KASYM TYNYSTANOV AS THE FOUNDER OF KYRGYZ LINGUISTICS AND DELEGATE OF THE BAKU TURKOLOGICAL CONGRESS: LEGACY AND TRAGIC FATE

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Abstract. The article examines the life, scholarly legacy, and tragic fate of Kasym Tynystanov (1901–1938) – the founder of Kyrgyz linguistics, the first Kyrgyz professor, and a delegate of the 1st All-Union Turkological Congress (Baku, 1926). Based on verbatim reports, archival documents, and international research, the study analyses Tynystanov's role in transitioning Kyrgyz writing from the Arabic script to the Latin alphabet, creating national linguistic terminology and textbooks. It is shown that the congress's decisions determined the development of the Kyrgyz alphabet, orthography, and teaching methods. Special attention is paid to the political repressions of the 1930s, of which Tynystanov and most congress delegates became victims of; the history of his posthumous rehabilitation is traced. Additionally, the article highlights the scholarly debate surrounding the discovery of the Orkhon-Yenisei runic inscriptions – a crucial context for understanding the development of Turkology in the 20th century. The conclusion proposes measures to commemorate the scholar and to utilise his heritage in modern education.

Abstract. В статье рассматривается жизнь, научное наследие и трагическая судьба Касыма Тыныстанова (1901–1938) – основоположника кыргызского языкознания, первого кыргызского профессора, делегата 1-го Всесоюзного тюркологического съезда (Баку, 1926). На основе стенографических отчетов, архивных документов и международных исследований анализируется роль Тыныстанова в переходе кыргызской письменности с

арабской графики на латиницу, создании национальной лингвистической терминологии и учебников. Показано, что решения съезда определили развитие кыргызского алфавита, орфографии и методов обучения. Особое внимание уделяется политическим репрессиям 1930-х годов, жертвой которых стал Тыныстанов и большинство делегатов съезда; прослеживается история его посмертной реабилитации. Дополнительно в статье освещается научная дискуссия вокруг открытия орхоно-енисейских рунических надписей – важнейшего контекста для понимания развития тюркологии в XX веке. В заключении предлагаются меры по увековечению памяти ученого и использованию его наследия в современном образовании.

Keywords: Kasym Tynystanov, Baku Turkological Congress of 1926, Kyrgyz linguistics, Latin alphabet, repressed Turkology, Orkhon-Yenisei inscriptions, Turkic integration.

Ключевые слова. Касым Тыныстанов, Бакинский тюркологический съезд 1926 года, кыргызское языкознание, латинский алфавит, репрессированная тюркология, Орхоно-Енисейские надписи, тюркская интеграция.

1. Introduction

The first half of the 20th century was a period of profound changes in the cultural and scientific life of the Turkic peoples. Issues of transitioning from the Arabic script to the Latin alphabet, forming the orthography and terminology of national languages were at the centre of the Turkological research agenda. The First All-Union Turkological Congress (Kurultai), held in 1926 in Baku, is a historical event that played a foundational role in these transformations and has not lost its significance to this day. The Congress stimulated the cultural and linguistic integration of Turkic peoples, the modernisation of their writing systems, and national self-awareness. In contemporary Turkology, this event is assessed as a "historical turning point for the Turkic world" [21].

The Kyrgyz Autonomous Oblast sent two delegates to this Kurultai – Kasym Tynystanov and Bazarkul Daniyarov. Kasym Tynystanov (1901–1938) went down in history as the founder of Kyrgyz linguistics, a figure who laid the foundation of Kyrgyz written literature, and the first Kyrgyz professor. His active participation in the Congress (including his election to the Congress Presidium) and his report on the transition to the Latin alphabet had a significant impact on the subsequent development of the Kyrgyz language. However, the fate of Tynystanov and many other delegates was tragic: during the political repressions of the 1930s, they were shot or sent to camps on charges of "nationalism" and "Pan-Turkism".

The purpose of this article is a scholarly analysis of the historical significance of the First Turkological Kurultai, its influence on the development of Kyrgyz linguistics, as well as the role of Kasym Tynystanov in this process and his tragic fate.

2. Literature Review and Source Analysis

An analysis of the literature on the research topic shows that the First Turkological Congress has been widely covered in Soviet and post-Soviet Turkology. The primary source is the "First All-Union Turkological Congress. Verbatim Report," published in Baku in 1926 [1]. This report contains the full text of 17 sessions, 38 papers, and the adopted resolutions.

One of the most important studies examining the subsequent fate of the congress participants is the book by F.D. Ashnin, V.M. Alpatov, and D.M. Nasilov, "Repressed Turkology" [2]. It shows that out of 130 delegates, 59 were repressed. Accurate information about the Kyrgyz delegates is provided by B.K. Abytov's article [3].

Influential primary sources are the works of Kasym Tynystanov himself [4; 5] and an autobiographical fragment written by him in 1935 [6]. Memories of Tynystanov were left by his contemporaries – Academician Kusein Karasaev [7] and Salizhan Zhigitov [8]. They point to Tynystanov's literary translations, his excellent command of the Russian language, and his contribution to the translation of the "Manas" epic.

Among recent articles in Kyrgyz, the works of Mairamgul Dykambaeva [9] and Omurbek Tillebaev [10] should be noted. They reveal that, despite Tynystanov's rehabilitation in 1957 and his reinstatement in the party in 1958, in 1960 he was again subjected to criticism, and his works were not published until the end of the Soviet period.

The study also draws upon international scholarship Of particular value is the report of a contemporary of the congress, the German Turkologist Theodor Menzel, "Der 1. Turkologische Kongreß in Baku" (1927) [16], which describes the view of a foreign observer who was directly present at the event. In contemporary foreign Turkology, the study of Kasym Tynystanov's legacy is actively continuing. Turkish researchers H. Aşlar, E. Aydoğmuş, and M. Castro analysed folklore elements in Tynystanov's textbooks, showing their role in shaping national identity [17]. Kazakh scholar Ye. Maralbek examines Tynystanov's linguistic views in the context of the scientific school of Akhmet Baitursynuly [18]. Another Turkish work investigates the education of values and the reflection of Kyrgyz culture in Tynystanov's writings [19]. Azerbaijani philologist Sh. Mammadova, in an article dedicated to the 100th anniversary of the congress, assesses its significance for the Turkic peoples from a contemporary perspective [20]. The leaders of the Organization of Turkic States, B. Yıldırım [21] and E.H. Mikayıl [22], characterise the congress as an important stage in the integration of the modern Turkic world.

Among the noteworthy contemporary works are the article by Turkish researchers E. Aydoğmuş and H. Aşlar analysing the pedagogical and didactic texts of Kasym Tynystanov [24], as well as the work of American professor N. Ertürk, examining the Baku Congress in the context of postcolonial literary studies [25]. Furthermore, the outcomes of the international event held at the Azerbaijan University of Languages for the 100th anniversary of the Baku Congress provide insight into contemporary scholarly discussions [28]. The study of European Turkologist M. Kemper [29] helps to better understand the impact of the political terror of the 1930s on Turkologists.

Scholarly discussions surrounding the Orkhon-Yenisei inscriptions are also an important context for this research. The discovery and decipherment of these inscriptions became one of the key stages in the formation of Turkology [30; 31]. Debates about the genre nature of the inscriptions [32] and V.V. Bartold's interpretation of the term "qara bodun" [33] constitute an important part of scholarly discourse in Turkology. These discussions directly influenced the formation of Turkological schools and their ideological orientations in the early 20th century.

Thus, the literature review shows that, although the history of the congress and Tynystanov's legacy have been extensively studied, some aspects (for example, the exact content of Tynystanov's report at the congress, the reasons for his subsequent repression) require further clarification.

3. Research Methodology

The following scientific methods were used in the research:

- ✓ historical-comparative analysis;
- ✓ source criticism and archival analysis;

- ✓ biographical approach;
- ✓ systemic historical analysis.

The main sources of the research were: 1) the verbatim report of 1926 [1]; 2) funds of the National Archive of the Kyrgyz Republic [11; 12; 13; 6; 14]; 3) published works of Kasym Tynystanov [4; 5]; 4) memoirs of his contemporaries [7; 8]; 5) scholarly research on repressions [2; 3; 9; 10; 15]; 6) foreign Turkological works [16; 17; 18; 19; 20; 21; 22; 23; 24; 25; 26; 27; 28; 29]; 7) sources on the Orkhon-Yenisei inscriptions [30; 31; 32; 33; 34; 35].

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Organisation of the Congress and Main Decisions

The First All-Union Turkological Congress took place from 26 February to 6 March 1926 at the "Ismailiyya" Palace in Baku. It was attended by 131 delegates (93 Turks, 38 other nationalities), including two from Kyrgyzstan. Twenty-two people were elected to the Presidium, with Tynystanov listed as number 17 – "Tynystanov – Kara-Kirghizia" [1, pp. 9-10]. Over seven days, the Congress held 17 sessions and heard 38 papers. According to the observation of the German Turkologist T. Menzel, the discussions at the Congress were highly dynamic and occasionally marked by sharp ideological disagreements at times accompanied by sharp disagreements [16, S. 28-30].

The main resolutions adopted by the Congress:

1. On the new Turkic alphabet – a transition to the Latin script was recommended.
2. On the study of Turkic languages and their connections with other language families.
3. On methods of teaching the native language.
4. On current issues in studying the history of Turkic peoples.
5. On orthography and terminology (including the adoption of the phonetic principle as the main one).

These decisions quickly began to be implemented in the Kyrgyz language as well. On 12 December 1927, the Central Executive Committee of the Kyrgyz ASSR recognised the Latin alphabet as having equal state status with the Arabic script [11, 17-b.]. From 1928, the Latin alphabet began to be taught in schools, and from 1 January 1930, the use of Arabic script in official education was discontinued.

4.2. Role and Scholarly Legacy of Kasym Tynystanov

Kasym Tynystanov was born on 10 September 1901 in the village of Chyrpykty on Lake Issyk-Kul. From the early 1920s, he became involved in the work of reforming Kyrgyz writing. His main works:

- ✓ 1923 – reform of the Kyrgyz Arabic-based alphabet;
- ✓ 1924 – publication of the textbook *Okuu Kitebi*;
- ✓ 1925 – article "Why Are We Delaying the Transition to the Latin Alphabet?";
- ✓ 1926 – *Primer for Adults*;
- ✓ 1927 – *Our Native Language* (Latin script edition);
- ✓ 1934 – *Morphology of the Kyrgyz Language* [4];
- ✓ 1936 – *Syntax of the Kyrgyz Language* [5].

Contemporary foreign research specifically analyses folklore elements in Tynystanov's textbooks, demonstrating their influence on the national identity of Kyrgyz children [17, P. 48-50]. Also, his linguistic methods are compared with the school of the founder of Kazakh linguistics, Akhmet Baitursynuly, revealing common features [18, B. 115-118].

Furthermore, Tynystanov developed foundational grammatical terminology of the Kyrgyz language: “bailamta” (conjunction), “jöndömö” (case), “etish” (verb), “zat atooch” (noun), “syn atooch” (adjective), etc. These terms are still used today. Together with E.D. Polivanov, he also participated in the translation of the “Manas” epic into Russian, and in 1937 was invited to Moscow as a consultant [12, 61-b.].

At the Congress, Tynystanov presented a report “On the main systems for constructing a new alphabet.” His proposals showed specific ways of transitioning to the Latin script, taking into account the characteristics of the Kyrgyz language. The theses of the report are included in the verbatim record [1, p. 26].

4.3. Repressions and Tragic Fate

In the late 1930s, Turkology was declared a “bourgeois-nationalist” science. During the “Great Terror” of 1937–38, most Turkologists were destroyed. According to B.K. Abytov’s calculations, out of 130 delegates, 59 were repressed, shot, or died in camps [3, pp. 19–20]. Among them were Bekir Chobanzade (Azerbaijan), Akhmet Baitursynov (Kazakhstan), Galimjan Ibragimov (Tatarstan), as well as the Kyrgyz delegates.

Kasym Tynystanov was arrested on 1 August 1937. Charges: “nationalist,” “bourgeois-kulak nationalist,” “Pan-Turkist,” “leader of the Social-Turan party,” “destroyer of the ideological front.” On 5 November 1938, a death sentence was passed, carried out on 7 November. His remains were identified in the 1990s in a mass grave near the village of Chon-Tash near Bishkek (among 138 people) [15].

Bazarkul Daniyarov was arrested in 1937 and sentenced to 10 years in prison. He died on 1 December 1942 in the Ivdel camp in the Sverdlovsk region.

Tynystanov was rehabilitated by the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR in 1957 [9]. In 1958, the Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Kyrgyzstan restored his party membership. However, in 1960 this decision lost force, and the publication of Tynystanov’s works was banned [10]. His name was given to Issyk-Kul State University only in 1992.

The tragic fate of many participants of the Congress remains in the memory not only of the Kyrgyz people but also of the entire international scholarly community. In Western Turkology, the repressions of the 1930s are assessed as “the loss of the Turkic intellectual elite” [29, p. 315].

4.4. Discovery of the Orkhon-Yenisei Inscriptions and Scholarly Discussions

One of the most important topics that formed the basis of Turkological research at the beginning of the 20th century was the discovery and scholarly analysis of ancient Turkic written monuments. This process began before the First All-Union Turkological Congress and had a profound impact on the worldview and scientific activities of its participants.

The oldest writing system in the history of the Turkic peoples is considered to be the Orkhon-Yenisei runic inscriptions. These monuments date from the 7th-10th centuries and are known to science as the earliest written monuments in the Turkic language [30]. Their discovery occurred in the following stages:

- ✓ In 1889, the head of a Russian expedition, N.M. Yadrintsev, discovered two large monuments (Kül-Tegin and Bilge Khagan) in the valley of the Orkhon River in present-day Mongolia [31].

✓ In 1893, the Danish philologist Vilhelm Thomsen managed to decipher these inscriptions. They were called “Turkic runes”, and later similar inscriptions were found in Yenisei, Talas, and other regions [35].

✓ The Russian Turkologist V.V. Radlov also made a great contribution to the decipherment of the inscriptions [35].

The scholarly significance of these monuments is enormous. They provided important evidence of the historical depth and literary culture of the Turkic peoples and culture of the Turkic peoples at a new level, giving a powerful impetus to the development of Turkological science [34]. The ideological and historical content of the monuments proved particularly debatable among Soviet and world scholars.

Scholars continue to debate on the genre nature of the monuments either. Some researchers consider them to be poetic lines in prose (F.E. Korsh, Amid Abid), others – a “small literary work” (Vasfi Mahir Göçatürk), still others assess them as a historical-documentary novel or an epitaph (grave literature). According to recent scholarly opinions, the Orkhon-Yenisei monuments are a combination of prose and poetry, an early example of the poetic tradition in the Turkic epic [32, pp. 98-101].

One of the most outstanding scholars in the study of the Orkhon-Yenisei inscriptions was the Russian orientalist V.V. Bartold. Analysing some social issues in the texts of the monuments, he saw a contrast between the elite (“begler”) and the “qara qamay bodun” (common people). In his view, this was evidence of social stratification in ancient Turkic society. Bartold’s hypothesis was discussed in the scholarly community for many years, supported by some scholars and criticised by others [33, pp. 137-140].

The Orkhon-Yenisei inscriptions are of particular importance for the cultural heritage of the Kyrgyz people. These monuments are valued as important historical sources, proving the antiquity, deep roots, independent culture and civilisation of all Turkic peoples, including the Kyrgyz [31]. Scholarly discussions surrounding their study determined the main directions of Turkology, giving a powerful impetus to the development of linguistics and historical anthropology at the beginning of the 20th century.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The First All-Union Turkological Congress became an important stage in the cultural and scholarly integration of the Turkic peoples. The decisions adopted at the Congress directly influenced the formation of the alphabet, orthography, terminology, and teaching methods of the Kyrgyz language. Kasym Tynystanov, not only as a delegate of the Kyrgyz people but also as the founder of Kyrgyz linguistics, actively participated in the work of the Congress, thereby playing a significant role in adapting its decisions to the Kyrgyz language. As the contemporary Azerbaijani Turkologist Sh. Mammadova notes, it was precisely this Congress that became “the driving force behind the writing reform and national self-awareness of the Turkic languages” [20, p. 15]. The Chairman of the Organization of Turkic States, B. Yıldırım, also calls the Congress a “historical turning point in strengthening the unity of the Turkic world” [21].

The discovery of the Orkhon-Yenisei inscriptions and the scholarly discussions surrounding them also played a key role in the formation of Turkology. These inscriptions proved the ancient culture of the Turkic peoples, giving impetus to the development of linguistics and historical anthropology at the beginning of the 20th century [30; 34].

However, the majority of the Congress participants, including Tynystanov, fell victim to the political persecution of the 1930s, which caused substantial disruption to the development of Turkological scholarship. Tynystanov's works were not published for a long time, and his name was not mentioned.

Public recognition of his scholarly legacy significantly expanded after 1992.

Recommendations:

1. Introduce special courses dedicated to the legacy of Kasym Tynystanov at the philological faculties of higher educational institutions in Kyrgyzstan.

2. Publish the complete collected works of Tynystanov (including manuscripts kept in the archives) with scholarly commentaries.

3. In connection with the 100th anniversary of the First Turkological Congress in 2026, hold an international scholarly conference, resulting in the creation of an encyclopedic information database of repressed Turkologists.

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