Studies
on the Turkic World

A Festschrift for Professor Stanisław Stachowski
on the Occasion of His 80th Birthday

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The Consonants ʒ ~ ĝ in Kazakh

Kazakh, beside Yakut, is one of the most dispersed Turkic languages.¹ The territory of Kazakhstan stretches over 2.7 million km² and substantial Kazakh minorities inhabit China and Mongolia. Although large lands in Kazakhstan lie uninhabited, the distances between extreme territories are very large. Quite surprisingly most researchers insist that Kazakh is a relatively homogeneous language with few dialect differences.²

1. Distribution of əc in Standard Modern Kazakh

In Modern Kazakh, əc (pronounced ʒ or ĝ) occurs mostly in word initial and medial. In the initial the number of words with əc is very high, since it has emerged from the change ɣ- → ʒ ~ ĝ. This change in Kazakh is regular and it includes almost all words, except for some compounds.³ In the medial between vowels əc appears rarely in genuine words, e.g. аябек ‘grandmother’, ожсай ‘ladle’, but the number of loanwords with əc in this position is also relatively low, e.g. əжсап ‘complexion; countenance’,

¹ If we neglect the problem of Siberian Tatars.
² Radloff (1870: xiv, xvii), Баскаков (1960: 169), Benson, Svanberg (1988: 95). The homogeneity of language was variously explained. Some researchers pointed to the mobility of the Kazakhs, relative social homogeneity, and marriages between distant couples (cf. Olcott 1987: 11).
³ Exceptions are mostly some adverbs composed of demonstrative pronouns and nouns which once had ɣ- in the initial and this ɣ- may still be retained, e.g. бурак – бурак (Жаннепикан ed. 2002: 154; Сарыбаев, Қалиев 2002: 43) ‘this side; this way’, биыл [biyıl] ‘this year’. 
κοζεα 'member of social class pretending to be descendants of Muhammad', both of Arabic origin. In the final, жс is very rare and it is encountered in loanwords, e.g. махс 'crown' (an Iranian loanword) and келемеж 'mockery' (a word of quite complicated origin).

The consonants ž ~ ǧ, although not very frequently, may occur in the medial after or before a consonant, if another adjacent sound is a vowel. These consonants are usually [ɾ ɹ n]: (a) -ржс-, e.g. абржсем- 'to be astonished', тыржси- ['tırži'] 'to sulk', уржсыңда- 'to grin'; (b) -лжс-, e.g. жсължсем- 'to move', including loanwords, e.g. олжса 'booty' (a Mongolian loanword); (c) -жжс-, e.g. кеңже 'the youngest child; the last-borne young', including loanwords, e.g. күңжім 'sesame' (an Iranian loanword) or жанжасал 'scandal' (an Arabic loanword).

In addition to this, ž ~ ǧ may be preceded by a consonant in compounds, such as биржаскры 'one-sided' ← бир 'one' + жаскры 'sided', төміржасол 'railway' ← төмір 'iron' + жасол 'road' or syncopated words as a result of vowel deletion, e.g. аржасы 'that side' ← ары жасы.

2. The alternation of ž ~ ǧ

Standard descriptive grammars of Kazakh describe the consonant жс as an apical fricative [ʒ], IPA [ʒ], a weak counterpart of у [ʃ], IPA [ʃ]. However, it is obvious that many Kazakhs pronounce this consonant [ʒ], IPA [ʃ]. This fact is seldom reported in grammars and language descriptions. For instance, Kajdarov shows many vowel and consonant alternations, among which he assigns a special place to the alternation of жс ~ джс and у ~ ж, both in word initial (Кайдаров 1997: 247). In another place of his grammatical sketch, Kajdarov says that джс- and ж- initials are typical of Eastern Dialect (Кайдаров 1997: 254). Unfortunately, this explanation is not satisfactory, for it does not include all cases. Before examining this question, we should see what has been established or supposed in the existing studies so far. An important clue to this question may be how the Kazakhs noted this consonant before the transition to the current Cyrillic script.

When we read old manuscripts written in Arabic characters, we see that the authors and copyists employed the letter ж, which probably represents ǧ, e.g. жет [gigit] 'young man', жаңдаң [gawdan] 'from a foe', жер [ger] '(he) eats' (Исин 2001: 20).4 Because they employed other Persian letters

4 The poems edited by Isin are quite old and the copies are dated to the beginning of the 19th century. It is important to note at this point that the Soviet allegations that the Kazakh written literature was created in the Soviet period are untrue.
such as those for the consonants p and č, we can take for sure that they could also make use of the Persian letter ž. The letter چ was also employed in Kazakh printed publications for which we have examples from the years 1913–1928, e.g. [gerge] in Ya'qub Dulatof’s (Mirqaqb Dulatuli, later Mirqaqip Dulatuli) Azamat from 1913 (Dulatof 1913) and Baytursinul’s works (e.g. Baytursinul 1928). However, on the front page of Baytursinul’s textbook published in 1928, the title ‘new practical aid’ written in Arabic characters is also provided in a Latin transcription as “jana qural” (in the modern standard spelling Жана құрағат), which suggests the pronunciation [ʒ]. The tradition of employment of the letter چ in private writings and correspondence of some Kazakh intellectuals continued to exist at least in the 1930s, after the official shift to the Latin-based alphabet, see for example the copy of a letter by Baytursinul of 1932 to Dulatuli, published in 2004 (Дулатулы 2004: 412).

Naturally, the use of the letter چ does not make its pronunciation clear. It is possible that the Kazakh intellectuals had just chosen a letter more familiar to the Turkic tradition, and it could have been pronounced variously according to the dialect of a speaker and the distribution within word sequence, as also observed by Omarbekov (Омарбеков 1992: 26).6

Reliable publications of Kazakh language material started to appear in the 19th century. The first to mention are Kazakh texts published by Il’minskij in 1861.7 Since this publication is unavailable to us, we have to refer to the materials published by Radloff and his dictionary where he employed Il’minskij’s texts.8 In the dictionary, Radloff recorded all relevant

Radloff’s opinion about it is contradictory. On the one side he says that there is no genuine literary Kazakh language, for nearly all teachers are Tatars, on the other he reports that he had employed written books from which the Kazakhs recited and sang songs (Radloff 1870: xix).

5 The Kazakh names and titles of Kazakh publications are transcribed from Arabic and Cyrillic into a system predominantly based on Modern Turkish.

6 At this point it should be mentioned that in the first Kazakh books and periodicals printed in the Kazakh centres the Kazakh consonant й was also written traditionally by the letter چ, e.g. Bastawq ekinci cil oqlatin qurağat kitabi ‘a reader for the second class of elementary schools’ (Dulatuh 1926, title page), as in the first Kazakh books published in Kazan affected by the Tatar orthography, although it was later replaced by ʃ [ʃ].

7 Н. И. Ильминский. 1861. Материалы для изучения Киргизского наречия. Казань.

8 Two tales recorded by Il’minskij were republished by Radloff in 1870 (see Radloff 1870: xviii) and Il’minskij’s lexical material was included in Radloff’s dictionary (Radloff 1893: iii).
Kazakh words with the letter ḡ (ў) in the initial.9 However, in the medial Kazakh words are written with the letter ж, i.e. āжак ‘grandmother’ (Radloff 1983: 914), ожак ‘small scoop with a short handle’ (Radloff 1983: 1154), олож ‘booty; income’ (Radloff 1983: 1095), the two latter words being written exactly as in the modern spelling. The verb ‘to grin’ is recorded in the form иржак-, with reference to its Kirghiz equivalent иржак- (Radloff 1893: 1373), and the word ‘the youngest child’ is represented as кежак (Radloff 1899: 1083).10 As for the word-final position, Radloff records the Kazakh words with the letter ж, e.g. маң (Radloff 1905: 944). In his Kazakh texts published in 1870, Radloff transcribes the letter у as dsch (e.g. Radloff 1870: xxiv, 8), which also shows that it was pronounced ḡ. Moreover, Radloff unambiguously demonstrates that the relevant consonant was ḡ “ў pronounced dsch”.11 However, Radloff’s remark is only valid for Eastern Kazakh. At the same time he observes that Il’minskij in his texts recorded in the western steppes employs the letter ж in the place of у (Radloff 1870: xxvi–xxvii). The presence of the sound ḡ is supported by what Melioranskij writes in his grammar of Kazakh. Melioranskij employs the same letter as Radloff did, but he remarks that the initial component of the жж affricate is not very strong and disappears in the western part of the Kazakh steppe (Мелюранский 1894: 8–13).

However, Ibrahim (Ibray) Altinsarin in his Kirghiz (i.e. Kazakh) chrestomathy (Алтынсаринъ 1879), regarded as the first book written by a Kazakh author with Cyrillic characters, employs exclusively the letter ж in all positions. Although Altinsarin’s orthography is far from being exact, this is an important argument for ž [ʒ].

There are valuable texts published by Çağatay in 1961 recorded among the Kazakhs who emigrated from China to Turkey. In the introduction to this publication, Çağatay has discussed the problem of the consonants spelled on the basis of Turkish orthography c ~ ɟ, i.e. ģ ~ ż, but she could not formulate strict rules of the distribution and alternation of these consonants. Instead, she demonstrated a stylistic aspect, observing that the

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9 There are only eleven words beginning with the letter ž (ж) in his dictionary, all being Troki Karaim and Tatar (Radloff 1911: 1115–1116).
10 Radloff’s findings are contradictory, again. Namely, in the introduction to his texts he says that “ж” is pronounced by the Eastern Kazakhs only in the medial in loanwords, which in the written form had the letter ż (Radloff 1870: xxvii).
11 “Diejenigen Wörter, die im Altaisdialecte auf j, bei den Sagaierm u und bei der Koi- balen auf j anlauten, erhalten im Kirghischen der Öststeppe den Anlaut u (sprich dsch), das ḡ als Vorschlag ist ganz deutlich hörbar” (Radloff 1870: xxvi).
Kazakhs pronounce c when an educated man is present, but "c ~ j" and sometimes "c ~ d" in an uncontrolled conversation. When she asked what the correct pronunciation should be like, they said that it should be "c" (Çağatay 1961: 6). Therefore, in most cases she introduced the vowel [ŋ] and spelled it c. In a vocabulary appended to the texts, most words have c- in the initial (Çağatay 1961: 168–170), but four words are spelled with j-: jan, japalak, jin and jut (Çağatay 1961: 174). Three of these words were also provided with the c- initial, namely can, japalak, and cut. However, she also noted other cases of the j- initial in the texts, some alternating with c-, e.g. jabuwo ~ cabuwnn ‘(camel) blanket’ (Çağatay 1961: 24).

According to Koç, Doğan and Bayniyazov’s grammar (2004: 45), the normal Kazakh consonant corresponding to Common Turkic y- was once c-, but it changed into j- as affected by the letter єc imposed by the modern writing. Quite interestingly, in contrast to Çağatay these authors maintain that the Kazakhs – except for a few northern dialects – in a free, uncontrolled conversation almost always pronounce this consonant “c”, and “j” appears only when they are obliged to use literary pronunciation. They attribute the question of the use of the letter єc and its pronunciation j- to the political factors. Koç, Doğan and Bayniyazov deliver three proofs, one is Radloff’s notation єc, the other is the Russian rendering ðєc of this consonant, not єc, and the third is Baytursmuli’s alleged opinion that є occurs in Russian words. These authors say nothing about the position of this consonant in a word or speech sequence. Despite this sharp critic, Koç, Bayniyazov and Başkapan in their Kazakh-Turkish dictionary write the relevant words with j (Коç, Байниязоw, Başkапан 2003). In another Kazakh grammar published by a Turkish scholar (Tamir 2007: 435), the author says that the Turkish initial y- corresponds to the Kazakh j- in all words, but he adds that this consonant is pronounced c by the Kazakhs in Mongolia, China and also in many regions in Kazakhstan.

As a result, there is no standardized sign in Turkish transcription system for the Standard Modern Kazakh єc. For example, Ercilasun proposed both c and j for it (Ercilasun 1990).

12 In fact the alternation ż ~ d is also known in some standard Kazakh words, e.g, ежірет ~ едірет 'to goggle' (Жаннелєєв ed. 2002: 154), though in the course of time such pairs usually acquire new meanings, e.g. бүжір 'knoll, hill' – бүдір ‘pockmarked’.

13 In the Kazakh dialect of China the normal consonant in the initial is [г], see Bazilhan (Базылхан 1991: 31).
The first—and to the best of our knowledge—the only author to give a correct distribution of the consonants _UNS̃_ was Bazilhan. Although his distribution was intended to represent the language of the Kazakhs in Mongolia, it is valid for many variants of Kazakh spoken in Kazakhstan as well. In Bazilhan’s opinion, _мe_, i.e. _UNS̃_, is pronounced in the medial after a vowel or between two vowels as well as in the final, while _UNS̃_, i.e. _UNS̃_ is pronounced in the initial and in medial after [l n], for which the following examples are delivered: _кəлджӣ̄гa_ ‘dish of hot meat for a woman after childbirth or for the sick’, _олджə̄_ ‘booty’ and _кəндэ̄кəр_ ‘dagger’.

The alternation _UNS̃_ ~ _UNS̃_ has not escaped the attention of Kazakh linguists, but they regard it as a feature of dialect variation. However, in the first voluminous study on Kazakh dialectology, Amanžolov (1957), who demonstrated many vowel and consonant alternations in three dialects he established, said nothing about the alternation _UNS̃_ ~ _UNS̃_. Information on these consonants is found in Saribayev’s introduction to the first Kazakh dialect dictionary. Namely, Saribayev says that the affricate _UNS̃_ is pronounced in word-initial position in Qorday and Üyğir districts of the Almatı province as well as in some districts of the Eastern Kazakhstan province (Сарыбаев 1969: 10). In a study on Kazakh dialectology published in 1979 and its new, revised edition of 2002, Qaliyev and Saribayev remark that _UNS̃_ occurs in the Eastern Dialect in the initial and the medial after [l n]. They provide the same examples as other researchers, i.e. _кəлджӣ̄гa_, _олдə̄лə_ and _кəндэ̄кəр_, and link this feature to the language of Mongolian Kazakhs (Сарыбаев, Калиев 2002: 43). Their observations are inconsistent, since in another place of their book the same feature is also demonstrated in the Southern Dialect (Сарыбаев, Калиев 2002: 108). In spite of this, this feature was disregarded in the dictionary (in contrast to the _UNS̃_- initial), for the _UNS̃_- pronunciation is irregular and vary with _UNS̃_. The alternation _UNS̃_ ~ _UNS̃_ has attracted Omarbekov’s attention who in his study on the geography of Kazakh dialects employed it as a feature characterizing dialect distribution. Two maps in this study show the alternation _UNS̃_ ~ _UNS̃_, one with the word _UNS̃}_вreetings _UNS̃_g, and the other with _UNS̃}_greetings _UNS̃_g (Омартбеков 1992: 194–195). The area of _UNS̃_ is similar in both maps, it includes the territory of South-Eastern Kazakhstan stretching from the

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14 However, all of his examples show _UNS̃_ in intervocalic position only, i.e. V—V, in words such as ажал, жеңелден, кылымдау, ккілдеу etc.
15 No example is delivered for this position.
16 The same principle was applied in a new dialect dictionary (Энес, Удербәев eds. 2007).
river Chu across the Seven River land up to the Altai mountains. On the borders of this territory there is an area of дж ~ ж variation. Ombarbekov considers this alternation a shift from ж to ж (Омбарбеков 1992: 24), accepting therefore the standard language as starting point and implicitly the ж stage as original, though he points to the fact that the area of ж which covers northern and western Kazakhstan is characteristic as a Turkic feature, not only Kazakhstan.

Turkology reference books and comparative studies regard the initial Kazakh consonant as ж (e.g. Menges 1995: 92). Räsänen does not formulate any opinion, he just refers to Russian and Soviet works (Räsänen 1949: 186).

3. Discussion of the problem in a comparative perspective

Kazakh ж and з go back to various Old Turkic consonants. In the following, two points will be discussed.

1. y- → ж-
Since there is no clear historical phonetic evidence, we do not know if Old Turkic y- has first changed to ж- or з.17 Therefore, it is impossible to trace all stages of the relevant phonetic process. Before going into the discussion of the change y- → ж- and y- → з- in Turkic languages, we have to note that these changes are known in many languages of the world. Among Indo-European languages, they are evidenced in the Romance branch. For example, Latin y- changed to ж- in Italian and з- in French.

In Turkic languages, initial y- shifted to ж- in Old Bulgarian, in most northwestern languages such as Karachai, Tatar, Nogai (not literary standard language), northern Crimean Tatar, Karakalpak and Kirghiz, also in southern dialects of Altai, a northeastern language. In Chuvash it changed into s- (via ж-), in Yakut into s- (also via ж-). In some other northeastern languages it shifted into c- (Tuvan, Shor, Khakas). It is to be noted that these changes in some languages are partial and do not embrace all dialects.

In some traditional grammars the change y- → ж- is termed palatalisation (Dauzat 1950: 42). However, this term is inadequate, for both sounds are palatal. A better term is affrication. Affrication may also be called closing,

17 We believe that there is no need to start the discussion with Proto-Turkic. Some Turkologists derive Old Turkic /j/ from other consonants, e.g. Шербак derives it from Proto-Turkic /θ/ (Шербак 1970: 159).
as in Lass (1984: 181), who gives Latin /j/ → Italian /ʝ/ and → French /ʒ/, e.g. Latin *maior, Italian maggiore, French majeur as an example.

The change y- → ţ- is a phonological process that may be regarded as fortition. Also Lass takes closing for fortition. As is well-known, in northwestern Turkic languages initial consonants are typically strong. Therefore, one may explain this process by analogy, i.e. a change from weak to stronger. However, if this is the case we have to ask why y-strengthened to ţ- weakened later to ź-. The answer seems to be simple. Namely there are also other cases of lenition in the initial position, e.g. č- → š-, though this occurs in all environments and is not position-depended. Moreover, the change ţ- → ź- may be affected by č- → š-, for it is a similar change.

2. ţ → ź / V—V

Medial -ţ- has not developed from -y-, but is a continuation of the Proto-Turkic *-č- from the time before the change č → š. In contrast to the preceding, this change occurs in all dialects. Medial -ţ- may be retained if it is protected by /l n r/, i.e.

\[ ţ → ź / \{l n r\} \rightarrow V \]

See the examples above like kęnegę ~ kenže etc. As is evident from the discussion, this change occurs in some dialects, while in others it does not.

Lenition and fortition are little studied in Turkic, although these processes underlie the whole historical development of Turkic sounds. On the phonetic level, it was discussed in many aspects in Bajčuра's studies, on the phonetic and phonological levels by Ščerbak (Шербак 1970: 88–89). On the comparative, phonological and historical levels the problem of consonant strength was examined in detail by Johanson (1986, reprinted in 1991). However, Johanson does not discuss the changes relevant to our topic. Traditional Turkic linguistics treats most cases of fortition and lenition as voicedness and voicelessness (Räsänen 1949: 143, Menges 1995: 81). Naturally becoming voiced or voiceless does not exclude lenition and fortition. However, lenition and fortition as notions pertaining to phonological strength are more feasible to explain historical phonological processes.

Summing up, we will argue that the Old Turkic y- changed in two stages in Kazakh. The first stage was the change y- → ţ-, whereas the second

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18 Final position will not be discussed, as this is not typical of Kazakh, see above.

19 Except from some complicated cases, such as ayı̈r- * → ağïra- * → azïra- 'to separate; to go apart'.
one was ğ-→ž-. The first change achieved its final point in southern
and eastern dialects of Kazakh, whereas in central, northern and western
dialects it went further and produced the consonant ž-, accepted in Mod-
ern Kazakh as standard. It must be observed that in the pronunciation
of many speakers both consonants may appear in the initial, depending on
factors that have not been yet examined.

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