

Marek Stachowski\*

Uniwersytet Jagielloński  
Kraków

## **Proto-Slavic palatal consonants and Proto-Turkic vowel harmony**

### **1. Introductory remarks**

The central problem of this paper is the idea that Proto-Slavic palatal consonants came into being under the influence of Proto-Turkic palatal consonants which, in their turn, resulted from vowel-consonant assimilations provoked by a system of vocalic assimilations known as vowel harmony. The author of that conception is Roman Jakobson (1896–1982) who first suggested it in his 1930 presentation in Prague and published 1931 in Paris. The problem has not been especially intensely discussed in the past<sup>1</sup>.

The next important work on the topic was a 1997 monograph by Herbert Galton (1917–2004) who additionally tried to identify several other Proto-Slavic features which could have arisen as a result of Altaic influence. Finally, Elena Stadnik read,

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\* Marek Stachowski, Full Professor, Jagiellonian University, Institute of Slavonic Studies, Kraków, Poland.

ORCID: 0000-0002-0667-8862.

e-mail: marek.stachowski@uj.edu.pl

<sup>1</sup> An influence from the Orient has not been a sole imaginable explanation. A far more popular one is the connection that J. Kuryłowicz (1957: 88sq.) made between the emergence of palatal consonants and the Balto-Slavic linguistic community. Žuravlev 1961 starts with Jakobson's synharmonism and offers a highly technical article but does not discuss the probability of the Altaic origin of Slavic synharmonism.

during the 8th Deutscher Slavistentag in Potsdam in 2001, a paper on that topic and, then, published it in the same year.

These three authors form the three main pillars of the hypothesis of the Altaic origin of Slavic palatal consonants and, at the same time, a good discussion base because their opinions are not fully identical, even though they all accept the possibility of Proto-Turkic influence on Proto-Slavic.

However, the discussion panel will be, I think, more representative if also two other authors are included. One of them is Henrik Birnbaum who actually fully rejected the “Altaic possibility”, stating:

If indeed any such contacts between one of the Altaic peoples (one may think of the Huns, the Proto-Bulgars, or the Avars) and the CS [= Common Slavic – M.S.] linguistic community as a whole (and not only one of its subbranches or dialects) could have existed, their linguistic yield at least for Slavic seems to have been nil (or virtually so, in view of the very few isolated lexical items in need of closer scrutiny).” (Birnbaum 1975: 225, § 7.1)<sup>2</sup>.

The question of Proto-Turkic loanwords in Proto-Slavic does not in fact bring great hope (see, for instance, M. Stachowski 2005: 438–441 and 2017 passim for \**baranь* ‘ram’; M. Stachowski 2005: 441–444 for \**koza* ‘goat’) but the topic deserves a separate and detailed discussion. Cf. also the following opinion:

Дискуссионной проблемой является, имеются ли среди этих заимствований заимствования в праславянское состояние, то есть до распада славянских языков на отдельные ветви. (Dybo 2019: 79).

A conspicuous fact is that all the authors mentioned above are Slavists. Thus, the last additional member of the panel should be an Altaicist. The problem is that there is none nowadays<sup>3</sup>. Fortunately, all authors seem to agree that what is called “Altaic influence” most probably should be limited to “Turkic influence”. So I can feel competent enough to join into the discussion.

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<sup>2</sup> The phrases in both the middle and the last brackets are, for no apparent reason, tacitly omitted in the Russian edition (Birnbaum 1987: 166).

<sup>3</sup> The Altaic hypothesis is only represented in the Nostratic milieu today. However, the *Etymological dictionary of the Altaic languages* (compiled by Nostraticists from Moscow: S. Starostin, A. C and O. Mudrak; Leiden 2003) has received only negative reviews apart from one written by a Nostraticist (for details see M. Stachowski 2011: 264). Besides, the Nostratic hypothesis does not necessarily require a Proto-Altaic language; it can also work with Proto-Turkic, Proto-Mongolic and Proto-Tunguzic as three genetically separate (albeit geographically and typologically close) branches of the Nostratic macro-family. – For both hypothesis see M. Stachowski 2011, 2012.

## 2. Roman Jakobson

Roman Jakobson's paper on the Eurasian Language League ~ Union (Russian *евразийский языковой союз*) is a very controversial one. Even though I am only going to focus on palatal consonants in this context I feel obliged to mention right at the beginning that also some other claims presented by Jakobson are rather disputable. That is the case when he says that there exists a group of languages which have both hard and soft consonants<sup>4</sup> and since those languages represent various genealogical families, one may call them a "linguistic league" (Jakobson 1931 = 1962: 172sq.). Deconstructing this proposition, I understand that it suffices to find a few languages which belong to various families but share a single feature to call them "a league". For example, Polish, Finnish and Basque, too, form a league because they all have the short vowel *a*. This is a very liberal definition<sup>5</sup>.

Another astonishing feature, even for those who know the circumstances in which Russian immigrants created their Eurasianism, is Jakobson's hostility towards Western Europe and even the Latin script. The Cyrillic script can, he says, much better render palatal consonants. In reality, Russian orthography based on the Cyrillic script typically uses the same symbol for both hard and soft consonants, and its actual quality is only revealed by the vowel symbol that follows. For instance, letters ⟨я⟩ or ⟨ю⟩ denote the same vowels as ⟨a⟩ or ⟨y⟩, but the former additionally signify the softness of the preceding consonant, while the latter its hardness, so that ⟨мя⟩ stands for [mja] and ⟨ма⟩ for [ma], and so on. (Jakobson 1931 = 1962: 191–194).

Let us now move on to discuss Jakobson's claims concerning palatality. He first explains the Turkic vowel harmony, using Kazakh and Tatar as examples. But then he informs the readers that no palatalized consonants are known in Ottoman Turkish<sup>6</sup>, or the ottomanized<sup>7</sup> Gagauz language in Dobrudja (ibid. 1962: 174sq.) and assures us that this information comes from two Turkic linguists: Jan Rypka (Prague) and Tadeusz Kowalski (Kraków). That claim cannot possibly be true for Kowalski who investigated vowel and consonant harmony in Karaim<sup>8</sup> and, besides, had practical knowledge of Turkish and conducted dialectological field

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<sup>4</sup> "Hard" and "soft" are terms used in Slavic linguistics for non-palatal(ized) and palatal(ized) consonants, respectively. In some contexts, it is quite reasonable to ignore the difference between "palatal" and "palatalized", and then the Slavistic terms prove to be practical.

<sup>5</sup> For a thorough discussion of (sometimes contradictory) criteria employed by various linguists to define "linguistic league", thus, effectively, the lack of a single, unambiguous definition of the term see Urban 2007 *passim*.

<sup>6</sup> Here, *Ottoman Turkish* = Turkish in the Republic of Turkey rather than Turkish of Istanbul intelligentsia.

<sup>7</sup> Here, *ottomanized* = Turkicized.

<sup>8</sup> The situation with Karaim is very peculiar because the inherited vowel harmony (e.g., *üst* 'top' > *üst+ündän* 'from its top'; *ämän* 'oak' > *ämän+dän* 'from the oak') was substituted by an

studies with peasants in Anatolia. It is just unbelievable that Kowalski never noticed the palatality of *k*, *g*, *l* before front vowels and could not pronounce Turkish words correctly. What is more, unambiguous information on the phonetic value of those three consonants could also easily be found in Turkish grammars of the day. It is true that consonants other than *k*, *g*, *l* are only very slightly palatalized when neighbouring front vowels and have no velar counterparts but the same is true for Kazakh and Tatar<sup>9</sup>. In short: Jakobson's information on Kowalski and Turkish is simply wrong.

However, much more important is the fact the vowel harmony has changed in time and space. I fail to see the point of using modern Kazakh and Tatar vowels to explain Proto-Slavic consonants. What we need to understand is the structure of the Proto-Turkic vowel harmony and, especially, the character of consonants adjacent to front vowels. Even though three of them (*k*, *g*, *l*) are palatalized in that position nowadays others are not so that it is legitimate to ask whether they were also palatalized in the Old Turkic period, that is about one thousand and three hundred years ago.

And in this way we come to the problem of chronology. Jakobson (1931 = 1962: 187) says that the oldest Turkic literary sources were written in the Orkhon runic script in the 7th and 8th century but the script itself was used as early as in the 6th century. In point of fact, our oldest Orkhon texts come from the first half of the 8th century. It is admittedly true that the oldest literary monument from the Old Turkic period and region (even older than any known to Jakobson at the time) is a rectangular stele dated to 584, but it is written in Sogdian and in the Sogdian alphabet (apart from its strongly damaged back side which is written, in the Brahmi script, probably in a Mongolic language). This text only contains a few Turkic political titles that do not provide much information on the language (Ölmez 2017: 16, 27). We actually do not know anything specific about Turkic from before the 8th century.

The Orkhon runic script, too, is imprecisely described by Jakobson. Its most important feature is its half-alphabetic, half-syllabic structure which means that a rune can either denote a single sound or, more frequently, syllabic sequence “*a* or *e* + consonant”. We are not going to discuss here all the combinations and complications connected with this system but one thing should be pointed out: There was only one sign for both *a* and *e*, one for *u* and *ü*, and so on, but two signs for most consonants. Some of them were used to signal non-palatal vowels

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innovative consonant harmony (*üst* > *üst+uhdañ*; *ämañ* > *ämañ+dañ*). – For more details and a discussion see K. Stachowski 2009 *passim*.

<sup>9</sup> In an academic description of Tatar (Kurbatov 1969: 89) we read that two features distinguish Tatar palatal consonants from their Russian equivalents: the Tatar ones are phonetically harder than those in Russian and, besides, they are non-phonological, that is, they are allophones and, as such, occur in complementary distribution.

adjacent to them, and we mark them with 1 today, for instance,  $k^1$  stands for  $ak$ . Others, marked with 2 in the contemporary notation, denote a combination of a consonant with a palatal vowel, for example,  $k^2$  stands for  $ek^{10}$ . But, in contrast with Jakobson (1931 = 1962: 187), we have no good reason to think that  $k^2$  (or any other consonant marked with 2) was itself pronounced as palatal. In other words:  $k^1 = ak$ ;  $k^2 = ek$ , possibly but not necessarily  $ek$ . On the other hand, we have valid grounds to assume the palatalized pronunciation of  $l^2$  and  $s^2$  (M. Stachowski 1998: 394, 395) but we cannot be sure that *all* consonants were soft in that position. In modern Turkish, only /k/, /g/ and /l/ have palatal and velar counterparts:  $\acute{k} : \check{k}$ ,  $\acute{g} : \check{g}$ ,  $l : \acute{l}$ . It is thinkable that the situation was similar with Old Turkic, for example, rune  $k^2 = ek$ , but rune  $t^2 = et$ , not  $*et$ . Nor can we be certain that the palatalizing process had already existed in the time of hypothetical contacts between Proto-Slavic and Proto-Turkic. For a continuation of this aspect see section 5.

Vilhelm Thomsen, the decipherer of the Old Turkic runic script thought that different forms of consonant signs signalled different vowels but nothing more:

Relativement aux consonnes, [...] pour la plupart d'entre elles, il y a deux signes différents, dont l'un ne sert qu'en combinaison avec les voyelles vélaires (*a, o, u* et en général *y*), l'autre ne servant que combinée avec les voyelles palatales (*ä, ö, ü, i*). Le son propre de la consonne a été sans doute<sup>11</sup> dans la plupart des cas tout à fait le même [...] (Thomsen 1896: 17).

Jakobson dispels the uncertainty simply by asserting the superiority of Russian linguists, and not mentioning any specific sources: “Российские лингвисты справедливо учли, что алфавит орхонских надписей отражает слоговой сингармонизм” (Jakobson 1931 = 1962: 187, fn. 37). Actually, we cannot claim the syllabic synharmonism in Old Turkic time even today, see section 5.

Jakobson (ibidem) also says that there are good reasons to posit vowel harmony not only in Proto-Turkic but even earlier, in Proto-Altaiic. We shall return to this idea shortly.

The main idea Jakobson formulated in his paper is as follows: Languages surrounding the Altaic world went through various phases of phonological rapprochement to the Altaic linguistic kernel (ibidem: “[...] в разное время эти языки проходили через стадию фонологического притяжения к алтайскому лингвистическому ядру”). What actually the “Altaic kernel” was remains unsaid and Jakobson’s definition of the Uralo-Altaic language family (ibidem 147, fn. 2) does not contain that notion either. And what phonological rapprochement can there be without thousands of bilingual persons and hundreds of loanwords?

<sup>10</sup> Incidentally, the Old Turkic system was a typological opposite of the Cyrillic script which records the palatality of a consonant by using a separate vowel sign.

<sup>11</sup> For a justification of Thomsen’s *sans doute* cf. the passage on runes for *n* and *ñ* in section 5.

A rapprochement limited to palatality only? What made palatalization so appealing to languages neighbouring the Altaic kernel? Unlike, say, Altaic front rounded vowels or phonotactic rules of the first syllable that did not influence the Slavic languages to the least extent.

Further, Jakobson says (*ibidem*), Proto-Slavic should have separated palatal syllables from non-palatal ones and thus attained syllabic harmony in the period between its separation from other Indo-European subfamilies and its split into Slavic dialects. Even though the approximate date of the split is not ultimately settled (and it is quite certain that one should rather speak of a longer period), we will certainly not exaggerate if we accept the 5th century as the last phase in which a Proto-Turkic impact on Proto-Slavic could have occurred,<sup>12</sup> since the first Slavic palatalization had already been completed before Slavs conquered the Peloponnese in the 6th and 7th century, as is seen from the phonetic shape of Slavic loanwords and geographical names, for instance Greek ζάμπα ‘frog’ < Slavic \*žaba id. < IE \*gʷēbʰa id. (Stieber 1969: 67; Boryś 2005: 749). This means that the “phonological rapprochement” of Slavic with Altaic must have taken place earlier. However, it was mentioned above, that the oldest Turkic runic inscriptions date from the 8th century. Even the acceptance of T. Tekin’s (1992) Turkic interpretation of a Hunnic couplet of 329 does not change the situation because the couplet only consists of two short lines.

### 3. Herbert Galton and Elena Stadnik

Herbert Galton’s 1997 monograph will not be discussed in detail here. Its two features, however, should be mentioned. Galton, unlike Jakobson, does not limit himself to just positional palatalization but discusses also six other features. Elena Stadnik (2001: 178sq.) enumerates them all but focuses on palatalization (and, partially, velarization). If we look at the number of features shared by Proto-Slavic and Proto-Turkic according to subsequent authors the following chronological chain will emerge: Jakobson 1931 (1) – Birnbaum 1975 (0) – Galton 1997 (7) – Stadnik 2001 (2).

E. Stadnik’s opinion on the topic is the newest one. In her approach, both palatalization and velarization of consonants occur in Slavic and Altaic as phonetically identical phenomena. I fail to see how one could prove that the situation was different, or indeed the same, in protolanguages. Palatality is a special case because the palatalizing process only yields palatalized consonants in Turkic (e.g., \*E+k > Ek, and so on) whereas the place and manner of articulation remain

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<sup>12</sup> H. Birnbaum devoted a series of studies to chronological questions of Proto-Slavic. A bibliographical synopsis and a discussion can be found in Birnbaum 1998.

the same, which is unlike Slavic languages with such changes as  $*kE > *k' > \check{c}$ ,  $*gE > *g' > \check{z}$ ,  $*xE > *x' > \check{s}$  (Stieber 1969: 66sq.).

Finally, Stadnik is ready to accept the Turkic origin of both consonant changes:

Und was ihre [= of palatality and velarity – M.S.] genauere Herkunft betrifft, so kann türkischer Einfluß angenommen werden, denn sie kommen *beide zusammen*, und zwar so, wie sie im Slawischen erworben wurden, als allophonische Erscheinungen, nur in den Turksprachen vor (Stadnik 2001: 183).

Another interesting aspect of Galton's monograph is that he uses, again: unlike Jakobson, the word *Altaic* in the title of his monograph as if to make a profession of faith. Stadnik follows Galton's lead. It is telling that Jakobson, who lived in a period in which the term "Altaic" was generally accepted, did not advertize it in the title whereas Galton and Stadnik do so in an era in which it brings discredit rather than glory – Altaic linguistics was already past its prime by the end of the 20th century.

The three authors have more than one feature in common: they all view Turkic as a more likely donor of palatality than the other Altaic, they all are in the first place Slavists, and they all are not worried by the assumption of phonetic influence without considerable lexical impact.

The lack of Turkological schooling leads to mistakes of different sorts and varying seriousness. The least significant ones are incorrect meanings of adduced words such as *äl* 'Hemd' (in place of 'hand') or *el* 'Volk' (instead of '1. stranger, foreigner; 2. the others, foreign people') in Galton (1997: 126). We are not going to discuss and correct such mistakes here as, after all, they do not change any aspect of the possibility of Turkic influence and this paper is not an editorial review.

Instead, we will move on to a discussion concerning Turkic vowel harmony and palatal consonants.

#### 4. Turkic and Altaic aspects

The truth of the matter is that a uniform Altaic vowel harmony probably never existed, regardless of whether one choses to believe in the genetic or the areal character of the Altaic linguistic community. Rather, several types of vowel harmony evolved in Central and North Asia. This is why Shirô Hattori speaks, and is right to do so, of "vowel harmonies [in plural – M.S.] of the Altaic languages", in the title of his paper which concludes as follows:

When we start our travel from the west into the Altaic world including Korean and Japanese, we see the vowel harmony decaying more and more as we proceed eastward, and find it disappear when we reach Japan (Hattori 1982: 214).

Thus, as was mentioned above, one should only speak of a possibility of *Turkic* influence on Slavic whereas the Altaic background can, from the Slavistic point of view, easily be ignored.

Three types of vowel harmony (= vowel assimilation) have evolved in Turkic: palatal-velar<sup>13</sup> harmony ( $a - a, \ddot{o} - e$ ), labial-illabial one ( $a - \iota, \ddot{o} - \ddot{u}$ ) as well as so-called labial attraction ( $o - o, \ddot{o} - \ddot{o}$ ). The terms mislead a little because both labial harmony and labial attraction also in fact incorporate palato-velar harmony.

Palatal harmony is generally accepted as the oldest form of vowel harmony in Altaic, and there is no reason to question this view. Rather, one should ask how old it is. It occurs in all the Turkic languages and is the basis for labial harmony and attraction which is why today we generally assume it for the Proto-Turkic stage and the fathers of the Altaic hypothesis did not doubt its original Proto-Altaic character, at least for Proto-Turkic, Proto-Mongolic and Proto-Tungusic (Poppe 1960: 147). That opinion is hardly shared by all Oriental linguists today. Its opponent is, for instance, S.E. Martin whose opinion is very similar to Hattori's viewpoint (see above):

As to vowel harmony, that seems to have developed independently in each of the families here discussed, except Japanese, where there is but scant evidence that it ever existed (Martin 1996: 61).

Even if there ever was a Proto-Altaic harmony it could not have been an established assimilation mechanism because we know there have existed both Turkic-Mongolian and inner Turkic inconsistencies. The former ones are not of great importance for specialists in Slavic linguistics and I am not going to discuss them here. Examples of inconsistencies can be found in any grammar of Old Turkic. The best known case is the possessive suffix of the 3rd person singular which occurs in the nominative as  $-(s)\bar{i}$  and in the accusative as  $-(s)\bar{i}-n$  (Tekin 1968: 123, 128sq.; Ölmez 2017: 51, 53) – but importantly, in both cases only ever in the palatal variant.

The Turkic proportion  $l : \bar{l}$  (e.g., Turkish plural suffix  $-ler$  [l] vs.  $-lar$  [l̄]) does not perfectly fit the other proportions  $\acute{k} : \acute{k}$  and  $\acute{g} : \acute{g}$  because Turkic  $l$  is a so-called “clear  $l$ ”, neither velarized nor palatalized. Put differently:

soft consonants:	$\acute{k}, \acute{g}$
clear consonants	$l$
velar consonants:	$k, g, \bar{l}$

<sup>13</sup> The term “velar” is traditionally used for all non-palatal vowels in Turkic linguistics so that also the more or less centrally pronounced  $a$  falls under “velar” because its phonological function in the vowel harmony is that of velar vowels.

We cannot know for sure whether the Proto-Turkic phonetic proportions were identical but opposing arguments seem to lack. For further discussion see section 5.

An additional difference can be seen in vocalic notations. In Slavic linguistics, we do not doubt that the first palatalization affected consonants before *ĩ, ĩ, ě, ě*, whereas I put vowels *before* consonants in my transcription of the runic alphabet. Two interwoven orthographic rules of the Old Turkic script make me do that: “Initial vowel was not written, unless long. Word-final vowel was always written”. Such rules are only reasonable if the consonant runes have the VC structure rather than a CV one. That difference, too, speaks against systematic similarity of Proto-Slavic and Proto-Turkic syllables.

## 5. Final remarks

I will try to present my ideas, objections and explanations of some aspects of our problem below. Most of my remarks exclude or at least cast doubt on some arguments of my predecessors and, thus, undermine the traditional Jakobson’s model of Proto-Turkic influence on Proto-Slavic. However, not every point will be negative. Some thoughts will more or less concisely repeat insights mentioned above if this is necessary to show new aspect or aspects.

The first doubt concerns the time and space of the contact. Stadnik (2001: 183) says that both palatalization and velarization are phenomena of areal character but she does not suggest any specific region or period. Galton (1997: 18sq.) counts on (Pannonian) Avars and (European) Huns – indeed, nothing could be easier than referring to dead languages nobody knows anything about. Avars were a federation of various peoples and we cannot say for certain how many different ethnē it included or what languages they spoke. Pannonian Avars, certainly different in ethnic terms from their Caucasian ancestors, established supremacy over Slavic tribes in the end of the 6th century. We do not know, however, whether they spoke a Turkic language at the time. If they did, we do not know what language it was exactly and whether it had vowel harmony. Further, what kind of vowel harmony it was and whether Avarian-Slavic bilingualism was any common if there are no Avar words in Slavic. Additionally, the end of the 6th century in Pannonia was too late to affect all the Slavic languages. Exactly the same can be said of European Huns, their multiethnic confederations and the languages used by the confederated tribes in Europe as well as more than one hundred years earlier in Asia. Referring to languages of (Pannonian) Avars or (European) Huns is as vague as speaking of the influence of the Soviet language or a loanword from Yugoslavian<sup>14</sup>. Some see it even harsher:

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<sup>14</sup> For Bulgar-Turkic and Slavic see Dybo 2019:79.

- a) Wir wissen nicht, was die Hun sprachen.
- b) Wir wissen nicht, was die Hiung-nu sprachen.
- c) Wir wissen nicht, was die Hunnen sprachen.
- d) Wir dürfen vermuten, daß weder Hiung-nu noch das Hunnische zu irgendeiner bekannten (oder gar lebenden bekannten) Sprachfamilie gehört, es sich vielmehr [...] dabei um ausgestorbene Sprachgruppen handelt (Doerfer 1973: 46).

From the viewpoint of the history of linguistic ideas, Galton went far away from Jakobson's (1931 = 1962: 187) "languages surrounding the Altaic world", both in the geographical and chronological sense.

Regardless of what phonologists and diachronic linguists say, the problem of time and space of the Proto-Slavic–Proto-Turkic contact will always require an explanation. Also the sociolinguistic aspect has to be taken into account – admittedly, a reliable bilingual contact situation cannot be proven beyond any doubt but a credible scenario should at least be suggested.

Next, there is a degree of imbalance between Slavic palatal consonants (various phonemes independent of vowel backness) and Turkic ones (three allophones  $k'$ ,  $g'$ ,  $l'$  which depend on the adjacent vowels). It was mentioned above that one tacitly equates the occurrence of palatal vowels with the palatality of consonants. However, Turkologists, who are more often than not, trained in Turkish, apply modern Turkish phonotactic rules to the reading of Old Turkic inscriptions: they read the rune  $k^2$  as  $Ek'$  (with  $E$  = palatal vowel) and  $g^2$  as  $Eg'$ , but the rune  $r^2$  is read  $Er$ , not  $*Er'$  because there is no  $r'$  in contemporary Turkish. Similarly, the rune  $l^2$  is viewed as denoting  $Et$ , not  $*Et'$ , and even  $l^2$  is read  $El$  rather than  $El'$ , and so on. Other possibilities are generally not discussed at all<sup>15</sup>. The model  $Ag$  vs.  $Eg$  (with  $A$  = non-palatal vowel) is very likely, indeed, but it is not inevitable. It seems rather probable that some of those consonants could have had entirely different phonetic values. We have three signs for  $n$ , that is,  $n^1 = An$ ,  $n^2 = En$  and  $n^3 = \acute{n}$  = palatal  $n$ , regardless of the adjacent vowel. In other words: The rune  $n^2$  did not signal palatal  $n$  – that was rendered with an altogether different rune. It is quite likely that also other consonants with 2 were only used to mark the palatality of the adjacent vowel, not that of the consonant itself. If this conjecture is correct, there were in Old Turkic  $Ek$  and  $Eg$ , not  $Ek'$  and  $Eg'$  (just as  $Eb$ ,  $Ed$ ,  $En$ ,  $Er$ ,  $Es$ ,  $Et$  and even  $Ej$ ). And the system we presented above should be modified to:

clear consonants	$k, g, l$
velar consonants:	$k', g', l'$

Which makes the Proto-Turkic consonant system involved in vowel harmony still less similar to that of Slavic consonants.

<sup>15</sup> For instance, (pre-)Proto-Turkic consonant phonemes, which did not originally depend on the adjacent vowel:  $le$ ,  $la$ ,  $le$ ,  $la$ , and only later: (1)  $le$ ,  $le > le$ ; (2)  $la$ ,  $la > la$ , and so on.

Last but not least: Why there are no other traces of Proto-Turkic influence such as, for example, *ö* and *ü*, loanwords, syntactic constructions, numerous past tenses or mental categories (as, for instance, the narrative ~ inferential mood)?

In view of all those doubts, inaccuracies and unanswered questions, it will be more prudent to not ascribe the origin of Slavic soft consonants to a Turkic influence.

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## Summary

The origin of Proto-Slavic palatal(ized) consonants has interested many linguists. Some of them have tried to connect palatality and velarity of Slavic consonants with the influence of Turkic consonant palatalization or velarization dependent on vowel harmony. This paper is a first study allowing for Turkological point of view and striving to show that there still are many doubts about the Proto-Turkic influence on Proto-Slavic.

**Keywords:** Proto-Slavic, Proto-Turkic, vowel harmony, palatal consonants, languages in contact.