

## Lexical-Semantic Analysis of Socio-Political Lexemes in the Altın Orda Khan Tokhtamysh's yarlıġ to Grand Duke Jogaila

**Abstract.** *The article examines the language of the historical document, Yarlıġ, the message from Altın Orda (The Golden Horde) Khan Tokhtamysh to the Grand Duke of Lithuania and then King of Poland, Wladyslaw Jogaila, which was published approximately in 1393. In the era of Altın Orda, Jochid rulers issued many decrees and messages both for internal affairs and external relations. These decrees and messages contain rich historical and linguistic information. During the rule of Altın Orda, there is a significant part of these letters were written in the Kipchak language. The study of the linguistic system of these edicts and decrees, particularly the lexical semantics, is relevant and necessary for Turkic studies. The article aims to examine the socio-political lexemes of the document, reveal their semantic potentials in syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations, and mark word-forming associative units as a part of the semantic field based on the text. To accomplish the purposes, the author also uses etymological and comparative methods. The study on the semantics of the Yarlıġ makes it possible to interpret the cultural and socio-political situation of the Eurasia Steppe under the rule of Altın Orda from a new perspective.*

**Keywords:** *Altın Orda yarlıġ, semantic field, socio-political lexemes, semantic analysis.*

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### Introduction

The Kipchaks, a nomadic people in the Eurasian Steppe, were mainly active in the 10th-13th centuries. During the 9th-11th centuries, Kipchaks were attached to the Kimak Khanate and then became a large tribe in the western part of the Khanate. By the beginning of the 11th century, the Kipchaks had annexed the Kimak Khanate, occupied its territory, then expanded westward to where once been called Oguz steppes (mostly in nowadays Kazakhstan) and the Caspian Sea. Later, they conquered southern Russia. During the peak, their political influence reached the border of the Byzantine Empire by the Danube and then became a powerful nomadic

confederation in Eurasia when it comes to the 12th century. Other neighboring ethnic groups called the Kipchaks differently. Kipchaks were called «Cumans» by Western Europeans; «Borovits» by the Slavic people in the Southern Russia steppe. In the early 13th century, Kipchaks were annexed by the Mongol Empire after the disastrous defeat by the Kalka River in 1223. Since then, a new political power, *Altın Orda*, had shaped and taken the swath of land stretching from Central Asia to Eastern Europe [1, 137-138 p.].

Despite the Mongol origins of *Altın Orda*, the Khanate was soon culturally and linguistically assimilated by the enormous Kipchak-speaking tribes living in its realm. Most scholars agree that the Mongol invasion was the watershed

between Old Turkic and Middle Turkic. With social structures broken up and ethnic geography rearranged, those Turkic tribes which had been relatively isolated were able to interact with each other in the boundless Mongol empire; this had the effect of enhancing Turkic linguistic contacts and leveling [2, 5-6 p.]. The Jochid rulers had been assimilated by the Kipchaks shortly after the establishment of *Altın Orda*, and many court letters and decrees are also in Kipchak, such as the edicts of Tokhtamysh. [3, 101-102 p.].

Tokhtamysh is considered the last great ruler of *Altın Orda*, who unified both *Aq Orda* (the White Horde) and *Kök Orda* (the Blue Horde). With the help of Amir Temir, Tokhtamysh defeated Urus Khan, the former *Aq Orda* Khan, and took the throne. From 1381 to 1382, Tokhtamysh occupied Kazan (a city in southwest Russia) and won the war against Mamai, a powerful military commander of *Altın Orda*, and the Muscovite Rus. After several military triumphs, Tokhtamysh's ruling territory stretched from Balkhash Lake to Crimea and [4, 54-55 p.]. successfully reunited *Altın Orda*. However, the success only lasted a decade until Amir Timur crushed Tokhtamysh's army and raided *Sarai* (located near nowadays Astrakhan)

This *Yarliğ* was written to the Grand Duke of Lithuania, Wladyslaw Jogaila, in 795 of the Islamic calendar (1393 in the Gregorian calendar). There are 25 lines in this *yarliğ*. Tokhtamysh's *yarliğ* is written in the Old Uighur scripts and the language is Middle Kipchak. The manuscript is now preserved in the Central Archives of Historical Records of Warsaw. [5, 97 p.].

The content of the *Yarliğ* is as follows: Tokhtamysh mentions that he has succeeded to the throne and exchanged envoys with Jogaila. In addition, Tokhtamysh mentions the existing estrangements and conflicts between himself and several princes, and orders Jogaila to prepare and submit the taxes from the areas which belong to *Altın Orda*. [6, 135-136 p.].

### Discussion of previous studies on Kipchak studies

Many scholars have done much work on the topic of Middle Kipchak. The history of studies

on the Kipchak language can be dated back to early ages. The first scholar who described the Kipchaks' language and collected the relative language materials was Mahmud Kashgari. In his book, *Dīwān Lughāt al-Turk* (abbr. DLT), the author recorded many Kipchak words and discussed the linguistic phenomena of the language. In the 14th century, Ibn Muhanna compiled an Arabic-Persian-Turkic-Mongolian lexicon. Six copies of this dictionary are now in a collection in Oxford, U.K., Berlin, Germany, Paris, France, and Istanbul, Turkey. In 1880, the Hungarian scholar G. Kunn translated the full text of Codex Cumanicus into Latin and published it in Budapest. In 1887, Radrov published a Cuman-German dictionary based on G. Kunn's research, which collected 3000 words. In 1973, Romanian scholar V. Drimba published his work "A study on Cuman Syntax" [3, 101-102 p.].

In 1950, the Soviet scholar M. Obolensky found this Tokhtamysh's *yarliğ* in the archives of the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Then he published a research paper, *Yarlik hana zolotoy ordi tohtamisa k polskomu karolyu yagayla(1392-93), 'A yarliğ written to Polish King Jogaila by Altın Orda Khan Tokhtamysh'* [5, 97 p.]. Then, this *yarliğ* was introduced by the Turkish scholar A. M. Oyzetgin in 1996 and collected into her book *Altın Ordu, Kırım ve Kazan sahasına ait yarlık ve bitiklerin dil ve üslup incelemesi: inceleme, metin, tercüme, notlar, dizin, tıpkibasım'*, 'Linguistic and stylistic analysis of decrees and documents belonging to Altın Ordu, Crimea and Kazan: review, text, translation, notes, index, facsimile'.

### Methodolgy

Socio-political lexemes are essential to the Kipchak studies, for analyzing socio-political lexemes provides an insight into the linguistic features of Middle Kipchak and an interpretation of the socio-political environment and culture at the time from a new perspective. Therefore, related scientific methods are needed to help the study accomplish its purpose.

The combination of synchronic and diachronic lexical-semantic analysis methods is necessary for this study. Firstly, the study focuses on a detailed description of the semantic field of

socio-political lexemes so that we could observe the semantic changes and relations from the micro respect. For that, the diachronic analysis could trace back the semantic evolution of the words and phrases, and compare them with the modern Turkic languages. Secondly, the article intends to describe and reveal the syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations between the words within the theory of the semantic field and reveal the possible associative relations, related phrases, and word forms stemming out of each word and phrase within the semantic field. In this way, the structure of Middle Kipchack politics-related words, the extended meanings, and other semantic features can be thoroughly presented.

Etymological and comparative methods are also vital in the process of studying the lexical-semantic system of the socio-political lexemes in Tokhtamysh's *yarliġ*. By comparing similar lexemes in the *yarliġ* with the related materials of the same period, the author is in hope of finding the similarities and differences and drawing some valuable conclusions.

### Analysis

Analyzing socio-political lexemes provides an understanding of the political environment and culture at the time. In the following part, the study will describe and analyze the socio-political words and phrases collected from the text. The text is quoted from A. Melek Oyzetgin's work, *Altın Ordu, Kırım ve Kazan sahasına ait yarlık ve bitiklerin dil ve üslûp incelemesi: inceleme, metin, tercüme, notlar, dizin, tıpkıbasım*. The selected words and phrases (arranged in order of occurrence) from Tokhtamysh's *yarliġ* are *uluġ orun*, *oġlan*, *beg*, *il*, *yosun*, *ulus*, *altun nisan*, *yarliġ*, *ordu*.

#### *Uluġ orun*

There are no available resources at present for an explanation of this phrase in dictionaries. No traces have been found in either Old Turkic written materials (Old Turkic inscriptions, Old Uighur manuscripts, DLT, etc.) or modern Turkic languages (Kazakh, Uyghur, Turkish, etc.). The occurrence of the phrase seems abrupt. However, according to the context, *uluġ orunġa olturgan*

*ergeyin...*' since I sat on the great seat' [6, 105 p., 135p.], it is evident that the meaning of the phrase is 'throne', the symbol of 'imperial power'. As the absence of the phrase in older or modern Turkic languages, *uluġ orun* is likely a result of language contact and could be a loan translation from the Chinese phrase 大位/大位次 (*Da-Wei/Da-Wei-Ci*), whose direct translation is also 'great seat', and an alternative expression of 'throne'. In *Cihai*, the grand dictionary and encyclopedia of Standard Mandarin Chinese, the definition of 大位 (*Da-Wei*) is 'throne' [7]. In contrast to the rare occurrence of *uluġ orun* in Turkic languages, *Da-Wei* was very frequently used in ancient Chinese imperial decrees. As the Mongols established empires both in China and Eurasian Steppe, this phrase was likely adopted by the Mongol rulers from the Chinese language. Accordingly, this Chinese phrase is also met in the imperial decrees of the Yuan dynasty. One of the most famous is the *yarliġ* issued by Yesün Temür, who was a great-grandson of Kublai Khan and the 6th emperor of the Yuan dynasty of China from 1323 to 1328. He issued this *yarliġ* as an announcement of his succession to the throne. In his *yarliġ*, the phrase 大位/大位次 (*Da-Wei/Da-Wei-Ci*) has been met several times. For instance, 大位次不宜久虚· · · · · 大位次里合坐地的体例有· · · · · [8, 639 p.], translation: the grand seat (throne) shall not be empty for long· · · · · I have the lawful right to sit on the great seat· · · · · In summary, the phrase *uluġ orun* is likely a loan translation from the Chinese phrase 大位/大位次 (*Da-Wei/Da-Wei-Ci*).

#### *Oġlan*

Originally *oġlan* is the plural form of *oġul* 'son', and *-n* is the ancient plural suffix which is not used in modern Turkic languages. In old Turkic, the word *oġul* more likely implies 'offspring, child' and applies to both genders, see Old Turkic inscriptions, e.g. · · · · · *uri oġlın qul boltı, silik oġlın küñ boltı*· · · · · [Inscription of Kultegin (abbreviated as I in the following), the East side (abbreviated as E in the following) 7th line (abbreviated as number in the following)] '· · · · · the noble sons became slaves, the innocent girls became slave girls· · · · ·' [9, 122 p.]. However, the word, *oġlan*, loses its plural function in the later centuries

and becomes singular. For example, in DLT the word is noted as 'son', or 'male child' [10, 53 p.]. Further, in Tokhtamysh's *yarliġ*, the word carries the specific meaning of 'prince', e.g. *Hoca M'DYN başlı bir neçe oġlan-lar.....*, translation: the headman Hoca M'DYN and several princes [6, 105 p., 135 p.].

#### Beg

The word is an ancient Turkic title with a long history, and first seen in old Turkic inscriptions, e.g. *bāglāri yāmā bodunī yāmā tüz ārmīš ārinč* (I: E 3) 'both begs and people were loyal' [11, 121 p.]. G. Clauson believes the word is a loanword from the ancient Chinese word 伯 (*pāk/p'vk/po*) [11, 323 p.], which is convincing if we review Bernhard Karlgren's work, *Grammata Serica Recensa*. B. Karlgren denotes the Chinese word 伯 (*pāk/p'vk/po*) as feudal lord or chief [12, 207 p.]. Both the word form and the semantic meaning of 伯 (*pāk/p'vk/po*) is coordinated with the Old Turkic Beg 'the head of a clan, or tribe, a subordinate chief' [11, 323 p.]. In DLT, Mahmud Kashgari notes that beg has a metaphoric meaning of 'a wife's husband' because 'a husband is like a beg in a family' [10, 216 p.]. In Tokhtamysh's *yarliġ*, beg is still an official and honorary title, i.g. *Dawut başlı begler.....* and the person name, *begbolat* [6, 106 p.]. In the later centuries, the word survives several phonetic changes (-e>-i; -e/-e- ; -g/-y) and develops similar meanings in alternative societies; for example, bey in the Ottoman Empire came to mean 'a junior administrative officer' [11, 323 p.]; and biy in Kazakh, who is an eloquent judge who thoroughly knows the customs and traditions of Kazakh society, and who is both a lawyer and a judge who determines the merits of cases [13, 332 p.].

#### Il

Another variation of *il* is *el* due to the phonetic change (i>e). The original meaning is 'a political unit organized and ruled by an independent ruler'; the most convenient short term is 'realm' [11, 835 p.]. In DLT, Mahmud Kashgari records several definitions of the word. The first meaning is 'country', and Kašgari records a phrase, *Beg eli*, 'the realm of *Beg*'. The second meaning is 'emptiness, void', which seems not semantically linked to the original meaning. An example of it

is *qapuġ eli* 'the empty field in front of a gate'. The third meaning is an alternative name for horses. The fourth meaning is 'to make peace', which is semantically related to the original meaning. In this case, Kašgari gives the example as *eki il birlä el boldi* 'two countries become peace together'. This meaning is still preserved in modern Kazakh, which can be observed in the traditional Kazakh idiom, *eldestirmek elšiden* 'the mission of envoy is to make peace between realms' [14, 248 p.]. The last meaning he records is 'ignorable', which seems not semantically related to the original meaning [15, 77-78 p.]. In Tokhtamysh's *yarliġ*, the phrase, *il qiriġ*, whose direct translation is 'the edge of the realm', denotes the meaning of 'border' [6, 135 p.].

#### Yosun

*Yosun* is a Mongolian loanword that means 'manner, custom'; a word first noted in Old Uyghur civil documents [11, 1022 p.]. In modern Kazakh, the word is seldomly used but still keeps the meaning of 'manner, custom' in the phrase, *jol-josin* which means 'manner, custom'.

#### Ulus

The original form of the word is *uluš* in old Turkic, meaning 'country' [11, 153 p.]. The meaning later changes into 'city' in the 11th century, according to DLT [15, 91 p.]. Mahmud Kashgari mentions that *uluš* is the synonym of *šahr* ('city' in Persian). The word *uluš* was borrowed to Mongolian and became *ulus*. *Ulus* in Mongolian preserves the original meaning of 'country, nation' and is used for the largest political unit during the era of the Mongol empire (e.g. the official name of the Mongol empire is *Yeke Monggol Ulus* 'the nation of the great Mongols' in Mongolian or *kür uluġ ulus* 'the whole great nation' in Turkic) [16, 169 p.]. Similarly, Tokhtamysh refers to his empire (i.e. *Altın Orda*) as *uluġ ulus* 'the great nation' in his *yarliġ*.

The word only survives in the north-western language group of Turkic languages [11, 153 p.]. For example, the corresponding word in modern Kazakh is *ulis* (orthotopically *ulus*), and there is little semantic change. It gives the meaning of 'confederation of tribes' and the extended meaning of 'the whole nation' or 'the whole people' [17, 723 p.].



### *Altun nišan*

*Nišan* is a loan word from Persian, *nišan*, which means 'sign' or 'mark' [18, 1403 p.]. In Tokhtamysh's *yarliğ*, the phrase *altun nišan* 'gold seal' is used at the end of the decree to indicate his supreme political power. The corresponding word for *nišan* in Turkic is *tamğa*. In old Turkic, *tamğa* is originally a brand or mark of ownership placed on horses, cattle, and other livestock [11, 506 p.]. *Tamğa* was later borrowed into Mongolian, and *altun tamğa*, 'gold seal', was widely used by Chinggisid rulers. According to Rašid-al-dīn, there were three types of gold seals in the Ilkhan Khanate: large gold seals for important matters, special gold seals for military affairs, a small gold seal (*altūn tamgā-ye kūčak*) for fiscal, and commercial letters [19, 556-557 p.]. In the record of the Chagatay Khanate, an *altan nišan* is mentioned. [20] In the political system and tradition of the Mongol Empire, *altun nišan/tamğa* was not only a symbol of imperial power but also an indicator of the Mongol rulers' legitimacy. Therefore, *altun nišan/tamğa* has a very important symbolic meaning in the socio-political culture of *Altın Orda*.

### *Yarliğ*

*Yarliğ* is a command from superior to inferior, or sometimes with some connotation of a grant of favor from a superior to an inferior [11, 967 p.]. The word becomes *jarliq* after undergoing certain phonetic changes in modern Kazakh (i.e. *y>j, ğ>q*), and retains the original meaning. In addition, the word is now broadly used in the nowadays administrative system of Kazakhstan [21, 104-105 p.].

### *Ordu*

The word originally means 'royal residence' or 'palace' in old Turkic [11, 204 p.]. Since Turks are nomadic people, *ordu* also suggests the meaning of 'royal camp', which depends on the circumstance. For example, *qan olurupan ordu yapmis* [Irk Bitig, 28th line] 'the khan sits on the throne and erects a palace' [9, 293 p.]. In DLT, Mahmud Kashgari records several meanings of the word in his book. The first one is the original meaning 'palace'; the second is 'Khan's city'; the third is the name of a city where near *Balasagun* (located in nowadays Kyrgyzstan); the fourth meaning is 'a nest of mice-like or cricket-

like insects. The word was then borrowed into Mongolian as *ordo*. The word remains in the North-Central group of Turkic languages, *ordo* in Kyrgyz, *orda* in Kazakh, *ürda* in Uzbek, *orda* in Nogay [11, 204 p.]. *Orda* in Kazakh, after undergone phonetic changes, retains its original meaning of 'palace, a royal residence'. Moreover, The word is used to refer to a special grand yurt where royals are used to treat guests. In addition, *orda* is also described as a central place for arts or academics [22, 735 p.].

## Results

Through the semantic analysis of the above-selected words, the following results can be drawn:

1. After the evolution of language, the semantics of most words have been constantly enriched, and the semantic field is continuously expanding. For example, the word *oğlan* originally only had the meaning of son, but the meaning of prince is met in the *yarliğ*. The word *beg* originally meant 'a tribe chief', then developed a new meaning of 'husband', which is recorded in DLT. The word *il* had the original meaning of country or people. Later, in DLT, new meanings are met, such as the meaning of peace.

2. The impact of language contact is also evident. Through the analysis, it is noticeable that there are loanwords from neighboring languages borrowed into Middle Kipchak, or new phrases that suddenly appeared due to the influence of other languages. For example, *josun* comes from Mongolian, and *nišan* comes from Persian. In addition, the appearance of the phrase *ulug orun*, through the above analysis, was possibly influenced by the Chinese language.

3. Through comparative analysis with other languages of the same period, the author finds that *Altın Orda* and the other Chinggisid Empires of the same period had similar socio-political symbols (e.g. *altun nišan* in *Altın Orda*, *altun tamğa* in the Ilkhan Khanate, *altan tamğa* in the Chagatay Khanate; *uluğ orun* in *Altın Orda*, *da-wei* in the Yuan Dynasty).

4. By comparing the words selected above with modern Turkic languages, especially Kazakh, it is noticeable that these socio-political

words are still widely used in modern Turkic languages, although the meaning of some words has undergone some changes. However, some words appear only briefly in Middle Kipchak and hardly survive in Modern Turkic languages (e.g. *ulug orun*).

### Conclusion

From the above semantic analysis and its results, it is obvious that *Altın Orda* at the end of the 14th century has been highly Kipchakified, for most of the socio-political lexemes in the

decrees are Turkic. Nevertheless, as a trans-regional, multicultural nomadic empire, *Altın Orda* had been constantly influenced by neighboring cultures. As a Chinggisid Khanate, *Altın Orda* also preserved the traces of its Mongolian origin. Meanwhile, the semantic analysis of Tokhtamysh's *yarlığ* provides a deep understanding of the administrative system and political culture of the *Altın Orda*. As an empire, *Altın Orda* has a top-down socio-political hierarchy system and the socio-political lexemes helped construct the political structure and highlight the authority of the Khan.

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#### **Алтын Орда ханы Тоқтамыстың Литваның Ұлы князі Ягайлоға жолдаған жарлығындағы әлеуметтік-саяси лексемаларға лексика-семантикалық талдау**

**Аңдатпа.** Мақала Алтын Орда ханы Тоқтамыстың 1393 жылы шамасында Литва князі Владислав Ягойлаға жолдаған «Жарлығының» тілін зерттеуге арналған. Алтын Орда дәуірінде Жошы ұрпақтарынан тараған хандар мемлекеттің ішкі және сыртқы байланыстары үшін көптеген хан жарлықтарын жариялап, хаттар жолдап отырды. Бұл құжаттарда аса бай тарихи және лингвистикалық мағлұматтар сақталған. Мұндай ескерткіштердің едәуір бөлігі, соның ішінде «Жарлық» мәтіндері көне қыпшақ тілінде жазылған. Бұл ескерткіштің тілдік жүйесін, атап айтқанда, лексикалық семантикасын зерттеу түркітану ғылымы үшін өзекті әрі өте қажетті болып табылады. Мақалада жазба ескерткіштің қоғамдық-саяси лексемалары қарастырылып, олардың синтагматикалық және парадигматикалық байланыстардағы мағыналық мүмкіндіктері ашылады, сондай-ақ жазба ескерткіш мәтінінің семантикалық өрісінің бір бөлігі ретінде сөзжасамдық ассоциациялық бірліктер белгіленеді. Мақаланың алға қойған міндеттерін жүзеге асыру үшін автор этимологиялық және салыстырмалы әдістерді де пайдаланады. «Жарлықтардың» семантикасын зерттеу Алтын Орда дәуіріндегі Еуразия даласының мәдени және қоғамдық-саяси жағдайын жаңаша түсіндіруге мүмкіндік береді.

**Түйін сөздер:** Алтын Орда жарлығы, семантикалық өріс, қоғамдық-саяси лексемалар, лексика-семантикалық талдау.

### **Е. Мунай**

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#### **Лексико-семантический анализ социально-политических лексем ярлыков хана Золотой Орды Токтамыша великому князю Литвы Ягайло**

**Аннотация.** В статье исследуется язык памятника «Ярлык», послания хана Алтын орды Токтамыса князю Литвы Владиславу Ягойла, которое издано было приблизительно в 1393 году. В эпоху Алтын Орды правители Джучи издавали подобные многочисленные ярлыки (указы-послания) как для внутреннего пользования, так и для внешних связей. Эти послания содержат богатейшую информацию исторического и лингвистического характера. Значительная часть этих памятников, в т.ч. и текст «Ярлык» написаны на кыпчакском языке. Исследование языковой системы этого памятника, в частности, ее лексической семантики является актуальным и необходимым для тюркологической науки. В статье исследуются со-

циально-политические лексемы памятника, раскрываются их семантический потенциал в синтагматических и парадигматических связях, отмечаются словообразовательные ассоциативные единицы как часть семантического поля текста памятника. Для реализации поставленных задач автор также использует этимологический и сравнительно-сопоставительный методы.

Изучение семантики «Ярлыг» дает возможность по-новому интерпретировать культурную и социально-политическую ситуацию в Степной Евразии в эпоху Алтын Орды.

**Ключевые слова:** Алтын Орда ярлыг, семантическое поле, общественно-политические лексемы, лексико-семантический анализ.

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