“The World’s Richest yet Most Unfortunate Language”

Four Texts by Abdurauf Fitrat on Uzbek Language & Literature

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Cover image: https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abdurauf_Fitrat#/media/Datei:Fitrat_Buxoro_1908.jpg (Fitrat sitting in the middle, flanked by two colleagues, around 1908?).

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Abdurrauf Fitrat (‘Abd al-Ra‘ūf Fiṭrat), one the most important thinkers of the reformist jadidist movement of Central Asia, straddles two periods that could hardly be more different for a single person’s lifespan. With the introduction of a Latin-based alphabet in 1929, he already moved his pen literally in the opposite direction, now from left to right instead of from right to left, but the writing direction was certainly not alone in taking such a radical turn during his lifetime: born in the emirate of Bukhara, a worn-out ancient regime polity that waned as a tsarist protectorate, and executed in the Uzbek SSR during Stalin’s Bol’shoi Terror; writing first in Persian and then personally declaring the Uzbek language the “national” language of the Bukharan People’s Soviet Republic; driving out the Arabo-Persian aruz meters of the ghazals and mustazāds of old and thus recentering the Uzbek folk lapar, doston and ertak, topping all this with the modernist novel, the futurist poem, and the romantic opera.

Fitrat was born in 1884 or 1886 in Bukhara, present-day Uzbekistan. In his adolescent years, he became involved in the activities of local Muslim modernist reformists or so-called jadids, whose financial support allowed him to go study in the Istanbul of Mehmed V and the Young Turks, where he soaked up reformist ideas and quickly grew into the spokesman of the jadidist Central Asian diaspora. World War I forced Fitrat to return to Bukhara, where he continued to push his jadidist agenda, now dressed in an explicit Turkic garb. While his earlier publications had all been in Persian, he completely switched to “pure Turkic”, undoubtedly fueled by the pan-Turkist ideas fermenting in Istanbul and beyond. When the Bukharan emir proved himself to be a cool lover of jadidist reform, Fitrat fled to Samarqand and then to Tashkent in 1918, where he founded the Chaghatay Circle (Chig atoy gurungi), a group of like minds who sought to reform first and foremost language and literature by advocating for a Chaghatay linguistic and literary “nationalism”. Around the same time, Fitrat joined the Communist Party of Bukhara, a move that is said to have been not so much pro the Soviets as it was contra the European powers (first and foremost Great Britain), who were commonly identified as Islam’s greatest enemies. By 1920, with the declaration of the Bukharan People’s Soviet Republic, Fitrat could finally return to his hometown, where he served in various capacities, including those of foreign minister and minister of education. An important decision he made during these years was that the official language of Bukhara was changed from Persian to Uzbek. The Bukharan people’s republic, however, was short-lived: caught in the middle between the anti-communist Basmachis on the one hand and the Red
Army on the other, it crumbled and was merged into the new Uzbek SSR. As old school “nationalists” were now highly suspect, Fitrat was expelled to Moscow in 1923, and the Chaghatay Circle was shut down. In 1924, Fitrat returned to Tashkent. Unwilling to pay lip service to the new secular communist masters, he tried and steered clear of any political involvement, and instead focused on teaching and researching the history of literature. Alas, those were the days when even such seemingly “innocent” activities were fraught with danger. Before long, Fitrat’s “nationalist” approach of Chaghatay—pardon, “Old Uzbek”—literature earned him a reputation of being “subversive”. Accused of being a counter-revolutionary pan-Turkic jadid nationalist, Fitrat was arrested during Stalin’s Great Purge of 1937 and executed the next year.

Following Fitrat posthumous rehabilitation in 1956, he pretty much remained a toy in the hands of successive ideological spin-doctors. In the 1980s, he was found to be a veritable “advocate of socialism”, and whatever “ideological” errors his works may have displayed were glossed over as unfortunate yet harmless misunderstandings of the ideology. Following the breakup of the USSR and the foundation of the Republic of Uzbekistan in 1991, Fitrat was then found to be a champion of the Uzbek national language and his work was admired for its utter lack of socialist tendencies. While it remains to be seen what the future holds for Fitrat, at least now he is no longer left merely at the mercy of the powers that be. While his works were either banned or heavily censured before the years of the Perestroika, they are now but a few mouseclicks away, and we can finally assess Fitrat on our own terms.

As a jadid reformist, Fitrat’s agenda overlapped with that of earlier reformers (such as the Iranian Malkom Khan, the Afghan Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, the Azerbaijani Akhund-Zade¹, and the Young Ottoman Ziya Pasha²), and, more closely, with that of fellow-jadidists (such as the Tatar Ismail Gasprinsky, and the Baskhir Zaynulla Rasulev). While each of these put their own accents, they all shared the observation that the Islamic world was going through a decline, and that in order to turn the tide reforms were needed, be it on the religious, educational, literary, linguistic, orthographical, military, political or economical level. In tandem with his fellow-jadids, Fitrat counted first and foremost on an educational reform in order to free Islam from the burdens of imitation, superstition and institutionalization, and to rekindle it into the innovative, dynamic and unifying force that it once was. For Fitrat, the main key to all such an educational reform was the emancipation of Late Chaghatay/Uzbek as


² See my forthcoming working paper on Ziya Pasha’s Şi’r ve İnşa (Poetry and Belles-Lettres).
a national language that could serve the interests of all and not just the educated elite, and that was adapted to the needs of modern education and press.

This agenda he tried and pushed in the various innovative formats that were so aptly used by reformers: newspaper and journal articles, drama, fictitious travel memoirs, legislation, etc. Not unlike Akhund-Zade—claimed as “theirs” by the Iranians and the Azerbaijanis alike on account of his bilingual output—Fitrat is claimed both by the Tajiks and by the Uzbeks on account of his bilingual output. Indeed, it should be noted that Fitrat composed with equal ease in “Turki” (that is, Uzbek or late Chaghatay Turkic) and in “Tajik” (that is, Persian). For us, modern readers, Fitrat’s bilingual output may seem to sit uncomfortably with the pan-Turkist and Turkic nationalist ideals that he successively embraced. However, as Olivier Roy observed in his *La nouvelle Asie centrale ou la fabrication des nations*, “La linguistique, c’est de la politique”, and this observation is as apt for Fitrat’s Uzbekistan as it is for that of Mirziyoyev.

**A presentation of the selected texts:**

Four shorter titles of Fitrat are given in full translation. These are written between 1919 and 1921, so either in the run-up to or during the early days of the Bukharan People’s Soviet Republic, while the author held several high offices. The first three were published in *Ishtirokiyun (The Communists)*, the first state-owned newspaper to be published in Central Asia following the October Revolution, while the fourth title is a paper delivered by Fitrat at the the first Uzbek Language and Orthography Congress (*Til va imlo qurultoyi*) of 1921.

While the original texts must have been written in the “classical” Chaghatay script, based on Arabic script, the editors of the 2009 edition of his collected works\(^3\) had to transpose these into the Latin-based alphabet that was introduced in Uzbekistan in 1993. Inter alia, this Latin-based alphabet is not the same as the one that was in effect during Fitrat’s lifetime, for this was replaced by a Cyrillic-based alphabet between 1939 and 1993. Indeed, Uzbekistan has a complicated orthographical history, and new chapters are to be added in the near future…

Every now and then, Fitrat has added a synonym or explanation in round brackets. In order to distinguish his addenda from my own translational interventions, I have included the

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former between round brackets, while putting the latter between square brackets. I have, moreover, taken the liberty to overhaul the edition’s paragraph indenting, as this was blinding rather than elucidating. Apart from this erratic paragraph division, the edited texts are not free from the occasional repetition or obscure sentence or phrase. To what extent all this reflects Fitrat’s original text or rather some infortuitous editorial interventions remains unclear.

In general, linguistic, orthographical and literary reform was key to Fitrat. In Our Language (I), he points out that Chaghatay is “the world’s richest yet most unfortunate language”. Being the world’s richest language in terms of lexicon, morphology, etc., Chaghatay was perfectly capable of standing on its own feet. However, being the world’s most unfortunate language, Chaghatay failed to capitalize on this rich potential, and instead had opted to blindly following first Arabo-Persian models (see his Poetry and Versification), and then, more recently, Ottoman and Tatar Turkic models or some fictitious “common Turkic literary language” (see his On the Literariness of Our Language).

A more detailed summary of the four translated texts:

1) Poetry and Versification

In this first article, published in an October 1919 issue of the newspaper Ishtirokiyun, Fitrat begins by pointing out that the Turks have always composed poetry and have been civilized well before the Islamisation and Arabisation. Indeed, the cho‘bchaks, matals, ertaks, o’lans and lapars, still in vogue, are living testimony of the Turks’ rich pre-Islamic heritage. This heritage, however, has largely moved underground following the Islamisation, which came with a sweeping Arabo-Persianisation and a deplorable imitation (taqlidchilik or iyaruchilik) of Arabo-Persian literary models.

The most obvious victim of this imitation has been poetry. While Arabo-Persian literary sciences define poetry as “speech with a meter and a rhyme”, in Fitrat’s view, poetry has nothing to do with meters and rhyme. Instead, it is—or rather, ought to be—“a force that makes people’s blood boil, that tingles their sinews, that makes their brain shiver, and that lifts theirs senses, a spiritual force”. As for him, poetry is to “convey precisely such feelings as they appear in our hearts to the hearts of others by way of skilful words”, the poet is not one who knows his kāmil meter from his rajaβ and his rhyme letter from the radīf, but one “who conveys the feelings that he experiences in response to things and events around him to others by way of skilful words”. As such, Fitrat sees no qualms in accepting prose poetry (sochim she‘ri, without meter and without rhyme) side by side with the more “conventional”
poetry (tizim she’ri, with meter and rhyme). Fitrat does, however, not dismiss “meter” and “rhyme” out of hand, for these can “adorn speech” and can be useful by making the poem “more attractive to the ear”. But when it comes to poetry’s primary objective—to immediately convey “the feelings in our heart”—these poetic features are quite irrelevant.

While the Arabs have always copied “wisely”, by adapting any copy to Arabic and thus “protecting the independence of their language”, the Turks have always copied “blindly”, without any consideration whatsoever of “their own national spirit”. Indeed, and this is Fitrat’s second argument against Arabo-Persian poetics, the Arabo-Persian meters that the Turks have adopted eagerly yet blindly does not suit the linguistic make-up of the Turkic languages. In order to make these meters work in Turkic poetry, the Turkic poet must use plenty of Arabic and Persian loans and/or he must distort whatever Turkic words he might use. Surely, no such poetry could ever fulfil poetry’s main function! Rather than “moving” the Turkic reader or listener, such poetry is bound to disgust him. For the latter to read or hear foreign words or distorted Turkic words in a poem is like enjoying “a mouthful of well-cooked pilav” only to bite his teeth on a little pebble mixed in the pilav…. In short, for Fitrat, there is only one proper way forward for Turkic poetry: to rid itself the straitjacket of blind imitation of Arabo-Persian meter.

2) Our Language (I)

This article, said to be published in a July 1919 issue of Ishtirokiyun, opens with a ominous question: “Which is the richest yet most unfortunate language of the world?” The answer to this question is Turkic. Turkic is the richest language of the world, given its rich lexicon, its rich potential to coin new words, and the perfection of its grammatical rules. Yet, at the same time, Turkic is the most unfortunate language of the world. For this deplorable state—Fitrat is quick to point out—the Soviets are not to blame, as it comes with a much longer pedigree. The culprit? The Arabo-Persian language and its literary models, which have smothered the Turkic language. In the eyes of Fitrat, Persian was only spared a similar fate by virtue of the “nationalist” Firdawsi, whose Shah-Nama created an “Iranian sense”. The unfortunate Turkic language, however, “has not succeeded in bringing forth its own Firdawsi”.

Smothered, curtailed and suppressed as Turkic may have been, however, “it has not died out completely, but has stayed alive (…) because of its richness”. The one million dollar question now is: can Turkic save itself from this Arabo-Persian dominance? Can it shake off this heavy and age-old linguistic and literary yoke? Some are bound to answer this question
with “No, it can’t”, but their arguments Fitrat refutes one by one. “Yes, Arabic and Persian are rich, but Turkic is not less so”, “Yes, there are concepts for which there is no Turkic equivalent, but there is no harm in keeping loan words, as long as these are Turkified”, etc.

Fitrat concludes his argumentation with a comparison between the Turkic language and the woman you love. Half-hearted love won’t do, for no woman wants to hear you call her beautiful yet describe her eyes as uncomely! Just as one ought to love one’s partner whole-heartedly, one must love one’s people and one’s language whole-heartedly.

3) Our Language (II)

Following the publication of Our Language (I), the newspaper received a lot of reader letters, which prompted Fitrat to write Our Language (II), published in an August 1919 issue. Fitrat opens this follow-up article by recapitulating the arguments that he had made in Our Language (I): Turkic is being smothered by Arabo-Persian; Turkic is rich enough to stand on its own feet as a literary language; the lexicon must be Uzbekicized; loan words that cannot be avoided for now must be Uzbekicized.

Next, he summarizes the (rather vitriolic) critiques that his article had received: there are no Uzbek equivalents to replace loan words; a Turkification of the lexicon is but a waste of time; a Turkification of the language will take forever; how could we ever develop a literary language by tapping into the “language of the porters”, that is the common, everyday spoken language; etc.

Fitrat is honestly shocked by these critiques. For him, these betray “a lack of self-love, a lack of self-confidence, and an incapability to appreciate the richness” of the language. Why shouldn’t we be able to reform and to Turkify our language? Why should this be no good? In refutation of these critiques, Fitrat first point out that the critics often confuse “Arabic” and “literary”: why should a de-Arabisation of the lexicon automatically entail a de-literalisation? Why should any language need another language in order to become a literary language in its own right? Second, Fitrat points out that loan words are not taboo. In case an Uzbek equivalent is available, you replace the loan word; if not, you simply maintain the loan word for now and Turkify it. Third, Fitrat acknowledges the fact that any reform of the language will be a lengthy process, but for him, this is not an argument to not do anything at all, but instead an argument to move into action all the quicker. Fourth, Fitrat problematizes the objections against adopting words from the spoken language. Confronting his critiques head-on, he asks them, “Doesn’t the Arabic learned lexicon also have its roots in spoken Arabic?”
Did he understand correctly that they don’t want Turkic words, arguing that these come from “porters”, and instead want to adopt terms that are ultimately taken from “Arab camel drivers”?

4) **On the Literariness of Our Language**

The fourth text is a speech delivered by Fitrat at the 1921 Congress of Language and Spelling (*Til va imlo qurultoyi*). The text was first published in *Til va imlo qurultoyining chiqarg’an qarorlari* (Tashkent, 1922), pp. 35-40.

Fitrat opens his lecture with a praise of the “literature of the East (…) a garden with no match among the whole of world literature”. In this literary corpus, Arabic and Persian literatures are commonly said to hold the first rank, followed by Turkic and Urdu literatures. Zooming in on Turkic literature, the place of pride is held by Chaghatay literature, for literature in any other Turkic language first and foremost “boasts about the fact that it resembles it and that it is its pupil”.

Changing his focus from literature to language, Fitrat asks whether the fact that Chaghatay literature comes second only after Arabic and Persian literature also implies that the Chaghatay language itself comes second. His answer to this question is a loud and clear “No!” In fact, according to Fitrat, the Chaghatay language is even richer than Persian.

But then, how to explain that the Chaghatay literature comes only second? In answer to this enigma, Fitrat provides the following answers. First, many authors, “having an incomprehensible state of mind”, preferred to write in Arabic instead of Chaghatay. Second, while there may have been a “renaissance” of Chaghatay during Neva’is era, before long, the language returned to its former state of being smothered by *arabchiliq* and *forsiychilik* (Arabicateness and Persianateness), which sucked all life out of Chaghatay literature. Third, litterateurs produced first and foremost a “palace literature”, which was not “true to the people” and hardly “spoke” to them.

During his own lifetime, Fitrat observed a renewed interest in language and literature, displayed by new schools, teachers, newspapers, and intellectuals. Unfortunately, this change of affairs did not come with a rediscovery of the Uzbek language, but rather chose to tap into modernizing developments in Ottoman Turkic and Tatar Turkic, and embraced the idea of a “Turkic common literary language” (*adabiyy umumiyy turk tili*), which Fitrat dismisses as nothing but “Ottoman mixed with Arabic”.
In response to this, in 1918 the Chaghatay Circle (Chig’atoy gurungi) was founded, with the explicit aim of reviving the Uzbek language, to be used instead of Ottoman, Tatar, or some “common Turkic language”. Fitrat concludes his lecture by summing up the principle objectives of the Chaghatay Circle, and by putting these to the vote at the Congress of Language and Spelling.

**Suggested reading:**


**Keywords:**

Late 19th-early 20th century – Uzbekistan – literary and linguistic reform - Jadidism – Fitrat – true nature of poetry – language purification – national language

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4 An Uzbek posted, dated 1931
The words “poetry” [she’r] and “versification” [shoirliq] are not new to us. Indeed, ever since the Turkic people made their appearance in history, they have known poetry and versification. While everybody seems to believe that the prosperity of the Turkic people and their civilization had begun only with the arrival of the Arabs, [the fact of the matter is that ] when the Turks were building a civilization, founding a government and living at peace around the Altay mountains, they were still unaware of the conditions of the Arabs in Arabia; indeed, they might even not have known of the Arabs’ existence. To claim that a civilized people did not have poetry is as laugable as to believe that a dead person is talking. “Already before the Islamization, the Turks have seen an era of glorious civilization.”

If we accept these very words to be true, then, mutatis mutandis, we must accept the fact that “the Turks already had poems, poets, and literature before the Islamization.” We all have heard the tales [cho ’behak], proverbs [matal], stories [ertak], songs [o ’lan] and duets [lapar] that, some way or the other, have lived on to this very day among Uzbeks, Tatars, Kirghiz, and Turkmens alike, without ever being forgotten and are [as much alive as the very] name “Turk” itself. We all know that young Turkmens, Kirghiz boys, and common girls who can’t even read or write are masters of the word. Each of the[ir words] is nothing but a precious gem that has been passed down to us from the school of old Turkic literature. From the tales that are orally passed on among the people, it is perfectly clear that many things [were taught] at the school of old Turkic literature, not just love and lover, [but also] things such as philosophy, wisdom and good morals.

Alas, with the arrival of the Arabs, these grand and precious traces of old Turkic literature have withered and vanished. Whatever country the perceptive, zealous, tough, smart and well-informed Arabs invaded, they made short work of all of its old religion, language, writings and vestiges. Once our own alphabet and writing had been destroyed with the Arab raids, it was only natural for us Turks to also part from our own literature and poetry. By parting from these, we have lost so many crucial things. Whatever types of poetry and versification and whatever perspectives our old literature may have had, these things we no
longer know. They are lost, having slipped from our hands for good, and, [as a consequence], we lack clear and sufficient knowledge of the old Turkic literature. It is with this process of Islamisation that the second phase of our literature has started. The foundations and basics necessary for this second phase of our literature we were given by the Arabs, via Iran. Following the arrival of Islam, we have been utterly unable to keep the roads of literature clear from imitation [iyaruchiliq]. Indeed, when it comes to literature, our greatest talent has been to imitate [iyarmak] the Iranians, followed by the Arabs. Let us now identify those places in the field of literature where this imitation of ours is discernable.

The later Arab litterateurs have defined poetry as “kalamu muvazzanin muqaffanin” [in Arabic], that is, as “speech with a meter and a rhyme”. Our poets have also accepted poetry to be structured along these lines. The more our poets were sold on the idea that it was OK to use all sorts of meaningless words, as long as these had a meter and a rhyme, the more they strayed from the true nature of poetry. For indeed, the gap between combining a couple of words in soe learned meter and with some learned rhyme on the one hand and [true] poetry on the other hand is as large as the gap that separates heaven from earth. In [true] poetry, there is a force that makes people’s blood boil, that tingles their sinews, that makes their brain shiver, and that lifts their senses, [in short, in poetry there is] a spiritual force. Speech that lacks such a force—even if duly measured and rhyming—simply cannot be poetry.

As I stated above, poetry has been defined as “speech with a meter and a rhyme”. While the later Arab litterateurs maintain that this definition is correct, building on logic, these later, artificial [yasama] poets, building on logic, have defined poetry incorrectly. The earlier, pre-Islamic Arab poets, who were true and natural poets, did not understand poetry in these terms. Even school children that are learning Islamic history know that the Arabs used to say of Qur’anic verses “Huva qovlu shoir” [in Arabic, “Those are the words of a poet, that is poetry”], thus going against the words of the Qur’an that stated “Va ma huva biqovli shoir” [in Arabic, “These are not the words of a poet, this is not poetry”]. If the pre-Islamic poets, who were natural poets, really had understood poetry to be “speech with a meter and a rhyme”, then surely they would not have called Qur’anic verses poetry, as they lack both meter and rhyme. (p.7) As long as we continue to understand poetry as “speech with a meter and a rhyme”, we won’t come any closer to true poetry. [Instead], all we do is arrange some words in a particular meter as we see fit—words such as sharob, jom, xumor, hol, xat, qosh, ko’z, gulu, or bulbul [“wine”, “cup”, “thirst”, “state”, “down” “mould”, “eyebrow”, “eye”, “rose” or “nightingale”—and think of some words that rhyme—words such as ol, hol, and xol [“that”, “state” and “birth mark”]—and off we are, boasting to have composed some
poetry! The crux of the matter is this: poetry on the one hand and meter and rhyme on the other hand are two different things. But now, if that is the case, then what exactly is poetry?

As you know, each of us has a soul and five senses, which make our consciousness aware of the things and events around us. By virtue of these five senses, our soul is informed of the things and events of the world around us, and from each of these it derives feelings and sensations, such as grief, joy, fear, anger, or excitement. Does our heart remain unmoved when we see a white-bearded beggar on a snowy and cold winter day, dressed in ragged clothes and with a face turned blue from the cold, all of a sudden falling down like an old man? [No!] It is exactly like when one [stumbles upon] a body, left behind on the road all alone, covered with wounds inflicted by someone and drenched in his own blood. When holding this dead person’s head or when seeing this body drenched in blood, everybody feels something depending on his or her own personality. One will cry over the situation, struck with great fear; another one will dig a grave and bury the corpse; and still another one’s blood will start boiling as soon as he sees the wounded corpse, and he will set out to find and kill the unscrupulous predator that did this.

Poetry is to convey such feelings as they appear in our hearts to the hearts of others by way of skilful (effective), and the poet is one who conveys the feelings that he experiences in response to things and events around him to others by way of skilful (effective) words. The more perceptive a person’s heart is, the better poet this person can be. What poetry needs is the presence of feeling inside one’s heart and the power to convey this feeling to others by way of skilful words. As for meter and rhyme, these have nothing to do with the truth of poetry. Indeed, some people even flatly deny that poetry should require skilful words, [instead] arguing that poetry is for the waves of feelings inside one’s heart to pour out by way of words, [be these skilful or not]. [In my view], this perspective is a bit excessive, and looses all significance, once one accepts poetry to be an art. If we would stray from the concept of “true poetry and art” and would start pouring out every word that comes to our mind, suspecting these [to reflect] “the waves of feelings inside our heart”—God forbid!—then our readers won’t know where to flee! (p. 8)

Poetry is of two types: measured poems [tizim she’rlar] and prose poems [sochim she’rlar]. Just as one can compose poetry using measured speech, one can compose poetry using prose speech. While prose poems do not involve a meter and a rhyme, it is still necessary for their words to be skilful (artistic).

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7 Mutaxassis, undoubtedly to be emended as mutahassis.
Above, we have first discussed the quality of poetry and then its two types. Of these two types, we have already briefly discussed the type of prose poetry, and in this second part we will now discuss measured poetry.

A clear and obvious quality of measured poetry is (the presence of) meter and rhyme. In the first part, we have said that meter and rhyme have nothing to do with the recitation of poetry, while here we are stating that measured poetry requires meter and rhyme. [This calls for some clarification.] Meter and rhyme have no effect on poetry: just as there are many poems that lack meter and rhyme, there is much speech that has a meter and a rhyme yet cannot be considered poetry. Poetry is to display the feelings of one’s heart. As for meter and rhyme, these are [nothing but] adornments [ziynat] of speech. If we want to communicate the feelings in our heart immediately, then we write a poem without a meter and without a rhyme (prose poetry). If, on the other hand, we want to adorn [bezamak] our poem, then we write a poem with meter and rhyme (measured poetry). Meter and rhyme cannot describe the feelings in our heart, [all they do] us adorning our words that describe our feelings. When the words that we utter in order to convey our feelings to others have a meter and a rhyme, then they commonly more musical, and as such, more attractive to the ear.

A person who spots his beloved one in someone else’s street on a pitch-black night might compose a poem that imitates the sad music that comes forth from the leaves and branches rustling with the north wind. It goes without saying that this poem will be more moving, in case its words are put in one meter and in each word group in this particular meter words are used that have the same effect on the ear as loud exclamation. Voila, this is what the adornment of meter and rhyme in poetry is all about.

Now let us consider the meter that Turkic poets have accepted following the Islamisation. Basically, these are the meters of the Arabs. After the Iranians had taken over these from the Arabs, they changed and adapted [the Arabs’ meters] in accordance with the playful and poetic spirit of their own poems (p. 9) The meters that we know today are the ones that have been changed by the Iranians, and so they are slightly different from the Arab meters. For no nation across the world has the role of imitation been as large as it has been for us, Turks. Whatever thing of whatever nation we intend to imitate, we imitate without considering our own national spirit. As for the Arabs, [on the other hand], whatever word they copy from some people they adapt in order to fit their language. No Arab will ever say “Petrograd” or “Petrasburg”, even if you’d kill him! He will say “Bitrojrad” or “Bitrasburj”.

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No Arab will ever say “Franskik. He will only say “Afranj”. In this way, the Arabs protect the independence of their language. And what about us? While we boast about how much we follow the Arabs, when it comes to the excellent way in which they handle this particular aspect, we are taking the exact opposite course! [One would even say that] we consider it a religious duty <not> to adapt the many Arabic rhyming words in accordance with our language, and not even their orthography in accordance with the spelling of our own words! While the Iranians [contented themselves with] adapting the Arabic words in accordance with their own language, we, on the other hand, have taken from the Iranians not [only] the spirit of the poetic meter, but the poetry itself, <even [if this meant] replacing our own meters with theirs> (Long live imitation!). However, [truth be told,], it is impossible to compose Turkic poetry with Persian meters and to teach it to the Turkic people.

Persian words are among the most playful and most delicate ones of the world, playing inside the prosodic circles like girls on a theatre stage, while Turkic words are heavy, grave, and robust. So let it stop playing inside the prosodic circle of mafoʿiylyn mafoʿiylyn, for it simply can’t get it, it doesn’t fit! Those who compose Turkic poetry using the Iranian meters are obliged to do two things. First, they are obliged to include a lot of Arabic words in their poem, since it is impossible fill the mafoʿiylyn meter with Turkic words alone. Second, given the metrical demands, they are obliged to distort the form of the Turkic words. All Turkic poets who compose poetry using the Iranian meters have contracted these two illnesses, not one of them being spared. [Fortunately, unlike today, in the older days] our Turkic poets who inserted Arabic and Persian words in Turkic poetry were in any case educated. As such, they grasped the meaning of the word and could insert it in its proper place. Our contemporary poets, on the other hand, go about without any method and principle. As a matter of fact, one of our “bright” poets has written a poem for the Yozuvchilar Uyushmasi [Writers’ Association], the first hemistich of which reads as follows:

\[Kuch bilan bosg’an yo’ling-u millata “rohi alhamdu”\]

The road that you tread with strength and to the nation “the path of praise be” (sic)

We can’t just pass over the phrase rohi alhamdu in this poem. Roh is a Persian word, hamd is an Arabic word, and the article al- is Arabic. This is a combination that goes against the basics of the [possesive] izafet construction. Even the group of reformist poets, who say that

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8 “Not” is missing in the edition, but appears to be a necessary emendation (Tilimizด’a ko’b gofiyali arab so ‘zini emas, uning imlosini hmam o’z so ‘zimining imlosiga qarab o’zgartmakni “farz” deb bilamiz).

9 A tentative rendering of tilimizdan chiqarg an yerinda she’r vazni-da bolsa.
“[All that] basically matters in the East is that one understands one another”, can only laugh when they see something like this\textsuperscript{10}.

One poet who exerted himself not to distort the form of Turkic words was Neva’i, and indeed, in his poetry, one rarely encounters words of distorted form. However, all while his excellency Neva’i understood the gravity of this, he was unable to completely avoid this. By way of example, I present the following poem of Neva’i:

\begin{verbatim}
Yuzingni ko ‘rib, meni ramida
Ishq o ‘tiga bo ‘lg’ali giriftor.
\end{verbatim}

As I see your face, I am afraid
of being seized by your love’s fire.

The meter in this verse can only be correct if one distorts the word \textit{yuz}, making it \textit{yuzz}.

Let us now look for poems and verses [that do] the two things [that I am about to introduce]. We have stated above that (the poet) apparently wants convey the delicate feelings in his heart to others by way of words, or, stated otherwise, that the poet is one who influences others by way of words. In light of this, the poet must do two things: he must try and make sure that his words are well received, and he must try and make sure that he keeps his poem free from distorted words.

We know that each people love their own national music and language more than any other, and are first and foremost moved by these. [For example, consider] a Turk who has studied for many years at some music academy in Europe, who has listened to European music and who has been hearing it for many years. When he returns to Turkestan one day and he hears old Turkic music, he will get into a different state. His musical taste, which he was unable to find [satisfied] in European music, [immediately re]surfaces and he now sees [satisfied] in the old Turkic music. For language, this is the case even more clearly and more strongly, given the fact that the language of a people goes a long way back. The famous Hungarian general pasha Fundurg’ruhich\textsuperscript{11}, who had entered Ottoman military service, once said the following regarding the Ottoman troops: “The Ottoman troops are very warlike, that everybody knows. When they go to war, they do so under the shadow of religion, the religious feeling being most strong with them. The feeling of “meter” [\textit{vazn}], on the other hand, does not give [the same effect], because it has no Turkic equivalent. The word “meter”

\textsuperscript{10} Tentative, given the blurred syntax (\textit{O’z tillarini “aslan anglash sharqiyada matlabdir” degan bir qism isloh shoirlari ham bo ’yla bir iska kulibgina qaraydir}).

\textsuperscript{11} Currently unidentified.
is an Arabic word and thus foreign to the Turks. No foreign word, whatever it may be, can ever have the effect that one may desire.” (p. 11)

[Let me ask you this.] When a person who is used to take a mouthful of well-cooked pilav and chew it at ease bites his teeth on a pebble [inside the pilav], then would he still enjoy it? [No! Exactly the same happens with] the pleasure of a Turk, when he runs into a foreign word. While the unfortunate Turk’s pleasure is already spoiled by running into a foreign word in a supposedly Turkic poem that he is reading, as soon as he then runs into some Turkic words in this poem that have been distorted, his aversion will only grown, and he he’ll never ever read it again.

This is why the Turkic poets have not been able to make their own poems comprehensible for the majority of Turks. As they [tried and] compose in Turkic and as saw how stodgy their poems were, they simply turned to composing in Persian. There are many Turkic poets who have started composing poetry in Persian. As for why they did so, many reasons are given. But for me, the first of these reasons are those abominations that come with [the application of] the Iranian meter [in Turkic poetry]. <Turkic poetry has its own excuse>\textsuperscript{13}. <As soon as composing in Iranian meters and these mental proof are allowed to rot, then the exalted (quality) of Turkic meter will be there to stay.>\textsuperscript{14} This I will discuss in another article.

\textsuperscript{12} A free rendering of sovaq, “cold”.
\textsuperscript{13} Turkcha sheʾrning oʿziga koʿra bir uzri bor, perhaps meaning that there is still hope for Turkic poetry?
\textsuperscript{14} A highly tentative rendering of Eron vazonida soʿyamak fikriy shul tonuqlar ila churutilgach (sic, for chiritilgach?), turkc vazoninin oliy (sufati) qolib ketadir.
Which is the richest yet most unfortunate language of the world? Do you know? Turkic! I am not applying poetic licence here; the truth of the matter is the following. Turkic is both the richest and the most unfortunate language of the world. As for those who say that our [Turkic] languages ended up in this unfortunate state under Soviet rule only and that they used to be fortunate before that time, these are talking [nonsense, and are clearly] uninformed of the state of our language.

The richness of a language lies in the richness of its lexicon (kasrati kalimat), in its potential of deriving new words (vus’ati isthiqoq), and in the completeness of its rules (mukammalliyati qavoyid). First, does Turkic have a rich lexicon, or, as our Arabists would say, a kasrati kalimat? (This question) has already been answered in Neva’i’s Muhokomat ul-lug’atayn An Assessment of the Two Languages: “These words have come into being not today, but several centuries ago.” Even though Neva’i’s book did not explicitly discuss the richness of Turkic, the author knew the rich lexicon of Turkic very well. For the various types of weeping, he recorded the following Turkic words: ingramak, singramak, ingichkirmak, yig’lamoq, yig’lamsinmoq, o’kurmak, siqtamoq, … Voila, different names for seven types of a single act, each with subtle differences in meaning. In Turkic, this is far from rare. For Arabic nufuz, murur and ubur, we have o’imoq, kechmoq, oshmoq and ortmoq. For Arabic kand, azm and amal, we have Turkic tilak, istov, and o’rxan. For Arabic zarf, there is Turkic idish and bor. Instead of Arabic naf’ and manfaat, we find Turkic tosix and unum. Instead of Arabic qalb, there is Turkic yurak and ko’ngul. For Arabic sadr, there is Turkic ko’ks and ko’krak. As I am planning to write a Turkic dictionary, I won’t discuss the rich Turkic lexicon in any more detail.

Second, let us move over to the rich potential of deriving new words (that is, vus’ati ishtiqoq). As for the act of “knowing”, the following words are be derived from Turkic bil-: bil, bilar, bilajak, bilg’usi, bilg’ay, bilsa, bilsa-chi, bilay, bildi, bilibdir, bilgan, bila (p. 125) bashladi, bilayozdi, bila oldi, bila turdi, bila berdi, bilib, bilg’ach, bilg’ali, bilmak, bilish, biluv, bilmov, bilim, bilgi, bilgili, bilguchi, bilmakchi, bilgur, bilmagay, bilmagan, bilmay, bilimsiz, bilmas, and bilmaslik. Voila, of verbs alone, I give you thirteen forms16, including six compound types. Each of the compound forms has an imperative, a positive [vs. negative],

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15 Fitrat, Tanlangan Asarlar, pp. 124-128.
16 While the counting is in my view somewhat confusing, the outcome is clear: in Turkic, a great many words can be derived from a single stem.
adverbial, future, conditional, and intensive form. Thirteen times six makes seventy-eight. If one adds to this aspect, tense, and causality, one ends up with eighty-one forms. By adding the eighteen nominal and adjectival forms, one ends up with ninety-nine forms, [all derived from] the same basis. That is to say, it appears that in Turkic, ninety-eight words can be derived from a single root.

Third, let us consider the completeness of its grammatical rules (*mukammaliyati qavoyid*). Whatever book on Arabic, Persian, Russian, Hungarian or French morphology you may look into, you’ll always find the principles for creating new word to be immediately following by a couple of exceptions (mustasno). Something like this you won’t find in Turkic words, irregular cases (*istisnolilik hollari*) being utterly absent from Turkic morphology. Are the richness of our language and its completeness in these terms known?

Let us now move over to what makes Turkic unfortunate. In spite of their richness and their completeness, the Turkic languages are not spared from being unfortunate and are indeed the most unfortunate of the world. Its unfortunate state is connected to the Arab raids. In the lands that they trampled under foot, the Arabs not only introduced and established their rule, but also their religion and customs. Since the basis of Islam and its main source is the Qur’an and the Hadith, new[ly converted] Muslims considered it their duty to learn Arabic, [and so they did]: they studied it, learnt it, loved it. Following the Islamisation, Persian and Turkic were being smothered by Arabic. The condition of the Persian language deteriorated dramatically. Discarded their own languages, the Persians started using Arabic not only for their books, but even in their mutual correspondence. This, however, didn’t last too long, since the Persian tongue liberated itself from being smothered by Arabic, achieving this with a single shake. The one shake that this took was the advent of the Iranian poet Firdawsi. Firdawsi was a nationalist, who was most angry and infuriated with the Arabisation [*arabchiliq*]. After toiling away for thirty years, he finished his famous *Shah-Nama*. With this, Firdaws had two objectives in mind: to make the people of Iran turn away from the Arabs and to give them an “Iranian sense”, and to push the Arabic language out of Iran. (p. 126) It is for this reason that the poet, who praises the Iranians everywhere in the *Shah-Nama*, exclaims the following in relation to Arabness:

> From a diet of camel’s milk and lizards
> the Arabs have come so far as to aspire
> the throne of the great kings!
> Fie, you wheel of fortune! Fie!
This is what the business of the Arabs has come to, the Arabs, whose sole business was to drink camel’s milk and to eat snake flesh: they are keen seizing the throne of the Iranian empire! Fie, you fate that has brought this about, fie!

This is the reason why Arabic words are rare, almost absent even, from the Shah-Nama, [and this in spite of the fact that] it was composed at a time when Arabic held sway in Iran. Firdawsi informs [us] that he had these two objectives and that he had set to work to realize them, writing:

For thirty years, I have toiled away.
I have brought Persia to life with this Persian [book of mine].

Translated into Turkic:

I have toiled away for thirty years.
I have allowed Iran to rise through this Persian book that I have authored.

By doing so, Firdawsi grabbed Persian by its collar and saved it. Our unfortunate Turkic, on the other hand, has not succeeded in bringing forth a Firdawsi.

Turkic, the richest language of the world, is not only in the clutches of Arabic, but is also being crushed by blows of the Persian language. Let us consider this closely. Avicenna, the greatest physician of the world, was a Turk. Al-Farabi, nicknamed the second Aristotle, was a Turk. Al-Jawhari, [the lexicographer] who has immortalized Arabic, was a Turk. Jalal al-Din Rumi, the leading figure in the philosophy of “oneness of being” (vahdati vujud), was a Turk. Nizami, one of the prophets of Persian literature, was a Turk. These men I just referred to were great men not just of the Turkic people, but of the whole world. Still, neither of the two Turkic peoples\(^\text{17}\) was ever able to derive profit from their works, indeed, was ever been able to get to get to know these very well. If these men had written their works in Turkic, then the condition of the Turkic people would probably be quite different from what it is today. Can there be any misfortune greater than the misfortune of having Mahmud of Ghazna, born a Turk and raised a Turk, summon Firdawsi to write the Shah-Nama, which portrays the Turks being crushed, and even giving him a gold coin for each verse? It is the same kind of misfortune that has the Ottoman rulers, born Turks, record their feelings in Persian poetry. (p. 127) It is the same kind of misfortune that has the Persian language hold the

\(^{17}\) That is, both the Turks in the West and the Turks in the East?
Turks of the Caucasus under its thumb, and has them use [the Persian word for “80”,] hashtād, instead of [the Turkic word] sakson out of respect for the Persian language!

The Turkic language is unfortunate, having been been crushed for over a thousand years. Yet, it has not gone extinct, it has not died. No, by virtue of its richness, the Turkic language has stayed alive, it lives! It lives, but can it save itself from the Arabic and Persian language, yes or no? Having reached this point, I have put my finger on the wound. There are two different answers to my question, to wit: “yes” and “no”. Let us first consider the “no”. Those who answer “no” are saying that Turkic cannot free itself from Arabic and Persian. Why? Their arguments are the following:

- “Because Arabic and Persian are rich.”
  I have already refuted this [argument by pointing out that] Turkic is rich as well.

- “Because the learned and great writers of today’s Turkic world have taken a different path, [that is, they make settled with the ample use of Arabic and Persian].”
  My answer to this is as follows. Al-Farabi and Abu ‘Ali, both great physicians of the Turkic world, wrote their works in Arabic. Why did you depart from the way they did it? If you were could depart from how Abu ‘Ali did it, then [there is no reason] why we should not be able to depart from how you work.

- “Because our language lacks words for many things.”
  My answer to this is the following. What are you trying to say? If you are trying to sayat present no Turkic equivalent is found for [any of] the Arabic and Persian words in your language, then you are wrong, then you clearly don’t know Turkic, and you ought to learn it! If you trying to say that no Turkic equivalent is found for all of the Arabic and Persian words in our present lexicon, then you are right. But [rest assured,] not even we want to get rid of all of them. We will keep them, but we will make them our own and turkify [turkchalashtir-] them. If there is no Turkic equivalent for qoida and we are unable to find a Turkic equivalent for sarf, we simply retain both terms. Yet, rather than saying gavoyidi sarfiya, as you do, [following Arabo-Persian grammatical rules], we say sarf qoidalari, [following Turkic rules instead].

- “Because there is no Turkic equivalent for scientific terms.”
  Says who? The Turkic equivalent for shams is quyosh [“sun”], for kavokib yulduzlar [“stars”], for manor olov or o’t [“lighthouse”]. Sabohi munavvar? Yorug’ bulut [“bright cloud”]! Handasa? O’lchov xat or chiziq [“geometry”]! Zoviya? Burchak or puchmoq [“angle”]! Kavokibi sobita? Turg’uchi yulduz [“fixed stars”]! Kavokibi zu zanb? Quyruqli Yulduz
[“comet”]! Agreed, for some expressions we have thus far not been able to find a Turkic equivalent, so those we keep.

• “Because our Turkic language is dull and coarse, and not a literary language?”

Really? This is untolerable! We’ll show dullness and coarseness! Here’s what I say! You do not love your people, and because of that, the Turkic people and the Turkic tongue⁴ have no business with you! Those who hear you say this won’t pay the slightest attention and just mind their own business. [Sure, you will object.] saying, “I love my people more than I love myself!” Words like this are nothing but rubbish! Imagine yourself: you love a woman, you try and win her heat, you find your way into her house and make your way to her, you look at her face and then you say “I love you very much and you are very pretty, but these eyes of yours are very coarse, so get rid of them, and your nose smells bad, so cut it off and chunk it!”

This woman that you love, won’t she then beat you with a stick and come after you? Of course she will! All those who say that they love the Turkic people, but that their language is dull, that their music is tasteless and that their history is obscure, they should be hit with a stick and chased off! (Unable to scare away its cool lovers with a sticke), however, the Turkic language is unfortunate…
3) *Our Language (II)*

I have written an article on the richness of our language in one of the issues of *Ishtirokiyun (The Communists)*—I don’t remember which issue exactly—in which I first presented my evidence regarding the richness, completeness and width of our language, and I then said that we should remove the Arabic and Persian words and terms that have entered our language. There are obviously people who oppose this idea. Before I discuss their opposition and their objections against me—objections permeated with anger—let me first clarify and repeat my ideas:

- I have learnt that the Turkic tongue has been taken captive and is in the state of a prisoner <but that it hasn’t died,> because of its richness, the width, and completeness.
- What I want is for the Turkic people to have an independent (*mustaqil*) language and a science written in that language, and I believe that this would be easy, since I know that Turkic is a rich, deep and complete language.
- In order for our language to become independent (*mustaqil*), let us try and find Uzbek equivalents for those foreign words that have entered our spoken and our written language to the best of our abilities. In order to see [the development of a] “science” that is written in our language, I consider it any Turkic author’s duty to try and find Turkic equivalents for scientific terms or so-called *ilmiy istilohlar* to the best of his abilities. (p. 129)
- In case there are words and terms for which no Turkic equivalent can be found, I am not saying that we should get rid of these without anything to replace them with. Let these words and terms remain in effect, but just let them abide by the rules of Turkic. To put it otherwise, let a French [word] that lives in the Turkic language be subject to the laws of Turkic, just as a Turk who is living in France [is subject to the laws of the French], and [let it thus not be like a Frenchman who is living in the Ottoman Empire] under the myster[ious protection] of capitulations [that release him from the obligation to abide by local laws].

Voila, these are my thoughts… Let it be clear that I have taken this path not simply because I felt like it, but rather because I was prompted by an idea that [seems to have] died

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19 An illegible word according to the editors. The emendation is based on *Our Language (I)*.
20 *O`z istaklari bo`yicha*, literally “at my own wishes”.

out. The Turkic people need an independent (mustaqil) language, and in order for the Turkic language to become independent (mustaqil), it must free itself from foreign words. Now that I have clearly put forward my ideas, let me now consider the thoughts that have been formulated against it. Before everything else, let me first say this: <we do not want [to sully] language—one of the greatest and most esteemed things that there are—with any actions of ours that are filled with anger>.

Now let us listen to what they have to say:

- They say: “As for our scholars who are against us know, all they know something about is that what their own profession. We cannot possibly imagine how this issue and their thoughts could be of any use to us. <The things they’re saying? Things said on [scholarly] meetings, not the street’s concerns over language!>.
- They say: “We try and write Turkic in a literary way, and because of that, we are in favour of not removing literary words from Turkic.”
- They say: “There are no Turkic equivalents for the Arabic and Persian words that have entered the Turkic language.”
- They say: “There are no Turkic equivalents for scientific terms.”
- They say: “Any effort to Turkify scientific terms would be a waste of our time.”
- They say: “We do not want to to study science in the Chaghatay language, [before science ever becomes available in Chaghatay] we’ll have to wait for two centuries.”
- They say: “Arabic is a scientific and a literary language. It would be wrong to replace Arabic scientific terms, for we cannot simply replace these scientific terms in our scientific writings (ilmiy kitoblar) with the language of [common] porters.” (These last words were uttered by one of the teachers at the school where I taught).

Voila, these are the kind of things said to me. Before answering these one by one, let me first say this: what is clearly observable in all these statements is nothing but a lack of self-love, a lack of self-confidence, and an incapability to appreciate our own richness. Underlying all of these words are the following [thoughts]: “We cannot do it”, “What we have

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21 Muntafy bir tushunchaning qisuvi bilan?
22 Tentative, given the garbled syntax (G’azab-la to’ldur’usi ishlarimizni eng ulug va eng soyillig’lardan biri ul til istamaymiz).
23 A tentative rendering of Unlardan bizga erishkan so’zlar ko’chada til uchun o’ylanmag’an o’tirishlarda aytilib o’tkan so’zlardir.
24 The edition reads odmi, “modest”, which should probably be emended as adabi, “literary”.

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is no good.” In all honesty, even I find it hard to believe that a nation that despises itself so much and a people who has so little faith in itself could ever remain on their feet, without ever buckling or tumbling, on the arena that is the struggle for life. “We cannot do it”…. Why?! “It’s no good”… Why?! What nation that sets out on the path of advancement would enter this enterprise with such lack of faith? Would a nation that enters this enterprise with such lack of faith ever raise itself? These are the questions that we want to answer… Let us now kindly answer the statements of those who oppose us:

• They say: “We are in favour of not removing literary words from Turkic.”

But not even we want this! We are not saying that you should remove literary words from Turkic. It is not the literary words that we seek to remove from our language, but the Arabic words. From all this, it is understood that those who oppose me are confusing “literary” and “Arabic” with one another. The way that they put it, the foreign words that have entered our Turkic language are “literary words”, and to remove them would mean to deprive our language from its “literariness”. Now, what else do such words indicate but a lack of self-love, a contempt of ourselves, a lack of self-confidence? Apart from us, is there any other nation like that? What nation goes begging with foreign languages in order to make its own language “literary”? In a narrow sense, the word “literary” means something that is written and intelligible and that not breaks the rules of the language. These are not qualities shared by Arabic and Persian.

• They say: “There are no Turkic equivalents for the foreign words and scientific terms in our language.”

This has already been amply answered. If we try and look for Turkic equivalents for foreign words and scientific terms, then we will find them, and as for those for which we cannot find an equivalent, these we simply adapt in spelling to the rules of the Turkic language. Simply embrace the idea of reducing the foreign words and scientific terms in our language, and their Turkic equivalents will turn up. Or no, in case you would’nt even try and walk this path, your path being another one, I’ll do it myself! Here is what I am thinking: <the Turkic people have many scientific and social problems and many elevated positions [to fill?]>. Not to acknowledge these problems while [still] filling these elevated positions is our prison. The effort of someone who has taken this path, however small, will not be in vain.25

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25 A highly tentative rendering of Turk ulusning ilmiy, ijtimoiy ko’b dardlari, ko’b yuksak o’rnlari bordir. Shul dardlarni bilmanak, shul yuksak turumlarni to’ldirmoq qamug larimizg’a teyish. Bir yo’lg’a tushkan kimsaning torroqdaj amri bo’shq’a o’ikan bo’lmaydir.
• They say: “If we want to study science in Chaghatay, then we’ll have to wait for two hundred years.”

Who ever said that he would write down all terms in Chaghatay, wrap it up, and hand it over to you just like that, in seven days? We know that it won’t be easy and that it will take much time. That is precisely why we should now quickly take action.

• “We cannot study science using the language of the porters.”

Really? Wouldn’t it be good to take a look at the scientific and literary history by comparing it directly with this menial work? The Arabs didn’t receive the sciences of philosophy and engineering falling out of the sky, but instead received these from the Greeks. At the time when these sciences were still absent among the Arabs, so were the scientific terms, but the words that would However, the words themselves that would come to be used as scientific terms were already there. Let me put it [like that]: at a time when there was not yet a science of “life”, even if there was no technical term for calculus and for [the letter] H, the word hisob [“calculus”] and [the letter] H already existed. The Arab poet, the rich man, the porter and the camel driver, they all had a word for “cloud”, sahob, and they all called a “signifier” madi. At a time when there was not yet a science of geometry among the Arabs, even if there was no technical term for zoviton and doxilon26, all of the learned Arabs, from the mullah to the saint, already called an “angle” zoviyat and the “inside” doxila. Just as the “sun” is called shams in the<br>Christian school of life>,27 so it is called among the camel drivers. When the Arabs started translating the Greek sciences into their own language, they simply took words from these camel drivers and turned them into “scientific terms”. Why should we be unable to do this? We should first refuse [to use] a Turkic word because it comes from “porters”, only to then accept technical terms that are taken from Arab camel drivers? Really?!

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26 Presumably two technical geometrical terms, the first to be emended as zoviyaton (“two angles”) and the second as doxilaton (“two inside corners”).
27 Nasroniy hayot madrasasinda?
ON THE LITERARINESS OF OUR LANGUAGE

The literature of the East has a magnificent and colourful history. While leaving this splendid history behind it, today’s literature of Europe tips its hat and salutes it in passing, feeling as it were obliged to do so. The historical literature of the East is a garden unlike any other, unmatched among the whole of world literature. If we would take a closer look at the flowers in this beautiful garden, then in the first row we would find the Arabic and Persian roses lined up, and in the second row the Urdu and Turkic flowers. Indeed, in the historical literature of the East, the first place is given to the Arabic and Iranian literature, while the second place is given to the Urdu and Turkic literature. The most important, richest and most valuable of the Turkic literary corpuses that holds a place in the historical literature of the East is the literature in the Chaghatay language. The Chaghatay historical literature is not limited to folk literature, as it also includes a high, exalted, and artistic literature. Chaghatay historical literature is home to numerous heroes, each of whom, with the force of a hurricane, has wrought inimitable [marvels] in the world of art, heroes such as Bayqara, Neva’i, Lutfi, ’Umar-Khan, and Fazli. In short, Chaghatay literature holds the most exalted and most important place in the whole of literature in the various Turkic languages. If there is one thing in which Turkic literature in the other (Turkic) tongues takes pride in, then it is in the fact that it resembles [Chaghatay literature] and that it is its pupil.

Literature is a form that is adorned and that is embellished. In light of the fact that Chaghatay literature holds an elevated, high and exalted place among Turkic literature as a whole, one must recognize the Chaghatay language as equally elevated, high and exalted among the Turkic languages. A girl who looks extremely beautiful after she has adorned and embellished herself must be essentially beautiful, while a girl who is essentially not beautiful won’t ever look extremely beautiful, even when she embellishes herself. If this claim of mine had been [based on] logic only, [then one could try and refute it, but instead] it is not limited to logical reasoning only, since there are other corroborative pieces of evidence for it. When we consider Chaghatay morphology and Tatar morphology respectively, we find Chaghatay morphology—that is, word derivation—to be the richest. As for the rich lexicon of our language, we have at our disposal our national treasures written in the past, works such as the Mukohamat ul-lugʿatayn [Judgment between the Two Languages], the Lugʿati Chigʿatoy [The Chaghatay Dictionary], the Lugʿati Navoyi [Neva’is Lexicon] and the Lugʿati Xorazmshohiy

28 Fitrat, Tanlangan Asarlar, pp. 131-135.
Apart from all this, whatever work on Turkic language and literature you may be reading, in it you will find statements that the Chaghatay literature is the mother or the ancestor of Turkic literature. From the fact that our literature holds first place among the literatures in the various Turkic tongues, I infer that our language itself holds an [equally] exalted place among the various Turkic tongues.

This inference leads to another question. Does the fact that our literature comes only after Arabic and Persian literature also mean that our language also comes only after Arabic and Persian? My answer to this question is “No!” Its rich lexicon, its rich potential of word derivation, its rounded grammar, and its subtle morphology and syntax are not inferior to those of the other languages of the east; indeed, our language even surpasses (p. 133) Persian in these respects! This being the case, the [actual] reason why our literature lags behind is the fact that our poets and litterateurs have an incomprehensible [onghashilmas] state of mind. Authors have written their works completely in Arabic. Abu ‘Ali Sina, a Turk of Turkestan, wrote all of his works in Arabic, and what little poetry that he wrote, he wrote in Iranian! Poet Zahir al-Din Faryabi hailed from Turkestan, yet worked wonders in Persian literature! I’ll give you another one, a first [rank] poet of the East, as well as a first [rank] scholar and philosopher. He hailed from Turkestan, but his parents had moved to India, so it was there that he was born and where he lived. In light of the facts that he hailed from Turkestan and that he lived in India, it would have made sense for him to write in Turkic or in Urdu, no? Nonetheless, this person, the famous Mirza Abd al-Qadir Bedil, wrote neither in Turkic nor in Urdu, but in Iranian <in captivity>30…

As for the reason why our literature ranks second only, while our language ranks first among the languages of the east, there are the following conditions [to consider]. For this, the language itself is not to blame. It is Neva’i who has already earlier realized that this condition is a malady that should be ended and routed. Neva’i openly revolted and rebelled against the fact that Turkic poets were writing in Persian, and he composed this work called the Muhokamat ul-lug’atayn [Judgment between the Two Languages] in order to demonstrate that Chaghatay is both a literary and a rich language. Neva’i’s era has remained the heyday of Chaghatay language and literature. Alas, we do not come across a second Neva’i in the history of our literature. Following the latter’s era, our literature gradually returned to its

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29 This Persian-Turkic dictionary is better known as the Muqaddimat al-Adab, authored by the early 12th-century Iranian theologian and linguist al-Zamakhsharī. The first manuscript of the text was discovered by Fitrat himself in Bukhara.

30 Tutqunda? Does this refer to actual imprisonment of Bedil, or should it rather be understood metaphorically, that is, that Bedil felt the need to write in Persian?
former state. Once more, our language and our literature were smothered by Arabicateness \textit{[arabchiliq]} and Persianateness \textit{[forsiy[chilik]}. Crushed under these burdens, our language and our literature lingered on in an ailing and lame condition until the literary era of Umar Khan in Khokand, when the candle that had almost burnt up glittered and flared up one last time, before dying out. [This last flowering period, however, was short-lived:] no sooner had our language and our literature glittered and risen [anew] at the time of Umar Khan than it died out for good. Ever since then, neither our arriving poets nor their works have been strong enough to resuscitate our literature.

Let me also say the following. In the literary history, we can see the idea of “true to the people” re[appearing] in the literature of Neva’i’s era.\footnote{\textit{Lutfi}, the very first poet of this era, wrote in a language that is utterly clear and comprehensible. According to Neva’i, he wrote each of his works for the benefit of the Turkic people and he wanted his works to serve them as spiritual food. The literature of the era of Umar Khan, on the other hand, was nothing but palace literature, unable to relate directly to the people.}

If you allow me, I would now like to discuss the things that have befallen our language [after Umar Khan]. This is what happened: as soon as the funerary service of our literature was held following the literary era of Umar-Khan, our tongue became [e]stranged from us, and those who knew the rules of the language were caught\footnote{Round about this time, our thought began to wake up: we [started] reading newspapers and books that were being published by other Turkic people, we opened schools based on the new principles \textit{[usuli jadid]}, and before long, we also published a newspaper. For these schools and this newspaper, we needed our language, so we again began to care for it and to think about it. Those who did all this were our enlightened thinkers and our intellectuals, whose numbers may have been few, but whose actions were numerous. But with all that they were doing, our teachers, masters, authors, litterateurs, poets, politicians and philosophers could not investigate our language and our literature any more deeply or profoundly. While thinking about our language, they ran into distorted words such as “\textit{kep qopsiz}”, and while going through our writings, they ran into the present madrasa writings, which were obviously bad\footnote{While the Tater language was more or less reborn out of the blue and there were newspapers and books being written in Tatar, our earlier intellectuals, stuck in a similar context, had no idea what to do.} and worthless\footnote{This last sentence probably refers to the fact that the language revivers/reformers were working rather carelessly, with all its consequences.].}

While the Tater language was more or less reborn out of the blue and there were newspapers and books being written in Tatar, our earlier intellectuals, stuck in a similar context, had no idea what to do.
difficult situation, [took a course that was very different from that of the Tatars], coming to
the gloomy view that “our language is not a scientific and literary language”. As a
consequence, our schools and our writings are under the influence of Ottoman Turkic, while
our printing is somewhat influenced by Tatar Turkic. In the courses given in Tashkent, most
of the hours assigned to language instruction are dedicated to Ottoman Turkic, while the first
teacher training that opened in Samarkand includes no language instruction whatsoever! At
the [19]18 assembly of the Council of Knowledge [Maorif sho’rosi] and at the teachers’
conference last year, the following decision had been made: “In the first three school years,
the mother tongue—that is, Uzbek—is to be taught, and after that the Turkic common literary
language [adabiy umumiy turk tili].” What they call this “Turkic common literary language”
was Ottoman mixed with Arabic. So Arabicness [arabiyligi] has been accepted as a condition
for the literariness of the language. I’m all too familiar with this kind of people. When I ask
them, (p. 135) “Why do you stuff our writings with all that Arabic?” they simply reply, “Is there
a problem with the fact that it’s Arabic?” What are our teachers, who have enrolled in courses
for teaching Uzbek, discussing? The izofai lamiya, the izofayi bayoniya, and the izofai
tashbehiya34, all taken from the Qavoyidi lisoni usmoniy [Principles of the Ottoman
Language] of Sheikhv Vasfi, an Ottoman Turk, and all copied from Arabic.

All these things are nothing but contempt of our language and disrespect of our
tongue, and they all have their roots in insufficient knowledge of our language and our
literature. In [19]18, young and old united in order to revolt and to fight and to undo all this.
This was the Chaghatay Circle [Chig’atoy gurungi], and the ideas put forth by the people who
met there were the following:

• Our language has an accomplished, exalted and artistic literature. Our language does not owe
its literariness to Arabicness but to itself, and we must resuscitate this.
• In order to exalt our literature, we must benefit from the immortal works of our earlier
talented poets, and catch up with the general principles formulated by the developed nations.
• We must derive the principles of our language not from the grammars of Ottoman or Tatar
Turkic, but from our language itself.
• In order to do so, we must collect the words used in the common language, as well as
the tales, stories and songs that make up folk literature.

34 Various types of genitive constructions in Arabic.
• Because literature is [first and foremost] written, we must to sort out the principles of writing and orthography.

Voila, these are the five principles that we have discussed on this meeting, [apart] from [the question of] orthography: to establish the principles of our language, to collect our great authors in order to benefit from our old literature, and to collect our folk literature as well as our dialect words. [Just to be clear.] it is not the Chaghatay Circle that is in need of these concrete actions, but our language itself. Now, let our conference come to a decision regarding these issues.