

THE UZBEK LANGUAGE AND CULTURE DURING THE KARAKHANID ERA**Eshankulov Dilmurod**

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Annotation: In this article, the author discusses the Karluk state and the Karluks, their language and cultural life, the literary works created during that period, as well as the formation of the Uzbek ethnos. In the formation of the Uzbek ethnos, the Karluk–Chigil language played a leading role.

The Karakhanids, as a state established in the 10th century in the region between Transoxiana and Eastern Turkestan, used Khāqāni Turkic as the official written language. During this period, alongside the Uyghur script, the Arabic script was also widely used.

Keywords: Karakhanids, Karluk–Chigil, dialect, Oghuz, Kipchak, ethnos, ethnic group, vernacular, Turkic language, Khāqāniyya.

Introduction. Language plays an important role in the formation of an ethnic group. In the formation of the Uzbek ethnos, the Karluk–Chigil language played a decisive role. Linguists have, of course, carried out numerous studies on the history of the Uzbek language. However, there is still no consensus among scholars regarding which tribal language dominated during the period when the ancestors of the Uzbeks were forming as a distinct people (ethnos), or concerning the emergence of a literary language characteristic of the 10th–13th centuries.

Academician Shonazar Shoabdurahmonov classifies modern Uzbek dialects into three groups, one of which he identifies as the Karluk dialect [Shoabdurahmonov, 1971: 397–404]. The Karluk language is considered one of the ancient Turkic languages that emerged in the early Middle Ages. The linguist Professor N. A. Baskakov, in his classification of ancient Turkic languages, divides them into several language groups and also includes the Karluk language group among them [Baskakov, 1961: 177]. According to him, the Karluk language group emerged during the Karakhanid state, that is, in the 10th–11th centuries.

Taking into account the achievements of modern scholarship, it can be argued that the political entity known as the Karakhanid state was formed not in the 10th–11th centuries, but rather in the 9th–10th centuries. The term “Karakhanid” itself was conditionally introduced into academic usage by the orientalist scholar A. A. Grigor’ev. Considering these uncertainties, it would be closer to the truth to state that the Karluk dialect developed in the 9th–10th centuries, concurrently with the period when the ancestors of the Uzbeks were forming as a distinct ethnos.

The Karluk–Chigil dialect was widely spoken between the 8th and 10th centuries in Yettisuv, the western part of Eastern Turkestan, the middle reaches of the Syr Darya, and in Transoxiana. This language served as the principal language of the Karakhanid state.

Analysis of the Literature on the Topic

Among the dialects, the Karluk or Karluk–Chigil dialect became firmly established among the population of Transoxiana and the surrounding regions, remaining the language of the

Western Karakhanid state. It should be noted that during the second half of the 10th century and the 11th century, the language in the Karakhanid territories differed somewhat from the earlier Karluk–Chigil language of the preceding centuries (up to the mid-8th–10th centuries).

At that time, the language was strongly influenced by the Karluk tribal confederation and the tribes later incorporated into the state [Shoniyozov, 1999:12]. During the Karluk period (9th–10th centuries), a number of sedentary (Turkic, Tajik), semi-sedentary, and semi-nomadic ethnic groups inhabited the vast territories under their rule. Mahmud al-Kashgari noted in his works that there were differences in the dialects of the Turkic-speaking population living in these regions. At the same time, he also emphasized that a common language (ethnos language), understandable to all, existed [Kashgari, 1960; Vol. 1, p. 65]. This widely understood language was referred to by Mahmud al-Kashgari as the “Khāqāniyya” language. This language developed during the 9th–10th centuries and continued to evolve in subsequent centuries. After the Karluks, the Chigil tribe became a major ethnic group [Kashgari, 1960; Vol. 1, p. 66].

There were no significant differences between the languages of the two related tribes; their dialect (Karluk–Chigil) became the main language of the Uzbek ethnos during the 9th–10th centuries. During that period, the majority of Karluks and their related tribes became sedentary, intermingling with the long-established Turkic population. Under the influence of these interactions, the Karluk–Chigil language increasingly incorporated Arabic and Persian loanwords.

It is well known that during the Samanid period, science and scholarship flourished in Transoxiana and adjacent regions. In major cities such as Bukhara and Samarkand, specialists in various fields (medicine, philosophy, history, logic, astronomy, geography, and others) lived and worked. Some of them, for example Ibn Sina, became known across the Arabic, Persian, and Turkic worlds. Numerous poets also resided and created literary works in the cities of Transoxiana and Khorasan. Bukhara and Samarkand had large libraries that collected books from various fields, known in the Arabic-Persian world. These books were also sold in the city markets.

Research Methodology

The practice of writing works in Arabic and Persian continued during the period of the Western Karakhanids. Throughout the 11th–12th centuries, poets, writers, historians, philosophers, and specialists in other fields produced dozens of works in cities such as Bukhara, Samarkand, Shash, and Fergana. This indicates that science and scholarship did not cease under the Karakhanids; rather, they continued and developed. The khāqāns served as patrons for scholars and poets.

During the Karluk–Karakhanid period, along with works written in Arabic and Persian, works in the Turkic language also began to appear, although the majority of these have not survived to the present day. It is known that in the early 9th century, some Turks living in Egypt under the Abbasid Caliphate composed poetry and qasidas. By comparison, it is reasonable to assume that similar works were written in this language in Transoxiana as well. During the 11th–12th centuries, oral folk literature also flourished. Popular epics such as *Dede Qorqut* and the stories of Oghuz Khan spread widely not only among nomadic, semi-nomadic, and semi-sedentary tribes, but also among the settled Turkic population. It is likely that the beloved Turkic epic *Alpomish* also gained popularity during this period.

Analysis and Results

By the mid-11th century, the Uzbek ethnos in the Karakhanid territories had its own literary language and both written and oral literature. The general ethnocultural identity of the Uzbek ancestors developed rapidly. N. A. Baskakov had noted that the Karluk language group emerged in the 10th–11th centuries.

According to K. Shoniyozov, however, the Karluk language group formed earlier, in the 9th–10th centuries. During the 11th–12th centuries, the Karluk language continued to develop and reached the level of a literary language. Numerous works were written in this language during the 11th–13th centuries. Among the most significant are Yusuf Khwaja Hajib's *Qutadghu Bilig*, Abu Abdulg'afur al-Almani's *Tarikh-i Qashghari* (11th century), Ahmad Yugnaki's *Hibat al-Haqa'iq*, and the wisdom writings of Ahmad Yasawi, among others.

The Karakhanids, as a state established in the 10th century in the region between Transoxiana and Eastern Turkestan, used Khāqāni Turkic as the official written language. During this period, alongside the Uyghur script, the Arabic script was also used. In terms of vocabulary, Old Turkic was relatively rich, and the Islamic Uyghur lexicon largely replaced words associated with Buddhism from earlier periods with terms related to Islam.

The *Qutadghu Bilig*, written by Yusuf Khwaja Hajib in 1069, consisting of 6,645 couplets, and Mahmud al-Kashgari's *Diwan Lughat al-Turk*, written in 1074 to teach Turks the Turkic language for Arabs, are among the first dictionaries of the Turkic language. Ahmad Yugnaki's *Hibat al-Haqa'iq*, consisting of 101 quatrains, and Yasawi's *Diwan-i Hikmat* are key examples of Karakhanid Turkic literature. The *Diwan Lughat al-Turk* contains 8,624 words, the *Qutadghu Bilig* 2,961 words, and *Hibat al-Haqa'iq* 1,306 words, demonstrating the extensive vocabulary of Karakhanid Turkic [O'zaydin, 2013:124]. Karakhanid Turkic was the first Islamic literary Turkic language and flourished in Kashgar, as well as in Eastern and Western Turkestan, during the 11th–12th centuries. In the 10th century, with the adoption of Islam by the Karakhanids, close relations were established with surrounding Islamic states.

It is known that during the 13th–15th centuries, the majority of the population living in sedentary and semi-sedentary conditions in Transoxiana and adjacent regions belonged to Turkic-speaking ethnic groups. Most of them spoke the firmly established Karluk dialect. During this period, the Karluk lexical stock was enriched with Arabic and Persian-Tajik words, while its grammatical system became considerably more refined.

The level of development of this language can be understood from works written in the 13th–15th centuries and later. It should also be noted that the language of these works contained a significant number of Oghuz and Kipchak words.

Between the 10th and 13th centuries, scientific research in the Turkic-Islamic world was highly advanced. Scholars were highly esteemed by rulers, and those who lived during this period exerted considerable influence on Europe.

Al-Farabi (known in the West as Al-Farabius), who authored around 160 works on physics, mathematics, astronomy, and logic, provided comprehensive commentaries on Aristotle's ideas. Due to his commentaries, he became known as the "Second Teacher" (*Mu'allimi Sani*). Many of his works were translated into Latin and used as textbooks in European secondary schools.

Ibn Sina (Avicenna) was a great physician and philosopher, writing nearly 220 works in medicine, logic, physics, and philosophy of religion. He was honored in the West with the title

“Prince of Physicians.” Notably, al-Biruni produced over 110 works and established geography as an independent field of study in the Islamic world [O‘zaydin, 2013:125].

Ibn Sina also studied musical instruments extensively. Remarkably, he regarded the human voice as the most perfect instrument and compared other instruments to it. His favorite instrument was the *ghijjak*, which he considered the most natural and admirable instrument closest to the human voice. He also provided information about instruments such as the *ud*, *tanbur*, *rubab*, *nay*, *surnay*, and *qanun*, discussing their playing techniques and interactions.

As musicologist I. Rajabov noted, “Abu Nasr al-Farabi and Ibn Sina, in their treatises, elaborated on Eastern music theory, particularly providing a theoretical foundation for the *maqam* system. Their works established the classical definition of *maqam*. The consistent teaching of these great scholars influenced the content of musical theorists living and creating in the 13th–15th centuries, as seen clearly in the works of Urmavi, Shirozi, Husayni, and Jami” [Rajabov, 2006:18].

Ibn Zayla (d. 1044), a student of Ibn Sina, was a famous music theorist. According to medieval sources, Abu Mansur Ibn Zayla died young in 1044. Despite his short life, he produced substantial works in various fields and was regarded as one of the most accomplished scholars of his time, earning the title *al-Hakim* (the Learned) from his contemporaries. His only known work in music is *Kitab al-Kafiy fi’l-Musiqa* (“The Complete Book of Music”). Ibn Zayla’s musical thought was heavily influenced by Ibn Sina’s perspectives.

Under the Karakhanids, rulers gave great attention to scholarly activity and the support of scientists. Thanks to such patronage, scholarly activity flourished significantly. Cities such as Tashkent, Balasagun, Kashgar, and others became important centers of art and learning.

The Karakhanid rulers’ interest in scientific knowledge led to significant developments and an increase in the number of scholars. Their focus on education served two important purposes. First, it strengthened the newly adopted Islamic faith among the Turkic tribes and helped eliminate older beliefs that contradicted the new religion. Second, these educational institutions helped the Sunni population consolidate their faith in opposition to Shiites [O‘zaydin, 2001:24–410].

In the early stages of Islamic civilization, education and upbringing were not conducted in dedicated institutions; instead, teaching took place in private spaces, known as *kuttab* (schools), within teachers’ homes and mosques [Shahin, 2010:70–71]. On the other hand, madrasas occupied a very important position in terms of educational activity. In Islamic history, madrasas emerged as institutions of growing significance due to the increasing importance of education and upbringing, as well as the expansion of their audiences.

The madrasas established by the Karakhanids in cities of Central Asia, such as Samarkand, Bukhara, Tashkent, Balasagun, Yarkent, and Kashgar, became important centers of knowledge. Instruction in madrasas was conducted systematically and in an organized manner. In addition to reading and writing, students were taught the Qur’an, tafsir (exegesis), and religious studies. A country’s education system can only be effective and develop successfully with the support of a strong governing authority. The Karakhanid rulers ensured such support, allowing the educational system to develop progressively and maintain its effectiveness.

During the 9th–10th centuries, significant cultural changes occurred among the peoples living within the Karluk state. Most nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes gradually settled, leading to an increase in the number of cities and villages. Islam became firmly established, and science

and knowledge began to flourish. In the 9th–10th centuries, during the rule of the Samanids and the Khwarezmshahs, various fields of culture and scholarship in Transoxiana and Khwarezm developed several times more than in previous centuries. Faith in Islam strengthened, and the cities of Bukhara and Samarkand remained major religious centers of Central Asia.

The culture of urban and rural populations in these regions had a strong positive influence on nomadic and semi-nomadic populations living along the Syr Darya, in Yettisuv, and in Eastern Turkestan. Tribes that had previously engaged in pastoralism largely settled, embraced Islam, and increasingly pursued scholarly knowledge.

Later generations of the Karluks lived in the territory of modern Uzbekistan during the 18th–early 20th centuries, mainly in the regions of Samarkand, Bukhara, Qashqadaryo, and Surkhandaryo. To provide a clearer picture of these later generations, we note their settlement patterns and approximate numbers during this period. The Karluks lived dispersed across Samarkand, Bukhara, Qashqadaryo, and Surkhandaryo regions.

Historical sources indicate that a certain group of Karluks resided in the city of Qarshi during the 1830s. They lived in the Qarluqkhona neighborhood, and the city's inhabitants nicknamed them the "pumpkin-flowered Karluks." By the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the Qarluqkhona Karluks had fully assimilated into the city population, and their ethnic identity was almost forgotten. During an ethnographic expedition in the 1950s, only two of the oldest residents of the neighborhood could recall that their ancestors were Karluks, while the younger generation knew nothing about it.

In Surkhandaryo region, several villages inhabited by Karluks exist in the Shorchi (present-day Oltinsoy) and Sariosiyo districts. One of these is Qarluq village in Shorchi (Oltinsoy) district, which, according to 1925 records, had 120 households or 636 residents. The village is located on the left bank of the Qarluq River (a tributary of the Halqayer River), in its upper reaches near the mountains. The Karluks living in this village are also referred to as Ipoq Karluks (the local population calls the Halqayer River the Ipoq River).

At the turn of the 19th–20th centuries, the village population lived a sedentary life, primarily engaged in farming and, to a lesser extent, in animal husbandry. However, the villagers did not know when or from where their ancestors had settled there. Despite this, most of the population of Qarluq village in Shorchi (Oltinsoy) district maintained the memory of their Karluk ancestry.

In the village, in addition to the Karluks, some families from other Uzbek ethnic groups also lived in close proximity. For example, families belonging to the Qong'iro, Yuz, and Batash clans lived in the Qarluq village. Karluks residing there would not give their daughters in marriage to other ethnic groups, but they did accept brides from them, which accelerated the process of intermarriage and integration between the Karluks and other Uzbek groups. During the collectivization period and afterward, many Karluks living along the Qarluq River migrated with their families to other villages in Shorchi (present-day Oltinsoy) district.

Karluk from Shorchi (Oltinsoy) district had heard of Karluks living in the Qarshi region, Sariosiyo district, and southern Tajikistan, but they had no direct contact with them.

In Surkhandaryo region, Karluks reside in the following villages of Sariosiyo district: Tog'chion, Bayqishloq, Zag'nivot, Pozilko'chdi, Ko'lmozor, Cholmiyon, Sarimozor, Buyropush, and Neloba. Altogether, these villages consisted of approximately 500 households,

hence the collective reference “five-hundred-household Karluks.” By the late 19th and early 20th centuries, most Karluks in the Sariosiyo region led a semi-sedentary lifestyle.

Karluk in Sariosiyo district maintained kinship ties with Karluks living in Regar district and Chalamzor in southern Tajikistan, exchanging brides and grooms. The Karluks of Chalamzor and its surroundings often brought their deceased to be buried in the cemetery of Tog‘chiyon village. This practice suggests that the Chalamzor Karluks had originally lived in or near Tog‘chiyon before later relocating.

A large portion of the Karluk population lived across many districts of southern Tajikistan. Ethnographer and regional specialist N. G. Malitskiy noted: “In the 1920s, Karluks lived in the districts along the Qaratog‘ River, in the upper reaches of the Yavansoy River, in Hisor province, and in the Baljuon and Kulob districts.”

Many Karluks of southern Tajikistan were concentrated in Regar and Shahrinav districts. Their appearance, language, and lifestyle were almost identical to those of the Karluks of Muborak, Shorchi (Oltinsoy), and Sariosiyo.

Thus, the Karluks living in the regions under discussion must have been closely related ethnogenetically. In other words, their earliest ancestors were part of a single people who, due to historical events over time, dispersed and settled in various locations.

Turkic Karluk villages were primarily located along the upper reaches of the Surkhandaryo and Kafirnigan rivers.

In conclusion, the Karluks left a significant mark on the history of statehood and cultural development in Central Asia. Although they had long exited the political arena and their ethnic composition changed, they preserved their Karluk identity in their ethnic traits for centuries, maintaining it to the present day.

Conclusions and Recommendations

In the 9th–10th centuries, one of the Karluk clans, the Halach, settled in the Amu Darya and Syr Darya regions (Transoxiana). In subsequent centuries, most of them assimilated into the local Turkic population, mixing and losing the Halach name. However, some groups retained their ethnic name up to the early 20th century (and even today). One of these groups resides in five villages along the lower reaches of the Kafirnigan River in southern Tajikistan, living alongside other ethnic groups, as documented by ethnographer B. Kh. Karmisheva. According to M. Solih in *Shayboniyoma*, Halach communities also lived along the lower reaches of the Vakhsh River. In later centuries, these groups likely assimilated into the local population.

Some Halach groups may also have lived in the upper reaches of the Qashqadaryo River. In the 1920s, Halach village was recorded in this upper region, but the village inhabitants did not identify themselves as Halach.

Based on the information presented above, it is evident that the Karluk and their related Chigil and Halach clans, after the decline of the Western Karakhanid state (in the early 13th century), lived in the Transoxiana region for several centuries and made a significant contribution to the ethnic, economic, and cultural development of the Uzbek people.

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