, as well as the requirement for the vowel in a CV root to be long, can both be solved. The purported Altaic correspondences, however, not only indicate a long vowel in our root, but perhaps also different roots for various words (Section 4).

I consider the relation between the words in the study and their hypothetical Manchu-Tungusic and Mongolic parallels to be uncertain. In contrast, the Turkic data appear to be relatively clear. Taking into account all the circumstances summarized above, it seems that the most likely hypothesis for the words addressed in this study can be presented in Figure 1.

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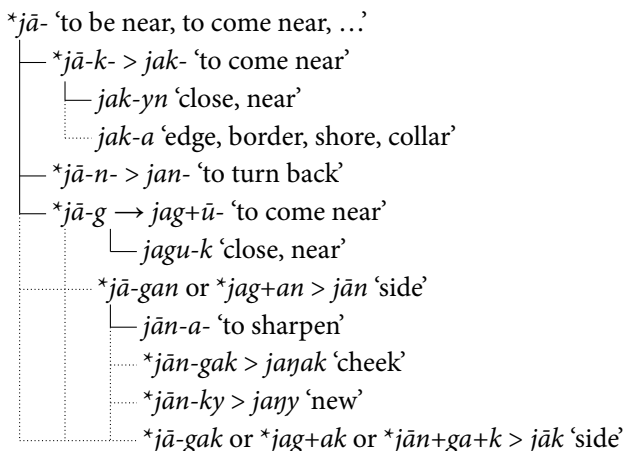


Figure 1: A potential family of words centred around PTkc. *jā ~ *ja- 'to be near, ...' (cf. point 2 in Section 4)

Abbreviations

Alt. = Altaic; **Ar.** = Arabic; **Az.** = Azerbaijani; **C-** = Common; **Chlk.** = Chelkan; **Chuv.** = Chuvash; **dial.** = dialectal; **Kyrg.** = Kyrgyz; **Kzk.** = Kazakh; **MaTung.** = Manchu-Tungusic; **Mo.** = Mongolic; **N-** = New; **O-** = Old; **Oir.** = Oirat (Altai); **P-** = Proto; **Pers.** = Persian; **Pol.** = Polish; **Russ.** = Russian; **Tkc.** = Turkic; **Tksh.** = Turkish (including Ottoman); **Tlut.** = Teleut; **Tof.** = Tofalar; **Trkm.** = Turkmen; **Tuv.** = Tuvinian; **Uigh.** = Uighur; **Uzb.** = Uzbek; **WYu.** = Western Yugur; **Yak.** = Yakut

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