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THE EXPRESSION OF YEAR RECKONING IN "QISAS-I RABGHUZI"

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Abstract. This paper examines how year reckoning is expressed in Qisas-i Rabghuzi, a unique written monument composed in the fourteenth century by Nasiral-Din Burhan al-Din Rabghuzi. Treating the work as a source that reflects an important tage in the development of the Turkic language, the study elucidates the semantic and etymological nature of the chronology-related lexical units attested in the text, namely the names of the days of the week and large and symbolic numerical units.

Keywords: chrononym; year reckoning; Qisas-i Rabghuzi; the lexeme yil 'year'; days of the week; semantic analysis; Old Uzbek.

Introduction. Qisas-i Rabghuzi (Uzb. Qissasi Rabg'uziy), one of the earliest monuments of the written literature of the Turkic peoples, is an invaluable source not only from a literary and religious perspective but also from a linguistic one. In narrating the stories of the prophets, the work incorporates a considerable number of units relating to time and chronology. An analysis of these units reveals not only the lexical and semantic features of the language of the work but also the layering of chronological conceptions that existed in Central Asia at the beginning of the fourteenth century.

The relevance of the present study lies in the fact that the work employs time-reckoning systems of Arabic, Persian and Turkic origin side by side, at times intermingled within a single sentence. This provides unique material for tracing the historical and semantic formation of chrononyms.

The concept of year reckoning is one of the most ancient and universal categories of human thought: it embodies not only astronomical and calendrical knowledge but also a people's religious beliefs, historical memory and linguistic worldview. The concepts of the Hijri lunar calendar, which took shape under the influence of Islamic civilisation, became deeply embedded in the languages of the Turkic peoples, and traces of this process can be clearly observed in works of religious-historical content such as Qisas-i Rabghuzi.

Main Part. Qisas-i Rabghuzi was composed by Nasir al-Din Burhan al-Din Rabghuzi in the region of Khorezm at the beginning of the fourteenth century (c. 709–710 AH / 1309–1311 CE). The work comprises the stories of the prophets, significant events of Islamic history and religious-moral narratives, and it is valued as a vivid example of the Old Turkic (Khorezmian Turkic) literary language. Linguistically, it stands close to such monuments as Tafsir, Khusraw and Shirin and Nahj al-Faradis, and it served as an important foundation for the formation of the Old Uzbek language [3, p. 6]. The language of the work displays a harmonious combination of religious and scholarly terminology borrowed from Arabic and Persian with the distinctive

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grammatical and lexical stratum of Turkic, which makes it a valuable source for historical lexicology and, in particular, for the study of chrononyms.

Events in the work are frequently narrated with reference to a specific time, year, month or day. Such chronological references serve to present the history of the prophets in a coherent sequence and, at the same time, have given rise to a rich lexical stratum of year reckoning in the text. For instance, in "The Story of Cain and Abel" (Qissai Qobil va Hobil), Cain is said to have been yigirma yashar ('twenty years old') when he killed Abel, while "The Story of Seth, peace be upon him" (Qissai Shis alayhis-salom) states: Qobilda kezin yuz o'tuz yil kechdi, Shis tug'urdi ('one hundred and thirty years passed after Cain, and Seth was born') [3, p. 33].

Within "The Story of Adam, peace be upon him" (Qissai Odam alayhis-salom), year reckoning recurs in several passages: the narrative of dominion over the earth being granted to the jinn, the birds and the angels for yetti ming yil ('seven thousand years') each; after Adam was created from clay, qirq yil yog'mur yog'di ('it rained for forty years'), followed by bir yil sevunch yog'muri ('a year of the rain of joy'); Adam and Eve lived together for besh yuz yil ('five hundred years'); after the expulsion from Paradise, Adam wept for ikki yuz yil ('two hundred years') and was thereafter reunited with Eve at Arafat; the account of Adam's lifespan, umrum ming yil ('my life is a thousand years'), of which he gave qirq yil ('forty years') to David; and Tuproqdin yaratilmishdin beru ming ikki yuz qirq yil erdi ujmohga borg'incha ('from his creation from clay until he went to Paradise, it was one thousand two hundred and forty years'), which stands out as a distinctly precise count.

In the text of Qisas-i Rabghuzi, units of year reckoning are expressed predominantly through a syntactic-lexical construction of the type "numeral + yil": yetti ming yil, qirq yil, bir yil, besh yuz yil, ikki yuz yil, ming yil, ming ikki yuz qirq yil. This demonstrates the consistency of the numerative construction characteristic of Old Turkic: after the numeral, the lexeme yil appears in an invariable form without the plural affix. This constitutes an early attestation of the rule in Turkic languages whereby a noun is not pluralised when used with a cardinal numeral.

Semantically, these units can be divided into two groups. The first group comprises round numbers: seven thousand, forty, five hundred, two hundred and one thousand. Rather than serving as precise chronological calculation, such numbers perform a symbolic and artistic function, emphasising the grandeur, duration or sanctity of events. For instance, the threefold repetition of the narrative in which dominion over the earth is granted for yetti ming yil, separately for each figure (the jinn, the birds and the angels), attests to the transfer of the classical oral-epic style into the written genre of the qissa. This, in turn, reveals the function of the chrononym not merely as a measure of time but also as a compositional device.

Of particular note is the use of the numeral qirq 'forty' in two different contexts: the "forty years of rain" that fell after Adam was created from clay, and the "forty years" of Adam's life given to David. In the Turkic-Islamic tradition this numeral is known as a lexeme carrying a profound symbolic load (a period of trial, purification or completion), and its repeated use in the text is not accidental; rather, it indicates that the numeral functions as a stable formulaic unit in the language of the work. At the same time, bir yil sevunch yog'muri ('a year of the rain of joy'), placed in contrast to the forty years, serves to juxtapose periods of sorrow and joy through a stylistic opposition of large and small quantities.

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The second group contains a single precise number: ming ikki yuz qirq yil (‘one thousand two hundred and forty years’, from Adam’s creation from clay until his return to Paradise). This number differs from all the preceding examples in its structure, being compound rather than round, and lays claim to genuine chronological calculation within the text. Such precision serves the aim of narrating the history of the prophets sequentially, on the basis of a coherent calendar, and shows that the author sought to present religious-historical events not merely as legend but within a definite chronological system.

In the cosmogonic section of the work (the account of the creation of the world following the chapter Sifat al-samawat), the names of the days of the week are enumerated consistently:

> Yakshanba kun ko‘klarni yaratti, Dushanba kun oyni, kunni, yulduzlarni yaratti… Seshanba kun… olam xalqinda qush-qurtlarni, farishtalarni yaratti, Chahorshanba kun suvlarni yaratti… Panjshanba kun ujmoh, tamug‘ni… yaratti… Azina kun Odamni yaratti. Shanba kun narsa yaratmadi [3, p. 12].
>
> (‘On Sunday He created the heavens; on Monday He created the moon, the sun and the stars… On Tuesday… He created the birds, the creeping creatures and the angels among the beings of the world; on Wednesday He created the waters… On Thursday He created Paradise and Hell… On Friday He created Adam. On Saturday He created nothing.’)

Semantically, these names are compound units formed on the Persian model “numeral + shanba” (shanba ‘day of rest’, from Hebrew shabbat): yak ‘one’ + shanba, du ‘two’ + shanba, se ‘three’ + shanba, and so forth. This is a classic example of the projection of numeral semantics onto a calendrical unit of time, that is, the reuse of cardinal numerals to name units of time. Notably, a distinct form, Azina, is used for the sixth day (Friday) instead of the expected *shashshanba, which indicates that the day of religious significance was singled out in the naming system.

Conclusion. The examples discussed demonstrate that the lexeme yil simultaneously performs two distinct functions in the text: a symbolic-stylistic one and a chronological-computational one. This points to the necessity of classifying the units of year reckoning in Qisas-i Rabghuzi not only from a lexical-semantic perspective but also in terms of their function within the text. Qisas-i Rabghuzi can therefore serve as a rich and reliable source for the study of the historical development of linguistic units related to year reckoning. The chronological vocabulary attested in the work is diverse in its origin, semantic properties and textual function, and it clearly illustrates the complex lexical-semantic structure of Old Turkic, which, while enriched by Arabic and Persian borrowings, preserved its own internal system.

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