

MAREK STACHOWSKI
Jagiellonian University in Kraków
marek.stachowski@uj.edu.pl
ORCID: 0000-0002-0667-8862

SLAVIC LANGUAGES IN CONTACT, 10: “ALTAIC” LOANWORDS IN PROTO-SLAVIC – A CONTRIBUTION TO THE DEBATE

Keywords: Proto-Slavic, Proto-Turkic, etymology, languages in contact, sound change

Abstract

A discussion of the problem of “Altaic” influence on Proto-Slavic is the main focus of this paper. In its first part, chronological and terminological questions are presented; the second part is devoted to etymologies (**baranъ* ‘ram’, **koza* ‘goat’, **klobukъ* ‘fur cap, hat’, **kъlbasa* ‘sausage’, **sablja* ‘sabre’).

1. Preamble

After I had published a paper on the “non-influence” of Proto-Turkic vowel harmony on consonant palatality in Proto-Slavic (Stachowski M. 2020) I thought I would never return to that topic. However, my Czech colleague Vít Boček (Brno) sent me in the first week of December 2022 a final draft of his paper which was provoked by my study. It discusses the problem of the so-called “Altaic” influence on the Slavic languages. It is only natural that our views are not always in full accord but we both approach the question with a dose of scepticism, albeit – perhaps contrary to expectations – Stachowski, being a Turkologist, is less positive than Boček about the possibility of Proto-Turkic influence on Proto-Slavic phonology (which, however, does not exclude single words that could have been brought to separate Slavic tribes by Proto-Bulgars or any other people, in a possibly unchanged form).

I was busy finishing my book when Boček sent me his draft and I could not react immediately but I promised to think about it as soon as my book was ready (Stachowski M. 2023). It is now time (April 2023). The more so as Vít Boček's study (2023) has been published in the meantime.

2. Introduction

The Slavacists' readiness to accept the idea of a Proto-Turkic influence has probably arisen from the following fact mentioned by Boček (2023: 66) in the introductory part of his paper:

The initiative of the expert in Turkic languages is clearly to be welcomed here, as views from the other shore are minimal in the discussion of this problem: the vast majority of assumptions about "Altaic" influences on "Slavic" were formulated by Slavists.

Boček is perfectly right. Karl Heinrich Menges (1908–1999) was the only Orientalist who regularly engaged in Slavic-Oriental matters of the oldest time (but he also was an expert in Slavic linguistics). Unfortunately, he tended – more and more so with age – towards what Doerfer labelled "omnicomparatism". Menges' weak points were the complete exclusion of the concept of accidental similarities from his research, and the ignoring of the difference between close and distant resemblances. Reading Menges without appropriate criticism can lead to rather bold claims, sometimes going too far even for Nostraticists.

But Boček (2023: 70) is mistaken to think that we are witnessing a new trend here:

"Altaic" loanwords have been a subject of inquiry of many other authors, the trend being, as it seems, to question the number of borrowed words of "Altaic" provenance (cf., most recently, Dybo 2020).

Anna Dybo's criticism arises out of her professional training in Oriental philologies and linguistic history rather than out of the ostensible "anti-Altaic trend". On the other hand, Boček may be perfectly right in the prophetic sense; if more and more Turkologists join in the discussion they might indeed start a new trend, but it will be one based on their knowledge rather than on fashion.

However this may be, one cannot help feeling that the topic must be investigated in cooperation between Slavacists and Orientalists, especially experts in Turkic historical linguistics. The more so as it does not suffice to read, understand and adduce passages from a work by an author "from the other shore". It is also quite necessary to know which school the given authors represent and how precise they are.

This paper is a special opportunity for me to explain both how some terms are understood in Turkology, and how I understand the topic. Concrete data – such as, for instance, names of peoples and languages in chronological and geographical aspects – are particularly emphasized because they are the Achilles heel of most Slavistic works. Karl Heinrich Menges, so eagerly quoted by some Slavacists, observed the same thing years ago:

Dieser Artikel hätte im Jahr 1989 eigentlich nicht mehr geschrieben werden müssen, da die wesentlichen Data und Ereignisse aus der Geschichte jener Völker längst bekannt sind. Ich sehe mich aber dazu gezwungen, da ich immer wieder feststellen muß, daß in gewissen Fachkreisen, und zwar nicht nur denjenigen der österreichischen Heimatforschung, sondern in solchen, die es besser wissen müßten, ein ziemlicher Wirrwarr der Vorstellungen oder gar bare Unkenntnis herrscht. (Menges 1989: 125)

Somewhat depressing is the fact that more than three decades have passed since the publication of that article, and the above words have not lost much of their relevance (apart from the “österreichische Heimatforschung” which I dare not evaluate).

3. Terminology, chronology, geography, methods

My objections are based on doubts of two kinds: non-linguistic, and linguistic ones. Thus, I will speak about terminology, chronology and geography (this section) before I deal with some etymologies suggested in previous publications (Section 4).

Let us start with the central term “**Altaic**”. Boček (2023: 67) writes as follows:

[...] the term “Altaic” is often used not in a genetic sense but rather as a fall-back: since it is primarily the influence of the language of the Huns, the Avars and the Proto-Bulgarians on “Slavic” which is considered, and since there is, at the same time, no consensus on the genealogical classification of these languages (the belonging to the Turkic, Mongolian, or Tungusic language family being at hand), the umbrella term “Altaic” ultimately seems appropriate [...].

As for the closing part of Boček’s opinion adduced above I feel compelled to disagree. If an author cannot distinguish between English and Italian (s)he should not write about English or Italian. Analogically, if one cannot distinguish between Turkic and Mongolic one should not write about either. The solution suggesting that those who cannot distinguish Turkic from Mongolic should call them both “Altaic” and continue writing means that those who cannot distinguish English from Italian should call them both “Indo-European” and continue writing. This method makes writing easier but understanding more difficult.¹

Additionally, the term *Altaic* is also used for a set of Turkic languages, previously also called *Oirot*, in the Altai Republic in southern Siberia. K. Stachowski (2023: 552)

¹ Years ago I wrote:

Dieselben Etymologen, die mit peinlicher Genauigkeit zwischen Dialekten, ja sogar Mundarten der Einzelsprachen Europas unterscheiden und jeden orientalischen Autor auslachen würden, der sich mit einer Etymologie wie “aus einem Dialekt Osteuropas” bzw. “aus dem Albanischen (Europa) oder dem Obugrischen” begnügen wollte, betrachten das weit differenziertere Sibirien als einen Kessel mit kochender Suppe, von der man zwar manchmal kostet, da sie ja schön exotisch schmeckt, ohne jedoch bereit zu sein, die Zutaten zu lernen und nach dem Rezept zu fragen. (Stachowski M. 2000: 305).

I am sorry to see that the situation has not changed a bit.

calls the *Altai* and *Oirota* a “confusing pair” because they “can both refer to the literary language together with its six dialects, as well as to the one dialect upon which it was based”; and he adds a table showing the use of both terms from “before 1917” till “after 2000”. One glance is enough to understand consequences of mixing up the term *Altaic* ‘Oirota’ with the name of the protolanguage *Altaic* and the family name *Altaic*. (Speaking of confusing pairs, *Oirat* with an *-a-* is the name of a Mongolic language spoken not too far away from the Turkic *Oirota*).

Ergo, the traditional terms “Altaic” and “Proto-Altaic” are best avoided.²

Other questionable terms can also be sometimes found in the literature. One of them is the term “**Turanian**” which “can evoke ambiguous connotations”, as Boček (2023: 68) rightly puts it – and, I must add, connotations that are very much unwelcome in scholarly research because of their political nature and connection with the nationalistic pan-Turanian movement. However, we should remember that researchers of the older generation used that term without political or nationalistic connotations, in the same neutral meaning in which we use “Turkic” today. Thus, for instance, the founders and collaborators of the Hungarian journal *Turán* (1913–1944) were scholars and had nothing in common with pan-Turkic nationalism. There can be no doubt that also Hubert Schelesniker (1975) meant “Turkic” rather than “pan-Turkic”, as well as linguistics rather than politics when he spoke of the “Turanian influence”. In short, the term was initially (i.e. in the beginning of the 20th century) justified, albeit only if used for “Turkic”, but it is no more usable today and Schelesniker would have done better if he had not put it in the title of his paper.

Chagatai is another term that some authors use too readily. This is unacceptable. I explained the fundamental reasons a few years ago (Stachowski M. 2017: 89–90; 2005: 439, fn. 8) so there is no need to repeat them here.

Further, we do not in fact know anything about the language of the Asiatic **Huns**, or the **Hiung-nu**.³ The only text that is believed to be in the language of the Xiongnu is a two-line oracle from the 4th century, written in Chinese ideographs. From a Japanese historian and Orientalist Kurakichi Shiratori who tried to decipher the two lines at the very beginning of the 20th century, through to Talât Tekin’s 1992 publication, at least nine different translations have been made, roughly one per decade, by world-class scholars representing various countries and traditions. None has truly been accepted by other researchers (for their history see Tekin 1992 *passim*). Gerhard Doerfer suggested that the text of the oracle is so short and the notation so unclear that one could even read it in Akkadian, which he actually successfully did (Doerfer 1963: 95–96).

As can be seen, the rather optimistic announcement published by Joseph De-guignes (~ de Guignes) in 1748 was premature:

Ici avec le secours des Historiens Orientaux & surtout des Chinois, je ferai voir que ces Huns étoient une Nation considérable dans la grande Tartarie, [...] & je donnerai l’origine des Turks qui avec ces Huns ne sont qu’une même Nation. (Deguignes 1748 : 4)

² For a popular presentation of the Altaic theory see Stachowski M. (2012).

³ The European name *Hiung-nu* is a reflex of the Chinese name *Xiongnu* [ʃjɔ̃ŋnu]; we do not even know how the Xiongnu called themselves.

Doerfer (1973: § 24) published, among his numerous works, also the most extensive and most detailed study of the possible traces of the Hunnic language. His conclusions are generally still valid today:

- a) Wir wissen nicht, was die Hun sprachen.
- b) Wir wissen nicht, was die Hiung-nu sprachen.
- c) Wir wissen nicht, was die Hunnen sprachen.
- d) Wir dürfen vermuten, daß die Sprache der Hunnen sich von jener der Hiung-nu unterschied [...].
- e) Wir dürfen vermuten, daß weder das Hiung-nu noch das Hunnische zu irgendeiner bekannten [...] Sprachfamilie gehört, es sich vielmehr [...] dabei um ausgestorbene Sprachgruppen handelt.

Pritsak (1982) speaks of the “Hunnic language of the Attila clan” which sounds as if he had at his disposal Hunnic linguistic materials such as texts and/or wordlists. That, however, is not at all the case. As a matter of fact, his lexicological basis comprises twenty-five “names of members of the dynasty” and eight “names of leading Hunnic statesmen and officers”, that is, in total, thirty-three personal names from one clan.

In fact, the same⁴ can be said, *mutatis mutandis*, of the language(s) of the **Avars** who, just as the Huns, were illiterate and left no written records. We do not even know with reasonable certainty what (and how many) languages and dialects were spoken in their *multi-ethnic* tribal confederation. The few Avar words known to us are political titles and personal names (Golden 1992: 110) – both groups of words that can easily be borrowed from one language to another and do not tell us much about their speakers. (Indeed, the belief that, say, an imaginary *Major General Patrick Mark* speaks Latin because his both names and both titles are of Latin origin would have to be considered too far-fetched).

Even though Menges and Doerfer held the polar opposite views on the question of the Proto-Altaic language, they represented the same scepticism as far as the languages of the Huns and the Avars were concerned. For the Huns see above (Doerfer); for the Avars see the following opinion (Menges):

Was war ihre [= of the Avars – M.S.] Sprache? Diese, ebenso wie das Hunnische [...] einfach und ohne jede Diskussion unbesehen der Großen Unbekannten, dem Türkischen zuzuordnen, geht heute nicht mehr an und zeugt von beträchtlicher Oberflächlichkeit. (Menges 1989: 126)

Even Omeljan Pritsak – as controversial as he was in his lifetime (and he is that even more today) – said years ago what follows:

The European Avars were not directly connected with the real Avars, but, as contemporary Byzantine sources clearly state, consciously imitated them [...] in order to gain for themselves the prestige the true Avars, the Wu-huan of Chinese sources, had enjoyed among the steppe peoples. It is also clear, especially from the Byzantine data,

⁴ Apart from the subsections d) and e) that seem less certain – or rather unprovable in the view of a), b) and c) – but should not be fully ignored.

that these Pseudo-Avars were of Hunnic origin [...]. It is this group, which will henceforth be called simply Avars in this paper [...]. They have nothing to do with the Asian Jou-jan. (Pritsak 1983: 356)

Even if “Pseudo-Avars were of Hunnic origin” (Pritsak), “[w]ir wissen nicht, was die Hunnen sprachen” (Doerfer)...

One more thing should be remembered: Our sources are more often than not chronicles written by monks in monasteries or documents drawn up by secretaries who had never even met the “barbarians” and were not in a position to distinguish one people from another:

Die Hunnen nannte man oft Skythen; Awaren und Bulgaren dafür Hunnen; Goten und nach ihnen sogar gelegentlich Slawen wurden als Geten bezeichnet; und das legendäre ‘Gog und Magog’ der Bibel wurde noch auf hochmittelalterlichen Landkarten eingetragen. (Pohl 1988: 4)

It is another thing that all these facts together did not stop Pritsak (1983: 405–407) from talking about the Hunno-Turkic origin of the ethnonym *Slav*. His etymology is based on some nontrivial sound changes as well as on an assumption of a Proto-Bulgarian plural suffix *-in*. In an earlier article, Pritsak (1957: 148–149) explains the motivation for his belief that such a plural suffix (or, a “Kollektivsuffix”, as he puts it in his article) existed, by adducing three ethnonyms – each one from the 8th, the 10th and the 11th century. Two are Danube Bulgarian words, one is a Volga Bulgarian ethnonym. Two of them are only valid if a graphic emendation is made. The third word, attested in an immense dictionary by Mahmud al-Kashgari, does not need emendation. It is very odd indeed that only one word with the plural suffix *-in* could be found in such a big dictionary. Are three hapaxes, collected from across a period of four centuries, a convincing proof that the syllable *-in* in a non-attested **sklavin* is a Proto-Bulgarian plural marker even if two out of the three hapaxes need to be formally changed to fit Pritsak’s purpose? What if the three words were borrowed, say, three hundred years before their first attestation, that is, in the 5th century, from a language unknown to us today? What if Pritsak abstracted the syllable *-in* from those borrowings, interpreted it as a plural or collective marker and, then, added to a word **sklaw* (Pritsak’s notation), also unattested, but reconstructed by him personally (with its absolutely unacceptable word-initial three-consonant cluster)? What is this etymology actually worth? It would be a good thing to mention that Pritsak’s plural suffix *-in* cannot be found in standard books on Turkic historical morphology such as Ščerbak (1977: 82–90).

The Turkic languages generally do not allow for clusters in the word-initial position, even for two-consonant ones.⁵ Why did they, then, tolerate – or even

⁵ Exceptions exist, e.g. *sler* ‘you [pl.]’ or *pčak* ‘knife’ in some Siberian dialects, but they are no more than a handful across all the Turkic languages and they are shortened forms of full variants: *siler* and *byčak*.

produce⁶ – the three-consonant cluster **skl*-? Or, even more: How could a Turkic **CVCC*- word possibly have been changed into a **CCC*- word? Why was that cluster only reduced to *sl*- in Slavic although the Slavic languages have word-initial clusters aplenty? At worst, the Slavs could have inserted a *yer* so that the word would have begun with a **sʷkl*- sequence, parallel, for instance, to Common Slavic **sʷklepǫ* ‘vault, arched ceiling’. I would then rather expect a Common Slavic reflex **sʷklavinǫ* with a singular meaning ‘Slav’. I would expect... if only I believed that a Turkic language produced and retained the **skl*- cluster unchanged. I emphatically do not. The Turks would have reduced a **CCC*- cluster by means of one of the following processes: prosthesis, epenthesis, metathesis or consonant apheresis, as they always did in such situations. But then they would not have been able to offer a **skl*- word to their Byzantine and Slavic comrades; they would only have had **Vskl*-, **sVkl*- or (the rarest case) **l*- forms. None of them matches the Slavic name for Slavs and that is why Pritsak forced the Turks to pronounce a three-consonant cluster in the word-initial position.

That somewhat lengthy excursus was necessary to show that a Slavicist should not just take a publication by an Orientalist and use it for his purposes without having first learned a broader context of that publication and its author. As it seems, interdisciplinary cooperation is highly recommended and indeed urgently needed.

As to Proto-Bulgarian, it was only Nicholas Poppe (partially endorsed by Karl H. Menges) who suggested that this language might have been a dialect standing as a separate branch between Proto-Turkic and Proto-Mongolic.⁷ We can ignore this opinion in the context of influence on Proto-Slavic because Poppe meant a somewhat earlier period, before the Proto-Bulgarians left their homeland in what is today northern Mongolia.⁸ The *opinio communis* is that Proto-Bulgarian was a branch of the Turkic linguistic family, and that is why we should speak of “Proto-Turkic” (if any) influence rather than of a “Proto-Altai” one.

The chronological-geographical situation is as follows:

⁶ “Thus our conclusion is that there was a Proto-Bulgarian word *saqlaw* > *sqlaw* with the plural form **sqlaw-in* [...]” (Pritsak 1983: 407). – Pritsak’s *-q-* is just another transcription of what is usually written *-k-* today.

⁷ Dagegen hat der Verfasser dieses Aufsatzes schon im J. 1925 die Meinung zum Ausdruck gebracht, daß das Čuv.[aschische] zwar eine den Türksprachen nah verwandte, jedoch eine selbständige altaische Sprache darstellt, welche Ansicht auch in seiner späteren Arbeit vertreten ist. (Poppe 1974: 135)

Poppe refers in this passage to his publications: Poppe (1925b: 426) and Poppe (1965: 33).

⁸ The Proto-Bulgars left their homeland about the mid-5th century; “the first clear reference to the Bulgars is dated to 480 when they served as allies of the Byzantine Emperor Zeno” (Golden 1992: 103–104). Any hypothetical Proto-Bulgarian influence on Proto-Slavic would have to have happened before the Proto-Slavic split up, probably before mid-5th century, that is in a period in which the Proto-Bulgars still lived in their homeland in northern Mongolia. Any possible later contact in the Balkans (from the 6th century on) cannot be considered an influence on Proto-Slavic.

Preliterate epoch:

- a) Proto-Uralo-Altaic⁹ – no dating and no localization possible
- b) Proto-Altaic – no dating and no localization possible
- c) Proto-Turkic:¹⁰ from ??? till about the mid-5th c. (northern Mongolia) – see d), g)
- d) Common Turkic:¹¹ mid 5th c. – end of the 7th c. (northern Mongolia) – see e), f)

Old Turkic [continued in j), k]):

- e) Runic Turkic: 8th – 9th c. (northern Mongolia, esp. Orkhon, Yenisey)
- f) Old Uyghur: 9th – 13th c. (Northwest China)

Bulgarian branch [continuing Proto-Turkic – see c]):

- g) Proto-Bulgarian: mid-5th c. – 2nd half of the 7th c. (Black Sea, Kuban, Dniester)
- h) Danube Bulgarian: 2nd half of the 7th c. – end of the 8th c. (Balkans)
- i) Volga Bulgarian: 2nd half of the 7th c. – mid-13th c. (Volga, Kama)

Non-Bulgarian branch [continuing Old Turkic – e), f]):

- j) Middle Turkic: 10th c. – end of the 15th c. (Middle Asia)
- k) Old Anatolian Turkish: 11 th c. – end of the 15th c. (Anatolia)

I fail to see how the Proto-Slavs could have borrowed words from Proto-Turks (not to mention the Proto-Altaic) in northern Mongolia.

Boček (2023: 70) also says: “The most elaborate classification of possible ‘Altaic’ loanwords in Slavic I know of has been given by Granberg (2009). She distinguishes two chronological layers of borrowings and uses the single term Hunno-Bulgarian for them [...]”. Leaving aside the question of just how correct it actually is to cover two chronological layers with a single name as well as whether the single name provides accurate information, I would like to add that Antoaneta Granberg does not adduce even a single Turkic word in her paper. She simply lists Slavic words, explains their meaning and/or sometimes tells us something about their referents. A few examples (Granberg 2009: 21–22) suffice:

ΚΛΟΒΟΥΚЪ ‘Fur cap, tiara, κίδαρις’ (Granberg 1997a: 79–80; Vasmer 1986 II: 252).

Klobuk was a specific kind of conical fur cap used by Huns and Bulgars. An example of *klobuk* can be seen in the miniature from the Menology of the Byzantine emperor Basil II (975–1025 AD)

ΣΑΒΛΙΑ ‘Sword, ἐγχειρίδιον’ (Granberg 1997a: 105; Clauson 1972: 782; Vasmer 1986 III: 541)

⁹ There is of course no need to emphasize that Proto-Altaic has extremely few adherents nowadays while Proto-Uralo-Altaic has none. But it should be added that areal-induced Ural-Altaic contacts still are of course a valid research topic. For a concise and informative summary of the current research attitudes towards the “Uralo-Altaic phenomenon” see Georg (2023: 190).

¹⁰ = German *Gesamttürkisch* = Polish *prototurkijski*. Nicholas Poppe used “Vortürkisch” or “die türkisch-tschuwassische Ursprache” (Poppe 1925a: 409) in that sense.

¹¹ = German *Gemeintürkisch* = Polish *praturkijski*.

- СЛОНЪ [no English translation – M.S.] (Granberg 1997a: 109; Ivanov 1977: 153–157; Severtjan 1974: 177–179; Vasmer 1986 III: 674–675)
- ҲЕКАНЪ ‘Hammer, battle axe’ (Granberg 1997a: 119; Setarov 1990: 75; Vasmer 1986 IV: 324–325)
- ҲЪБАНЪ ‘Mug, ξέστης’ (Granberg 1997a: 121)

How can a classification of loanwords, the more so the “most elaborate” one, be made without etymons of the loanwords? Why should we believe the loanwords create just two, not three or, say, seven layers? Let me add that the references adduced by Granberg are often of little help. “Granberg 1997a” is Granberg’s PhD dissertation¹² which was written in Bulgarian and bore the title *Prabälgarski zaemki v starobälgarskija ezik. Mechanizmi na ezikovata adaptacija* (Sofia). It is generally inaccessible outside Bulgaria. “Vasmer” is, as we all know, an etymological dictionary of Russian whose Turkic material is rather disputable. A lesser known fact, especially in Slavistic circles, is that Gerard Clauson’s work, entitled *An etymological dictionary of pre-thirteenth-century Turkish* (Oxford 1972) is anything but an etymological dictionary. It does not include reconstructions, while morphological and semantic explanations can only be found in the simplest of cases. Clauson’s work is, despite its title, an ordinary dictionary of Old Turkic with a very limited comparative background, more often than not shortened to abbreviated information such as “s.i.m.m.l.g.” = ‘survives in most modern language groups’ or “s.i.a.m.l.” = ‘survives in all modern languages’.

Besides, Granberg almost completely ignores the existing literature and does not discuss any counterarguments. Even the few words adduced above are not really certain. Two examples will suffice:

Five years before Granberg’s article, I presented a study on the Hungaro-Tungusic rather than Turkic origin of the European word for ‘sabre’, a word that emerged definitely too late to be Proto-Slavic (Stachowski M. 2004, and see section 4 below), but Granberg does not refer to this publication in any way. Further, the word *чъвань* ‘mug’ is featured in multiple etymological dictionaries and commonly viewed as Slavic or at least Indo-European (Skok 1973: 672; Mel’nyčuk 1985: 47; Havlová 1990: 120; Boryś 2005: 137; Králik 2015: 141; Mańczak 2017: 44, and others; an “Altaic” or Turkic etymology is not even mentioned in *ĚSSJa* 4: 138) – there is, however, not a word about it in Granberg’s work. She does not make much use of works by other authors, let alone debate with them (references limited to a few general etymological dictionaries are neither a discussion nor a real consideration of the specialist literature on the subject), she only refers to her PhD thesis and to several works on subjects other than etymology.

All in all, Granberg grouped words into two layers but she did so without divulging to the reader what she believes their etymons to be. Her article has three sections with the word *discussion* in their titles (4.1.3 Discussion; 4.2.3 Discussion; 5 Conclusions and discussion) but in reality no phonetic, morphological or etymological discussion is to be found there. It is impossible for the reader to decide

¹² Written under the author’s name at that time: Antoaneta K. Deleva.

whether the words are adduced correctly, or to develop an understanding of where there still are white spots on our research map.

According to Granberg (2009: 19), “[t]he upper limit of Slavic-Altai contacts is set without much dispute in the second half of the 4th c., when the Huns cross the Eastern frontier of Europe”. I think, however, that some dispute would have been quite helpful, if only because those Huns had nothing in common with the Asiatic Huns, that is the Hiung-nu who were or were not linguistically related to the Turkic tribes. This thought is not new; Jean-Pierre Abel-Rémusat had already expressed his rather critical opinion on the relationship between the European and the Asiatic Huns more than two hundred years ago (Abel-Rémusat 1820: 11, 318). Also his opinion on the non-relationship of the northern peoples with Turks, even though not entirely correct from the modern point of view, should be taken into account:

[...] les Khozars, les Bulgares [...], les Avars, et tous les autres peuples, qui ont habité au nord des deux mers, à l'occident du Wolga, avant le vi.^e siècle, n'avoient rien de commun, ni pour la langue ni pour l'origine, avec les Turks qui s'y ont établis plus tard, et qui sont dans ces contrées une race étrangère. (Abel-Rémusat 1820: 319)

The European Huns were probably a mixture of various peoples who spoke various languages¹³ and knew very well that the name *Hun* was advantageous and effective because everybody feared it. They probably knew nothing specific of the Hiung-nu simply because the latter lived between the 3rd century BC and the 1st century AD while the Huns seem to only have emerged in the 4th century AD, that is about three hundred years after the collapse of the Hiung-nu confederation. The sole link between the Hiung-nu and the European Huns was their name, taken over by the latter as a symbol of a legendary and dangerous people.

My opinion has been that there were no “Proto-Altai” or even “Proto-Turkic” loanwords in Proto-Slavic (Stachowski M. 2020), and no influence on the other parts of the Proto-Slavic grammar can be shown. It is therefore entirely unclear how the Turkic palatality could have so deeply influenced Proto-Slavic. In fact, it cannot even be claimed with certainty that vowel harmony – so readily mentioned in Slavistic publications – really existed in Proto-Turkic and, if it did, it is not clear whether it had the same form as it does today, even so far as just palatality is concerned. Vít Boček objects to those opinions and presents in his article an impressive table of changes in Slavic that are believed to have occurred as a consequence of contact with the Turkic languages. However, a few words of commentary are necessary:

¹³ Cf. the situation in the Avar army, as depicted by Pritsak (1983: 361–362):

Camaraderie and uniform military training brought about linguistic assimilation; first, dialectal differences among men of a *tümän* [a 10,000 man military unit – MS] would fade, and then the emerging of lingua franca [...] would take the place of other languages still used among the specific tribes. The prestige of a warrior [...] prompted the rest of the population to imitate his speech.

The situation in the Hunnic army was supposedly identical. Speaking of an Avar or a Hunnic language only makes sense for ethnic Avars and Asiatic Huns or Hiung-nu. In other cases, that term is as good as are names such as “the Soviet language” or “Yugoslavian”.

1. All examples concern phonology only, no influence on the morphology or syntactic structure can be found in the table. Even though Boček (2023: 70) says it is so “[f]or the sake of brevity” I wonder why not even a single example of a morphological change presumably induced by Proto-Turkic has been shown here. I would be curious to see just one. Why this desire for brevity if the table occupies merely a little more than a page? A few morphological points, each taking up one line, would not extend the article dramatically, especially so as the aim of the table seems to be to show that I am mistaken when saying that no traces of grammatical influence of Proto-Turkic are known. My mistake cannot be established by showing no morphological trace “[f]or the sake of brevity”.
2. Some of the suggestions were only made by one¹⁴ or two¹⁵ scholars. The others apparently did not accept them.
3. Boček lists fifteen examples. Not even one is accepted by *all* the researchers.
4. Boček adduces eight authors. Not even one accepts *all* the examples.

If we decide to take seriously only those traits that were accepted by at least a half of the researchers referenced in the table, that is by four persons at a minimum, we will get as a result the following list of phonological changes:

- a) the first palatalization of velars;
- b) the second, regressive palatalization of velars;
- c) the third, progressive palatalization of velars;
- d) the jotation/yodization of consonants;
- e) the correlation of palatalization in consonants;
- f) the fronting of back vowels after palatal(ized) consonants;
- g) $\check{u} > \bar{u}$, $\check{i} > \bar{i}$.

Apart from g), for which see below, all these changes concern palatality. This is exactly what I meant. Boček’s impressive table is a very good instrument for analyzing the history of research into the Proto-Turkic influence on proto-Slavic: it unequivocally shows that the Slavistic interest in this respect has been focused exclusively on palatality.

Let us now consider the change listed under g). The first author who mentioned Turkic influence with regard to this change was George Y. Shevelov (1964). It will be very appropriate, I should think, to quote his words verbatim:

There could have been, at least for a part of the Sl[avonic] area, an additional factor favoring the reduction of \check{u} and \check{i} with their subsequent loss. Turkology points out that the Uralo-Altaic languages of the Volga basin are marked by a tendency to shortening and reduction of closed vowels; the fall of these vowels in these languages causes a compensatory lengthening in the vowel of the preceding syllable. If these features

¹⁴ E.g. prosthetic consonants; velarization of lateral *l*; South Slavic $y > i$; Umlaut of $\bar{u} > \bar{i}$ and $\bar{o} > \bar{e}$ in Church Slavonic; Bulgarian dialectal $\bar{e} > \check{e} > ja' a$.

¹⁵ The law of open syllables; syllabic synharmonism; the tendency toward structuring the vowel system into front and back series; loss of jers.

of the Volga Uralo-Altaic languages are old and characterized also the language of the Volgo[!]-Bulgars who, after 679 settled in the Balkans, Sl[avic] contacts with the Proto-Bulgars would explain why the rise and loss of the *jers* started earlier in the Balkans than anywhere else. Like all such parallels this is conjectural and even if such an influence did take place it did not determine the direction of the Sl[avic] sound changes. It could only have accelerated them. (Shevelov 1964: 462)

Shevelov is very cautious here, both in the two final sentences and in such formulations as “*could have been*”, “*at least for a part*”, “an *additional* factor *favoring* the reduction”). I would not go so far as to call his words a claim. Rather, this is a delicate conjecture, an idea warily suggested by an experienced researcher who knows perfectly well that it is appealing but very risky, and therefore clearly limits the suspected influence to no more than a possibility of acceleration of an already existing change. I imagine that Shevelov would have probably not approved of his words being included in a table of Turkic and Bulgar influence on Slavic and I believe that it is unfair to Shevelov to do so without commentary.

In addition, the above passage contains two misunderstandings that need to be clarified. Firstly, “Uralo-Altaic” is not the same thing as “Uralic and Altaic”. The idea of a “Uralo-Altaic language family” that preceded the “Proto-Altaic” evolutionary phase had been abandoned long before Shevelov’s book appeared. The term “Volga Uralo-Altaic languages” is an unacceptable mixture of modern geography and obsolete historiography. What Shevelov should have meant is “Volga Uralic and Volga Turkic”.

Secondly, I do not believe that I have ever seen examples of Kipchak compensatory lengthening caused by reduction of closed vowels in the subsequent syllables. Compensatory lengthening is generally a phenomenon alien to the Turkic languages. Reduction of closed vowels is admittedly well attested in the history of Kipchak but the process took a somewhat different course:¹⁶ **u* > *ö*, **ü* > *ö̃*, **i* > *ě*, **y* > *ŷ* (Berta 1982: 169). The most important aspect is that the question implicit in the phrase “If these features [...] are old” should be answered in the negative: they are not old enough, that is they occurred in the 13th century at the earliest (ibid. 169, fn. 2) – too late for Proto- and Old Slavic, or even for the Proto-Bulgars in the 7th century.

In this situation, Shevelov’s caution is well founded. The Kipchak vowel reduction and the Slavic change of *ŷ* > *z*, *ě* > *v* cannot possibly be treated as processes of equal structure and their chronology excludes the possibility of Proto-Turkic influence.

Thus, item g) should be removed from the table, and palatality remains as the only phenomenon on the list of examples of Proto-Turkic impact on Proto-Slavic, even though, admittedly, in different manifestations. I will not discuss them all here one by one.

Let us now move on to the examination of etymologies.

¹⁶ The letter ⟨*y*⟩ stands here for Turkish *i*, the letter ⟨*ŷ*⟩ for its reduced counterpart. This notation is more intuitive than ⟨*ı*⟩ and ⟨*ĩ*⟩, respectively. Especially, the letter ⟨*ĩ*⟩ can be misunderstood as a short *i* by non-Turkologists who are not sensitive to the distinction between ⟨*ı*⟩ for “short *i*” and ⟨*ĩ*⟩ for “short *i*”.

4. Five flagship etymologies

I am going to briefly present five words which are the flagship etymologies of our field. Generally, the quality of “Altaic” etymologies in Slavic is presented very well by Boček (2023: 70), albeit unintentionally (emphasis mine – MS):

Menges (1944; 1954; 1954–1955; 1959; 1961) adduces extensive material, including words attested in only one Slavic language (mainly Russian), but he does not suggest any specific languages as direct sources. Gołąb (1992, 398–414) confines himself to only analysing alleged borrowings from 370–670 AD. His 18-word list is conceived as loanwords from the languages of the Huns or the Avars, omitting later Proto-Bulgarian borrowings.

A word attested “in only one Slavic language” is just a borrowing in that one language and it has nothing in common with “Altaic” or “Proto-Slavic”.

If no specific language is suggested as a direct source of borrowing how can we know whether it really is a Turkic or “Altaic” loanword?

Gołąb’s loanwords “from the languages of the Huns or the Avars” are typologically the Altaic equivalent of “loanwords from the languages of the Soviets or the Yugoslavians”, the only difference being that we actually do not know anything about the languages of the Huns or the Avars.

**baran̄* ‘ram’

I wrote twice about this word and its proposed Turkic etymology (Stachowski M. 2005: 438–441; 2017) and reached the final conclusion that:

There exist no good reasons to derive the Slavonic word **baran̄* ‘ram’ from Turkic. No Turkic form or proto-form suggested until now can be accepted as an etymon. I have myself been inclined to understand the word **baran̄* as one of numerous reflexes of an old migratory word whose other reflexes are, for instance, Catalanian *marrà* ‘ram’ (Sławomirski 1995: 70) and Spanish *marrano* ‘male pig, boar’ (cf. also Malkiel 1948: 179sq., although I cannot accept every word in this work). We cannot really hope the etymology of **baran̄* will soon be properly understood but at least mistakes like Old Turkic ***bar(g)an* ‘ram’ can successfully be removed. (Stachowski M. 2017: 91)

Nowadays, also Corinna Leschber’s (2017) paper should necessarily be consulted before engaging in a discussion of this word. All in all, the word **baran̄* certainly is not of Turkic origin. It seems that its reflexes are known across a much wider areal than that of the Slavic languages alone, and we will probably need much more time and many more specialists in various languages to uncover its secrets.

One thing, however, will not change: Old Turkic **baran* cannot possibly be the etymon of the Slavic word simply because it had never existed (for details see Stachowski M. 2017).

*koza 'goat'

I wrote a long section on this word in an article in Polish almost twenty years ago (Stachowski M. 2005: 441–444), where I discussed its Oriental etymologies, as they were presented mainly by Oleg Trubačev (1960) and Zbigniew Gołąb (1992). I think it will be a good thing to summarize those thoughts in English.

Let us start with A. Brückner's suggestion that the Slavic word *koza* 'goat' appears to be an "arbitrary metathesis"¹⁷ of **ozka*, as in Lithuanian *oška* 'goat' (Brückner 1927: 262b). In actuality, however, there is no direct metathetical way from **ozka* to *koza*. One would have to assume two metatheses: (1) **ozka* > **okza*; (2) **okza* > *koza*. Trubačev (1960) thought he solved the problem through a parallelism he saw between Indo-European and Turkic: (3) words with **k-*, as Slavic *koza* and Turkish *keçi* id.; (4) words without **k-*, as Lithuanian *oška*, Persian *azak* and Kipchak *äčkü* ~ *äčki*. His claim was that both (3) and (4) represent Turkic loanwords in Indo-European. As to both Turkic types, he says (3) evolved from (4), "as is believed"¹⁸ by metathesis: "*äčkü* > **käcü* > *käci*, *käzä*" (Trubačev 1960: 87–88).

Gołąb (1992: 410–411) explains the same parallelism rather differently than Trubačev, as he locates the names for 'goat' among Slavic loanwords in Turkic rather than Turkic in Slavic.

Barring inconsistencies and blunders in the transcription of adduced examples, which I am not going to discuss here (see Stachowski M. 2005: 441–442), Gołąb sketches the following picture: the forms with an initial *k-* are attested in Northwestern Turkic,¹⁹ those without the *k-* in Northeastern Turkic and Mongolian (Gołąb 1992: 411). This does indeed suggest a dialectal division. However, it is pure fantasy. Forms with initial *k-* are also present in the southern Turkic languages such as Turkish (*keçi*) or Turkmen (*gäçi*), as well as in eastern Turkic, e.g. Uyghur and Chagatai *käçgi* id. Forms without an initial *k-* are also present in southern languages, for instance, Uyghur *äčkü* ~ *öškä* and Yughur (= Yellow Uyghur) *üşkö* id., as well as in western Turkic, e.g. Kazakh *äškī*, Kirghiz and Karaim *äčki*, dialectal Tatar *ičkī*. In addition, in some Turkic languages both types of the name for 'goat' appear simultaneously; this is the case with Uyghur with its forms *käçgi* on the one hand, and *äčkü* ~ *öškä* on the other. Now, the picture does not really resemble that of a simple dialectal division any more. Now it is instead suggestive of two groups of synonyms.

Also in the Slavic languages the match only appears to be perfect:

¹⁷ Lit. 'dowolna przestawka'. The expression "arbitrary metathesis" probably denotes what Brückner meant. Its sense is as unclear in English as it is in Polish.

¹⁸ Lit. 'как полагают'. However, Trubačev gives no source and no names of the "believers." I do not know any either.

¹⁹ Gołąb calls the group "type *käzä*" because he chose the form *käzä* as a Kipchak representative of the entire group and – even though he does not confess it openly – it matches Slavic forms with their *-z-* much better than all the other Turkic forms with *-č-* or *-š-*. This choice can hardly be accepted. Firstly, the word *käzä* is not general Kipchak. It only appears in Bashkir so it should be considered a very limited regionalism. Secondly, *-z-* never corresponds to *-č-* or *-š-* in other Turkic languages. All this means that *käzä* might perhaps be a loan from Slavic *koza* but it certainly cannot be viewed as representative of the Kipchak languages as a whole.

It is significant that the relationship *koza* : **aza* (in Church Slav. and ORuss. (j)*azbno* = *koža* ‘skin, hide’) is repeated by Altaic, namely the type *kāzā*, etc., with the initial *k-* [...], and the type *ōškā*, etc., without the initial *k-* [...] (Gołab 1992: 411).

However, Boryś (1980: 77 = 2007: 212) lists the proto-word **azbno* ‘animal hide’²⁰ among dialectal words that are typical of South Slavic languages only, and separate them from all the other Slavic languages. It is, thus, not entirely clear whether the range of **azbno* also included the north Slavic languages. The Czech etymological dictionary of Old Slavic (Havlová 1989) does not include the word. If it was a later and regional innovation it could not have been the etymon of Turkic names for ‘goat’ without an initial *k-*.

Speaking of forms without the *k-* in Northeastern Turkic and Mongolian, Gołab (1992: 411) implies a very long conduit of the Slavic names for ‘goat’, one that stretches as far as Mongolia. The problem is, however, that a connection between the Turkic words of the type *äčkü*, Classical Mongolian *äšigä* id., and Turkish dialectal *äžil* ‘goat’ can readily be reconstructed without resorting to Slavic:²¹ Mongolian *äšigä* ‘goat’ < Proto-Mongolic **äčgö* (→ Proto-Turkic **äčgö* > modern Turkic *äčkü*, etc.) < √**äč(-)* ‘?’ → Proto-Turkic **äcil* > Turkish dialectal *äžil* id. (the sound change **Včä* > *Vžä* is regular in Turkic; for more details see Grønbech 1902: 60, § 80; Stachowski M. 2005: 442, fn. 15). Meanwhile, if we insist that Turkic *äčkü*, etc. is borrowed from Slavic we will be unable to connect it with Turkish *äžil*.

For this reason, a scenario that assumes the opposite direction (Turkic → Slavic) seems more tempting, but even then the phonetic adaptation does not appear to be very realistic: the root √**äč(-)* ‘?’ has to be Proto-Turkic rather than Proto-Mongolic because we can show reflexes of that root in Siberian Turkic (see below the Oirot examples); besides, there were two derivatives of that root, one with the *-il* suffix, and one with **-gö* (> *-kü*). The evolution can be shown as follows: Mongolian *äšigä* < Proto-Mongolic **äčgö* ← Proto-Turkic **äčgö* ([a] > modern *äčkü* ~ *ōškā*, etc.; [b] > Lebed-Oirot *äškä* ‘goat’ (Baskakov 1985: 231); [c] ??? → Old Slavic **azbno* ‘skin of an animal’) ← Proto-Turkic √**äč(-)* ‘?’ ([d] > Lebed Oirot *äš* ‘ewe lamb’ (Baskakov 1985: 231); [e] → Proto-Turkic **äcil* > Turkish dialectal *äžil* id.).

Considering all of the above, I am sceptical:

- a) A connection between Old Slavic **aza* (> **azbno* ‘animal hide’) and Proto-Turkic **äčgö* ‘goat’ is improbable due to semantic, as well as phonetic discrepancies (Turkic -č- > Slavic -z-; Turkic -g- > Slavic -Ø-; Turkic **ä-ö* > Slavic *a-a*);
- b) The borrowing of Slavic **koza* > Turkic *käč(g)i* id. is impossible for phonetic reasons (Slavic -z- > Turkic -č-; the origin of Turkic -g-?). By contrast, the change Slavic *o-a* > Turkic **a-a* > *ä-ä* is within the realm of possibility because most Turkic languages tend to avoid the vowel *o*, even in the first syllable, and the consonant *č* could have caused the palatalization of the vowels. Nevertheless, the change **-ä* > *-i* is less clear.

²⁰ ‘Skóra zdarta ze zwierzęcia’ = lit. ‘hide stripped from an animal’.

²¹ With < and > for phonetic evolution, and → and ← for derivation and borrowing.

- c) The borrowing of Turkic *käčgi* > Slavic **koza* is impossible for phonetic reasons (Turkic *ä-i* > Slavic **o-a*; Turkic *-č-* > Slavic **-z-*; Turkic *-g-* > Slavic *-Ø-*).
- d) It would therefore be advisable to keep both Turkic groups, and likewise both Slavic groups, apart. I see no possibility of the borrowing of those words in either direction.

**klobukъ* 'fur cap, hat'

What Vasmer (1986: 252), an essential instrument in the toolbox of Slavo-Orientalists, has to say about the etymology of **klobukъ* is typical of almost all the authors: the Slavic word is a reflex of Turkic *kalpak* id. However, doubts about this etymology appeared as early as in the second half of the 19th century. "The idea appears to have been first put forward by Miklosich (1886). It was criticized by Brandt (1887, p. 35) on phonetic grounds (lack of justification for Tk. *p* > Slav. *b* and *-ak* > *-uk*) [...]" (Stachowski K. and Stachowski O. 2016: 252) and these doubts have not been removed even today:

At this point, we should perhaps concede that, tempting as it may be, a connection between the two sets of words [Slavic and Turkic – MS] is actually quite unlikely in light of what we know about them. It may seem rather frivolous to attribute phonetic similarity, semantic identity, and historical possibility to pure chance, but in our judgment the evidence we currently have does not suffice to show it is anything but. (Stachowski K. and Stachowski O. 2016: 257)

I am of course omitting all the details here, linguistic and factual, that are presented in that article. I hope we will one day be able to explain all the subtle yet crucial differences, but as long as this condition is not met one cannot seriously talk about Turkic origin of this Slavic word.

kъlbasa 'sausage'

Gołąb (1992: 404) considers the Turkic etymology of the word **kъlbasa* to be "the most convincing" one.

An important question is what sources Gołąb is basing his opinion on. He only lists three dictionaries: Vasmer, Sławski and Šipova (1976). Disregarding for now my general opinion about Šipova's work (see Stachowski M. 2005: 439–440), it is the only non-Slavistic publication that Gołąb quotes in the context of **kъlbasa*. It is in fact quite important here because it mentions an objection made by the Russian Turkologist Nikolaj K. Dmitriev who remarked as early as 1958 that, originally, the Turkic peoples did not produce sausages at all. This aspect has been completely ignored by Vasmer (Šipova 1976: 191), and by Gołąb, too.

The third problem is that Gołąb did not pay very close attention to the Turkic morphology, despite maintaining the appearance that he did. He says the Slavic word comes "from a Turkic gerund **kûlbasa*, posited on the basis of the Turkish *kûlbasty* [= *kûlbasti* – MS] 'grilled meat' [...]" (Gołąb 1992: 404). Also Vasmer (1986: 286)

suggests that the word could be derived “из тюркского герундия **külbasa*”, though he does not explicitly clarify its connection to *külbastı*.

A few remarks should be made here:

- a) What does it mean that a word is “posited on the basis of...”? Is Gołąb suggesting that “**külbasa* is derived from *külbastı*”?
- b) How can a *Turkic* word derive from a *Turkish* one? The Czech word *robot* is just a loanword in other Slavic languages. But borrowing clearly differs from “being posited”.
- c) The Turkish word *külbastı* literally means ‘ash (*kül*) [has] pressed (*bastı*)’. The use of a verbal phrase as a noun is possible in Turkic if the phrase contains a finite verb in the past tense, such as *bastı* (cf. the well-known food name *imambayıldı* ‘stuffed aubergine’, lit. ‘imam (*imam*) fainted (*bayıldı*) [of delight]’). But the adverbial gerund *külbasa* (morphologically derived from the stem *bas-* ‘to (com)press, stamp, step on’) means ‘adv. ash-(com)pressing, (com)pressing by/with ash(es)’, since the Turkic and Turkish suffix *-a* semantically corresponds to Polish *-ąc* (in *gniotąc* [*popiołem*]) and Russian *-я* (in *давя* [*золот*]). This is a nonfinite form and as such cannot be used as a noun. Additionally, such adverbs are typically repeated so one would rather expect a form such as **kül basa basa*. I can hardly understand how the semantics of an adverbial gerund changed into a noun.
- d) Admittedly, there is, in Turkish, a second suffix *-a*, the marker of the optative mood of the 3rd person singular. The optative form *külbasa* means ‘may ash(es) press’. Which does not look a bit better.

In short: There is no Turkish or Turkic form other than *külbastı*, and that one matches the Slavic word neither phonetically (*-tı*) nor semantically (Turkish ‘grilled meat’ vs. Slavic ‘sausage’, which was unknown to the Turkic peoples).

Even though most linguists consider the Slavic word of the type *kolbasa* to be a reflex of Turkic *külbastı* this explanation is fraught with difficulties and their belief in the Turkic origins is due to the fact that they cannot suggest any other convincing etymology.

According to the existing literature, the evolution would have to be as follows: Turkic *külbastı* was borrowed as, say, Slavic **kǔlbasta* (? ~ **kulbasta*) ~ **kolbasta* or similar but such a form is not attested anywhere. An adjective **kolbastnyj* would have to be derived from it (Vasmer 1986: 286), but that is not attested either. After some time its pronunciation would have to be simplified to *kolbasnyj* and that is finally an attested form. It is only from that adjective that the noun *kolbasa* was secondarily derived. That is, Turkic *külbastı* → Slavic **kǔlbasta* ~ **kolbasta* → **kolbastnyj* > *kolbasnyj* → *kolbasa*.

In other words: The origin of *kolbasa* is explained by assuming that it is a derivative from a distorted form of a nonexistent adjective derived from a nonexistent noun reflecting an etymon that denotes an object unknown to the speakers.

sablja 'sabre'

The word *sablja*, listed among “Hunno-Bulgarian loan-words borrowed by the Slavs prior to the formation of the distinguished groups of Eastern, Western and Southern Slavs” (Granberg 2009: 20, 22), is as a matter of fact neither Hunnic nor Bulgarian. The weapon itself was brought to Europe, together with the stirrup, by the Avars (Göckenjan 1993: 276). One might, therefore, conjecture that also the name for ‘sabre’ is of Avar origin. This idea is, however, not altogether free from doubt because European names for ‘stirrup’ were not directly borrowed from the Avars though the thing itself was.

The word ultimately comes from Tungusic **seleme* id. (< **sele* ‘iron’) but the specific channels of transmission remain partially unclear. Nevertheless, Avar mediation excludes the word from the list of loanwords “borrowed [...] prior to” the dissolution of the Proto-Slavic community because the Slavs had only come into contact with the Avars during the second half of the 6th century. Additionally, Old Hungarian mediation between the Avars and the Slavs should probably be assumed for phonetic reasons (Stachowski M. 2004: 135, 137) and that only became possible towards the end of the 9th century at the earliest.

The Tungusic origin of that single word does not of course imply that the Avars must have spoken Tungusic (for that question cf. Helimski 2000a, 2000b; Alonso de la Fuente 2015). They could have simply had a Tungusic loanword (a word for a technical innovation) in their language, which itself is unknown to us.

Be it as it may, the Slavic word *sablja* is a loanword whose direct source was in all likelihood Old Hungarian, and the ultimate origin was Tungusic. It was neither Hunnic, nor Bulgarian, nor Proto-Slavic.

5. Conclusions

If we have at our disposal etymologies of such quality it is irrelevant whether the list contains 18 or 180 or more loanwords. The black cat analogy (“a blind man, in a dark room, looks for a black cat that is not there, and shouts ‘I found it!’”) describes these etymologies quite aptly.

Changes to the phonological system of a language, if not induced internally, are only possible under the influence of a large number of loanwords. But, for both chronological and geographical reasons, there can be no Proto- Altaic or even Proto-Turkic loanwords in Proto-Slavic. *Ergo*: There can be no Proto- Altaic or Proto-Turkic influence on the Proto-Slavic phonological system.

Old Slavic contact with a form of Old or Middle Turkic is imaginable if (at least some parts of) the Huns and/or Avars actually spoke Turkic – which we do not know. Even then, however, we should speak of the influence of Hunnic, Avar, Turkic, etc., rather than of that of some imaginary “Altaic” which became, in the Slavistic literature, a sort of a drop bag for words “of unknown origin” – may Anatoly Liberman forgive me the word... (see, for instance, Liberman 1998, 2014).

The situation is as follows: We have as a matter of fact no certain Proto-Turkic loanwords in Proto-Slavic, no certain Proto-Turkic traces of any kind whatsoever in the Proto-Slavic grammar, not even in word formation. Most authors are not in a position to distinguish Turkic from Mongolic or Tungusic or to decide whether any “Altaic” had ever existed but they, nevertheless, claim a deep Proto- or Old *Turkic* influence on the Proto-Slavic *phonological system* and call it an “*Altaic* influence on the Proto-Slavic *language*”. Additionally, we do not know at all what languages (undeniably, plural) were spoken in the Hunnic and the Avar multi-ethnic confederations but still some authors do not feel embarrassed to speak of “Hunno-Bulgarian loanwords” though the European Huns had disappeared in the 5th century while the Proto-Bulgarians only arrived in Europe two hundred years later.

I think that the situation desperately needs to change.

References

- Abel-Rémusat J.-P. 1820. *Recherches sur les langues tartares, ou Mémoires sur différens points de la grammaire et de la littérature des Mandchous, des Mongols, des Ougours et des Tibétains*, Paris : Imprimerie Royale.
- Alonso de la Fuente J. A. 2015. Tungusic historical linguistics and the Buyla (a.k.a. Nagyszentmiklós) Inscription. – *Studia Etymologica Cracoviensia* 20: 17–46.
- Berta Á. 1982. Die Struktur des Vokalismus in den Wolga-Türksprachen. – *Ural-Altäische Jahrbücher. Neue Folge* 2: 169–174.
- Boček V. 2023. “Altaic” influences on “Slavic” (Remarks on a paper by Marek Stachowski). – *Slavia* 92.1: 66–81.
- Boryś W. 1980. Problematyka prasłowiańskich dialektyzmów leksykalnych. Izoleksy południowosłowiańskie i zachodnio-południowo-słowiańskie. – Kwilecka I. (ed.). *Etnogeneza i topogeneza Słowian. Materiały z konferencji naukowej [...]*, Warszawa, Poznań: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe: 75–87 [reprinted in Boryś 2007: 209–222].
- Boryś W. 2005. *Słownik etymologiczny języka polskiego*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie.
- Boryś W. 2007. *Etymologie słowiańskie i polskie*. Warszawa: Slawistyczny Ośrodek Wydawniczy.
- Brandt R. 1887. Ob ètimologičeskom" slovarè Miklošiča. – *Russkij filologičeskij vèstnik*" 18: 1–40.
- Brückner A. 1927. *Słownik etymologiczny języka polskiego*. Kraków: Krakowska Spółka Wydawnicza.
- Deguignes J. 1748. *Mémoire historique sur l'origine des Huns & des Turks* [sine loco].
- Doerfer G. 1963. *Türkische und mongolische Elemente im Neupersischen*. [vol. 1]. Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner.
- Doerfer G. 1973. Zur Sprache der Hunnen. – *Central Asiatic Journal* 17: 1–51.
- Dybo A.V. 2020. Turkic and Slavic contact. – *Encyclopedia of Slavic Languages and Linguistics Online*, Brill. [available online at: <https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopedia-of-slavic-languages-and-linguistics-online/turkic-and-slavic-contact>].
- ÈSSJa → Trubačev 1977.
- Georg S. 2023. Connections between Uralic and other language families. – Abondolo D., Valjärvi R.-L. (eds.). *The Uralic languages*. London: Routledge: 176–209.
- Göckenjan H. 1993. Die Landnahme der Avaren aus historischer Sicht. – Müller-Wille M., Schneider R. (eds.). *Ausgewählte Probleme europäischer Landnahmen des Früh- und*

- Hochmittelalters. Methodische Grundlagendiskussion im Grenzbereich zwischen Archäologie und Geschichte.* [vol. 1]. Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke: 275–302.
- Gołąb Z. 1992. *The origins of the Slavs. A linguist's view.* Columbus: Slavica Publishers.
- Golden P. 1992. *An introduction to the history of the Turkic peoples.* Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- Granberg A. 2009. Classification of the Hunno-Bulgarian loan-words in Slavonic. – Ambrosiani P. (ed.). *Swedish contributions to the Fourteenth International Congress of Slavists (Ohrid, 10–16 September 2008).* Umeå: Umeå University: 19–31.
- Grønbech V. 1902. *Forstudier til tyrkisk lydhistorie.* København: Lehmann & Stage.
- Guignes de → Deguignes
- Havlová E. (ed.). 1989. *Etymologický slovník jazyka staroslověnského.* [fasc. 1]. Praha: Akademie věd České republiky.
- Havlová E. (ed.). 1990. *Etymologický slovník jazyka staroslověnského.* [fasc. 2]. Praha: Akademie věd České republiky.
- Helimski E. (= Xelimskij E.) 2000a. Jazyk(i) Avarov: Tunguso-mañčžurskij aspekt. – *Folia Orientalia* 36: 135–148.
- Helimski E. 2000b. On probable Tungus-Manchurian origin of the Buyla Inscription from Nagy-Szentmiklós (Preliminary communication). – *Studia Etymologica Cracoviensia* 5: 43–56.
- Králik L. 2015. *Stručný etymologický slovník slovenčiny.* Bratislava: VEDA Vydavateľstvo SAV.
- Leschber C. 2017. Alban. *berr* aus der Perspektive des neolithischen landwirtschaftlichen Substrats. – *Linguistique Balkanique* 56.1: 47–53.
- Lieberman A. 1998. What can we expect from a new dictionary of English etymology? – Fontenelle Th. et al. (ed.). *EURALEX '98 Proceedings.* Liège: Université de Liège: 459–465.
- Lieberman A. 2014. My life in etymology. – *Studia Etymologica Cracoviensia* 19: 7–19.
- Malkiel Y. 1948. Hispano-Arabic *marrano* and its Hispano-Latin homophone. – *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 68.4: 175–184.
- Mańczak W. 2017. *Polski słownik etymologiczny.* Kraków: Polska Akademia Umiejętności.
- Mel'nyčuk O.S. 1985. *Etymolohičnyj slovník ukrajinškoj movy.* [vol. 2]. Kyjiv: Naukova dumka.
- Menges K.H. 1989. Avaren, Kroaten, Kirgisien, Bulgaren. Ein kurzes Repetitorium. – *Wiener Slavistisches Jahrbuch* 35: 125–142.
- Miklosich, F. 1886. *Etymologisches Wörterbuch der slavischen Sprachen.* Wien: Wilhelm Braumüller.
- Pohl W. 1988. *Die Awaren. Ein Steppenvolk in Mitteleuropa 567–822 n. Chr.* München: C.H. Beck.
- Poppe N. 1925a. Türkisch-tschuwassische vergleichende Studien. – *Islamica* 1.4: 409–427.
- Poppe N. 1925b. Čuvaškij jazyk i ego otnošenje k mongol'skomu i tureckim jazykam. – *Izvestija Rossijskoj Akademii Nauk. VI serija* 19.9: 405–426.
- Poppe N. 1965. *Introduction to Altaic languages.* Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- Poppe N. 1974. Zur Stellung des Tschuwaschischen. – *Central Asiatic Journal* 18: 135–147.
- Pritsak O. 1957. Tschuwaschische Pluralsuffixe. – *Studia Altaica.* [Festschrift für Nikolaus Poppe zum 60. Geburtstag am 8. August 1957]. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz: 137–155.
- Pritsak O. 1982. The Hunnic language of the Attila clan. – *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 6.4: 428–476.
- Pritsak O. 1983. The Slavs and the Avars. – Antonelli G., Manselli R. (eds.). *Gli Slavi occidentali e meridionali nell'Alto Medioevo.* [2 vol.]. Spoleto: Presso la sede del centro: 353–435.
- Ščerbak A.M. 1977. *Očerki po sravnitel'noj morfologii tjurkskich jazykov (Imja).* Leningrad: Nauka.

- Schelesniker H. 1975. Turanische Einflüsse im urslavischen Sprachsystem. – *Wiener Slavistisches Jahrbuch* 21: 237–241.
- Shevelov G.Y. 1964. *A prehistory of Slavic. The historical phonology of Common Slavic*. Heidelberg: Carl Winter.
- Šipova E.N. 1976. *Slovar' tjurkizmov v ruskom jazyke*. Alma-Ata: Nauka.
- Skok P. 1973. *Etimologijski rječnik hrvatskoga ili srpskoga jezika*. Zagreb: Jugoslavenska Akademija Znanosti i Umjetnosti.
- Sławomirski J. 1995. *Wprowadzenie do języka katalońskiego*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego.
- Stachowski K. 2023. *j- in Altai. A preliminary report. – Ayazlı Ö., Karaayak T., Uzunkaya U. (eds.). *Bilge Biliglig Bahşı Bitigi* [FS M. Ölmez]. Çanakkale: Paradigma Akademi: 551–570.
- Stachowski K., Stachowski O. 2016. Possibly Oriental elements in Slavonic folklore. *Klobuk*. – *Türk Dilleri Araştırmaları* 26.2: 241–264.
- Stachowski M. 2000. Das Wort *Mammut* in etymologischen Wörterbüchern. – *Folia Orientalia* 36: 301–314.
- Stachowski M. 2004. The origin of the European word for sabre. – *Studia Etymologica Cracoviensia* 9: 133–141.
- Stachowski M. 2005. Uwagi o zapożyczeniach altajskich w języku prasłowiańskim i kwestie pokrewne. – *Studia Turcologica Cracoviensia* 10: 437–454.
- Stachowski M. 2012. Teoria altajska. – *LingVaria* 7.2: 239–263.
- Stachowski M. 2017. The problem of a Turkic etymology of the Slavonic word **baranǔ* ‘ram’. – *Rocznik Slawistyczny* 66: 79–93.
- Stachowski M. 2020. Proto-Slavic palatal consonants and Proto-Turkic vowel harmony. – *Rocznik Slawistyczny* 69: 121–132.
- Stachowski M. 2023. *Podstawy turkologii dla bałkanistów*. Kraków: Księgarnia Akademicka.
- Stachowski O. → Stachowski K., Stachowski O.
- Tekin T. 1992. The Hunnic (Hsiung-Nu) couplet in Chin-Shu. – Bacqué-Grammont J.-L. (ed.). *Mélanges offerts à Louis Bazin par ses disciples et ses amis* [= *Varia Turcica* 19]. Paris: L'Harmattan: 1–4.
- Trubačev O. 1960. *Proischoždenie nazvanij domašnih životnyh v slavjanskich jazykach*, Moskva: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR.
- Trubačev O. (ed.). 1977. *Ėtimologičeskij slovar' slavjanskich jazykov*. [vol. 4]. Moskva: Nauka.
- Vasmer M. [Fasmer M.]. 1986. *Ėtimologičeskij slovar' russkogo jazyka*. [vol. 2]. Moskva: Progress.