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L'affaire d'un chargé? Ghuzz <kwǰrkyn> 'deputy (of any ruler or chieftain)' ≠ Qarluq/Uyyur Kül Erkin 'epithet of a supreme ruler'

Bu Nasıl Bir Mesele? Ghuzz <kwǰrkyn> 'Herhangi Bir Hükümdarın veya Reisin Vekili' ≠ Qarluq/Uyyur Kül Erkin 'Yüce Bir Hükümdarın Sıfatı'

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The author strongly criticises the medieval explanation of Mahmud Kashgari's interpretation of the Qarluq royal title *Kül Erkin* as 'intelligence collected like a full pond', calling it utter nonsense. He also argues against the claim that this Qarluq title is the same as the Ghuzz title <kwǰrkyn> recorded by Ibn Faḍlān. The equation of the two titles lacks evidence and reason, since <kwǰrkyn> was not a royal title but a title for a subject. He suggests that the title may have been derived from *küǰār* 'to wait for, to look after, to take care of' (< *küǰ*- 'to wait for, to look after, to take care of') combined with *äg-gin* or *äg-in* meaning 'who has bent, bowed' or 'one who bends', possibly referring to a servant who looked after state affairs or carried the weight of state affairs. They discuss parallels from other cultures, including the Khazars, where titles reflected the holder's role in society. The Khazars appear to have developed a triarchy before the collapse of their empire, with a separate office for the 'king' in Jewish sources, reflecting a deliberate attempt to parallel the history of Israel's judges.

Key Words: Ghuzz, Oyuz, kül erkin, küǰarkin, küǰār-äg(g)in, Khazar, oceanic ruler, yabyu.

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They sentenced me to 20 years of boredom / For trying to change the system from within. (Leonard Cohen)

Ibn Faḍlān, who visited Oghuz territories around 922, met with a person carrying the title **Köl-Erkin* (*Kudharkin*),¹ who was assistant to the *yabgu*. (Binbaş 2005).

We have explained [...] that universal dominion was compared to the Sea/Ocean ([Turk.] *Deniz* ([Mong.] *Taluy*), and lesser dominion to a ‘Lake’, and that for this reason the rulers of some states were also given the titles of *Köl-erkin* ve *Költekin*² (Turan 1969 [2009: 116 n. 61]).

La guerre! C’est une chose trop grave pour la confier à des militaires. (Clemenceau)

The ideology of professionalism that is so appealing to occupational groups and their practitioners includes aspects such as exclusive ownership of an area of expertise and knowledge, and the power to define the nature of problems in that area as well as the control of access to potential solutions. (Evetts 2013)

Introduction

In the decades 1970s through 1990s I sought to do good work, if not better at least different than the work that had come before and/or that I was not so much criticizing as proposing an alternative to. Not for me to either bury Caesar or praise him, just to offer to replace him. All this work was, it seems to me,

¹ Note the asterisk, showing that this reading is *theoretical*. Most other authors do not bother to indicate this key fact, or to mention what the *actually attested form* is *at all*. I will likely not be forgiven (but more likely forgotten) for saying that this is simply not the way scholarship is supposed to be done— but quite often is, and will continue to be no matter what I say, unless and until someone with more power and prestige than me joins me in saying that this has got to stop.

² In the original Turkish: Cihânşümul hâkimiyetin Deniz (taluy)e ve daha küçük hâkimiyetin de “Göl”e . benzetildiğini ve bu sebeple bazı ulusların beglerine “Köl - erkin” ve “Költekin” unvanları verildiğini de [...] izah etmiştik).

ignored. Between roughly 1999 and 2019 I stopped publishing while pondering (among other things) why I had been pretty generally ignored. In the last few years I have tried to explicitly call attention to a basic difference in method, approach, and attitude—of course, with no noticeable effect so far, though any day this may change. Here I would like, not exactly for the first time but perhaps for the first in print, to show that contrary to what we are often told “people are” NOT “stupid, ready to believe anything”, and so on. In short, that the difference between the two methods, approaches, attitudes that I keep harping on (which I sometimes call CONCIlient vs. SUPERSilent, and yes, spelled just like this, and yes, with all the allusions and puns that this implies) is, and has long (perhaps forever) been, perfectly clear to everyone. For example, to two of the giants of the fields of the history of the Turkic (and other nearby) peoples and languages. But, and this is the real point, even their prestige was not enough to stop much less reverse an intellectual juggernaut that just keeps on rolling, showing that (just the way Donald Trump gets booed by his most devoted adherents when he so much as mentions vaccination) in the world of scholarship, too, it is the alleged followers that actually dispose, and not the alleged leaders—who at most propose.

Thus, Barthold was not fooled when he said uncompromisingly: “utterly artificial” (my translation of his *pek sun’ıy* 1927: 81 ~ *äußerst künstlich* 1932-1935: 90).³ Nor was Clauson, even if he began relatively mildly: “unconvincing [...] almost certain ... not” (1972: 225). But this did not take, and after a few hundred pages more he became more characteristically merciless: “obviously preposterous” (p. 715). So, no, these are not my words (nor would I ever publish such and, if I did, who would notice or care?). So, do not take (as if you ever would) my word for it, but rather those of two of the giants of the historiography

³ I am not sure that Barthold’s own approach was necessarily correct either, playing fast and loose with an interchange of **l** and **r** in **kül* supposedly from *kür* ‘stout-hearted, courageous, bold’, an approach revived by Gedikli (2021), who now adds **küd* into the mix. While this is neither cricket nor even comparative linguistics, there could be a “new” root **kü* (or **kū*), but it seems very difficult to believe that three different derived nouns (**kü-r*, **kü-l*, and **kü-d* would all have the SAME meaning). Moreover, while I believe I have myself discovered such a root, I know of none that would have an even remotely appropriate meaning. For *köl/kül irkin*, we still do not even know the vowel of the first element or have any explanation of the second (and like many Turkic titles it may well be foreign), and there is no reason whatever to think that our *küdäräg(g)in*, as I read it, has anything to do with it.

and historical linguistics of the Turkic and other Central and Northeast Asian peoples. And yet what they said—and what should always have been plain to anyone with any kind of scholarly background—has largely been ignored, and what they denounced continues to be slavishly repeated. But, no, not slavishly. For that is the very point, that scholars possessing full freedom to choose between sense and nonsense, and quite able (should they but bother) to refer to Barthold and Clauson, continue to *choose* to repeat (and indeed to doubledown on, to lilygild) guess which?

But what were Barthold and Clauson (and what am I) talking about?

The two giants were, as it happens, pillorying Mahmud Kashgari’s explanation of an early Turkic (notably Karluk) royal epithet or title, *Kül* (or *Köl*)⁴ *İrkin*, as supposedly containing the word *köl* ‘lake, pond’, so that the whole compound term (with *irkin-* ‘gathered together, collected’) would purportedly have meant ‘his intelligence is “gathered together like a full pond”’ [sic!] (Dankoff & Kelly, 1982/I: 137). I should perhaps add here that there is in Turkic (unlike Indo-European) no recognized type of compound that this sequence, if taken to be a compound, could belong to. Now, of course, it is obvious that the “intellect” bit is totally imaginary. But SUPPOSING the word WERE a compound at all, and *supposing* that this compound had ANYTHING to do with lakes and gathering, it would on the face of it have to mean ‘One who is gathered like a lake’ *vel sim*. This seems to make very little sense, and given the foreign origin of many other titles in Turkic, perhaps that is the story of this one too. Kashgari of course flourished a millennium ago, so he deserves a bit of slack. But what about scholars active a millennium later (scholars presumably not unfamiliar with Barthold and Clauson or with the methodologies of historical linguistics, etymology, philology, historiography, and other such good fields of study) who nevertheless repeat, and indeed double and triple down on, the “utterly artificial” and the “obviously preposterous”? I submit that no slack is deserved when this

⁴ This word, found in other names/titles as well, is not attested in any source that would unambiguously identify the vowel—which is important. One must not (though one scholar after another does) just glibly choose one (the one each author happens to like) of the (at least) four imaginable readings (two different vowel qualities and two different vowel lengths) in such a case, but should consider the possibility that precisely one of the OTHER ones is the correct one.

nonsense is (as it is, time and again) repeated uncritically⁵ by one MODERN scholar after another—and worse is tolerated⁶ by those who do not themselves actively endorse it.

And it gets better. Because then comes the doubling and tripling down. By doubling down I mean the rather widely repeated⁷ explanation (it would seem due to Togan [1939: 141; 1972: 103, 136-137], followed by [unless one or both are parallel and independent discoveries] by Pelliot & Hambis [1951: 297] and Banguoğlu [1959: 14]) of the 10th century Ghuzz (Oguz) title <kwḍrkyn>⁸ (recorded by Ibn Faḍlān) as supposedly being the SAME term as that Karluk <kwl 'yrkyn> that Kashgari gave that “utterly artificial” and “obviously

⁵ The mindless repetition of obvious nonsense is a striking feature of modern scholarship (as well as journalism, political and ideological rhetoric, and indeed everyday ‘conversation’).

⁶ Much of modern scholarship (and not only scholarship) in various fields also suffers from this insidious phenomenon of TOLERANCE for unacceptable claims by unacceptable authors.

⁷ To be sure, there are historians who largely or even totally ignore these emendations and fake etymologies (e.g., Canard, Marius 1958: 73 n. 124 [who however feels compelled to add that Ibn al-Athir mentions a Turk “king” Qudar-khân, which cannot possibly have anything to do with the case]; Spinei, 1996: 91; Curta, 2019: 153; Lunde & Stone 2012 [physical p. 196 of the ebook] n. 38). The last specifically say: “There is no agreement about the origin or exact meaning of this word”. But they do not so much as hint at what the alternatives might be, or what the (implied) APPROXIMATE meaning might be. But the APPROXIMATE meaning is not known either. It was in reality no less of a mystery in 2012 than it had been for Togan (1924: 245) or Minorsky (1937: 312) It is rather difficult (at least for me) to locate things in Kovalevskii’s (1939, 1956) translations and commentaries on Ibn-Faḍlān (where repeatedly, instead of just saying what he has to say, he sends the reader on wild goose chases, e.g. from the Russian index to the Arabic one (1939: 190), a footnote that promises that we will learn more below but does not say where (p. 98 n. 190), or (my favorite) being referred (1956: 185 n. 220) to [1956: 188] n. 258—only to be sent back from there to n. 220). Not to mention his obsession with minutiae matched only by the intensity of his disregard for substantive issues. In short, while I do not see that he says anything about the etymology (and literal meaning) of this title, certainly not where a body would expect to find it, it is possible that I have missed something.

⁸ In the literature this is usually given in some arbitrary (and often misleading) form such as “kudarkin”, “küdärkin”, “kudharkin”, “кудеркин” (Togan 1924), “кударкин” (e.g., Kovalevskii 1939) vs. “кюзеркин” (e.g., Kovalevskii 1956), and even “кюзергин” (Kuleshov 2016), not to mention the arrogant lunacy of Angeli’s (2007: 90) claim that “кударкин (кузаркин)” represents a “corruption (искажение)” of a made-up “кёле ыркин”. Many of these forms, by the way, are impossible given that a front vocalism is implied by the two occurrences of the Arabo-Persian letter <k>, which would instead have been <q> if the vowels had been back.

preposterous” account of.⁹ This of course would be quite a trick, but neither these authors nor the many others (in both basic reference/survey works and more specialized publications) who uncritically follow them have ever addressed this. No, not Sümer (1967: 52 n. 2 [as cited by Golden, since I have not seen this publication]; 1972: 53 n. 216 [2nd ed. of the foregoing]; 2007). Not Turan (1969 [2009: 146 n. 146]). Not Agajanov (1969: 141 [in Russian] = 2002: 210 [in Turkish]; 1998: 67). Not Golden (1972 [2003: 74] and 1992: 209)—which is particularly disheartening. Not Binbaş (2005). Not Ocak (2002). Not Angeli (2007, who writes келе ыркин). Not Bosworth (2010: 34, 2011: 16). Not Karatayev (2019). Not anyone.

And how could this trick be pulled? Easy. By telling their ever-obedient colleagues (and, yes, this is exactly what I have wasted, and continue to waste, so much of my life on, on exposing the willing even eager obedience of the most highly educated editors and of the most highly educated readers) to tolerate these authorities’ decision to ignore the difference between the /-**d**-/ (which denotes the voiced interdental fricative and which occurs no less than four times

⁹ As noted (and decried) by Müller (1920: 317ff.) and Clauson (1972: 215, who however misread Müller and accused HIM of this very error), the second part of this name/title is sometimes transcribed as “ärkin” or “erkin” (which may itself stand for “ärkin”), even though the Chinese sources (which, as mentioned by Müller, were first properly read by Hirth 1899: 111f.) identify the first vowel as *i*, which agrees with the Persian/Arabic ones (which had been known much earlier). I have not made a study of the history of this confusion, but confusion (or a set of confusions) is just what it clearly is. Thus, f.ex., Radloff (1891: xxvi, or rather C[arl] Salemann, who is credited by Radloff with this part of the work published under Radloff’s name) gives Rashid ad-Din’s Persian <’yrkin> (left-hand column l. 19) while transliterating it as “ärkin” (right-hand column l. 27), so a contradiction between adjacent columns on the same page! What is even stranger is that Radloff (or Salemann) specifically cites Berezin’s edition of the same text, where the same Persian (Berezin 1858: 126; 1861: 162 l. 3 up) is transcribed CORRECTLY as Куль-Иркинь (1858: 126), as well as Erdmann’s (1841: 66) rendition of the same as “Gul Irgin”. So, I have not been able to figure out where Salemann (and/or Radloff) got either the “ä” of *ärkin* (or indeed the “ö” of *köl*. The latter, as if by magic, matches Kashgari’s (folk-etymological) reading, which however they would have had no way of knowing of. Everyone who has studied the manuscripts (which I have not) seems to agree, without discussion, that the title is everywhere written <KWL ’YRKYN> including Klapproth (1820: Persian p. 37 l. 2 up, transcribed as “Kul-Irkin” p. 41) and Khetagurov & Semenov (1952: 147, transcribed as “Кул-Иркин”). Among other publications one could cite, there is confusion about all THREE vowels in Barthold (1897: 29, esp. n. 1), while Kotwicz (1949: 188f.) knows only the incorrect form with /ā/ (and builds fantastic etymological speculations on that).

in the ms., so it is not a mere scribal error)¹⁰ in Ibn Faḍlān and the *-l-* in Kashgari and likewise between the */-i-/* in the former and the **/-e-/* or */-ä-/* (some authors seem not to distinguish consistently between the last two vowels) in the latter.¹¹

Not only this, but one finds almost no discussion, much less debate, and literally no attempt of ANY kind to JUSTIFY these emendations/misreadings—

¹⁰ This is not JUST a substantive point, though it is that too. Rather, the fourth part of my theory of everything comes into play here, and it is the part that says that usually the myths that we are all force-fed can be easily and quickly exposed—and, moreover, often are by the creators and spreaders of the myths themselves. Thus, in his first work on the subject, Togan himself (1924: 245), using the same methodology I just did, points out that, of the basically two spellings of the title of the Oguz ruler found in Muslim sources, one beginning with <YB> (specifically <YBĠW>, <YBĠẆ>, later also <ġBĠWYH>), the other with <BY> (<BYĠW> or <BYĠẆ>), the Ibn Faḍlān ms. CONSISTENTLY shows <YB>, making it supremely likely that the <BY> ones are simply an error of some later Muslim writers (an error much easier in the Arabo-Persian script, where the sequences <YB> and <BY> are often indistinguishable and anyway involving the very same sort of uncritical copying centuries ago that keeps going on among Modern scholars). And what happened? Numerous philologists and historians have continued to simply ignore this entirely rather obvious conclusion—this is what happened. The point is not that Pritsak (e.g., 1948; 1953: 407) and, at least tentatively, some others (e.g. Agajanov/Agacanov 2002: 208, Angeli 2007: 90f) insist on *baygu* or *paygu* ‘falcon, hawk’ as an etymologically and functionally distinct title (accompanied the usual unsupported speculations about “totemism”)—and this despite this claim (as stated in Agajanov [1969: 139f.] having already been criticized by none less than Golden (1992: 209 n. 115), though in prose several shades less purple than Barthold’s and Clauson’s. Nor yet is it the point that *yabgu* (for which see first of all Hirth [1899: 48-50] has long since been identified as obviously borrowed from Tocharian (as first suggested by Pulleyblank 1966), where it is clearly (and with a clear etymology) the title of a subordinate ruler, one who holds an appanage (just the same as in its oldest Turkic attestations!)—so the perennial search for Altaic (even if not Turkic!) or Iranian etymologies (see Tezcan 2012) is a priori senseless. Nor yet is it the point that the basic principles of methodology have been blatantly flouted here, too, so that as we said, here one and the same title is taken, without any basis, to be two—whereas in the case of the two titles at issue here Togan and others just as glibly did the reverse, taking two entirely different titles of two entirely different (kinds of) positions as one and the same. The point is the underlying arrogance of power/poor scholarship, which requires no data or argument for its assertions to be made and then constantly repeated by succeeding generations, which is the same in both cases. THAT is my whole basic point—of which I’ve been finding (and exposing) examples for a half-century now, to no noticeable effect.

¹¹ It is a well-known curse of Turkic historical linguistics that these two distinct sounds are often confused even now, a century or so since they were discovered to have been distinct. The problem is compounded by the fact that some specialists write (or used to write) */e/* for */ä/* (and */é/* for */e/*). In short, when we run into *erkin* somewhere, it is not always clear which vowel is meant (or even if the author realizes that there are two different vowels involved).

which instead are stated *ex cathedra*, as if they were established, uncontroversial facts. Togan (1939) simply took as “obvious (*offenbar*)” (without any argument) what Pelliot & Hambis (1951) off-handedly stated as “le “küdar^{kin}” d’Ibn Faḍlān [...],¹² certainement à lire *kül-ärkin*”. OK, maybe such a reading could be seen (even if not by me) as just barely possible. But how did it get to be CERTAIN? No less typical is Agajanov’s (1969: 141 in Russian ≈ 2002: 210 in Turkish) assertion, as if it were a simple documented fact, that (in my translation) “The dignity of *kudarkin*, as noted in the historical literature, is a corruption of the title *kol-erkin*” (presumably a typo for *köl-erkin*, so it seems not “certinement à lire *kül-ärkin*” after all), referring to Togan (1939) and Banguoğlu (1959). And on and on.¹³

In the half century that I have engaged with academic scholars in this field and others, I have constantly encountered attacks on outsiders and amateurs who either supposedly or (sometimes) really fail to pay attention to such details. Most hurtful of course have been such attacks on me personally. And here we see, as I have incidentally demonstrated time and again over these years in various publications, that the pot is very often (as usual in human affairs) calling the kettle black. And yes, I AM enjoying being able to state, without the slightest fear of contradiction, that there has been virtually no attempt in this entire juggernaut of error to so much as PRETEND to recognize the need to convince anyone much less to respond to anyone who might have disagreed. Clearly, this

¹² They cite this as “dans Minorsky, *Ḥudūd al-‘Ālam* 312”, which suggests that they did not know the earlier literature on the subject (notably, Togan), but this is not what bothers me. What does is that, as this very fact shows, such arbitrary emendations and etymologies were (and obviously still are today) regarded as so perfectly normal that they could be (and it seems were) freely reinvented, without requiring even the most minimal attempt at justification—no, not even the thinnest skimpiest of fig leaves.

¹³ The relevant literature is vast. There are, however, four particularly amusing works I cannot resist citing. One Kotwicz’s (1949: 187f.) idea that the *kül* part of the titles refers (“it seems [*semble-t-il*]”) to ‘ash’. The second is Kononov’s (1958: 100 n. 140) lengthy, erudite, and hopelessly confused endnote, where he says nothing about the *küd-* part of the Ghuzz title but does opine that the rest of this is “apparently (по-видимому) the same as the *ärkin* of the other title (which he takes to come from *är* ‘man’ + a collective suffix {-kin}). The third is Taşağil (2015: 28), who writes “*kül erkin*” instead of the professorially emended *köl erkin* for Kashgari’s word (hence presumably distancing himself from the lacustrine etymology)—and yet still repeats the professorially emended form of Ibn Faḍlān’s word (of course with no mention at all that this is an invented form or what the attested form actually is). And then there is Gedikli (2021: 404), with his private idea of historical linguistics in which even without any emendation the two are the same (or related) word(s).

is yet another characteristic of modern scholarship (and other kinds of human discourse and activity too): endless pointless “argumentation” on entirely obvious and/or trivial points but no evidence or argument at all for points that are not at all obvious—or indeed obviously mistaken.

Turan (1941) is the one exception to this that I have located, but his entire response to Barthold is that, supposedly, the mere fact that the megalomaniacal Mongol khans sometimes called themselves “oceanic” proves (but how?) that the much earlier Turkic titles written with <kwl> or even <kwd> must (but why?) be referring to <kwl> **köl** ‘lake’. This it seems to me is not even as compelling an argument as the following would be: that we must “certainement” emend the title of the British heir to the throne, **Prince of Wales**, to **Prince of *Whales**¹⁴ because after all the French crown prince was once called **Dauphin** (literally, ‘Dolphin’). This entire approach to doing what after all purports to be a science of some sort is, to me, absolutely bizarre. And yet it goes on. And on. And on. And I feel rather sure that no matter what I say it will continue.

And what about the TRIPLING DOWN that I alluded to? Here I have in mind Turan’s (1969 [2009: 116 n. 61]) additional claim that—since, as just noted, some MAJOR rulers in the Eurasian steppe called themselves ‘oceanic’, a LESSER ruler would accordingly (by some kind of aquatic quantifier logic I never learned in grad school and still cannot make myself understand) be named after a SMALLER body of water, namely, a pond or a lake. So Chinggis would be oceanic, but the Qarluq rulers mentioned by Kashgari would be ‘lacustrine’. And, via a double emendation, so would the Ghuzz officials—who, however, as we will see, were not rulers at all. But one fallacy at a time. First, then, let us be clear that Turan’s argument plainly presupposes the very OPPOSITE of Kashgari’s idea. Turan is taking a pond or lake to be distinctively small, whereas Kashgari took it to stand for plenitude—unless I am expected to believe that Qarluq rulers intended to call themselves ‘Ones (whose intellect is inferior), like a (mere) lake (compared to an

¹⁴ The analogy to the Kashgari etymology and all the work building on it is actually quite close here. For, much as we cannot know whether Kashgari’s <kwl> was actually **kül** (and, if so, had nothing to do with lakes at all) or **köl** (in which case it MIGHT), there are varieties of English that distinguish /wh/ and /w/ sounds, and others that do not. And so if we did not know better, we could not be sure that **Wales** and **whales** are quite distinct words, much as we cannot be sure whether the <kwl> found in early Turkic titles or names is **kül** or rather the same word as **köl** ‘lake’.

ocean)'.¹⁵ I dwell on all this to show yet again both what is wrong with the way much of current scholarship is done, and (more usefully) that it can be done quite differently—if anyone but wanted to. For there is an alternative. I have for years shown how to build it, I have at times built it myself, but of course I cannot make anyone come.

Getting back to Turan, then, even a joke needs to be *a propos* of something in the real world, yet here we are dealing with a total disconnect between the reality and the so very scholarly theories. Thus, the Ghuzz polity was not one whose sovereign voiced any “oceanic” claims such as those of Chinggis Khan and his successors,¹⁶ so there is no reason why the Ghuzz ruler’s deputy should have a “lacustrine” title—even if this whole theory or any part of it were valid. In short, there is no basis whatever for supposing that the <KWDRKYN> title had a LACUSTRINE etymology playing off of his boss’s supposed claim (if he ever made such a claim, which of course there is no indication of in any known source) to be the OCEANIC ruler. Next, the <KWDRKYN> actually was not a ruler but a subject, and as far greater authorities than me have repeatedly pointed out the steppe people made a very clear distinction between the one and the other—no less than did the Europeans. Much as the sole reason why in 1610 the Muscovites invited the Polish-Lithuanian prince Владислав Жигимонтович | Vladislav Zhigimontovich (as he was known in Russian) to become czar was that they wanted someone of ROYAL blood on their throne, so too among the steppe peoples even a world conqueror like Timur could not do without a puppet khan of Chinggisid blood (which he himself was not) and could dare to claim for himself no status higher than those of ‘great commander’ and ‘son-in-law’ of the puppet (see e.g. Manz 1988). The <KWDRKYN> is thus explicitly described as this kind of

¹⁵ Turan (1969) says that this proposal occurs in his own (1941) article, but what I seem to see there is precisely the opposite, namely, the idea that ‘lake’ and ‘ocean’ are similar concepts, rather than opposites. Be that as it may, it is anyway clearly the case that Turan (1941) did see SOME connection between the (real) oceanic and the (alleged) lacustrine titles—and that really is the issue here.

¹⁶ Instead he called himself merely by the LOWER title of *yabgu*, which (as already discussed) among other steppe peoples denoted a RELATIVE of the supreme ruler, usually ruling over an appanage, so not (in Eurocentric terms) an emperor but rather something more like a prince. It is thus, apart from other considerations, quite unlikely that the Ghuzz *yabgu* would have made the kind of “oceanic” claims that the Chinggis and his descendants did some centuries later (apart from the fact that no such claims, and indeed no military campaigns intended to realize it, are recorded).

“deputy” who (in what was surely yet another Turkic dyarchy)¹⁷ did (much of) the real work of ruling, while the sovereign (here *yabgu*) perhaps just (or mostly) reigned.¹⁸ But he was not himself a ruler of any sort. To suppose that his title

¹⁷ I do not see why the endlessly discussed Tonyukuk is not universally regarded as the same kind of “shogun” in what was obviously dyarchy. But, of course, I do. Surely, it is because in his account the khagan is not a total figurehead (but rather someone, who among other things, could lead troops in war). And the scholarly literature preaches (see esp. Ormos 2017, who cannot understand why the Muslim sources describe the Magyar *kündü*, or however the title is really to be read, at the head of 20,000 warriors) TOTAL political and military INACTIVITY on the part of the “sacral”, “nominal”, “figurehead”, “puppet, etc. But this is NOT a necessary feature of such systems. How is the *kündü* with his troops any different from Napoleon III or Wilhelm I at Sedan, or several of today’s monarchs reviewing THEIR armed forces on various more peaceful occasions? Consider the characteristic fact that quite recently the King of Sweden was deprived of his (purely nominal) role of commander-in-chief (so till then he had that nominal position), while remaining a general and an admiral (which theoretically now makes him subordinate both to the new military supreme commander and the civilian government)! In just this way Timur’s so-called “puppet” khans repeatedly took part in his military campaigns (the first, Suyurghatmish, was only appointed, on the road, during an early campaign). Obviously, this is why such nominal rulers were needed in the first place: for armies to feel comforted, when going out to kill or die, by the presence (and charisma) of Chinggisid blood. All of which was quite clear to the people of that period, as we can see from native narratives recalling those events (e.g., Elias and Ross, 1895: 83). And, which may seem even stranger to us Moderns, such “puppets” did take an active role in battle, too—as underlings to the real commander (here, Timur). Suyurghatmish did, and his son (Sultan Mahmud) even commanded the whole left wing of Timur’s army in various engagements, personally capturing the Ottoman padishah in the battle of Ankara (Bernardini 2013: 173-174). The Timur examples are not isolated. In the same period, Mamai, the effective but not official ruler of (part of) the Golden Horde, dragged his figurehead khan (Muhammad Bülek or Tülek) with him to the ill-fated battle of Kulikovo (Grigor’ev 1983), much as a millennium earlier (394 AD) the figurehead Western Roman emperor, Eugenius, accompanied the army led by his effective master (the Frankish *magister militum* Arbogast) at the equally disastrous battle of the Frigidus (Gibbon 1776 [1907: 60-66], Seeck & Veith 1913). Yet another myth (originating in Japan but widely bought into by Modern historians), it seems to me, is the idea that the pronounced tendency of Japan to revert to a dyarchy (not only with shoguns, but at other times with various kinds of regents, retired emperors, cloistered emperors, and so on, exercising actual rule, while the emperor remained at all times a “sacral” figure) is secondary, reflecting a decline or fall from power of an initially “normal” imperial system. (see e.g., Wakabayashi 1991, who draws a much less radical conclusion but one consistent with this proposal).

It seems to me, on the contrary, not at all unlikely that Japan had, to BEGIN with, in prehistory, a dyarchic system such as we find among the earliest Turks, and that it is the occasional periods of direct imperial rule that were the innovation.

¹⁸ There are also more complex systems, such as the triarchy (1199-1256) and then the tetrarchy or even more (1256-1333) that we know (or should know) about from Japanese history. In 1854/1855, too, the Japanese officials told the US representative that the shogun “does not rule in Japan. The government is conducted by a supreme council, and the chief of the council is the head of the government. He

performs all duties” (e.g. Miller 1942: 659), which implies a triarchy at that time, too (leading to a dispute over who would sign the Japanese instrument of ratification of the 1854 treaty with the US, a disagreement that almost led to an armed clash, avoided when the US representative received and verified that the document had seven signatures and seals (so one more than what he had been offered earlier), which he took (not being able to read Japanese!) to now include the shogun’s. (A curious mystery is that the document purporting to be this, found in the US National Archive, which I have seen [see also the detailed description in Miller 1942: 599 n. 1, 661 n. 2], does not match this. It bears the names of six officials, so without the shogun, no seals and apparently no signatures either, the names of the officials having been written by a scrivener—and to date all my attempts to locate the document described at the time of the final ratification have failed). Elsewhere I hope to demonstrate in detail that the Khazars, always analyzed as a dyarchy, were that originally (as reflected in the Muslim sources) but ended up evolving into a triarchy, too. In the Schechter letter, the Khazar king (Hebrew *melekh* <MLK>) was distinct (so say I, contrary to earlier scholarship) from both the *khagan beh* and the *khagan*. The former is described as <HPQYD RB ḤŠMWNYY>, i.e., ‘the grand commander’ (Hebrew) plus what I read as a Pseudo-Hebraic spelling of **hiš-a ämgä-n* (Lir **amwan*) **aya* ‘(one) who pays respect by suffering pain from smoke/soot’. This would reflect the well-known ritual where precisely this official had to hold a piece of burning firewood in his hands before approaching the “sacred” khagan, the point (as per Modern scholars) being precisely “purification” by fire and smoke. It also agrees with the historical/legendary section of the same letter, where the same official is called ‘great general/prince’ (Hebrew הגדול השר) and in Pseudo-Hebraic Khazar סבריאל <SBRY’L> (which I read as **čavar-yal(V)* ‘causing firewood to blaze/blacken’). There are still more such kennings referring to this same ritual, all hitherto misunderstood, of which I will cite only those of his two “deputies”: the <WŠYGR> <WŠYGR>, which I submit can ONLY be **yigač-yagur* (or *-yakur?*) **one bringing (the) wood close*, who stands behind the <KNDR ḤQ̄N> <**konduz* (or **r*) (cf. Kashgari’s *kondiḡu*) *kak-(g)an* ‘one who strikes the whetstone’, who in turn, stood directly behind the unfortunate shogun who was forced to hold the burning wood in his hand(s) and had still more kennings referring to this which I cannot go through here. Given all this, the odds of me being wrong are homeopathically small (see also Manaster Ramer to appear). And even though the historical/legendary text says that he had been “chosen to reign over them as king” (Hebrew וימליכוהו עליהם למלך), it seems that at the time of the letter he probably was no longer himself the king (I explain this seeming contradiction below). The argument that the “king” was also distinct from the *khagan* is maybe a bit less secure. But the letter does mention another potentate (hitherto analyzed as some kind of minor local, even a city-level, official, which makes no sense because is described as waging war on, and dictating terms to, the Roman emperor). To me it seems that the way he is described fits only the khagan. The text reads <BWLŠCY HW’ PSH HN’QR> (the last word having been obviously misread both by Schechter and Golb, I asked Yoram Meroz to both enhance and read it, and this reading is indisputable, especially so because it at first glance made no sense). However, in a Greek source the khagan is called **ἄβουζηρος γλιαβανος**, which can only mean ‘mindless’ (*ibuzir* <**ög-siz*, where the *-zir* = Chuvash *-sär* = Shaz *-siz*) plus ‘tied so he cannot speak’ (*gliaban* <**külḡü-²yä* ‘for (dative) inability to speak’ (cf. Kashgari’s gloss *al-sakta*, inexactly taken by Clauson as meaning only ‘apoplexy’) + *bān* ‘bound, tied’). This reflects the ritual whereby a newly enthroned khagan was held tightly by the neck, almost strangled and making incoherent noises (which could be “heard” by his entourage as whatever they wanted). Next, <BWLŠČY> can only (despite what we have been taught) be read **bulgašči* **one experiencing confusion, disorder (or the like)*’ (see EDPT 336 for *bulgaš* and especially OTWF 265, for this

would be the same as that of a sovereign ruler, while perhaps not totally impossible, is thus far from obvious. It is rare for a prime minister, chancellor, shogun, or the like to be called by a royal title in the various societies we possess information on.¹⁹ In short, we would need some evidence that this happened among the Ghuzz, but we have none.

as a haplogological form with the voice suffix {-l}/{Uš-} invisible—thus explaining the attested meaning better), while the Hebrew <HN'QR> would be a misspelling of the homophonous <HN'KR> 'the disturbed/irritated/distraught one'. This would fit the ritual and the Greek title just discussed. But there is more. The apparent Hebrew <HW' PSH> (hitherto taken to simply give the man's name as Pesah) seems to me to be yet another pseudo-Hebraic spelling of a Turkic word, viz., **opsah* < **ospagi* 'one who wants to swallow' (or perhaps even 'breathe'), which makes the proposed connection with the khaganal ritual all but certain. (This would mean that the {-gl} suffix, discovered by Erdal OTWF 320-323, COULD be used with DERIVED verb stems—pace Erdal, who considered, as is common in Turcology, only Old Shaz data). Finally, the same letter, in its historical/legendary section describing the original, dyarchic system, takes the khagan to have been a “judge” (Hebrew שופט). Now, it seems to me that here the Jewish Khazars are alluding to the Biblical history of Israelites, and so, if the khagan was a “judge”, then their “king” would be someone quite different (and the whole story would thus serve to ideologically justify the rise of such a “king”). Moreover, now we could explain why it is said that originally it was the “great general” who had reigned, because the Israelite kings (Saul and David) did emerge from the ranks of military commanders. If so, then the “king” at the time of the letter (while not unlikely descended from an EARLIER “great general”) would have had a NEW commander-in-chief under him (like David under Saul, Bathsheba's husband and others under David, etc.). And yes, I do insist that, while perhaps all this was NOT obvious before I realized it (and if so, maybe I deserve to stop being ignored at long last), it is all obvious once presented. I know this is not the business model that academia has followed to date (with occasional exceptions), but it is how I work. There is thus nothing whatever to perennially discuss, debate (i.e., to preach about to a chosen choir and quire), much less to viciously attack other scholars over—or better yet to ignore. And, also, yes, Virginia, Khazar was thus a simple Lir Turkic language (as was known in the 1870, and in spite of the more recent efforts of Golden and Erdal to find a problem). For, we see that the Proto-Turkic sound that one cult reconstructs as **z* and the other cult as **r*₂ (**f*) was *r* in Khazar—just as in any Lir language. The synchronic -*z*- that we see in at least two other **Khazar** words, reflects a regular change from **-s-* (and one of a number of Khazar sound changes hitherto missed or rejected, such as the change of **k* > *ḡ* (phonetic [x] or [χ]) before *a*, the lenition of final vowels, etc.) and is in NO WAY Shaz. Also, and if anything, even more obviously, the title <ʒʔwšYGR>, even if my explanation were wrong, does not in any way (again in spite of Golden and Erdal) point to a Shaz origin, because Lir languages can (and do) have shibilants from at least two sources besides that cultish **š* = **l*₂ (**ʃ*) that gives *š* in Shaz but *l* in Lir.

¹⁹ There is a terribly complex (and only partially understood) history of some Japanese shogunal courts using a variety of titles previously or otherwise used for the imperial court (see esp. Ng 2000, 2019). A small but illustrative part of this involves some Japanese shoguns being at times titled King of Japan (日本國王 *Nihonkokuō*) and a large number of variations such as Lord of Japan (日本國主), Great King of Japan (日本國大王), King of the Great Land of Japan (日本大邦國王), Lord of Great Japan (日大

All this however is still nothing. What really got my goat was the fact that (while *kül ärkin* was the title of a ruler), *küdär(V)kin* was not even the non-royal

本國主), King of the Great Land of Japan (大邦本日國王), and others (the first of which is constantly discussed, while the others are rarely even mentioned, but see e.g. Kitagawa & Okamoto 2015). Perhaps even stranger (and rarely mentioned as far as I can see, briefly by De Palma 1991 and not only in such longer treatments as Ng 2000, 2019) is that in a few places, e.g., the 1854 Convention of Kanagawa with the US (Japan Foreign Office 1874:1, 4 = 1884: 717, 721), the shogun is *SOMETIMES* referred to as 君主 *kunshu* ‘monarch, sovereign’ (a usage also apparently missing from the dictionaries). However, such surprising usages actually only reinforce my point that in a dyarchy the nominally subordinate (even if actually effective) ruler normally does NOT do such things. For, on the one hand, many of these titles were *MOSTLY* used in diplomatic contexts (moreover sometimes only by foreign rulers and ambassadors addressing the shogun, the usage of the title King beginning in fact in 1401 on the part of a Chinese emperor), while the Japanese themselves *OFTEN* avoided such usages. F.ex., in writing to the Cambodian kings (who honored him with all the variations listed above) Tokugawa Ieyasu calls himself merely “Minamoto no Ieyasu of Japan” (日本國源家康). The attempt to establish a royal title *DOMESTICALLY*, advocated by such authors and/or shogunal officials as Arai Hakuseki and Dazai Shundai on the one hand produced controversy and had to be abandoned and on the other also rather proves than disproves my point because these men actually did seek to establish the shogun *AS* the actual monarch of Japan, possessing the Mandate of Heaven and thus not even in theory an agent of the emperor (see esp. Nakai 1998)—who was to be restricted to what we would call a purely “religious” role (though Wakabayashi 1991 usefully corrects the usual understanding of that role). This usage was anyway, even in foreign relations, replaced (starting in 1635/1636 with a brief interruption in 1711; see Kang 1997) by 大君 *taikun*, which had *ALSO* originally been a royal title but seems at the time to have been seen (by e.g. Arai Hakuseki) as *LESS* monarchical (even if Yoshida Shōin and Dazai Shungai thought it was still *ONLY* appropriate for the emperor!). Likewise, when used in foreign relations, all such titles (including *taikun*) again appear to have been intended to make it seem as if the shogun was the final authority and the emperor not involved (as if he did not exist) at all. And, in fact, in Western sources for some centuries the actual Emperor was often viewed as *ALREADY* a purely religious figure, compared sometimes to the Pope, or as a “spiritual Emperor”—or apparently not considered at all, as by the Americans in the 1850’s. Incidentally, this too is not unparalleled. Though the details differ, there was a period of Irish history, certainly 1937-1949 (Coakley 2012) and arguably even longer, 1936-1953, when there was an ambiguity about who the head of state was, since foreign relations were conducted, at least formally, in the name of the King/Queen of Ireland (the British monarch), whose role was moreover *cagily* concealed from the Irish public, whereas for all other purposes Ireland was a republic with its own President—with conflicts arising out of this contradiction that are not entirely unlike those documented through the history of the Japanese shogunate. And yet the Irish President (either then or when the King was finally deprived of even this residual function) never thought to call *HIMSELF* King! The point then is simply this: in various dyarchic polities (which is what most modern countries are!), it is *NOT* usual for the shogun-like official, the “deputy” who holds the real power, to assume a monarchical title—*UNLESS* he is actually attempting to usurp the monarch’s position (which happens if at all only very rarely).

deputy of even a minor ruler. The key difficulty thus is that the title was used for the “deputy” not only of the *yabgu* but also of any other chieftain, apparently no matter how minor, as we are explicitly told:²⁰ “Likewise anyone who substitutes for a[ny] chieftain (ra’īs) among them is called <KWDRKYN>” (Dahhān, 1959: 101).

In short, this word did not refer to a specific high official (like a prime minister or shogun) subordinate just to the sovereign (*yabgu*), as all the discussions to date seem to assume—even if this passage is quoted! It was equally used for the subordinate of any minor cacique. And so this is why, even going in, it never made any sense for Turcologists to try to equate the shogunal <KWDRKYN> with the imperial <KWL’YRKYN>, as Togan and others have done, and certainly not without some detailed justification. For, extraordinary claims may turn out to be true, but they require extraordinary evidence. Yet even the ordinary kind was never offered. The problem moreover is a common one in Turcology. In the case of the Khazars, it is a similar mistake to render the title the *khagan beh* as if he were some kind of *khagan*. Thus, this title cannot possibly, no matter what we are constantly told by the highest (and other) authorities, be a “khagan beg” (which is literal nonsense, as if it meant “emperor commander”). It is evidently to be understood as “khagan’s beg, beg to the khagan”—much as the Royal Air Force is neither the British sovereign nor a competing second monarch taking

²⁰ This is the same issue, and discussed as little (that is to say, apparently not at all), as the constantly repeated claim that the Khazar word supposedly to be read *išad* (one of the many titles of the Khazar shogun, which I read as *uvšad*) must be the same word as the widespread *šad*, which (apart from not explaining the alleged *i-*, even if that were the original reading rather than my *uv-*) does not square all that well with the fact that the **šad** was typically a senior member of the royal family, whereas the Khazar shogun was not a royal at all. Moreover, *uvšad* is transparently yet another kenning referring to this official’s duty to hold the burning wood in his hand, a compound (even if one can argue about the details) related to *uvšak* ‘crushed, broken up, small’ (sometimes applied to bits of wood) (*EDPT* 16) + **had-* ‘(hold in the) hollow, palm of the hand’, which I base on this word together with the Danube Bulgar **τζιγας** ‘sword bearer’ (Trifonov, 1923: 16, Beševliev, 1980: 350f.), where the meaning of **-at** now seems obvious even if the etymology of *čig-* is not (perhaps from *ačik* ‘open, bare, uncovered’, referring to the unsheathed weapon), as well as the well-known *adut* ‘handful, palm of the hand’—not to mention (though I did not know this when I posited such a root) Mongolic *adqu* ‘handful; to hold in the hand’. Nor did I know then that the Turkic (with several more derivatives) and Mongolic root had been posited decades before me by Tekin (1990, followed by Erdal, 1991: 459, 552f. and passim), than which what could be more comforting? It is thus only the Lir (Khazar and Danube Bulgar) reflexes that are, perhaps, my small but original addition (the initial **h-* of the root is also not mine, since that goes back, for Mongolic, at least to Ligeti [1986: 119]).

wing but an air force that (nominally) serves the (one and only) king. Compare, too, the **imperial stormtroopers** of *Star Wars* fame, who were not emperor soldiers but emperor's soldiers. I really should not have to be explaining this to Turcologists. It is, thus, evident that the final vowel of the underlying **khagan beg-i* (as required by Turkic syntax) has simply been lost via a sound change quite regular in Khazar. For, while in English etc. we are told to write "beg", the Khazar title was actually transmitted to us (as I wrote it) with a final /h/ (so, *khagan beh*), which to date has been like the weather (much talked about while nothing is done, and worse, after being discussed, this spelling is ignored and a fictitious spelling with a final /g/ is put in its place) can hardly not reflect another related sound change reflecting just this etymology, so that the final /°h/ is from */°gi/. Nothing to endlessly "discuss" anymore.

In the Ghuzz case, then, we are dealing not with a royal title at all but a word meaning no more than the equivalent of our **deputy** or **secretary**—or Arabic **khalifah**²¹--and if it is to be etymologized, THAT has to be the starting point. Now, I have already said that the existing "etymologies" operate instead just as if someone were to emend **Wales** to **Whales**. But, actually I was being much too generous. What we are dealing with here is the moral equivalent of trying to "explain" the **vice-** of our **vice-president** by first of all rewriting the attested word as f.ex. ^x**mice-president** or ^x**rice-president** and second, making up a story about the president (as opposed to his deputy) being associated with the (bigger) rats as opposed the (smaller) mice or with (protein-richer) wheat as opposed to

²¹ The Gentle Reader may of course be more familiar with the use of this word for a SUCCESSOR (of Muhammad and of his successors, whence our **caliph**), but that is not the only meaning of the word in Arabic. Incidentally, this is as good a place as any for me to express my view that—when Allāh tells the protesting angels in the Qur'ān 2:30 that He is placing "on Earth a *khalifah*" (leading to debates among Muslim scholars ever since and among Western ones at least since 1890, see Al-Qāḍī 1988)—that this refers or at least alludes to the MORTALITY of man (who therefore sooner or later will be succeeded by another), and if so it is an amazing poetic expression of this concept. If so, this is surely a uniquely powerful image of our inevitable destiny, suitably presented as alien to the angels, who only foresee trouble, and explaining why Allāh responds: "I know what ye know not". Anyway, common translations like 'viceroy, vicegerent' or even 'successive authority' seem to me to miss the point, whereas the translation 'generations after generations' (whose original author I have yet to identify) is much closer—but even so I have yet to see it clearly pointed out that the word was intended (if I am right) to mean something like 'ONE WHO MUST SOMEDAY HAVE A SUCCESSOR', i.e., a very striking way of saying immortal. In short, here too, I submit that (at least) most of the endless scholarly discussion of this word has been beside the point, too.

(less nutritious) rice. Or saying that the **Prince of Wales** is really the **Prince of *Gales**, so called because the sovereign (being higher ranking) is the ruler of Hurricanes (or Tsunamis). This entire approach is nothing more than blatant folk etymologizing, practiced not by the ever-abused folk but by often top academics from top universities playing the pot calling the kettle black (just as argued in, e.g., Trifonova & Manaster Ramer 2019 and Manaster Ramer 2021 in regard to what we call PROFESSORIAL ETYMOLOGIES—and, since it is a disease not confined to the field of word origins, more generally OLD PROFESSORS' TALES).

In short, neither the form nor the meaning of the word is properly explained by the lacustrine or any other hypothesis known to us—and the fact that it is presented as fact rather than the wild hypothesis that it is, does not help persuade us, though apparently it has numerous (even if not all) scholars till now. Instead of all this, it occurred to me that, without having to emend the text or give the word a sense it clearly did not have, we should try to think of a grammatically and lexically possible formation that would save the text as it is and make sense of it at the same time.

Although there are even more obvious problems, this would already be enough to get me out of bed and up in arms. So I am here to demonstrate once again that (like various other fields of scholarship), this one at least at times does encourage and reward various scholars for (even while both they and their audiences know full well what is (or can be) true or at least what does (or could) make sense vs. what is not, does not, and cannot; what the methods of their own science, all science, all human reasoning require vs. what they abhor) nevertheless blithely and indeed demonstratively insisting (unless perhaps they run into determined resistance backed up by superior firepower) on inventing, maintaining, defending, and above all uncritically repeating and even lily-gilding the “utterly artificial and the “obviously preposterous” kind of claims.

Not all the time, mind you. The vast majority of statements one reads and hears are true (and trivial). It is a minority, a very small minority, of the things we are bombarded with that constitutes the fake news or (in cases such as ours) the fake olds that, however, are disproportionately influential in distorting our basic view of everything. If the media report that the President of the United States pardoned a Thanksgiving bird, one can be practically certain that this did

happen and exactly as reported, that he was the President, and that they both were turkeys. But when the media keep reporting (as I heard with my own ears repeated yet AGAIN on Dec. 12 2021 in an interview on Bulgarian TV with the former US Director of Central Intelligence, John O. Brennan) that the US under Donald Trump supposedly prejudged the permanent status of Jerusalem (and notably of its Eastern, overwhelmingly Arab, part), precluding future Israeli-Palestinian negotiations on this issue, you can be certain that this remains just as false as it was when first reported over four years ago.²² To be sure not many people died or were injured in protests over an event that never happened then, but some did—and even one is (to my way of thinking) too many.

In medical research (and other serious sciences) it is generally accepted that the MAJORITY of published claims are false. This is in fact so well known that it is often just taken as a given (e.g. Ioannidis 2005). In historical linguistics, historiography, philology, and such, I keep being ignored even though I do not even claim that it is the majority. It may well be a minority, but certainly if so, it is a rather influential minority (Trifonova & Manaster Ramer 2019).

So since this official was a **chargé d'affaires**, why would his title not be somehow derived from *kūd-* (among other things) ‘to wait on, to tend, take care of *sthg/s.o.*’ (Clouston *EDPT* 701)? To me, who of course am a total outsider to this field and have yet to be heard (though my first publication here, joint with none less than Bob Dankoff, appeared back in 1982), this seems evident—and of course puts paid to the idea of emending this to *köl* ‘lake’.

²² “Today’s actions—recognizing Jerusalem as Israel’s capital and announcing the relocation of the US embassy—do not reflect a departure from the strong commitment of the United States to facilitating a lasting peace agreement. The United States continues to take no position on any final status issues. The specific boundaries of Israeli sovereignty in Jerusalem are subject to final status negotiations between the parties. The United States is not taking a position on boundaries or borders” (Proclamation 9683 of December 6, 2017 Recognizing Jerusalem as the Capital of the State of Israel and Relocating the United States Embassy to Israel to Jerusalem, [*United States*] *Federal Register* 82.236: 58331f., Monday, December 11, 2017, Title 3—The President. Presidential Documents). For a time this was applied in practice by denying US citizens born in Jerusalem the right to list Israel as the birthplace in US passports. Later, this policy was changed, which seems to contradict the statement just quoted, which perhaps no one noticed because precisely they had never noticed what the original policy was. Perhaps I need to add the (to me rather obvious) point that a city can be the capital of a country without being completely or indeed even at all contained within its territory. As I have frequently said: Mad King or Mafeking?

For, when developing etymologies, one really is dealing with something very similar to criminal detection or the trial that follows. There is a reason, which most people I know who are not world-class academics in a field like this one instantly understand at least intuitively (and see the relevance of, instead of telling me that they are only interested in linguistics and not in anything else so to please stop bothering them with mathematics or science or medicine or common sense or the law), why a man was hanged after he had collected insurance money for THREE wives in sequence, each of whom died by drowning without there being any evidence of foul play—whereas he would have gotten away with it if it had been one or likely even two. In other words, if the string of letters <KWDRKYN> had many different possible readings given the available lexical and morphological resources of Turkic (the roots, suffixes, endings, and so on that are documented or can reasonably be reconstructed—and the rules for combining these into words or phrases), then that would be much like a murder for which many suspects are equally likely (as in Christie’s **Murder on the Orient Express**) and any conviction would be unjustified.

However, after more than two years of trying every formally possible combination I could think of, I have found only one etymology that is even remotely possible (though it is quite hypothetical, so I do not insist), namely, the (attested) aorist participle *küdär* ‘waiting, waiting on, tending, taking care of’ (see Clauson *EDPT* 701) combined with, and modifying, the unattested but theoretically possible **äg-gin* ‘one who has bent, bowed’ (pp. 99-100) or even simply the quite attested *äg-in* ‘one that bends’, whose “normal meaning [...] is ‘shoulder’, but [...] can originally have denoted anything bent” (Erdal *OTWF* 305; see also, rather similarly, Clauson *EDPT* 109).²³ In short, if the bending was of the head before men of royal blood, he would have been the SERVANT who TOOK CARE OF (THE AFFAIRS OF STATE). But if the bending was to carry a (here, figurative) weight on his (figurative) shoulders (which is what the ‘shoulder’ meaning suggests anyway), then he quite literally was *CHARGÉ*. QED.

I say again that (unlike those who do insist on altering both the forms and the meanings of the attested words and/or on hilarious etymologies—and do not

²³ Call me crazy, but I find it hard not to see a connection (no matter how obscure the morpho(phono)logy may seem at present, when we as yet know so relatively little about Proto-Turkic) with *egät* (and modern Anatolian *ekti/ekdi*) ‘(maid) servant’ (Clauson *EDPT* 102).

even bother to admit that this is what they are doing) I do not insist. I see no way, without more data than we have at our disposal that one could be even close to certain. All I do say is that the exact word that Ibn Faḍlān himself wrote (or dictated) in the meaning he wrote down could be etymologized the way I said—and if the etymology is wrong, still its form and meaning are not to be brutally messed with—not even by such authorities as Togan and Pelliot and their obedient followers. Of course, for the various reasons stated above, the (seemingly) new approach I am proposing to this particular problem is not new as such. It is the way etymology and historical linguistics and linguistics and social sciences and humanities and science and indeed any human activity can be, and has been, done for a very long time—when done well. Moreover, even though I have on my side all this support, I still only propose it here with all due caution, as perhaps no more than a possible starting point for discussion or even just a very useful target for derision from the CURRENTLY coming up generation of those who surely think that it is now they that must be obeyed—and so perhaps they must, but not everywhere. For one thing, not here.

The contrast then between the Augean infrastructure of error that has persisted for a century (and the “methodology” that permitted this) on the one hand and my simple proposed solution (and the methods by which this was arrived at) on the other is a small, very small, example of how I deal with the whole miasma that begins and ends with the adamant refusal (no less typical of top authorities in every field than of their dutiful followers) to forthrightly admit when they simply DO NOT KNOW something and instead erecting and then perpetuating a blatant myth (and with nary a little Danish child to expose them to the ridicule they deserve). And I would beg the Gentle Reader to observe that this is a constant practice in more important fields, too, such as medicine, where we are precisely constantly told that the “exact” cause of this or that illness is unknown—when in reality nothing is known at all—and then some elaborate claims are made for which there is no basis whatever (a favorite being that the cause of a disease admitted to be not understood at all is “multi-factorial”). But if that were all, everyone would see it (even without the help of a Danish tot).

The devious reality is, though (as I said already written in other places) that many (usually trivial) facts are reported with painstaking accuracy and many correct (even if trivial) theories advanced in the very same scholarly literature

that insists on the most hair-raising myths too. For, when things are clear (and do not interfere with anyone's *a priori* agenda), then it does no harm to follow the most demanding of methodologies, and excruciating care then be taken, and especially of the trivia. This, I submit, is what confuses most readers, who are never warned that one and the same work of scholarship will turn on a dime from valid to invalid methodology, from an entirely reasonable etymology to a professorial one, from genuine fact to "obviously preposterous" myth.

It is not (as is sometimes claimed) that various professions (whether politicians, journalists, physicians, lawyers, or scientists) have NO standards. Nor yet that they are either cautious or conservative, in contrast to scholars like me being "daring" or "audacious" (as if that were a BAD thing!). It is rather that, when either nothing (or not enough) is known and/or when someone's ox would be gored, the standards that are observed MUCH of the time suddenly go out the window—precisely just when they are needed the most.

The PARTICULAR problem (or problems if you consider the footnotes) discussed here are of course just that (like Darwin's finches and peacock tails, like the orbit of Mars for Kepler, like that of Mercury for Einstein, like any one etymology or even a thousand in any given language, or any historiographic detail or a million). The GENERAL problem is the way in which science can be (and often is) done but sometimes is not; next, the stubborn refusal to admit that this is so but especially to do anything about it besides shrugging—and above all the stubborn refusal to step aside and permit someone else (e.g., me) to do anything about it. This of course is the very nature of "professionalism" and more so of what its academic variety, PROFESSORIALISM. Having enjoyed a half-century of boredom trying to effect the smallest change, I now propose to enjoy the rest of my days on nothing more nor less than a call to set Turcology free from this cancer. And this only as a first step towards the liberation of all academic (and then after all, of all other, i.e., non-academic) minds from the stranglehold of this juggernaut of error. If I prevail, my (as I whimsically call it) Great Unified Theory of Everything Else will have proven its worth. If not, well, it is still correct—but perhaps it will take longer than one lifetime to be understood much less acted

on. Anyway we begin with Turcology. “First we take Manhattan, then we take Berlin”²⁴ (to end, as I began, with Leonard Cohen).²⁵

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²⁴ And to those who still pretend that they still do not see the difference between the two approaches to science and everything else, I give up for I have shown it in well over a hundred publications since the 1970s and here again, for this is my Berlin, exactly like the one John Kennedy meant when he said “There are many people in the world who really don't understand, or say they don't, what is the great issue between the free world and the communist world” and invited them to “come to Berlin”.

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