ON THE ORIGINS OF THE TURKIC
DIRECTIVE SUFFIXES -jar(y) AND -sar(y)

Marek Stachowski

ABSTRACT

This study is devoted to the problem of the interrelationship between Turkic syŋar ‘direction’ and jak ~ jan ‘side’ on the one hand, and the Khakas, Shor and Oyrot directive suffixes -jar(y) ~ -sar(y) ~ -sāra, and so on, on the other.

The paper seeks to answer four questions: (1) Are jak ‘side’ and jan id. two derivatives ultimately of the same root *√ja?; (2) How do jak ‘side’ and sak id. compare?; (3) If it is true that jar, sar < *jagar, *sagar, how, then, should the final vowel in jary, sara, etc. be explained?; (4) How do Old Tkc. syŋar ‘direction’ (also used as a directive postposition) and sar ~ jar compare?

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Marek STACHOWSKI (Kraków)

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1.

The Turkic directive suffixes -jar(y), -sart(y), etc. are usually only mentioned when talking about Khakas or Shor – two languages in which they turn up in some diverse phonetic variants like -sāra, -sara, -sāry, -sary, -sar, -zāra, -sēri, -seri, -zeri, -zere, -zēr.¹ Three generalizations can be made about them:

[1a] Velar variants are more frequent than palatal ones.²
[1b] Some of the variants have two syllables, some have only one.
[1c] The vowel of the first syllable is sometimes long.

The situation becomes even more complicated if one adds Oyrot equivalents of the suffix: -jar and -jary (Borgojakov 1976: 92). This leads to another observation:

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¹ Old Turkic had its own directive suffixes: -(a)r, -ru, -ru, which are also involved in the evolution of -jar(y) and -sart(y).
² That is why these elements are sometimes rightly considered postpositions, rather than suffixes – they retain their velar vowels also after palatal stems, as in Khak.dial. köl sary ‘towards a lake’ (in Borgojakov 1976: 92 written both «көл капа» and «көл капа»); on the other hand, there also exists tigırzer ĉaripçepi (< *tiger sara) ‘towards sky’ (op.cit.) with palatal (*-ger zu- > -ger ze-) and voicedness assimilation (*-r s- > -r z-) which contradicts the postpositional character of -sary – a clear case of “suffixes in progress”.

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This phonetic fact is curious indeed because the correspondence is otherwise only known from Yakut, i.e. Yak. s- = General Tkc. j- (~ ž- ~ ž-).

2.

The discussion on the morphological structure and the origins of the new directive suffixes which certainly evolved from postpositions jar, sar, etc. has never been especially lively. It was W. Bang who first tried to solve the problem, or rather: all the problems connected with the Turkic directive. His suggestions were as follows:

[2a] The postposition jar ~ jār ‘towards’ goes back to an old directive form in -ar from Tkc. jak ‘side’, i.e. jar ~ and < jār < *jagar < *jakar < jak ‘side’ (Bang 1917: 28, § 30.7a).

[2b] The word jak (attested e.g. as Trkm.dial. jāk ‘side’, Tat., Nog. jak ‘1. id.; 2. edge, fringe’, see ESTJa IV 82) is etymologized in the following way: «? < *ja-k; vgl. jan < ja-n ?: jaŋ in SV < ja-ŋ ?» (Bang l.c.).

[2c] The postposition sar ~ sār ‘towards’ goes back to *sagar which is quite parallel to *jagar in [2a], i.e. sar ~ and < sār < *sagar < *sakar < sak ‘side’ (Bang l.c.; however, with a reference to p. 29, § 30.7c, where he suggests that Khak. sar should be identical with Uyg. sary, without an explanation of -y).

[2d] Even if sar is etymologized here in a way perfectly parallel to jar, Bang (op.cit. § 30.7a) reckons with a possibility that the correspondence jar = sar is of semantic character only. Should this fact be interpreted as a suggestion of their possibly differing morphological structures (even if the rest of Bang’s formulations argue in favour of their parallelism)? Bang’s explanation compels us to pose the following questions:

[2e] Are jak ‘side’ and jan id. two derivatives ultimately of the same root *j/a/?

[2f] How do jak ‘side’ and sak id. compare?

[2g] If it is true that jar, sar < *jagar, *sagar, how, then, should the final vowel in jary, sara, etc. be explained?

It was only somewhat later on in the history of Turkological research that Old Turkic syŋar ‘direction’ also became involved in the considerations on the history of the Turkic directives but we may pose a still other question right now:

3 The suffix-initial ž- is clearly a secondary development of an earlier s-.

4 The abbreviation “SV” is not explained by Bang. It was possibly used for modern “Suv.” = Suvarṇaprabhāśa-sūtra, i.e. the Old Turkic version of the “Golden Light Sutra”.

[1d] Khak., Sh. s- = Oyr. j- (only in these suffixes).
How do Old Tkc. *syŋar* ‘direction’ (also used as a directive postposition) and *sar ~ jar* compare?

In what follows, I shall try to find answers to all four questions.

3.

A. Zajączkowski (1932) and M. Lewicki (1938) in principle continue Bang’s interpretation, although with some diverging details.

Zajączkowski (1932: 48) divides Karaim *sary* ‘towards’ into *saáry*, and then derives it from *«*sakáry». Since he also derives Brb., Kzk. *ja-ry < jak*, one may assume that he, also here, posits an intermediate link *jak-ry*.

The question mark put by Zajączkowski after the form *sak-ry* might seem justified since *-kr-* usually changed into *-r-* in older times, as can be seen, even today, in Tksh. *ufarak* < *utfak-rak* ‘smaller’, *küçürek* < *küçük-rek* ‘smaller’, *alçarak* < *alçak-rak* ‘lower’. However, examples of this kind can only be shown for two suffixes: *rak* (comparative) and *cik* (deminutive) so that the change usually is explained as a dissimilation at a distance: *-Vk + *-CVk > *-VkCVk > -VCVk*. This, however, does not concern *sak-ry*, which has no *-* in the word-final position.

M. Lewicki’s (1938: 21) starting point is Chag. *janáry* ‘to (one/the) side, on (one/the) side’ (< *jan* ‘side’), which he most probably would divide into *jan* + dat. *-ka* + dir. *-ry*. He will have considered the consonant *ŋ* here secondary (*-ŋk- < *-n k*) because he neither makes any remark about this *ŋ* nor heeds it in his reconstruction. Besides, he criticizes Bang for his formula *jak > *jagar*, which, as Lewicki (i.e.) puts it, contradicts Bang’s own opinion on the phonetic evolution of *jokaru* ‘upward’ that suggests a directive form like *jakkar* (< *jak*), rather than *jagar*, and *jakkar* could not have possibly come under contraction.

Lewicki in turn traces *jary ~ jary* back to *janjary*. He does not directly explain the structure of *janjary* but saying that it is in close connection with *janjary* (< *jan-ka-ry*) he probably means a division like *jan-ga-ry* or *jan-(g)a-ry*. Both conjectures are hard to accept: Why should the dative form have been *jan-ga* here if it was *jan-ka* in case of *janjary*? A construct like *jan-(g)a-ry* posits a protoform *jan* whereas Lewicki operates with *jan* only.

All in all, both Zajączkowski and Lewicki work in the spirit of Bang: they do not suggest any entirely different solution, nor look for an answer to any of the questions [2e]-[2h].

This passage does not seem fully understandable because Bang (1917: 10, § 5) suggests both *jokkar* and *jogar* (however, without any explanation about the relation between the reconstructs).