

Kazakh Language and Turkic Studies
Қазақ тілі және түркітану
Казахский язык и тюркология

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Dziekanat Wydziału Polonistyki Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego
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Re: Viacheslav Chernow Ph.D. dissertation review

To the Dean of the Department of Polish Studies:

Thank you for the honor of requesting that I serve as external reviewer for a doctoral dissertation (in Polish) entitled:

“Funkcje Syntaktyczne Form Czasownikowych w Baszkirskich Tekstach Literackich (na Podstawie Powieści Mostaya Kärima)”

This may be translated into English as:

“Syntactic Functions of Verb Forms in Bashkir Literary Texts (Based on Mostay Kärim's Novels)”.

In my understanding of the role of external reviewer, it is my role to offer some formal observations about the dissertation of Mr. Viacheslav Chernow. Since I have been educated at Columbia University and worked most of my career at state universities in the United States, it is only natural that I will draw upon my experience teaching graduate students in the United States since 1983 and as a member of over 50 doctoral committees at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and at other universities in North America and Eurasia, including 12 dissertations written by my former doctoral students for whom I served as faculty supervisor. I am also the founding director of the Ph.D. in Eurasian Studies Program at Nazarbayev University. This Ph.D. program was established along the same model and standards as Ph.D. programs in North America. For this reason, I cannot say that I am familiar with the expectations for a Ph.D. dissertation at the University of Warsaw or other universities in Europe, especially if they are different from expectations in North America.

What is the goal and original contribution of this dissertation? First of all, as the author notes, there are no systematic studies of the Bashkir language (a Turkic language belonging to the Kipchak group of the Turkic languages) in Polish, nor is there any scholarship on the founding author of modern Bashkir letters, Mostay Kärim. For these reasons alone it appears to be a valuable contribution to Polish Oriental Studies, in particular to Turkology in Poland. The author notes that his goal is to systematically study the syntactic function of verb forms in

Bashkir, with his original contribution being a systematic morphology-driven classification of 22 verb forms, some of which have not been included previously in classifications. In this regard, his classification goes beyond the studies of N.K. Dmitriev (1948), N. Poppe (1964), A.A. Yuldashev (*Grammatika* 1981), M.V. Zäynullin (2005). I believe he has at least minimally accomplished the task he has set out for himself and deserves to receive a **passing grade**.

In the remainder of my review, I would like to offer some critical comments, should he wish to revise this dissertation further and/or continue his research and publish on this topic (just as we might do in North America or at Nazarbayev University).

The first comment I would offer is that in the United States (including at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where I served on the faculty for 28 years), there is the expectation that there would be a theoretical framework. This is true in all disciplines in the humanities and social sciences, from history to literature, linguistics, and other field. If one wrote a dissertation in Turkology in the former Department of Languages and Cultures of Asia (rather than in the Department of Comparative Literature, History, or Linguistics), this would take the form of a chapter introducing a theoretical framework which would then be applied in the body of the dissertation. If this were a dissertation in the Department of Linguistics especially, the expectation would be that the dissertation is devoted to testing existing theories and advancing theoretical frameworks.

In this regard, I find that the approach towards theory in this dissertation is quite different from what I am used to at the University of Wisconsin-Madison or at Nazarbayev University. It is understandable that Poland's official national tradition is as a Slavic language and that in the post-World War II period (until 1991) Polish scholarship was heavily influenced by the traditions of Soviet scholarship, including in the area of Turkology. What we see in this dissertation is a reference to the outline of parts of speech in Polish according to Nagórko (2007). This is followed by references to the treatments of the verbal system in the standard Turkological literature in Polish. There is no real further discussion of international linguistic theory with regard to verbal forms and their syntactic function; the discussion in the dissertation is driven at any rate by a morphology-based classification with a brief discussion of syntactic function for each. For this reason I would characterize the work as largely descriptive.

There is no real attempt to integrate international Turkological literature beyond Soviet and post-Soviet Russian scholarship (with some exceptions such as Deny 1921, Banguoğlu 1981). This is a great shortcoming from the point of view of international theory on verbal forms because Soviet and post-Soviet Russian Turkology is mostly descriptive and not integrated with international linguistic theory. (As examples of the scholars the author cites more frequently, we may offer as examples Baskakov, Tenishev, and Dybo.) In the field of the study of the verbal system and its syntactic functioning, in the case of Bashkir or any other Turkic language this is a tremendous injustice to international Turkology, especially the major contributions to this field of Professor Lars Johanson (Johannes Gutenberg Universität Mainz, Germany). In addition to the long list of various publications by Johanson which one might cite, one might add his *magnum opus* which appeared just last year:

Lars Johanson, *Turkic*. Cambridge Language Surveys. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781139016704>

I think the final version of a dissertation on this topic in Turkic defended in 2022 would be considered incomplete without acknowledging the work of Johanson, who has redefined the field of Turkic linguistics almost single-handedly. (I am not asking that candidate recast his dissertation, this would be unfair and unrealistic; but I am asking that the candidate at least cite this publication and direct readers to the bibliography of works by Lars Johanson included in the Bibliography of this work...)

Of course, the field of Turkology is very international and at the same time there are strong national traditions, such as in Russia (including Bashqortostan), Kazakhstan, and Turkey, to name just three countries. There is also a Polish national tradition in Turkology, which I also recognize. Yet if we believe that there is such a thing as international linguistic theory and/or a language family-specific body of theory as in the case of Johanson's life work, I believe that we should at least acknowledge this. (A simple examination of the Table of Contents in Johanson's book would reveal the possibility of other approaches.) It would also help avoid potential criticism of an overly broad use in the dissertation of terms such as "participle", which can lead to confusion or criticism, as in the discussion of Poppe's views (p. 40ff).

I would also say that for a dissertation of this sort, it would be unproductive to offer a monographic treatment of each of the 22 verbal forms identified. Yet, given my own interest in verb serialization or "descriptive verbs" (also called "analytical verbs" in the dissertation, based on the Soviet literature which uses this terminology), I would just like to point out that there could have been a more in-depth discussion of these verbs (p. 162ff.). These verbs in Kazan Tatar (which is in a dialect relationship with Bashkir) have been studied by the late Professor Claus Schönig (Freie Universität-Berlin):

Claus Schönig, *Hilfsverben im Tatarischen. Untersuchung zur Funktionsweise einiger Hilfsverbverbindungen*, Veröffentlichungen der Orientalischen Kommission 35. Wiesbaden, 1984.

The best publication on this topic in Soviet Turkology is the work by D. Nasilov, who has studied the topic for Uzbek:

D.M. Nasilov, *Problemi tyurksoy aspektologii. Aktsional'nost*. Leningrad, 1989.

The author cites only Abubekirova 2014 on this topic.

For Uzbek, Tatar, Bashkir, and similar languages, there are over 2 dozen different "descriptive verbs" (or "analytical verbs") which denote aspectological and additional secondary nuances. Thus in the examples which the author gives, the secondary position verb *tor-* indicates imperfect and continuing action; as for the verb *al-* the author writes that it "indicates the degree of performance of the action". Thus, in this regard, it is clear that the author could have had a deeper discussion of the syntactic function of these (and other) "descriptive verbs". Indeed, Johanson introduces a framework for discussing these verbal forms in an even more sophisticated manner.

I do not wish to offer a more extended discussion of the dissertation at this point. My conclusion is that the author has met the goals which he outlined for himself. This is probably consistent with the national Turkological tradition, just as it would be consistent with the Turkish and apparently the Bashkir national tradition. Yet, were one to be more ambitious, there is a world of scholarship on Turkology (not to mention general linguistics) which could have been brought to bear on the topic. Needless to say, such an ambitious approach would have meant that this dissertation might never have been completed as a study of 22 verbal forms; it would have had to be much narrower in scope.

Finally, I will provide the author with a set of comments and a couple of spelling errors which I found in the PDF version of the dissertation with which I was provided.

Despite the constructive critical comments which I have offered here, I still believe that the dissertation is worthy of a passing grade. I do not require any corrections, though I highly recommend that the reference to Lars Johanson's recent book and a mention of his works contained in the Bibliography be included. I recommend that the thesis be admitted to further stages of the procedure for conferring the doctoral degree to Mr. Vyacheslav Chernev, upon corrections, if necessary.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Uli Schamiloglu', written in a cursive style.

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