

TÜRK CUMHURİYETLERİ VE OTUZ DÖRT HARFLİ ORTAK LATİN ALFABESİ

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ÖZET

1991'de Sovyetlerin dağılmasıyla birlikte beş bağımsız Türk cumhuriyeti daha ortaya çıkmış oldu. Daha sonra Türk dünyasının kültür birliği sık sık gündeme gelmeye başladı. Kültür birliğinin sağlanmasında, alfabe birliği önemli olduğu için Kiril'den Latin'e geçişle ilgili tartışmalar da gündemdeki yerini aldı.

1991 yılında Marmara Üniversitesi Türkiyat Araştırmaları Enstitüsünün gerçekleştirdiği sempozyuma katılan delegeler, Türk lehçeleri için tavsiye edilen “otuz dört harfli ortak Latin alfabesi”ne imza atarlar. Bu alfabe, Türkiye Türkçesinde kullanılan Latin temelli alfabebe beş harfin daha ilâve edilmesiyle oluşturulmuştu.

Geçmişte çok değişik din ve kültürle yüz yüze gelen Türkler, yüzyıllar içerisinde bu kültür ve dinlerin etkisiyle alfabelerini de değiştirmişlerdir. Belki bu açıdan yeni cumhuriyetler, alfabe değiştirme pratiğine yatkın olabilirlerdi.

Önce Azerbaycan, sonra Türkmenistan daha sonra da Özbekistan Latin alfabesini kabul etti. Ancak bu alfabelerde “otuz dört harfli ortak Türk alfabesi”nden sapmalar vardır. Oysa farklı kodlarla yazılmış metinler, anlamlarının işaretlerin arkasına gizlenmesiyle, Türkler arasında anlaşmanın birkaç adım daha zorlaşmasına sebep olacaktı.

Günün birinde Kazaklar Latin'e geçtiklerinde, aynı Türk boyuna mensup olan Kırgızların Latin alfabesine geçişi daha kolay olacaktır. Öte yandan Kazaklar Latin alfabesine tam olarak geçerlerse, Kiril alfabesi kullanan tek Türk cumhuriyeti olarak Kırgızistan

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kalacak, bu durum da onları Latin'e geçmeye zorlayacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Türk cumhuriyetleri, Türk lehçeleri, Türkiye Türkçesi, otuz dört harfli ortak Latin alfabesi, alfabe değişikliği, Kiril, Latin, alfabe birliği.

TURKIC REPUBLICS AND THIRTY-FOUR LETTER COMMON LATIN ALPHABET

ABSTRACT

By the disintegration of Soviets in 1991, five more independent Turkic Republics emerged. Then cultural unity of Turkic communities began to become the current issue of that time. As the unity of alphabet was significant for the provision of the unity of culture, the disputes relating to transition from Cyrillic to Latin were also among the seriously discussed issues of the agenda.

The delegates who attended the symposium organized by Marmara University Turkic Studies Institute in 1991 signed up to accept "thirty-four letter common Latin alphabet" which was recommended for Turkic languages. This alphabet was formed by the addition of five more letters to the Latin based alphabet which was used in Turkish language.

Having encountered many religions and cultures throughout the history, Turks have changed their alphabets within the centuries by the influence of these religions and cultures. Maybe it was due to this reason that new republics were inclined to change alphabet.

Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan in succession accepted Latin alphabet. However, some discrepancies existed between the thirty-four letter common Turkic alphabet and these alphabets. Actually, the texts written by the use of different codes and the meaning of these texts was hidden behind the codes would lead to difficulties in communication between Turks.

When one day Kazakhs accepts Latin alphabet, the transition of Kyrgyz belonging to the same tribe of Turks to Latin alphabet will be easier. On the other hand,

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if Kazakhs adopts Latin alphabet completely, Kyrgyzstan would be the only Turkic Republic left to use Cyrillic alphabet and this would force them to adopt Latin.

Key Words: Turkic republics, Turkic languages, Turkish language, thirty-four letter common Latin alphabet, alphabet change, Cyrillic, Latin, unity of alphabet.

By the disintegration of Soviets in 1991, Turkic Republics gained their independences. This ended up with the emergence of five more independent Turkic Republics: Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. This progress which was then observed very heatedly and curiously in different parts of the world was an issue of great concern for Turkey. “We were blindsided” was the statement we heard very often then. What we would do and on what basis our relations would be conducted was unclear. Though it was more dominant among the nationalist front, majority of the people in Turkey were stating that Turks who had lived under captivity for many years should escape from the clutches of captivity. Nevertheless, the issues like how and what we would do after getting out of captivity were not the points concentrated on adequately because it was not deemed likely for most of Turkic countries to gain their independence within such a short time. Independence brought along many “new” stuff in many fields such as new army, new flag and new currency. Amidst this progress, the issue of the cultural unity of Turkic world came to the fore. As the unity of alphabet was of great importance for the provision of the unity of culture, the disputes relating to transition from Cyrillic to Latin were also brought to the agenda.

First Enterprises for a Common Alphabet

Having encountered many religions and cultures throughout the history, Turks have changed their alphabets within the centuries by the influence of these religions and cultures. Since then, Orkhon, Uyghur (Sogdian), Mani, Brahmi, Arabic, Greek, Hebrew, Cyrillic and Latin alphabets were used in Turkish/Turkic texts. It might be the reason why new republics had tendency to change alphabet. Moreover, they used three alphabets within a period of a century. Turkic tribes in Central Asia and Caucasus used Arabic alphabet from the beginning of their written literature until around 1928. Upon the

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indoctrinations of Russia, they adopted Latin alphabet and they kept on using it until 1940. After the use of Cyrillic alphabet between 1940 and 1990, some of the newly independent states readopted Latin and some still continued to utilize Cyrillic. The purpose behind the proposition of Latin alphabet to Turks was probably to disassociate them from Arabic alphabet first, and then make them accept Slav-origin Cyrillic alphabet. Since a unity of alphabet to a certain extent appeared upon the adoption of Latin by Turkish Republic in 1928, the application of this alphabet forever would not suit Soviets' book.

Turkey and Turkic Republics witnessed important and vehement disputes in linguistic area in 1991 and subsequent years. "Symposium of International Modern Turkish/Turkic Alphabets" was organized by Marmara University Turkic Studies Institute in 1991. The delegates who participated in the symposium signed up to adopt "thirty-four letter common Latin alphabet" which was proposed for Turkic languages. This alphabet was composed by including five more letters to the Latin based alphabet which is used in modern Turkish. Additional letters of all sizes are as follows: "Ä-ä", "Ñ-ñ", "X-x", "Q-q", "W-w".

These meetings and negotiations began to bear fruit and at different times, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan made their decisions on changing to Latin alphabet gradually. Giving up using Cyrillic letters Azerbaijan decided to adopt Latin alphabet on December 25, 1991. However, they preferred using "Ə-ə" to "Ä-ä". This was the first diversion from the "thirty-four letter common alphabet". Despite this, Azerbaijan was the most faithful state to the common alphabet. The alphabetical characters that were not present in the prevailing alphabet in Turkey were: "Ə-ə", "Q-q" and "X-x". The fact that any text which was written in new Azeri alphabet did not have so many code differentiations made it easier for Turks of Turkey who were using a Latin based alphabet to understand. On April 12, 1993 Turkmenistan and on September 2, 1993 Uzbekistan adopted Latin alphabet.

The alphabets adopted by these two Turkic states included rather lot diversions from the "thirty-four letter common alphabet". Adopting distinct codes Turkmenistan digressed the "thirty-four letter common Turkic alphabet" slightly and acceded to "y" instead of "ı", "ý" instead of "y", "j" instead of "c". As an example of this, when the word "yığıcı" the meaning of which is "dizgici" (compositor) or "ürün toplayıcı" (reaper) is transcribed as "ýygyjy", the first rapid connotation of this word is eradicated for those who still use the dialect in which this word exists as in their native language. If

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someone from Turkey encounters the word “yılını” written as “ýylyny”, this word will mean nothing to this person. On the one hand, instead of “ş”, “ç” Uzbekistan was using “sh” and “ch” which are the English spelling of these two letters; on the other hand, they decided to unite rounding letters “a” and “o” and represent them with only one symbol. If the word “çiçek” (flower) is spelled as “chichek” by Turks who use Latin based alphabet, it would be unavoidable for those who are not familiar with the new coding system to think that it is an English word. When the sentence “Çocuk çok nazlı bir çiçektir” is transcribed as “Chocuk chok nazlı bir chichektir” (A child is a very coddled flower), a sentence which belongs to Turkish language and the words of which we know very well becomes alienated. You can imagine to what extent an Uzbek text some words of which we may not know becomes alienated if it undergoes the same transformation. Bearing these approaches in mind, the efforts which we are normally supposed to make to understand a word must then be allocated to decipher the alphabet.

Imagining that alphabetical characters symbolized with different codes are present through the whole text network as we have illustrated in the examples above, communication among Turks would be a little more difficult due to the hiding of the texts written in Turkic dialects behind the symbols. There will be a day when Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan will make necessary regulations realizing that the preference of different codes will lead to many divergences rather than unity. As a matter of fact, Turkmenistan altered some characters which they adopted in addition to the “thirty-four letter common Turkic alphabet”. Besides Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, Gagauzs, Karakalpaks, and Crimean and Kazan Tatars have decided to adopt Latin alphabet so far. However, when the resolution made by Duma in 2002 was approved and legislated by Russian Federation Assembly, the enterprises of Kazan Tatars to alter their alphabet was hindered. According to the law enacted in Russia, all the nations within the borders of Russian Federation have to use their own Cyrillic based alphabets while writing in their native languages.

Since Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan are independent states, they do not have such problems. They can transit to Latin with their own will. In the 13th article of the report consisted of 18 articles presented to Abdullah Gül on 23 November 2003 by the General Director of Turkish Hearths Nuri Gürgür, the following things are mentioned about the common alphabet and the attitude of Kazakhstan towards it: “The issue of common alphabet has to be on agenda all the time. The brotherly republics have already covered a great distance

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regarding transition to Latin alphabet. It is a pleasing advancement that after the previous decisions of Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan in this favor, lastly Kazakhstan also stepped forward in the same way.

To maintain to meet at the same denominator regarding language and alphabet, the relationships have to be developed in all the fields. Parallel to the unity of the opinion came out in the earlier meetings, the decision of “acceptance of the thirty-four letter frame alphabet” and such must be implemented. The resistance of the countries including Turkey protecting their alphabet is to be observed. We can demonstrate a model attitude regarding this issue, we can reconsider the addition of two letters that are absolutely needed. It is a serious handicap that the decisions taken about common books, education, history, language and literature have just been remained as heartfelt wishes and realistic and permanent attempts are yet to be made.”

Importance of Using Common Alphabet from Various Aspects

- As long as the alphabets are not the same, the projects that the Turkic world performs together will not be at the desired level. For instance; if it is wanted to publish a common journal, this will not be possible practically because of the mess of the current alphabets or even if it be possible, it will not help in providing the desired contribution to the reciprocal understanding.

- The difference of the alphabets steals a part of the time that we are supposed to spend to understand the words. It is because firstly the text that covers itself with different characters is to be converted to the codes that our brain can perceive or match the codes that are met for the first time.

- The uncommon characters cause great distress in the study of computer based linguistics that is becoming more and more widespread day by day as in this condition the first step of the translations done by machines in several steps would unnecessarily be the translation of the alphabet. In the studies related to the frequency of the vowels and consonants; in the texts where Cyrillic origin alphabets are used, the double characters with single appearance ("E-e => Ye-ye", "Ё-ё => Yo-yo", "Я-я => Ya-ya", "Ю-ю => Yu-yu") and the sounds which can be shown with single character but shown as double characters ("ch => ç", "sh => ş" etc.) cause major difficulties. These characters cause problems from several aspects. First of all to improve algorithms that belong to the syllables of which all the

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characters are written differently with the “thirty-four letter Turkic alphabet” is pretty easy. Apart from this, the single sounds which are shown with double characters in the text of the newly used alphabets, there will be troubles in the algorithm of syllable. On the other hand, these double characters are either not available in the Unicode system ("ch", "sh" etc.) or because their position is at the bottom of the table ("Я-я", "Ю-ю" etc.), problems about their usage arise. If it is not available in the Unicode system, the cooperation with the world using this alphabet would be limited even if the Latin alphabet is accepted. In fact, it is also possible to compose the double characters by pressing the buttons twice. But in this case the state of being economical in writing the text abolishes and the obligation of composing the text in a longer period comes out. Thus, the effort spent in this condition is more.

- When different characters are preferred even the common words make it difficult for the people using two dialects to understand each other.

- That most of the letters in the “thirty-four letter common Turkic alphabet” are available in the Basic Latin computer character table provides convenience to the users. If an alphabet carrying on these characteristics is used in the texts transferred from one computer to the other one or in the texts downloaded from the internet, there will not be many unreadable characters. Since all the characters of “thirty-four letter common Turkic alphabet” are at the beginning of the Unicode character system, they are easy and handy to use.

- Taking all these into consideration, it is clearly understood that not to use “thirty-four letter common Turkic alphabet” in the shifting of the alphabets of Turkic Republics and communities will bring many problems.

To Have Right Cultural Policies is Inevitable

That Turks of Turkey are descendants of the Oghuz family may have been an effective factor in the rapid alphabet change and adoption of the Azerbaijanis and Turkmens to the changes. Thus, Kazakhs who are willing to transit to Latin must be provided with all the conveniences in accepting transition to Latin. Accordingly, when they transit to Latin, the transition of the Krygyzs who are the descendants of Kipchak family to Latin will be easier and earlier. On the other hand, if the Kazakhstan transit to Latin alphabet, Kyrgyzstan will be the only Turkic Republic using Cyrillic alphabet and this will force them to transit to Latin. Kazakhstan, in addition to the twenty-

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nine letter alphabet which is used by the Turks of Turkey, may add the letters "Ä-ä", "Ñ-ñ", "Q-q", "X-x", "W-w" from "thirty-four letter common Turkic alphabet" to the alphabet they are to accept. They can use "V-v" in Russian words whereas they can use "W-w" letters in Turkic origin words. The ones guiding the transition from Cyrillic to Latin should esteem the opinions of the linguists and take the scientific criterions in consideration in the reports presented to them.

There are other points to pay attention to. The Cyrillic alphabet which was started to be used in 1940 was prepared by taking separate characters into consideration for every republic. This was because of the special preference of the Russians. If parallel characters were used; Turkic nationals could easily understand the texts written in different dialects at least when common components are to be discussed. But the mess in the appearance of the alphabets was preventing the rapid subconscious call; moreover, the Cyrillic alphabet had the characters "E-e", "Ë-ë" "Я-я" "Ю-ю" ("Ye-ye", "Yo-yo", "Ya-ya", "Yu-yu") that were not needed for Turkic languages. These changes were the products of a special design to separate the children of the same nation. After having independence with no struggle and without shedding any blood, the authorities of the Turkic Republics should have acted with judgment and not with that of the preferences of Russia. On the contrary, by adding a few letters that they need from "thirty-four letter common Turkic alphabet", they should have paid more attention to activating subconscious parallel codes that would lead to the closeness in language.

The relations which are conducted on and off after Özal, have gained a new acceleration with Abdullah Gül's visit to Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan. That the issue of alphabet arouses in the President's travel and positive developments would take place is very pleasing. The President and the Prime Minister are expected to pay more attention to the Central Asia and the Caucasus in this new term. Turkey can not ignore the attempts of Iran, China, Russia and America in the region. Despite the bumpy relationships so far, Turkey is still more advantageous in establishing communications with these regions. We are the country with the facility to activate the subconscious. Just so, we have to determine right policies. On the other hand schools were founded, the trade and economic relations developed deeper in this region. The most significant step to be taken is to construct a building on the right basement laid before by communicating the people who took part in the educational, commercial and economical works in the region. Central Asia has always occupied an important place in our heart. Once, our ancestors immigrated from that place and made the Anatolia as motherland.

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Difficulties in new relationships will always come in front of us. But if we understand each other better, and represent the value of love, cooperation, joining together, help one another well, Turkey will have an everlasting place in the hearts of all Central Asian countries and thus the future of the Central Asia will be brighter.

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