

**Book review**

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**Baski, Imre: Crimean Tatar Folktales as Collected by Ignác Kúnos (1860–1945) (Studien zur Sprache, Geschichte und Kultur der Turkvölker, Vol. 38) Berlin & Boston: Walter de Gruyter 2024. VII+469 pp. Hardback €129.95. ISBN 978-3-11-144197-9.**

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Folklore collections have long served as critical sources for linguistic research. Crimean Tatar folklore compilations, such as those by Wilhelm Radloff (1896), Olga Chatskaya and Nikolay Dmitriev (1926), Nikolay Dmitriev (1936), and Aleksey Olesnitskiy (1910), provided essential linguistic data for later fundamental studies of Crimean Tatar grammar, such as those conducted by Gerhard Doerfer (1956), Ervand Sevortyan (1966), and Henryk Jankowski (2010). These scholars also referred to Kúnos’s collection, which was previously only known as archival material. Imre Baski’s edition publishes Ignác Kúnos’s *Tatár népköltési gyűjtemény* (A Collection of Tatar Folk Poetry), housed in the Oriental Collection of the Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. The Crimean Tatar folklore heritage collected by Ignác Kúnos holds a significant place in Turkological studies (Kakuk 1993, 1994, Seres 2010).

The historical context in which this collection emerged is dramatic. During World War I, Herbert Jansky and Robert Lach from the Austrian Academy of Sciences conducted their own research simultaneously, collecting data in prisoner-of-war camps. While Jansky and Lach focused on songs and folk poetry, Ignác Kúnos concentrated on collecting folktales and narratives. Each research effort employed distinct methodologies.

For example, Jansky and Lach asked their informants to write down their texts, which made it possible to draw conclusions about early 20th-century Crimean Tatar orthography. As a professor of Ottoman Studies, Jansky especially highlighted the “schriftliche Anarchie” that had resulted from the recent orthographic changes initiated by Ismail Gasprali in the early 20th century (Lach-Jansky 1930: 89).

In contrast, Ignác Kúnos used his own transcription system to record Crimean Tatar oral narratives. His notation distinguished vowels with remarkable precision, including *a, ā, e, é, o, ö, ó, u, ú, ü*. Among these, *é, ó, and ú* likely represented intermediate vowel qualities in terms of degree of openness or frontness.

Interestingly, the biography of Crimean Tatar linguist Bekir Çoban-zade reveals that he studied at the University of Budapest from 1916 and earned his doctorate there in 1919. However, there is no evidence to suggest that he interacted directly with Crimean Tatar prisoners of war or participated in Kúnos’s fieldwork.

In the book under review, Imre Baski presents the Crimean Tatar oral heritage collected by Ignác Kúnos in several sections: the introduction and analytical section (pp. 1–53); the main section, containing the original texts of the thirty-nine Crimean Tatar folktales (pp. 54–157); and the English translations (pp. 158–281). Two types of glossaries have been provided. The first is an explanatory glossary (pp. 282–284) including descriptions of religious terms (e.g., *abdās* “ritual ablution before performing prayers in Islam,” *hadji* “a Muslim making the pilgrimage to Mecca”), ethnographic terms (*belesh* “turnover pie,” *bolgach* “pirog, a kind of puff pastry”), units of measurement (*arshin* “ell, yard, a Turkish measure of a length of about 68 cm,” *batman* “a measure of weight varying from 2.5 to 10

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kg”), and proper nouns (*Salgir*, variant *Salghur* “a river in Crimea,” *Chin-Machin* “China and the Far East in general”). The second is a more extensive glossary (pp. 285–469) that serves as a Crimean Tatar–English–Russian dictionary. This includes rare terms requiring further ethnographic and dialectological investigation, such as the children’s game “romalama dompal,” which is not documented elsewhere.

The introduction (pp. 1–2) briefly outlines Ignác Kúnos’s biography, career, and development as a Turkologist. He collected the material for the book in prisoner-of-war camps in Éger and Kenyérmező between 1915 and 1918. In his *Notes on Life in Prisoners’ Camps* (pp. 2–3), Imre Baski provides details from Kúnos’s reports published in *Magyar Figyelő* (Hungarian Observer) in 1916 and 1918. The section *On the Collection of Crimean Tatar Tales* (pp. 3–6) describes Kúnos’s experiences and methods of working with the Crimean Tatar, Turkish, and Kazan Tatar folklore. However, Kúnos rarely documented the names, ages, or origins of his informants. Only one storyteller is identified: Mehemmed from Akmežid, who narrated the tale “Kiçkene ajdamak masalı.” Despite this, distinct Crimean Tatar dialects are evident throughout the collection. The texts 1–5, 14–15, 18–26, 29–32, 34–39 represent the northern dialect of Crimean Tatar; texts 6–13, 16, 25, 27, 28 have mixed northern-central dialectal features; text 33 has central features; and text 17 has southern dialect features. The Crimean Tatar dialects and their connection to the data are analyzed in detail on pp. 31–43.

The chapter *Language and Dialect Features of the Texts in the Collection* (pp. 6–15) focuses on phonological features reflected in the texts. Here, Imre Baski compares the transcription system used by Ignác Kúnos with later orthographies and the IPA alphabet. Regular sound alternations in Crimean Tatar, such as assimilation (*bolur* ~ *bolor*, *tokuz* ~ *tokoz*), closing (*ket-* ~ *kit-*, *bojle* ~ *bujle*), palatalization (*bakij* ~ *bakij*), and so on are discussed in *Notes on Sound Alternation* (pp. 15–19), along with questionable and erroneous alternations (pp. 19–31) such as the converb forms *sıkırep*, *ôtôrêp*. Incorrect alternations are attributed to mishearing or mispronunciation, e.g. substituting *i* for *ı* in *açip*, *açti*, *ajtip*, *kiz*.

The material collected by Kúnos is comparable to Radloff’s collection. For instance, Tale 11 “Karı koža masalı” is a variation of “Üčkündür” from Radloff’s “Proben.”

The texts provide valuable insights into Crimean Tatar phonology, morphology, syntax, and lexis. Notable phonological features include the palatalization of the 3pl present tense marker in verbs with stems ending in vowels: *jas-*, *tašla-*, *bašla-*, *žukla-*, *tokta-*, *baka-*, as seen in *jasajler* (p. 57), *tašlajler* (p. 61), *bašlajler* (p. 91), *žuklajler* (p. 62), *toktajler* and *bakajler* (p. 91), though non-palatalized forms such as *žašajlar* (p. 90) also occur; assimilation of *nl* and *nd* to *nn*: *künnerde* (p. 61), *karannık* (p. 57), *annatêp* (p. 62), *annan* (p. 76), *zamannar* (p. 89), *degennerin* (p. 90); and voiceless stops in word-initial position: *pitireler*, *teñiz* (p. 91), *toj-tügün* (p. 96), *terja* (p. 96), *bir taha* (p. 97), *keže* (p. 55), *togur-* (p. 106), *tegil* (p. 110) “not,” *tokoz* (p. 93), *tuχsan tuχız* (p. 94). Voiced stops in word-initial position are seen as well: *dat-lezzet* (p. 55), *pek* > *bek* (p. 94). Also found are delabialization: *avıž* (p. 59); labialization: *kim* > *kum* (p. 89), *buber* (p. 91); *č* > *š*: *kiškene* (p. 62); labial *w* (rendered as *u*): *sauluklašıp* (p. 61), *zauk* (p. 60), *tau* (p. 76), *deu* (p. 88), *sau bol* (p. 89), *kijeu* (p. 107), *euel* (p. 129), *breu* (p. 156); and *p* in the place of *f*: *musapir*, *pikir*, *lap*, *čuput*.

Some loanwords have been adopted in interesting ways. The *j* in *kajve* (p. 107), *kajveži* (p. 134) can be explained by a sound change *h* > *j*, whereas the change observed in *mejzerlik* (p. 97) remains unclear.

Variation among present-tense markers (*-Iy*, *-A*, *-yIr*, and *-yor*) provides insight into the dialectal diversity represented in the collection: *berij*, *kirej*, *konušijler* (p. 96), *kelijsiñ* (p. 100), *alijsiñ* (p. 117), alongside forms such as *kele*, *ala*, *kite*, *kelesin*, *bašlajir*, *gidejir*, *bašlijor*, which also occur in different texts of the collection.

Among case forms, the genitive personal pronoun *bsin* (p. 61), *bsnin* (p. 71) is noteworthy. Vocative forms such as *qartanaj* (p. 68), *babaj* (p. 70), *ataj* (p. 71), *anaj* (p. 89) also serve as diminutives: *atajların katına kelmege* (p. 66), *atajımızga* (p. 66), *ulujum* (p. 139).

The mode of wish or desire is expressed by means of *tile-*: *Qayda tilesem anda bararmen* “I go where I want” (p. 57).<sup>1</sup>

Ability and inability are mainly expressed with the auxiliary *bol-*: *kajtıp bolamadık* “we could not return” (p. 65) and *tanıp bolalmajler* “they could not recognize” (p. 65). Approximation with *-A jaz-* appears in *jarı keçe vaktı bola jazdı* “it was almost midnight” (p. 70). Progressive aspect is marked by several periphrastic constructions *-A jür-*, *-A jata-*, *-Ip jata-*, *-Ip tur-*: *bala bu ajdamaklarnen tauda kaja kobalarında oko jazu ne bolyanın bilmij jüre* “the child is living with bandits in the woods and rock caves, unaware of literacy” (p. 150), *bu padşa obir padşaya keti jatkanda bu ulannı jasata jatkan sarajların aldından ötüp kete jatkanda padişanı közüne bu çardaklar körüne* “when the king went to visit another king and passed the palaces built by the boy, he saw their attics” (p. 154), *Ej, kartım, sen br žarlı tilenüp žürgen br kart edeñ, şinde sen menem sarajlerimden jağşı sarajlar jasatıp jatasın* “Hey, old man, you were begging, poor old man, and now you are building palaces better than mine” (p. 154), *Br talaj žuklap tora* (p. 73) “he was sleeping a lot of the time.” Not all the texts provide progressive meanings for *-Ip jata-*: *çatın pişirgen, aşap jatkanlar* “the woman cooked, they ate and went to sleep” (p. 119). The resultative is formed with the suffix *-vll* and *-Ip çık-*: *brde şebirtki ilevli tora* “a whip is hanging there” (p. 63), *okıp çikkandan soñ* “having finished reading” (p. 136).

Auxiliary verbs exhibit different meanings than in modern Crimean Tatar usage; for example, Kúnos interprets *-a ber-* as indicating “quick action” (p. 309): *žiberi ber-* “to send away quickly, to let go suddenly” (p. XX), *(urbaların tuzın) kaka bere* “shakes (dust off the clothes) quickly” (p. XX).<sup>2</sup>

The adverbial pronoun *qa(y)* is used interrogatively *qajakka* “where?” (p. 131), *kaj jersiz* “where are you from?” (p. 147), *kalaj* “how?” (p. 157), and as an indefinite or relative pronoun when combined with *et-*: *katıp* “how”, *akçalarımız pitkenden son katmege bilmedik* “when our money ran out, we did not know what to do” (p. 65), *Katsın kalaj etse bolmajžak* “whatever he does, he will not succeed” (p. 67). Its counterpart is *şaj*: *şaj bolsa* (p. 58) “if so”; *alaj* is mentioned in the analytical section (p. 37), but is absent from the text.

Lexical features are characterized by archaic words such as *karaj* “he looks” (p. 63) and *ijbe* “saddlebag” (p. 63). The verb *ejt-* “to tell, say” is found in Krymchak texts as *et-*, *ejt-* (Ianbay 2016).

Non-finite use of verb forms in *-mA*, *-GAN*, *-ACAK* provide us with the syntactic structures of oral narratives. Verbal nouns in *-mA* appear in *Kız di ki: vaj žiget, saña o mallarnı alması bek kijın* “The girl says, ‘Alas, lad, it will be very hard for you to take that property’” (p. 64), *sizlerin brer nişan bermenizin munasib kuremen* “I’d consider it worthy if you would give him a gift” (p. 73). Non-finite clauses in *-GAN*: *Bolat ayajların digenin totıp artta kala* “Bolat, obeying his brothers, stays back” (p. 66), and in *-ACAK*: *Bolar Bolatnı br iş pitirep bolalmajžayın bilep uturmij taşlap keteler* “knowing that Bolat will not be able to do anything, they do not kill him, [just] leave him there and go away” (p. 66).

The lexicalized phrase *koş keldi* appears in *Epsin toplan ulanların aldına koş keldige čika* “he gathered all and went out to welcome the sons” (p. 66).

1 In modern Crimean Tatar, *tile-* has a narrower function, mainly appearing in wishing expressions such as *Uzun yıllar tileyim* “I wish you a long life.”

2 Modern Crimean Tatar grammars (Jankowski 2010: 117, Memetov 2006: 233) treat *-a ber-* and *-Ip ber-* as expressing actions directed away from the speaker, for example: *Ondan soñ müşterilerge daa sıcaq, tütep turğan ve etrafqa acayıp qoqu tarqatqan qaveni çekip bere* (Nuzet Ümerov) “Then she serves the customers steaming and wonderful-smelling coffee.” Kúnos’s long-overlooked interpretation of them as having a nuance of quick action may deserve reconsideration in examples such as *Qasaba soqaqlarında, evlerde, azbarlarda lipildey berip, elektrik lampaları yandı* (Yusuf Bolat) “On the streets of the town, in homes, and in the courtyards, electric lamps flickered and lit up.”

Existential sentences frequently convey not only existence or absence, but also intention or desire: *Saňa br ajtažak lapımız bar* “we have something to tell you” (p. 66), *bz padiša balalarından abadanya baražayımız jok* “we cannot go to anybody bigger than king’s sons” (p. 66), and *Ne degenniň bar?* “what would you say?” (p. 54).

Despite earlier criticism of Kúnos’s transcription system (Yüksel 1994: 19, Jansky 1952: 73), this edition of Crimean Tatar folktales collected by Ignác Kúnos constitutes an indispensable resource for the study of Crimean Tatar language or folklore. Many linguistic features documented by Ignác Kúnos are preserved in modern Crimean Tatar dialects, making this publication a major contribution to Turkological studies.

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