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METHODOLOGICAL JOURNAL**<http://mentaljournal-jspu.uz/index.php/mesmj/index>**KHOREZM TURKIC AND ITS HISTORICAL-LINGUISTIC FEATURES:
FORMATION, DEVELOPMENT, AND SCHOLARLY INTERPRETATIONS*****Dilnoza Akramovna Abduvalieva****Doctoral of Philosophy (PhD) in Philology, Associate Professor**Jizzakh State Pedagogical University*a.dilnoza1981@gmail.com*Jizzakh, Uzbekistan***ABOUT ARTICLE**

Key words: Khorezm Turkic; Middle Turkic period; Turkification; Karakhanid Turkic; Chagatai Turkic; Golden Horde; Oghuz-Kipchak languages; historical linguistics; Turkic literary language; Central Asia.

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Abstract: This article examines the historical-linguistic features of Khorezm Turkic, focusing on its formation, development, and scholarly interpretations within the broader context of Turkic language history. It traces the linguistic situation of the Khorezm region from the ancient period, when Eastern Iranian languages predominated, to the gradual process of Turkification between the 11th and 13th centuries. Particular attention is given to the emergence of Khorezm Turkic as a mixed linguistic system shaped by the interaction of Karakhanid, Oghuz, and Kipchak elements, reflecting the complex ethnic composition of the region. The study highlights the role of Khorezm as a major cultural and literary center, especially during the Golden Horde period, and its contribution to the development of a new written Turkic language within the Kipchak branch. It also discusses the transitional nature of Khorezm Turkic between Karakhanid and Chagatai Turkic, emphasizing its significance as a distinct stage of the Middle Turkic period. Various scholarly perspectives—particularly those of Bartold, Samoylovich, Köprülü, and others—are analyzed to demonstrate differing approaches to periodization and classification. Furthermore, the article addresses debates concerning the linguistic attribution of key

literary monuments and introduces the concept of “Khorezm–Golden Horde Turkic” as a unified historical-linguistic framework. It argues that, due to the lack of clearly defined criteria distinguishing these closely related linguistic layers, a comprehensive and comparative approach is necessary. Overall, the study underscores the importance of Khorezm Turkic in bridging earlier and later stages of Turkic literary language development and in shaping the foundations of classical Chagatai.

Introduction. The history of Turkic languages represents a complex and multi-layered process shaped by diverse ethnic, political, and cultural interactions across Central Asia. Among the stages of this development, Khorezm Turkic occupies a particularly significant position as a transitional linguistic phase between Karakhanid and Chagatai Turkic. The Khorezm region, located along the lower reaches of the Syr Darya and the Amu Darya, functioned as one of the major cultural and intellectual centers of the medieval Turkic world. Its strategic geographical location facilitated intensive contacts between sedentary and nomadic populations, which in turn influenced linguistic evolution.

Initially dominated by Eastern Iranian languages, the region underwent a gradual process of Turkification beginning in the early medieval period. This transformation was closely linked to the migration and settlement of Oghuz, Kipchak, and other Turkic tribes. As a result, a new linguistic environment emerged in which Iranian and Turkic elements coexisted and interacted, eventually giving rise to Khorezm Turkic as a distinct linguistic formation. The language reflects a synthesis of various Turkic dialectal features, particularly in its phonology, morphology, and lexicon.

Khorezm Turkic also played a crucial role in the development of written Turkic literary traditions, especially during the Golden Horde and early Timurid periods. Numerous literary and religious works produced in this language demonstrate both continuity with earlier traditions and innovation that paved the way for the emergence of Chagatai Turkic. Despite its importance, however, the linguistic status and classification of Khorezm Turkic remain subjects of scholarly debate.

Therefore, the present study aims to examine the formation, development, and historical-linguistic characteristics of Khorezm Turkic, as well as to analyze its interpretation in Turkological scholarship.

During the ancient period (from the first millennium BCE to the 4th–5th centuries CE), Khorezm was one of the major centers of civilization in Central Asia, with its population

predominantly composed of Eastern Iranian tribes. Culturally and linguistically, these groups were closely related to the inhabitants of Sogdiana and Bactria. Nomadic tribes living in the surrounding regions, such as the Massagetae and the Saka, also spoke Eastern Iranian languages.

The principal language of the region was Khwarezmian, which was closely related to the Avestan language and possessed its own writing system. At the same time, Sogdian was widely used in trade and cultural exchanges. Although Turkic tribes began to enter the region during the 3rd–5th centuries CE, they had not yet achieved a dominant position. The Turkic component became more prominent in subsequent periods.

The Arab geographer Yaqut al-Hamawi (1219–1220) also provided accounts of the land of Khorezm, the population of the Kardar region, and its cities based on his own observations. In his work, he describes Urgench (al-Jurjaniyya) as follows: “Among the cities I have seen, it was the most beautiful.” Yaqut al-Hamawi further noted that “the people of Kardar speak in a distinct manner, neither entirely Khwarezmian nor Turkic,” indicating the existence of a unique local dialect [8, 240].

By the 12th century CE, the process of Turkification of the Khwarezmian language in the Khorezm region proceeded gradually and in stages. Initially, the arrival of Turkic tribes led to the emergence of bilingualism, with Khwarezmian and Turkic languages being used side by side. Over time, the demographic and political prominence of Turkic languages increased, and they became the primary means of everyday communication and administration, while the sphere of use of the ancient Khwarezmian language gradually narrowed. By the 12th century, the Iranian Khwarezmian language slowly fell out of use, and Turkic languages began to replace it.

Materials and methods. This study is based on a qualitative analysis of historical and linguistic sources related to Khorezm Turkic. The primary materials include medieval written monuments such as “Muhabbatnama,” “Qisasi Rabghuzi,” and “Nahj al-faradis,” as well as relevant historical accounts and literary texts. In addition, the research draws on the works of prominent Turkologists, including Vasily V. Bartold, Alexander N. Samoylovich, Mehmet Fuat Köprülü, and Johannes Benzing. The methods employed include comparative-historical analysis, descriptive linguistic analysis, and textual interpretation. These approaches are used to identify the phonetic, lexical, and grammatical features of Khorezm Turkic and to examine its place within the broader development of Turkic literary languages.

Results and discussion. Khorezm Turkic is a form of the Turkic language that emerged in the 11th–12th centuries in the region of Khorezm, which had become Turkified both in its

ethnic composition and political life, as a result of the sedentarization of Oghuz, Kipchak, and Kangli tribes. It is the designation given to a Turkic linguistic form that developed on the basis of Karakhanid Turkic—belonging to the eastern branch of Turkic—through its interaction and blending with Oghuz Turkic of the southwestern branch and Kipchak Turkic of the northwestern branch within this region. For this reason, just as the ethnic composition of the population was mixed, the resulting language also exhibited a similarly mixed character.

Under the influence of the spoken elements of Oghuz, Kipchak, and other Turkic tribes that had settled in the Khorezm region, Khorezm Turkic developed a distinctive structure, particularly in terms of its morphological system and vocabulary. These features constitute its most important linguistic characteristics.

The Turkologist Gülden Sağol, in discussing Khorezm Turkic, states the following: “In the early periods of Islam, the language spoken in Khorezm was in fact an Iranian language, namely the Khwarezmian dialect, which differed considerably from other Iranian dialects. The process of Turkification of Khorezm, which began in the 11th century, continued until the 13th century, and it was only after this process that a new literary language emerged in Khorezm and its adjacent regions. In this Turkification process, the Oghuz and Kipchaks played a primary role, while the Khalaj, Kimaks, Bayavut, Kangli, and various other nomadic Turkic tribes also exerted a significant influence. As a result, these ethnic elements shaped not only the ethnic composition of the region but also its distinctive linguistic features. The dialect that developed on this basis was closely connected with the Karakhanid written language and represents Khorezm Turkic, which emerged through the convergence of the dialects of the Oghuz, Kipchak, Kangli, and other Turkic tribes [7, 804]”.

Evidence for the use of the term Khorezm Turkic as the designation of a language belonging to a specific transitional period—namely, the stage between Karakhanid Turkic and Chagatai Turkic—can be found in Alisher Navoi’s work *Majolis un-nafois*.

While providing information about the Khorezmian scholar Husayn Khorezmi and his commentary on *Qasidayi Burda*, the author states: “Mawlānā Husayn Khorezmi was a disciple of Khwāja Abulvafā (quddisa sirruhu) in the outward sciences and his follower in the inner sciences. Mawlānā is among the distinguished figures of his time, and *Maqsadi aqso* is his composition. He also wrote a commentary on the *Masnavi* of Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (quddisa sirruhu), and likewise composed a commentary on the *Qasidayi Burda* in the Khorezmian Turkic language” [10].

The Khorezm region, together with the lower reaches of the Syr Darya, held an important position as a second major literary center alongside Kashgar in the East even prior to the

Mongol period. This region maintained its significance during the period of the Golden Horde and, from the Mongol invasion in 1220 until 1379, remained politically subordinate to the Golden Horde. For this reason, the Mongol conquest did not hinder the development of Turkic literature influenced by Islam in this area.

The cultural activity that flourished in Khorezm in the late 13th century spread in the 14th century to Sarai, the capital of the Golden Horde, and to Crimea. Many scholars, poets, and writers migrated from Khorezm to the territories of the Golden Horde, thereby contributing to the wider dissemination of the Turkic language used in these regions. In this regard, the view of Alexander N. Samoylovich that Khorezm played a leading role in the development of the literary language of the Golden Horde is well-founded.

Thus, as a result of the interaction between local dialects used in the Golden Horde territories and Khorezm Turkic, a new written language emerged within the Kipchak branch of the Turkic language. It is natural that the literary language of the Golden Horde, or the Jochid Ulus, which developed under the influence of Khorezm Turkic, differed from the literary language that originated in the Khorezm region itself. However, to date, there have not been sufficient studies that clearly delineate these differences within the Turkic linguistic sphere of this region [3, 13].

Although the wide geographical use of this literary language increased its overall communicative significance, it did not fully ensure the complete standardization of linguistic units or the formation of a stable normative system. As a result, in the language of this period, older and newer forms appear in an intermixed manner, blending with phonetic, lexical, and grammatical features characteristic of local dialects. This stage of linguistic development reached its conclusion during the Timurid period, after which it was replaced in the subsequent historical stage by Chagatai Turkic.

According to the views of Mehmet Fuat Köprülü, all written literary monuments produced in the 14th century across Turkestan, Khurasan, Khorezm, and the territories of the Golden Horde should be considered within the scope of Chagatai Turkic. The scholar emphasizes that, although certain dialectal differences are present in works produced in these regions, it is essential not to overlook philological features in the process of periodizing the history of language and literature. However, as a primary criterion in periodization, it is important to take into account overarching historical and literary characteristics as a fundamental scientific principle.

From this perspective, the Mongol conquest is regarded as a key general historical factor in the formation of Chagatai Turkic. The literary features upon which 15th-century Chagatai

literature is based differ significantly from those of earlier works. For this reason, Köprülü evaluates works of the 13th–14th centuries within the framework of the early Chagatai period. At the same time, he divides this period into three main developmental directions: literary development in the Timurid realm; literary development in the Golden Horde; and literary development in Khorezm.

According to him, the long historical process that connects the 12th-century Khāqāniyya Turkic with the 15th-century classical Chagatai language is associated initially with literary activity in the territories of the Chagatai and Ilkhanid states, and later with that of Khorezm and the Golden Horde. This process of literary development reached full maturity during the Timurid period, particularly in the second half of the 15th century, ultimately leading—through the activity of Alisher Navoi and writers belonging to his literary milieu—to the formation of the classical Chagatai literary language.

Köprülü analyzes among the works of the early Chagatai period texts such as “Husraw and Shirin”, “Muhabbatnama”, and “Jumjumanoma”; among those associated with the Golden Horde, “Qissayi Yusuf” by Ali and “Qisasi Rabghuzi” by Rabghuzi; and among those produced in the Khorezm literary environment, works such as “Mu’in al-murid” and “Nahj al-faradis.” The scholar explains the differences observed among these works by the existence of various political and literary centers of the time, the affiliation of poets and authors with different social groups and geographical regions, as well as cultural distinctions between these regions [5, 275-285].

Vasily V. Bartold, in his study “Lectures on the History of the Turks of Central Asia”, associates the formation of Chagatai Turkic with the historical processes that followed the Mongol conquest. In his view, this literary language emerged as a result of the interactions between Turkestan and the Golden Horde, as well as the influence of the Khorezm region on the cultural life of Turkestan. Thus, the scholar emphasizes that the linguistic traditions of Khorezm and Golden Horde Turkic constituted an important transitional stage in the formation of Chagatai Turkic.

Another Turkologist who identified Khorezm Turkic as a distinct stage in the history of the Central Asian Turkic literary language is Alexander N. Samoylovich [9, 184]. Alexander N. Samoylovich, based on the linguistic features of Qutb’s “Husraw and Shirin” and Khorezmi’s “Muhabbatnama,” divides the history of the development of the Central Asian Turkic literary language into three periods and refers to Khorezm Turkic as Oghuz–Kipchak Turkic. According to him, the historical development of the Turkic language consisted of three stages:

- the first stage is the period of Karakhanid, or Khāqāniyya Turkic, whose center of activity was Kashgar and which corresponds to the 11th–12th centuries;
- the second stage is the Oghuz–Kipchak period, formed around the Syr Darya basin and the Khorezm center, covering the 13th–14th centuries;
- the third stage is the period of Chagatai Turkic, which began with the rule of the Timurids and developed in the Chagatai domains (from the 15th century to the beginning of the 20th century).

Ahmet Caferoğlu emphasizes that, despite the vast geographical spread of the Turkic world during this period, a common literary language existed among the Turkic peoples, on the basis of which a rich body of literature was created. He classifies Central Asian Turkic into three periods, taking into account different cultural centers as well as the ethnic and other characteristics of Turkic tribes [4, 74]: The first period is the Turkic language that developed around Kashgar beginning from the Karakhanid era, also referred to as Khāqāniyya or Eastern Turkic; the second period is Khorezm or Golden Horde Turkic, which developed in Western Turkestan, particularly in the Syr Darya basin and various centers of Khorezm; and the third period is the era of Chagatai Turkic, regarded as the most prominent stage in the history of the Central Asian Turkic language.

Johannes Benzing, who analyzed historical and modern Turkic languages together, includes the modern Uzbek and Uyghur languages within the group of Eastern Turkic languages and expresses the following view regarding historical Turkic languages: Johannes Benzing states: “Within this group, there exists a rich body of historical material that has been transmitted continuously since the Old Uyghur language of the 8th–9th centuries. The 13th-century Chagatai language, as well as the later Uzbek and New Uyghur languages, also belong to this tradition. Furthermore, Karakhanid and Khorezm Turkic constitute an essential part of this historical linguistic stratum” [2, 5].

This stage of the Turkic language—referred to as Khorezm Turkic (in the terminology of Alisher Navoi) and as Oghuz–Kipchak Turkic (according to Alexander N. Samoylovich)—is generally regarded in Turkological scholarship as a distinct phase of the Middle Turkic period. Although some scholars have used alternative designations for this stage, it is widely recognized as an independent period in the history of Turkic languages.

However, due to the relatively late publication of works belonging to this stage of the language and the incomplete study of Khorezm Turkic grammar, Turkologists have evaluated these texts differently, assigning them to various phases of the Middle Turkic period. For example, Ahmet Caferoğlu classified one of the most important works of Khorezm Turkic,

“Qisasi Rabghuzi” by Rabghuzi, within the first group of the Middle Turkic period, namely the Khāqāniyya (Karakhanid) Turkic sphere, and considered it alongside “Atebat al-Haqayiq” by Ahmad Yugnaki and the hikmats of Ahmad Yasawi. He explains the linguistic differences among these works by the regions in which they were written and by the new linguistic elements that developed within those regions.

The linguistic classification of one of the important written monuments of this period, “Nahj al-faradis,” remains a subject of debate in Turkological scholarship. In particular, Zeki Velidi Togan argues that the work was composed on the basis of Khorezm Turkic. On the other hand, Evgeny N. Nadjib, relying on the views of Shihabuddin Marjani, attempts to substantiate with scholarly evidence that the work was written in Volga Bulgar Turkic [6, 36-37].

The Hungarian Turkologist János Eckmann, in his study devoted to Khorezm Turkic, systematically classifies the literary monuments of this period and specifically highlights works such as “Muhabbatnama,” “Miftāḥ al-‘adl,” “Mi‘rājnāma,” “Mu‘in al-murid,” “Nahj al-faradis,” “Qisasi Rabghuzi,” and “Husraw and Shirin.” He also provides concise scholarly descriptions of these works [1, 183-223].

In the study “Khorezm–Golden Horde Turkic” by Aysu Ata, the primary criteria for classifying the works of this period are taken to be the geographical region in which the texts were produced and the regional origin of their authors [3, 12-46]. On this basis, works such as “Muqaddimat al-adab,” Rabghuzi’s “Qisasi anbiyo,” “Nahj al-faradis,” “Mu‘in al-murid,” and the interlinear Qur’an translation are interpreted as monuments of Khorezm Turkic. At the same time, relying on the same criteria, Qutb’s “Husraw and Shirin,” “Muhabbatnama,” “Mi‘rājnāma,” “Dostoni Jumujuma,” as well as various decrees and inscriptions from the Golden Horde territories, are collectively classified under the designation “Khorezm–Golden Horde literary monuments,” and their similar and differing grammatical features are analyzed comparatively.

In the study, the introduction of the term “Khorezm–Golden Horde” into scholarly usage is explained primarily by the insufficient development of clear criteria for distinguishing the linguistic differences between Golden Horde Turkic and Khorezm Turkic. As a result, rather than strictly separating these two linguistic layers, the need arises to study them comprehensively within a unified historical-linguistic framework.

Conclusion. Khorezm Turkic represents a crucial transitional stage in the historical development of Turkic languages, linking the Karakhanid written tradition with the later formation of Chagatai Turkic. Its emergence was the result of complex socio-political and ethnolinguistic processes, particularly the gradual Turkification of the Khorezm region and the interaction of Oghuz, Kipchak, and other Turkic tribal elements. As a mixed linguistic system, it

reflects both continuity with earlier Turkic forms and innovation shaped by regional and cultural dynamics.

The study demonstrates that Khorezm functioned as a major cultural and literary center, especially during the Golden Horde period, contributing significantly to the spread and development of Turkic written language across a wide geographical area. At the same time, the lack of full standardization and the coexistence of diverse dialectal features highlight the transitional nature of this linguistic stage.

Scholarly interpretations of Khorezm Turkic vary, particularly regarding its classification, boundaries, and relationship with Golden Horde and Chagatai Turkic. These differences stem largely from the insufficiently developed criteria for distinguishing closely related linguistic layers and the late publication and incomplete study of key sources.

In conclusion, Khorezm Turkic should be regarded as an independent and significant phase within the Middle Turkic period, playing a foundational role in the evolution of Central Asian Turkic literary languages and in shaping the emergence of classical Chagatai.

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