NOTES ON SOME TURKISH NAMES IN
ABU 'L-FADL BAYHAQI’S TÂRÎKH-I MAS‘ÜDÎ

by

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For Franz Rosenthal on his eighty-fifth birthday

I. Introduction

Islamic historians, at home in Arabic and Persian, have tended to ignore or to skate over Turkish linguistic and other elements which they have come across in the Arabic and Persian chronicles. Most of the early copyists of the manuscripts of such chronicles were ill-equipped to render Turkish linguistic materials in the first place. Certainly, many wrote under dynasties whose ruling strata were Turkish, since at various times, rulers who were ethnically Turkish in origin were to be found right across the Islamic world, from Algiers to Bengal, from Yemen to Siberia, but such Turkish-directed states in the Arab-Persian heartlands usually depended on an administrative and secretarial classes whose working languages would be Arabic or Persian. Not until the Ottoman sultanate developed its own Turkish cultural and literary traditions from the later fifteenth century onwards, and not until Chaghatay emerged as a flexible and expressive literary medium in the fifteenth century under the Chaghatayids and Timûrîds, did Osmanî and Chaghatay Turkish come into their own as literary media, and the secretarial class in the lands where these tongues flourished had to add to its ancient mastery of Arabic and Persian a sound knowledge of Turkish, i.e. Turkish was no longer essentially, as it had earlier been, an oral means of communication among the Turkish military and governing classes.

Before the early twentieth century, European scholars, faced with Turkish names and titles in the Arabic and Persian historical and literary texts before them, had only inadequate means for elucidating these. Outside the Ottoman Turkish realm, the two standbys for reference were M. Pavet de Courteille’s Dictionnaire turc-oriental, destiné principalement à faciliter la lecture des ouvrages de Bâber, d’Aboul-Gâzi et de Mir-Ali Chir-Nevâî (Paris
1870) and then V.V. Radlov/W. Radloff’s *Opit slovarya tyurkskikh narechii/Versuch eines Wörterbuches der Türk-Dialekte* (St. Petersburg 1888-1911). Both were remarkable works for their time, but became increasingly inadequate as fresh texts in the various Turkish languages were discovered and published. Also, Inner Asia became more open to travellers and scholars after the Imperial Russian annexation from 1865 onwards of the old Islamic regions of Khwarazm and Transoxania, whilst explorers and archaeologists were able to visit Eastern Turkestan, the Chinese province of Sinkiang, in the last decades of the Manchu Imperial dynasty and to recover Turkish linguistic treasures of the past from there and to record contemporary Turkish usages. Pavet de Courteille had not used the best native dictionary for Chaghatay Turkish, the Sanglakh of Muhammad Mahdi Khan (written ca. 1172-3/1759), though he knew about it and could have consulted manuscripts of it had he crossed the Channel to London and Oxford; he did, however, carefully use material from an earlier Chaghatay dictionary, the anonymous Abushqa (probably written in the first half of the sixteenth century; this was also used extensively by H. Vámbéry for his Čagataische Sprachstudien [Leipzig 1867] and by the Ottoman lexicographer Sheykh Süleyman Efendi for his *Lughat-i chaghatay ve turki-yi 'othmâni* [Istanbul 1298/1881]). For his great work, Radloff used the earlier authorities, though not exhaustively, and added nothing extra.¹ Nor did he make any significant use of the vocabulary of the Old Turkish inscriptions, the script of those on the Orkhon river being deciphered by Vilhelm Thomsen by 1896; this vocabulary is especially important for the study of Turkish onomastic and titulature in that an array of titles and functions used by officials below the Qaghan at the top are recorded (e.g. tégin, yabgu, tódhun, tarkhán, etc.), and these often formed part of subsequent Turkish onomastic and titulature.

The great leap forward in Turkish lexicography was, of course, the discovery and publication by Kilisli Rifat Bey of the Arabic text of Mahmud Kâshghari’s *Diewan lughât al-turk* (Istanbul 1333/1917), and a great florescence of scholarship on the Turkic languages and on Mongolian has taken place in the twentieth century. For our present purposes, the milestones in Turkish lexicography of the second half of the twentieth century have been G. Doerfer’s *Türkische und mongolische Elemente im Neupersischen* (1963-75) and Sir Gerard Clauson’s *An etymological dictionary of pre-thirteenth century Turkish* (1972).²

Specific studies on Turkish onomastic as it relates to the Islamic historical and literary sources are nevertheless still sparse. In 1932 the Hungarian

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¹ See Sanglax, Introd. 10-11, 30-2.
² See, in general, *EI*² art. “Kâmûs. 3. Turkish lexicography” (J. Eckmann).