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TWO COMMENTS ON MAREK STACHOWSKI'S "HOW TO COMBINE BARK, FIBULA, AND CHASM (IF ONE SPEAKS PROTO-TURKIC)?"

Abstract

This note reacts to an article by Marek Stachowski in *Studia Linguistica UIC* (no. 127, 2010, pp. 179–186) by suggesting that a phonemic opposition between /b/ and /v/ may be a relatively late development in the world's known languages and by suggesting that dialectal Turkish *goğuz* 'nutshell' may in some way be etymologically related to certain words in Arabic, Aramaic, Hebrew, and Persian meaning 'nut'.

M.S.'s "How to combine bark, fibula, and chasm (if one speaks Proto-Turkic)?" (*Studia Linguistica Universitatis Iagellonicae Cracoviensis*, no. 127, 2010, pp. 179–186) prompts two comments.

M.S. writes:

> The sound value of the respective rune in the Old Turkic alphabet might have positionally varied between a fricative *ß ~ v* and a stop *b* (Erdal 1998: 139). Nevertheless, we usually do not accept simultaneous existence of both *b* and *v* at the phonological level. (p. 180).

M.S.'s reluctance to accept Erdal's assumption of a phonemic contrast between /b/ and /v/ is based on Turkological considerations. It is also justified by the fact that that opposition is, probably more often than not, a relatively late development in the world's known languages.

For instance, whereas most latter-day varieties of Hebrew have a phonemic opposition between /b/ and /v/, it is not believed to have existed in Earliest Hebrew.

Rather, Earliest Hebrew is presumed to have had */u/, */b/, and */bb/ but not */v/. In certain later varieties of the language, these changes occurred (in the order shown):

1) */u/ split into /u/ and /v/.
2) */b/ became */v/ (thus merging with /v/ reflecting */u/).
3) */bb/ became /b/ (which, of course, is historically not the */b/ mentioned in the previous paragraph).

Or, to take another example, Classical Latin is assumed to have had */b/ and */u/ but not */v/. Only in post-Classical Latin did the language acquire */v/ (when */u/ split into */u/ and */v/).

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M.S. writes:

> There exists only one variant pointing to *-g, i.e. Tksh.dial. *goğuz* 'nutshell' […] (p. 180).

Not only is it easy to agree that the word should be considered an innovation (thus, a word that does not go back, at least not entirely, to Proto-Turkic) but it is also possible that the word is either a borrowing of an Arabic, Aramaic, or Persian word or a blend of a native Turkish word and an Arabic, Aramaic, or Persian word (in both cases, I have in mind Arabic, Aramaic, and Persian words that are cognate with Hebrew *egoz* 'nut').