

Aspect-Temporal and narrative devices in the so-called ‘Pagan’ Oğuz-nāmā

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1. Introduction

In my present paper I would like to introduce the aspect system of the ‘Pagan’ Oghuz-nāmā, which is considered a very doubtful text among Turkic linguistic monuments. My aim is to provide information, which can help to date the text, and outline some of the linguistic circumstances of its formation.

The ‘Pagan’ Oğuz-nāmā is a fragmentary text (Ms) which describes the birth, childhood, heroic deeds and military campaigns of Oğuz Kaghan the well-known epic hero of Turkic folklore. I chose the adjective ‘pagan’ to distinguish it from other Oğuz-nāmās because it contains no trace of Islam or other religion, rather it contains a description of totemic genealogy of the main character of this heroic poem. (from this point onward, I abandon the adjective ‘pagan’ and refer to this text simply as Oğuz-nāmā)

The Oğuz-nāmā in question is written in a version of Uygur script which differs in many features of that of Buddhist or Manichean Uygur texts, but there is no scope in this article to go into the details. There is only one manuscript of the text which has been considered a copy by Paul Pelliot (1930), and the supposed original text is lost. This idea is based on the fact that some words are misspelled in the text, and that the orthography differs considerably from other Uygur texts, and in Pelliot’s words, “it is re-edited”. He dates the formation of this ‘copy’ around 1500, but the original also cannot be older than the 13th century, since it contains Mongolic loanwords, and due to some other reasons based on its content.

2. Theoretical framework

In this paper I will examine the verbal aspect system of the text, attempting to explore the circumstances of the text’s background. For such an examination the theoretical framework is provided by Johanson 1971 and 2000.

Viewpoint operators of Turkic languages can be classified along three values. These are the following:

- A. Intraterminality (\pm INTRA)
- B. Focality (HF:LF:NF)
- C. Postterminality (\pm POST)

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Values A and C determine the situation of the orientation point (O) and the localization point, or – in cases of non momentary events – the locus (L) to each other on the time axis. In the case of intraterminal events, O coincides the localization point or takes place within the boundaries of the locus. Likewise, in the cases of postterminality L precedes O. Value B determines the narrowness of the view of vision of the event. It can be high focal (HF), low focal (LF) and non-focal (NF). The mentioned three values are valid only if they can be opposed to each other: (+INTRA^{HF}: +INTRA^{LF}):+INTRA^{NF}; +INTRA: -INTRA; +POST: -POST etc. Otherwise the negative (unmarked) values should be considered as neutral.

Johanson (1971) provides a very detailed description of the aspect system and its devices of standard Turkish. My basic working hypothesis is that Turkic aspect system are basically similar, or at least there should be common features. Thus the Turkish aspect system can be used as a basis for comparison during a similar examination on the Oğuz-nāmā, and searching for 1:1 correspondences between the items of two aspect-systems should be a good starting point.

The set of narrative devices used in a text is dependent on the discourse type, which has got a 'basic' narrative item (in Turkish, these can be *-di*, *-miş*, or *-ir*). With other words, the different discourse-types are based on different temporal strata. The Oğuz-nāmā basically has *-di* and *-ir* – based discourse types, so I will compare these sets of items to those of Turkish.

The inventory of the *-di* and *-ir* – based discourse types in Turkish are the following:

Table 1. Inventory of aspect markers in Turkish

Turkish	+INTRA ^{HF}	+INTRA ^{LF}	+INTRA ^{NF}	-INTRA -POST	+POST
<i>-di</i> – base (+PAST)	<i>-mekteydi</i> <* <i>-mekte erdi</i>	<i>-iyordu</i> <* <i>-A yorür erdi</i>	<i>-irdi</i> <* <i>-ur erdi</i>	<i>-di</i>	<i>-mişti</i> <* <i>-miş erdi</i>
<i>-ir</i> – base (-PAST)	<i>-mekte(dir)</i> <* <i>-mekte turur</i>	<i>-iyor</i> <* <i>-A yorür</i>	<i>-ir</i>		<i>-miş(tir)</i> <* <i>-miş (turur)</i>

Table 1. contains items which are used as intraterminals and postterminals in the Turkish aspect systems in the past (*-di* – based) and the non-past (*-ir* – based) temporal strata. The basic (unmarked) forms of them are *-di* and *-ir* respectively. The probable predeceasing forms of the marked items are marked with *. The basic corresponding items in the Oğuz-nāmā are *-di* and *-ur*. Nominal predications are always finitized with *erdi* and *turur* respectively. The question is what are the further correspondences of the marked forms in Oğuz-nāmā?

3. Preliminary notes

The Oğuz-nāmā is a limited, quite short corpus, consisting of 376 lines. Due to this reason, not all of the opposition pairs of the above-mentioned values can be found in both the +PAST and –PAST temporal strata. In these cases I call for the help of an expedient: The

junctors *kim* is used to introduce a direct quotation or description of circumstances. It is able (even if it does not always do so) to project the orientation point to the 'present' of the events.

Where the junctor *kim* is found in a sentence, I considered the predicate of the clause conjuncted by *kim* as an opposition pair of that of the main clause, as if they would be in the same temporal stratum.

The numbers of the examples shows the number of the line of the text they start in. (cf. Bang 1932 or 1936). The English translations of the examples are mine.

4. Examples and their interpretations

4.1. Opposition A: Intraterminality:

+PAST(+INTRA) : +PAST(-INTRA); -ur/-maz erdi : -di¹

- (54) *oğuz qağan yörüdi kördi kim uşbu yaruqnuñ arasında bir qız bar erdi yalğuz olturur erdi*

'Oğuz Kaghan went (there), and he saw that within the light there is a girl. She was sitting alone.'

- (127) *uşol urum qağan oğuz qağannıñ jarlıgın saqlamaz erdi qatıglağı barmaz erdi [...] tep jarlıgqa baqmadi*

'That Urum Kaghan did not care the order of Oğuz Kaghan, and did not go to give support at all. He said [...] and did not pay attention to the order.'

4.2. Opposition B: Focality

4.2.1. Focality vs. non-focality in the past stratum

+PAST(+INTRA^F): +PAST(+INTRA^{NF}) -a turur erdi : -ur erdi

- (226) *oğuz qağan bir aygır atqa minä turur erdi uşol aygır atnı bäk çoq söyür erdi*

'Oğuz Kaghan usually rode a spotted stallion. He loved that stallion very much.'

In the following example, one can see that a +INTRA^F can be opposed to a simple -INTRA item as well, regardless of its degree of focality. As I mentioned above, a value (in this case, focality) gains its validity only when it can be opposed to its opposition pair.

1 Rentsch's (2010) latest argument about aspect marker *-DI* shows that *-DI* functions as a [-PAST] operator in certain circumstances, although its default reading is [+PAST]. In the Oğuz-nāmā, in the following utterance *-DI* has possibly [-PAST] reading: (96) *män senlärgä boldum qağan, alalıñ ya taqı qalqan [...]* 'I became/Now (from this moment on) I am your kaghan, (so) let us take (our) bows and shields'. However, in the examples I establish the oppositions of the aspect operators, *-DI* does not allow [-PAST] reading, so I always refer to it as [+PAST] in the present paper.

- (315) *künlerdä bir kün uyquda bir altun ya kördi taqi üç kümüş oq kördi [...] bu üç kümüş oq tün yañaqqa ketä turur erdi*
 ‘One day, in a dream [Uluğ Türk] saw a golden bow and three silver arrows. These three silver arrows were going to the north’

4.2.2. Focality vs. non-focality in the non-past stratum

-PAST(+INTRA^F): -PAST(±INTRA) -a (*turur*): -ur/-maz (*turur*)

- (106) *män uygurniñ qağani bola män kim yerniñ tört buluñınıñ qağani bolsam kārāk turur [...] uşbu kim ağızumğa baqar turur bolsa taritğu tartıp dost tutar män*
 ‘I am (being) the Kaghan of the Uygur, who thus shall be the Kaghan of the four corners of the world. [...] (From) those who pay attention (lit. should become caring) to my speech, I shall gather tax and will consider them as friends.’

Example (106) needs some explanation. As we saw in example (315) in third person the +PAST(+INTRA^F) item was *-A turur erdi*. After subtracting the +PAST marker, we should get the -PAST(+INTRA^F) item as **-A turur*. In standard Turkish, personal markers exclude the element *-dir* (< *turur*). There are forms as *-mişim* : *-miştir*; but no **-miştirim*, **-mişimdir* etc. Thus, in example (106) *bola män* is the corresponding form of *ketä turur erdi* in example (315). In third person, it should be **-A turur*, see also example (31) and (197) in chapter 4.4.2 and could be opposed in focality to *-Ar turur*. Likewise, the same focality opposition appears between *-A män* and *-Ar män*. The same can be noted in example (194), keeping forward that there the element *turur* is reduced to *dur* in quoted speech:

- (194) *män saña başumnı qutumni berä män bergü berip dostluqtan çıqmaz dur*
 ‘I hereby offer my life (lit. my head) and sovereignty for you. Paying tax, the friendship never breaks.’

4.3. Degrees of focality

4.3.1. -PAST(+INTRA^{HF}): +PAST(-INTRA) *-mäktä turur* : *-di*

Another (+INTRA) item can be observed in the text, that is *-mäktä turur*, which can be opposed to the (-INTRA) *-di*. Here, *kim* synchronizes the two clauses in the temporal strata:

- (41) *kälip kördi kim bir şuñqar [qayinat] içegüsün yämäktä turur*
 ‘When he came, he saw that a falcon is just eating the innards of the creature.’ (= When he came a falcon was just eating the innards of the creature.)

4.3.2. +INTRA^{HF}:+PAST(+INTRA^{LF}) *-mäktä* : *-A turur erdi*

I consider *-mäktä turur* as a high-focal (+INTRA) item opposed to low-focal ones for two reasons. First, its correspondent form behaves as high focal in standard Turkish (cf.

Table 1). Second, it can be opposed to +PAST(+INTRA^F) item *-A turur*, see the following example, although in that *-mäktä* is not in finite position:

- (281) *munlar qanqa yürümäktä qanqa qanqa söz berä turur erdilär*
 'While (being in the state of) moving, these carts were giving a sound 'qanqa qanqa'.

4.4. Opposition C: Postterminality

4.4.1. Postterminality in the past temporal stratum.

+PAST(+POST) : +PAST(-POST) *-up erdi*: *-di (erdi)*

- (22) *uşol orman içindä beđük bir [qayinat] bar erdi yılqılarnı elkünlerni yer erdi beđük yaman bir keyik erdi bergä ämgäk birlä elkünni basup erdi*
 'In the depth of that forest there was a huge creature. It regularly ate the animals and the people. It was a great and evil creature. It had oppressed the people with selected torments.'

4.4.2 Postterminality in the non-past temporal stratum.

-PAST(+POST) : +PAST(-POST) *-up (turur)* : *-di*

Again, I considered the following examples synchronized by *kim*. Note that in example (197) *turur* is excluded by personal markers again, as we saw above in the case of *-a turur* : *-a män*.

- (31) *tañ ertä çağda keldi kördi kim [qayinat] buğuni alup turur*
 '[Oğuz Kaghan] came early in the morning and saw that the creature has taken the deer.'
- (197) *[Oğuz Kaghan] ayıttı kim maña köp altun yumşap sän baluqnı yağşı saqlap sän*
 '[Oğuz Kaghan] told: You have sent me a lot of gold. You have defended the city well.'

After considering the examples above, the following system can be drawn. It is very similar to the aspect-system of standard Turkish, except the +INTRA^{LF} and +POST columns.

Table 2. The inventory of aspect markers in Oğuz-nämä

Oğuz-nämä	+INTRA ^{HF}	+INTRA ^{LF}	+INTRA ^{NF}	-INTRA -POST	+POST
<i>-di</i> – base (+PAST)	* <i>-mäktä erdi</i>	<i>-a turur erdi</i>	<i>-ur/-maz erdi</i>	<i>-di</i> (<i>erdi</i>)	<i>-up erdi</i>
<i>-ir</i> – base (-PAST)	<i>-mäktä turur</i>	<i>-a turur/pm</i>	<i>-ur +pm</i> (<i>turur</i>)		<i>-up turur/pm</i>

Considering the whole text, Table 3. seems to be a complete system. However, it is by no means an exhaustive description of the aspect devices of the *Oğuz-nāmā*, since another set of items do appear within the same text. I will quote them below in the same order as above.

4.5 Opposition A₂: Intraterminality

+PAST(+INTRA^{LF}):+PAST(-INTRA) -*gān erdi* : -*di*

- (317) *künlerdä bir kün uyquda bir altun ya kördi taqı üç kümüş oq kördi bu altun ya kün toğışıda da kün batuşığaça täggān erdi taqı bu üç kümüş oq tün yanaqqa ketä turur erdi*

'One day, in a dream he saw a golden bow and three silver arrows. This golden bow was reaching from the east to the west, and the three silver arrows were going to the north'

The item -*gān erdi* could also be translated as postterminal. Here I did not do so because in the following we will see that there is another +POST item in the inventory, and I considered it low-focal, because another high-focal item appears in the set which has the similar morphosyntactic structure as -*mäktä turur/erdi*. Furthermore, in example (317) it co-appears with -*A turur erdi* which is +INTRA^{LF}. There is another example in which a non-finite -*gān* should also be translated as +INTRA rather than +POST, since the verb form in the next sentence is +INTRA (see chapter 4.1).

- (18) *bu çağda bu yerdä bir uluğ orman bar erdi munda kelgānlär keyik köp köp munda uçqanlar quş köp köp erdi. uşol orman içindä bedük bir qayinat bar erdi yilqılarnı, yelgünlerni yer erdi.*

'At this time there was a great forest here. The beasts coming here were many, the birds flying here were many. (cf. The beasts which used to come here [but not any more] were many, the birds which used to fly here [but not any more] were many.) In that forest there was a huge creature. It constantly ate the animals and the people.'

4.6. Opposition B₂: Focality

4.6.1. Focality₂ in the past temporal stratum

+PAST(+INTRA^{HF}): +PAST(-INTRA) -*guda erdi* : -*di*

- (49) *kān künlärdän bir kün oğuz qağan bir yerdä täjrini jalβarguda erdi qarañgu-luq keldi köktün bir kök yaruq tüşdi*

'Then one day *Oğuz Kaghan* was just being at the Heaven's devotion. Darkness arose and a blue beam of light fell from the sky.'

4.6.2. Focality₂ in the non-past temporal stratum

-PAST(+INTRA^{HF}): +PAST(-INTRA) -*guda turur* : -*di*

- (148) *oğuz qağan qoriyanni türdürdi ketti kördi kim çärigniñ tapuğlarıda [...] bir erkäk böri yörüğüde turur*
 'Oğuz Kaghan raised the camp and moved along. He saw that a [...] male wolf is marching in the service of the army.'

4.7. Opposition C₂: Postterminality

+PAST(+POST) : +PAST(-POST) -*miş erdi* : -*di*

- (104) *oğuz qağan bildürgülük bitidi [...] uşbu bildürgülüktä bitilmiş erdi kim män uygurniñ qağanı bola män [...]*
 'Oğuz Kaghan wrote a message. [...] In that message it had been written that „I am (being) the Kaghan of the Uygur [...]'
- (241) *uşol beg [...] ayğır atnı kældürdi muz tağlarda köp soğuş boluptan ol beg qardan sarunmiş erdi ap aq erdi*
 'That *beg* [...] brought the stallion back. Because it was very cold in the Ice Mountains, that *beg* had been covered by snow. He was as white as snow.'

After refilling Table 2. with the correspondent items, an alternative set of aspect-markers tends to become visible, in which the rather unmarked (+INTRA^{NF} and -INTRA/-POST) items remain the same.

Table 3. The alternative set of aspect markers in Oğuz-nāmā

Oğuz-nāmā	+INTRA ^{HF}	+INTRA ^{LF}	+INTRA ^{NF}	-INTRA -POST	+POST
- <i>di</i> – base (+PAST)	- <i>ğuda erdi</i>	- <i>gän erdi</i>	- <i>ur/-maz erdi</i>	- <i>di</i> (<i>erdi</i>)	- <i>miş erdi</i>
- <i>ir</i> – base (-PAST)	- <i>ğuda turur</i>	*- <i>gän turur</i>	- <i>ur +pm</i> (<i>turur</i>)		*- <i>miş turur</i>

After subtracting the time factor and some rearrangement of the items, a hypothetical, but complete system can be drawn. It is the following.

Table 4. The aspect system of the Oğuz-nāmā

Oğuz-nāmā	+INTRA ^{HF}	+INTRA ^{LF}	+INTRA ^{NF}	-INTRA -POST	+POST
Oghuz-type	- <i>mäktä erdi/</i> <i>turur</i>	- <i>gän erdi/</i> <i>*turur</i>	- <i>ur/-maz</i> <i>erdi/turur</i> (<i>pm</i>)	- <i>di</i> (<i>erdi</i>)	- <i>miş erdi/</i> <i>*turur</i>
Non-Oghuz type	- <i>ğuda erdi/</i> <i>turur</i>	- <i>a turur erdi/</i> <i>turur</i> (<i>pm</i>)			- <i>up erdi/turur</i> (<i>pm</i>)

I mentioned rearrangement of the data because of the following: The line I marked 'Oghuz-type' is very similar to the standard Turkish system. The place of the item -*gän*

erdi is not yet definite. It is a hapax legomenon, and there is no data in hand that it can function as +POST as well in finite position (in non-finite position it can). Since, as far as I know, the Oghuz is the only group among Turkic languages in which this -GAn-type participle has no +POST meaning, and I keep it in its present place in Table 4.

5. Conclusion

It seems that two parallel aspect systems coexist in the Oğuz-nāmā. I would like to draw attention to two more things. Firstly, only the marked elements differ, the unmarked elements, the 'core' of the system are common, which should not be surprising, since these devices are common in most of the Turkic languages. Secondly, according to the limited data in hand, it seems that only the core system can take on non-third person personal markers, together with the items which I marked as 'Non-Oghuz type'. The reason of this parallelity is a question I am not yet able to answer, although it can be due to many reasons. Pelliot (1930) has already highlighted it in his early paper, and contended that certain elements (*-mak* and *-ġu* for example) are mixed because the text has been written in one place and copied in a more Eastern territory by a scribe who spoke another dialect. I myself do not consider the copying of the text itself as a necessary factor for the arising of these two parallel systems, since both of them seems complete. It can also be possible that the dialect of the scribe was 'mixed', and the text has been written in an area where a Turkic dialect had been spoken under the influence of another Turkic one. Either the scribe himself could have spoken such a code or, if the text had noted down after hearing, (which is likely according to the phonetic phenomena observable in the text examining its orthography) the one who dictated the text. The lexicon and the fluctuation of the presence of the pronominal *n* before third person possessive suffix points to the same direction. If this is so, and we encounter here internal code-copying between Turkic dialects, the dominated code should be the 'Non-Oghuz' type, since it seems that items of this type can only take on personal markers, and in code-copying settings the grammatical system of the code *A* is generally more resistant to copying than the lexicon. If my classification in Table 4 is correct, the dominant code is an Oghuz dialect. In any case, further research on the grammatical system and the circumstances of its preparation is necessary.

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