Onur Karamercan

TOPOLOGY OF BALASAGUNİ'S *KUTADGU BİLİG*
Thinking the Between

> The nations who once dominated Central Eurasian history—the Scythians and Hsiung-nu, the Huns, Turks, Tibetans, Mongols, Junghars, Manchus, and others—and their descendants disappeared from world historical consciousness for a very long time. Now some of them have reappeared, sometimes under different names, in modern European-style nation-states, and in nearly all cases bereft of any real power. One is entitled to at least ask, "What happened to the old Central Eurasians?" Or to put it wrongly, 'What happened to all the barbarians?'
>
> Christopher I. Beckwith, *Empires of the Silk Road*

1. *Situating* Kutadgu Bilig

1.1. *The Linguistic Place of* Kutadgu Bilig*: Turkic Languages*

KB[1] is the oldest and the longest piece of poetry in all Turkic literatures, being the first Islamic work of literature and philosophy in Turkic languages (more on this below).[2] Yūsuf Balasaguni, the author of *KB*, (1017 or 1019–1070) was born in the city of Balāsāghūn (or

---

1   Throughout the article I abbreviate *Kutadgu Bilig* as *KB*, which will be followed by the number of the couplet and then the page number of the edition that I am consulting in Turkish: cf., Reşid R. Arat, *Kutadgu Bilig:* Metin I (İstanbul: Milli Eğitim Basımevi, 1947). For example, the couple number 950 will be cited as follows: *KB*, 950: 112. Translations from Turkish into English are my own. I also consult Dilaçar's Latin transcription and translation of the Karakhanid Turkic into Modern Turkish: cf., Agop Dilaçar, *Kutadgu Bilig İncelemesi* (Ankara: Türk Dil Kurumu Yayınları, 1995).

2   While one can find many philological, philosophical, linguistic works in Turkish on *KB*, sources are very scarce in English. Assuming that most readers of this essay will find secondary literature in Turkish useless, I find no value in discussing them. See Gulnisa Jamal and Muhammet S. Kafkasyalı, eds., *Kutadgu Bilig Araştırmaları Tarihi* (Ankara: Karınca Yayınları, 2016) for a list of studies done on *KB* in multiple languages.

Balasagun) from which the name Balasaguni derives. Although Balasaguni started composing *KB* in Balasagun, which is in modern day Kyrgyzstan, he completed it in 1069 in the city of Kaşgar (Kashgar) in the Tarim Basin, which was one of the most important cultural hubs of Central Asia during this period.[3] *KB* is authored in the Karakhanid Turkic, which belonged to the Eastern branch of Turkic languages. At this point, some general information about Turkic languages can be useful to better situate the text in Asian socio-linguistic context.

Turkic languages, which include Turkish, Azeri, Kazakh, Uzbek, Uyghur, Chuvash and Sakha among many others, are considered to be part of the Altaic *sprachbund* that includes vast regions stretching from Southeastern Europe to Northeastern Siberia. Altaic languages include Mongolian and Tungusian languages, and some philological typologies place Korean and Japanese among a greater Altaic language family, though this view is mostly contested. The discussions regarding the origins and classification of Turkic and Altaic languages continue.[4] In general, Altaic languages are neighbored by three language families: Indo-European languages from south, north, and west, Sino-Tibetan languages from south and east, and Semitic languages from southwest. Turkic languages find themselves in one of the linguistically diverse and dynamic regions of the world, being in contact with various historical Chinese, Mongolic, Persian, Indic, Greek, and Arabic languages and literatures. More specifically, Karakhanid Turkic was the language of Karakhanid Khanate, which conquered Transoxiana region along the Silk Road and ruled it over four centuries. Karakhanid Khanate is known to accommodate the Turkic peoples of Karluk origins,[5] that had gradually converted to Islam between the 9th and 10th centuries.[6] While the Karakhanid

---

3   Today the city of Kashgar (喀什) is part of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous region in China.

4   For a detailed map and discussion of Turkic languages, see Alexander Savelyev and Martine Robbeets, "Bayesian Phylolinguistics Infers the Internal Structure and the Time-depth of the Turkic Language Family," *Journal of Language Evolution*, 5:1 (2020): 39–53. https://doi.org/10.1093/jole/lzz010

5   Dilaçar, 13.

6   Christopher I. Beckwith, *Empires of the Silk Road: A History of Central Eurasia from the Bronze Age to the Present* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009), 167.

Turkic remains similar to Uyghur Turkic, the influence of the Persian language and the introduction of some Islamic vocabulary via Arabic becomes apparent in this period, which displaces religious words and concepts adopted from Buddhism and Manicheism.

1.2. *The Hermeneutic Place of* Kutadgu Bilig*: The Between*

In order to engage with the hermeneutic place from which *KB* emerges in Central Asia, I direct my focus on the idea of the between (Tr: *ara/aralık*), which requires a topological inquiry. From Plato to Nietzsche, various Anglo-European philosophers have placed the human being in the between, often between gods and beasts. In the 20th century, Heidegger famously associated the flowing of the river Ister with Antigone's betweenness as a demi-god among divinities and humans. The notion of the between has drawn considerable attention in contemporary philosophy and place studies from different point of views by scholars such as William Desmond, Nicholas J. Entrikin, and Andrew Mitchell. The idea of the between signifies relationality, connectedness, gatheredness as well as disconnection, difference, and individuality. We are exposed to betweenness more often than we think. Making existential decisions about our lives, such as in cases of the Kierkegaardian either/or, can be conceived of as a situation of the between. The relation between speaking and keeping silent signifies a movement in language that takes place in the between, and so on. However, in existing scholarship, the connection between Central Asian thought and culture and the idea of the between has not been issued in an explicit way, a gap which I will try to fill. My aim is not to put forward a merely metaphysical conception of place, but demonstrate the place-character of a particular place; thus, to show why the topological meaning of the between can be appropriately thought from the between. My thinking in terms of topology, or the logic of place, can be traced between Martin Heidegger's *Topologie des Seins* and Nishida Kitarō's *basho no ronri* (場所の論理). As I unpack the hermeneutic meaning of the between, my understanding of place will also come to the fore. It is against this topological background that the historical, linguistic, and literary place of *KB* comes to the fore.

What does it mean to translate and interpret a literary work from a philosophical standpoint—especially, if the translation at issue is a translation that must travel from a 11th century Central Asian language to 21st century English via modern Turkish? Hermeneutics informs us that when we philosophize, we always do so within the boundaries of a certain historical consciousness, which has been seen as a mode of acquiring self-knowledge.[7] In a certain sense, such a self-knowledge can be formulated as a way of knowing where we stand and how we are situated in our place. In contemporary hermeneutic philosophy, problematizing the situation or the very place of thinking points toward a topological mode of reflection, which suggests an engagement with the ground, ends and horizon of thinking.[8] Thinking through place and places brings us to the domain of a confrontation with history, since history encapsulates the very happening of place and places in time. In other words, history is the *taking place* of time. However, although thinking is always historically-geographically situated, in topological terms it can be argued that any intellectual engagement takes place within the boundaries of a certain language. No thinking can be traced without a language. Language is famously designated by Heidegger as the "house of being," or as the "torture-house of being" by Lacan and "prison-house" by Jameson.[9] Whether we simply are in language, or we are tortured or imprisoned in it, does not change the fact that all that happens to us as human beings first happens in the open-bounded region of language. We bear language; both in the sense of tolerating it, undergoing an experience with it and carrying with us its marks. Nonetheless, a language amounts to more than the uniform language of a designated nation-state: a language always becomes the language that it is through sustained and mostly untraceable dialogues with neighboring languages. It is interesting to note that the Turkish verb *konuşmak* (speak, converse) derives from

---

7   Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans., Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (London and New York: Continuum, 2004), 228.

8   Jeff Malpas, *Heidegger and the Thinking of Place: Explorations in the Topology of Being* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2012), 20.

9   Martin Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, trans., P. D. Hertz (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1971), 22. ; Slavoj Žižek, "Language, Violence and non-Violence," *International Journal of Zizek Studies*, 2: 3 (2008): 4.

the root of *konmak* (situate, locate), which is also heard in the word *komşu* (*neighbor*).[10] What that implicates is that speaking and conversing is considered to be situated in the nearness of another person or group of persons. Language is not an object, but an act of making neighbors, conversing and inhabiting the same neighborhood with them. To be in language means to be in the between. Central Asia is a region of multiple neighborhoods and *KB* situates right in the *middle* of it.

Differing from the "in-between," the topological sense of betweenness that I would like to underline brings forth the happening of place, which is the "place of existence" (*mekan*), that out of which the edges and the boundaries of place also find their orientation. In the between, places are both jointed and separated, appearing as neighbors that co-determine and transform one another. What that implies is that the between makes empty space (*aralık*) for the emergence of places around it as the places that they are, by providing the room in which they can occur and connect to other places. The between, which Mitchell astutely reformulates as the place of "interpenetration" and "co-belonging,"[11] forms and gathers the boundaries in and through which particular places can be conceived in the same site of nearness. While *ara* is that which relates and brings together two or more entities, *aralık*, as the place of the between, has its own space, in the sense of an interval, the very place of resting. In that context, with the concept of the between I do not simply mean "inbetweenness," which implicates the situation of being encircled by already established poles and centers. Those two are often confused and used interchangeably although they must be distinguished. I argue that the between has its own place, and the regions which connect to it are not fixed points, but are also relative in terms of their own positions. What is at stake is a profoundly enmeshed interconnectivity that signifies a dynamic movement, different from a sense of being fixed and jammed.

---

10   Gerard Clauson, *An Etymological Dictionary of Pre-Thirteenth-Century Turkish* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), 637; 640.
11   Andrew Mitchell, *The Fourfold: Reading the Late Heidegger* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2015), 121.

2. *Interpreting* Kutadgu Bilig*: The Essence of Language*

KB has been translated into European languages such as German and English by prominent Turkologists such as A. Vambery and G. Clauson. Translated most recently into English by Robert Dankoff as *Wisdom of Royal Glory*, the title of the book needs some clarifications. The word *kutadgu* (*kutlu*) conveys a sense of sacred happiness, deriving from the root word of *kut*, which is still used in modern Turkish in expressions such as *kutlu olsun* to congratulate an anniversary or a great achievement. Although *bilig* can be interpreted as "knowledge" in modern Turkish (*bilgi*), this does not say much. Taken together, *kutadgu* and *bilig* imply the way of the knowledge toward happiness, considered sacred and glorious. Within the overall structure of the book, the notion of knowledge is not necessarily an epistemological one, but rather a kind of ethical knowledge of pursuing the good, explicated through poetic discourse.

Balasaguni's work consists of more than six thousand five hundred rhyming couplets and eighty-five sections (*bab*), written according to the Arabo-Persian literary form *masnavi*.[12] The goal of *KB* is to show to the reader the way towards becoming a good person and attain happiness and good fate in life through the dialogues of four personalities.[13] They are Kün-toğdı (Risen Sun), Ay-toldı (Full Moon),

---

12   For a more detailed literary and philological analysis of *KB*, as well as other important literary figures of Turkic literature, see (Dankoff 1983).

13   Since discussing the main narrative does not add much for my elaborations on the essence of language, I provide a brief summary here. In a nutshell, Kün-toğdı, as the ruler of his state, is in search of a vizier to execute the good and just laws for his country who can be a good example of the follower of moral principles for his people. Ay-toldı, who learns about this, presents himself to him as a candidate. Acknowledging his extraordinary moral virtues, Kün-toğdı appoints Ay-toldı as the vizier. When Ay-toldı passes away, Kün-toğdı calls Ay-toldı's son Ögdülmiş to his side. Being convinced that Ögdülmiş is capable of replacing his dead father, Kün-toğdı appoints him as the new vizier. After his conversations with Ögdülmiş and conceiving the difficulties of dealing with the affairs of the state, Kün-toğdı decides to hire an adjutant for Ögdülmiş. Ögdülmiş mentions his brother Ogdurmış as a candidate, who once took refuge in the mountains to devote his life to praying. Despite his various attempts, Ögdülmiş fails to convince Ogdurmış. Ogdurmış argues that it would be unacceptable to take up any administrative roles for a devout believer like him whose only master can be God. Ögdülmiş visits back and forth his brother to receive his good prayers and counsels. One day, he finds

Ögdülmiş (The Praised One), Odgurmış (The Awakened One).[14] Each personality symbolizes a certain moral virtue and an administrative role in the structure of the state and society. According to Balasaguni, these represent the four fundamental "things" (*neñ*) in human existence that allow human beings to arrive at the sacred-glorious happiness. Kün-toğdı, as "the ruler" (*ilig*, *bey*), characterizes "the just law" (*köni törü*); as the chosen vizier Ay-toldı characterizes "the good fortune, happiness" (*kut*); his son Ögdülmiş, who grows up learning from his father and replaces him characterizes "reason and understanding" (*ukuş*); and his brother Odgurmış, who is a devout and meditative personality, characterizes the human being's longing for the other world and "the end of human existence" (*akıbet*).[15] The work ends with an outstanding epilogue where Balasaguni offers his apologies to his readers, mentioning the limits of his skills as a writer. As we are reminded by Balasaguni in this final section, one of his main goals in the book is to find the right discourse to communicate the wisdom which emerges from pursuing the highest good to the others. This is related to the discussion of the value and meaning of language and reason, especially centered on the idea of authentic speech distinguished from mere discoursing. In that sense, *KB* has both literary and philosophical significations. It is both a work of poetry and philosophy, and it highlights the relationship *between* philosophy and literature through a poetic mode of thinking.

In recent studies on *KB*, while some scholars have found similarities with Plato and Aristotle's ethics,[16] the fact that ideas pertaining to ethics and politics has been expressed via a poetic discourse distinguishes it from its Western equivalents. It must be underlined that *KB* is neither

---

Ogdurmış in bad health. Ogdurmış interprets the meaning of his nightmares for his brother, taking them to be a sign of his approaching death. He delivers his final words about the meaning of life, indicating that one should never be attached to this deceitful world to the point of enslavement. After mourning over the loss of his brother, Ögdülmiş returns to his work and continues to serve Kün-toğdı, trying to bring happiness (*kut*) to his people with the acknowledgement of the limits of human existence.

14   *KB*, 50: 353–358.
15   It is peculiar that the fourth and last personality is the one that designates the human being's being-towards-death, which would obviously have even a more particular sense in languages and literatures that use Chinese characters.
16   Dilaçar, 163.

a systematic work in moral-political philosophy nor ethics; just as it is neither a piece of poetry nor an allegoric story. Written mostly in dialogues, we can argue that *KB* is essentially a hermeneutical work that situates and discusses the main principles of knowledge that lead to happiness and justice. Accordingly, the fundamental issues relating to human happiness and justice are thought by engaging with the meaning of poetic word which provides a sharper image of human existence.

The last section of *KB* where the author offers his apologies to the reader is as follows:

6617. *Keyik tagı kördüm bu türkçe sözüg,*
anı akru tuttum yakurdum ara

I deemed this Turkish language like a deer
I held it gently, brought closer to me

6618. *Sıkadım sevittim köñül birdi terk,*
takı ma beliñler birerde yire

As I caressed it, it loved me quickly
Time to time it is in awe, bashfully

6619. *Sunup tutmışımça ederdim sözüg,*
kelü berdi ötrü yıparı bura

As I captured and rubbed the word
Its musk happened upon me

6620. *Köni sözledim söz, irig hem açığ,*
köni sözni yüdgen ukuşlug ere

Truthfully I said it, thus hard and bitter
Those who can bear the true word are wise

6621. *Okıglıka artuk ağır kelmesün,*
özüm ʿuzrı koldum aça hem yora

Upon reading it shall not be heavy
I offered my apologies, tried to explain and unravel it

6622.   *Köni sözde taştın sözüg söz teme,*
köni egri farkı ürüŋli kara

Do not call it a word if it is not the true word
The difference between them is as white and black

6623.   *Yıl altmış iki erdi tört yüz altmış iki bile,*
bu söz sözledim-men tutup cân süre

It was the year four hundred sixty-two
When I spoke these words in my lifetime

6624.   *Tükel on sekiz ayda aydım bu söz,*
Ödürdüm, adırdım söz evdip tire

I spoke these words in eighteen months in total
I selected, distinguished and gathered them

6625.   *Yadım tü* çiçek *teg yıdı kin burar,*
Ötündüm men, itnü tükettim, tura

I effused the words like flowers and musk
Forgive me for exhausting, here they remain

6626.   *Sözüg kim tüketür neçe sözlese,*
aka tınmaz erter bulaklar ara

Who can exhaust the speech, no matter how much one speaks
it streams without ceasing between the sources.[17]

Before presenting my interpretation of these couplets, let me share some hermeneutical clarifications that can help identify my point of departure and the main point of focus at issue.[18] Hermeneutics intervenes when a text is deemed to be incomplete, posing difficul-

---

17   *KB*, 6617–6626: 651–652.
18   From a philological standpoint, my interpretation of Balasaguni's couplets will not offer much of a novelty. My aim remains limited to shedding light on a hermeneutic idea that strikes me, which I will explicate topologically: an experience of the inexhaustibility of meaningfulness places us in the between, that is, language as the undefinable, uncontrollable space of relationality.

ties for our understanding. A translation that interprets and an inter-
pretation that interprets does not amount to building a mere bridge
between two language-worlds, as if two horizons of understanding
at stake are preestablished poles that can be immediately connected.
For that matter, the very place of the between that make spaces for a
possible connection must be experienced and inhabited. The depar-
ture point of any interpretation is the middle space of inter-connect-
edness, namely, the very condition of the possibility of any relation-
ality. The interpretation of *KB* emerges out of that middle space in
the between, where middle Turkic, modern Turkish, and English are
placed in a hermeneutic dialogue. In this light, even though Turk-
ish is my mother tongue, the interpretation at issue can be regarded
as an inter-cultural engagement. The idea of interculturality at issue
here does not denote a comparison of monolithic culture worlds.
The existence of any cultural whole is only possible on the grounds
of previous historical dialogues and connections, namely of "fusions
of horizons"[19] with other understandings of the world, which them-
selves are essentially pluralistic. What that also implies is that the
interpretation below focuses on the very place of language, which
is connected to the language of place insofar as the inter- of inter-
culturality hints at the place of the between.[20] Although *KB* can be
read from so many perspectives, this is the topo-logical basis of my
approach that focuses on the place of saying which is equally a say-
ing of place. In other words, Karakhanid Turkic is brought into the
neighborhood of English and Turkish as modern languages and we
look at its philosophical sense from the viewpoint of contemporary
philosophical problems.

The couplets that I have chosen to interpret are located at the final
section of the work, where we hear the poet's voice from his philo-
sophical point of view, which can be considered a philosophical dia-
logue with his poetry. The first couplet is remarkable for underlining
the significance of writing his work in Turkic:

> *Keyik tagı kördüm bu türkçe sözüg,*

---

19   Gadamer, 305.
20   Steven Burik, *The End of Comparative Philosophy and the Task of Comparative
      Thinking: Heidegger, Derrida and Daoism* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2009), 2.

anı akru tuttum yakurdum ara

I deemed this Turkish language like a deer
I held it gently, brought closer to me.[21]

In the historical context of 11th century, writing a work of poetry in Turkic languages was undervalued in the wake of overwhelming influence of Persian and Arabic, which were languages spoken and written by the literary elites, statesmen and religious authorities. In comparison with these languages, Turkic languages were considered dull for various reasons: agglutinative languages offer relatively limited possibilities of end-rhymes due to the structure of suffixes[22]; they comprise a strict vowel harmony, thus phonemes sound repetitive and monotonous for the non-speakers.[23] In a way, Turkic languages were considered the language of "barbarians" coming from the steppes of Inner Asia. Against this background, we can understand why Balasaguni represents the Turkish language [*türkçe sözüg*] like a wild deer [Karakhanid: *keyik*; Modern Turkish: *geyik*], which is shy, untamed, and distant. "The language," or as *söz* can also connote, "the word" needs to be approached gently and with attentiveness so as not to be scared off, otherwise it can simply run away and disappear. The language is "brought near" carefully; once it is caressed and shown love, a bond is created between the poet and the word, or the Turkish language.

Developing the poetic of image of deer, the couplets 6619 and 6620 offer an interesting passage that animates the essence of language as a scent:

---

21   *KB*, 6617: 651.

22   For example, Turkish *bilmiyorum* (I don't know): *bil* (know) + *m* (negative*)* + *(i)-yor* (present tense suffix) + (u)m (first person singular). Vowel harmony means, back (a, ı, o, u) or front vowels (e, i, ö, ü) follow the same type of vowels (Turkish: *Gidemeyeceğim* (I won't be able to go); *Bunu okumuştum* (I had read this).

23   In order to contest the negative impression of the Turkic languages, 11th century Karakhanid lexicographer Kaşgarlı Mahmut, meaning "Mahmut from the city of Kashgar" known also as Mahmut al-Kashgari, has written the most important scholarly work of lexicography of Turkic languages in Baghdad entitled *Diwan al Lughāt al-Turk* (*The Compendium of the dictionary of Turkic Languages*). The work is written bilingually in Karakhanid Turkic and Arabic, with the main aim of showing to the speakers of Arabic the richness and beauty of Turkic languages.

Sunup tutmışımça ederdim sözüg,
kelü berdi ötrü yıparı bura

As I captured and rubbed the word
Its musk happened upon me

As the poet embraces and firmly presses the language and its words against himself, the language releases its captivating musk (*yıpar*). This implies that the deer at issue, which is thought as the Turkish language, must be a musk deer. Indeed, what is poetically and philosophically noteworthy is the description of the essence of language literally as an *essence*. The poet's embrace of the deer frees the musk, which is the essence of the language of Turks. Earlier in *KB*, Balasaguni considers musk as knowledge that cannot be hidden. Knowledge, as the essence of language, is like an attractive scent which makes itself easily be identified even from afar.[24] At this point, the musk captures and mesmerizes the poet, which implicates a twofold movement of captivation: language captures us as we capture its words. The very idea of captivation, especially in regards with our relation to language is important, which reappears in a different manner only a few lines below. The couplets 6620–6624 express the core matter of the poet's apology, providing biographical information regarding the date of his poetry, elaborating how he managed to select and distinguish his words, until the couplet 6625 where the idea of the language as a scent and essence comes back into view. The couplets 6625 and 6626 constitute the most important part of this final section, which I will examine more closely.

As I have mentioned, *KB* devotes many sections to the relationship between knowledge, language and justice, especially in the seventh and nineteenth sections through a series of dialogues. For Balasaguni, the whole idea of writing this work of poetry emerges from and depends on the possibility of saying the true word (*köni söz*).[25] We can interpret this with a brief insight into Balasaguni's idea of the human being (*yalñguk*), which is issued in the couplet 197:

---

24   *KB*, 46: 312.
25   *KB*, 6620: 651.

bu yalñguk atı boldı yañgluk üçün
bu yañgluk uruldı bu yalñguk üçün

This name (the human being) has been given to the human being as (it)[26] errs
To err is created for the human being (the one who errs)[27]

The word's etymology literally means "the mistaken one" deriving from the verb *yanıl-*, thus *yañgluk* (to make a mistake), and the noun *yañ* (side, edge). What that means is the human being can lack the true word simply because the human being is designated as the kind of being that errs, makes mistakes, the one who can go astray and be wrong. As such, we are fundamentally hermeneutic beings who are prone to interpret things in the world. The human being either "teaches" (ögretigli) or "learns" (ögrenür), the third possibility is only the way of being of the beasts, specifically, randomly roaming horses (*yılkı*).[28] The human being is situated between the dialogue of teaching and learning, the former being a sign of wisdom, the latter being a sign of reason and understanding. Teaching and learning occurs through our following of the true word which aims for bringing righteousness and justice.

We can inquire: where is the origin from which the true and false word can emerge then? Indeed, Kün-toğdı asks his vizier Ay-toldı concerning the source of language:

kayudın çıkar söz kayuka barır
munı ma ayu bir manga ay bilir

From where does the word emerge, where does it arrive
Inform me on this, O the wise one[29]

Ay-toldı responds by saying that "the belonging place of language is secrecy, and one should keep one word out of ten to oneself."[30] This is in line with the overall idea that for Balasaguni the true wisdom of

---

26 Since in Turkish the personal pronouns he/she/it are the same (*o*), I choose to say "it" here.

27 *KB*, 197: 36.

28 *KB*, 3217: 327.

29 *KB*, 996: 117.

30 *KB*, 998: 117.

language depends on knowing when to speak and when to keep one's silence. The two-fold nature of language according to Balasaguni can also be exemplified in the couplet where language is designated as a "lion laying at the edge (*işik/*modern Turkish: *eşik*) of one's house, ready to eat one's head."[31] Language can bring good when the words are used warily, as much as it can bring evil if too much is said via idle-talk. The whole gist of language lies in being able to "untie thousands knots by saying only one word."[32] As Jean-Paul Roux remarks, Turkic languages allow for very long sentences in European languages to be expressed only in one word.[33] For that matter, Balasaguni's focus on reticence is important, which connects his thought with Asian perspectives on language.

Following that, the couplet that appears towards the end of Balasaguni's epilogue can be considered to capture the core matter of Balasaguni's account of language:

> *sözüg kim tüketür neçe sözlese*
> *aka tınmaz erter bulaklar ara*

> who can exhaust the speech, no matter how much one speaks
> it streams without ceasing between the sources[34]

Despite having treated language as a means of communication and a means to gain the true knowledge which will lead to justice, Balasaguni here designates language as a boundless phenomenon, a river that streams between the sources or springs beyond the control of the human being. This couplet is crucial considering the way in which it is connected to the previous couplet where Balasaguni writes:

> *Yadım tü çiçek teg yıdı kin burar,*
> *Ötündüm men itnü tükettim, tura*

> I effused the words like flowers and musk
> Forgive me for exhausting (them), here they remain[35]

---

31   *KB*, 164: 33.
32   *KB*, 172: 33.
33   Jean-Paul Roux, *Histoires des Turcs* (Paris: Fayard, 2000), 27.
34   *KB*, 6626: 652.
35   *KB*, 6625: 652.

Here, the idea of the language, and more specifically the idea of "the words" as the scent of musk (*kin*), appears again and is connected with the principal movement of language. At first, Balasaguni apologizes for exhausting the words, or the language. In a way, he signals that he has said too much and his poetry is about to come to an end. The word *tükettim* (I completed, ended, exhausted) can be interpreted both as "completing" and "bringing to completion." Now it is as if the flowers and the musk have no more fragrance left, which was the true essence of his poetic language. Nonetheless, this is why the following couplet cannot be separated from the preceding one: The poet can neither exhaust the language, nor the words. "It streams (*aka*) without ceasing (*tınmaz erter*) between (*ara*) the sources (*bulaklar*)."

What is hermeneutically interesting and worthy of question here is the manifold sense of the verb *tınmak*, meaning "taking a break, stopping, as well as breathing, inhaling"[36] in Karakhanid language. Modern Turkish verbs *dinmek* (coming to a standstill, stopping, slowing down) and *dinlemek* (listening, paying attention) seem to be connected to the root of the word *tıñ* signifying life, breath, soul.[37] In this regard, *tınmaz* (it does not cease—without breathing) hints at the possibility of a freer interpretation, even if only by its etymological associations and phonetic undertones. As such, to hear the manifoldness of meanings which are simply connoted by the phonetic proximity that *tınmaz* opens up, the line can be translated in a double sense:

> *sözüg kim tüketür neçe sözlese*
> *aka tınmaz erter bulaklar ara*

> who can exhaust the language with abundance of words
> it *breathlessly* streams between the sources

Linguistically, the modern Turkish equivalent of *tınmaz* would be *dinmez*, which could be used to describe the slowing down of a rainstorm while *dinlemez* would mean "s/he does not listen." As such, the very essence of the occurrence would imply a sense of restlessness that emerges from its ceaseless streaming. This hint should direct us to

---

36   Arat, *Kutadgu Bilig: İndeks III* (İstanbul: Edebiyat Fakültesi Basımevi, 1979), 442.
37   Clauson, 512.

the meaning of the source of language at issue. Language is streaming between the sources, and this act of streaming runs between the tranquillity of reticence and the disquiet of endlessness. As human beings, we are both exposed to the language's indifference to us, while we can also take part in its very streaming if we let ourselves and go adrift with it. In as much as we believe that we have exhausted the source from which language springs up and the essence which it releases, we are overwhelmed by its endless occurrence that quietens us.

Furthermore, considering the previous couplet, there is room also for the following interpretation: accordingly, language is not only a streaming water, but also the very air that we inhale. Poetic words are the scent of flowers and the fragrance of musk, which transpire when the occurrence of language is hearkened. If language and its words are to be thought as the streaming of a river between sources, this implicates that the event of language is both the place of happening and the happening of place. Situated between different cultural, religious and philosophical sources, the emergence of words themselves are both a quiet and disquieting happening that astonish us. Language is the taking place of the between.

3. *Towards a Dialogue Between Topology and Topographics of Language*

Although Balasaguni names language as a stream that runs "between the sources" (*bulaklar ara*), he does not delimit the boundaries of the sources. Does that mean that the language streams between the sources silently? What are these sources? Indeed, one is tempted to think that the language itself as a source. Nonetheless, language itself, although streaming, is situated between sources. That would mean that Balasaguni considers language as a river, running between the springs from which it arises and discharges into another body of water,[38] probably a lake or a sea. Yet, let us take a step back and con-

---

38   Gizem Z. Debreli's interesting work examines hydrographic words and concepts in Kaşgarlı Mahmut and Balasaguni's works. See Debreli, "Dîvânu Lugâti't-Türk ve Kutadgu Bilig'de Hidrografik Terimler ve Metaforik Kullanımları," *Ondokuz Mayıs Üniversitesi İnsan Bilimleri Dergisi (İBD)*, 1/2 (2020): 153.

sider the possibility that Balasaguni does not only mean to offer a metaphorical link between languages and rivers and consider the fact that he really aims to invite us to think the place-nature of language. In that sense, I would like to ask: what is the between (*ara*) as the between at issue?

Here I will try to make sense of the meaning of the between by putting his thought in a dialogue with Heidegger's later account of language, since Balasaguni's idea of the inexhaustible event of language shows certain similarities with Heidegger's critique of language as a means of communication and an organ of speech—especially with regards to the idea of topology and topographics of language as discussed in contemporary scholarship.[39] Let me state that my approach here is similar to the sort of philosophical comportment that Rorty holds towards Heidegger: Heidegger's philosophy is like a tool-box and we take what we consider to be a useful, and leave out what we find useless.[40] Balasaguni, as an 11th century Turkic-Muslim poet, has no immediate link to Heidegger's notion of being or language, as Heidegger has a philosophical agenda within the limits of modern Western thought.[41] In that sense, I am not arguing that there is a strong philosophical affinity between the two. However, I find it useful to point out that Balasaguni, despite belonging to what Heidegger would call a "metaphysical" way of thinking language,[42] was able to think the nature of language in a "non-metaphysical" manner.

---

39   See Krzysztof Ziarek, *Language after Heidegger*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 71; Malpas, *Heidegger's Topology: Being, Place, World* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2006), 263. A more complete comparison could be offered between Balasaguni and Heidegger's interpretation of Hölderlin's hymn *The Ister* (Heidegger 1996), yet we leave this for another study that needs to focus on the possibility of a philosophical-poetic comparison between Balasaguni, Hölderlin, and Heidegger in more detail.

40   Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and Social Hope* (London: Penguin, 1999),191.

41   There are three footholds of Heidegger's intellectual trajectory: Phenomenologically, posing the question of the meaning–truth–place of being; historically, attempting to step into the boundaries of the overcoming of metaphysics; and politically stepping back from what he considers to be *das Gestell* as the essence of modern technology-Western *logos*.

42   Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, 130. Heidegger likes to find a relationship between *dao* and the Alemannic–Swabian words *wëgen* and *be-wëgen*, which can be understood as the "way–making, clearing movement." The way-making movement (*Bewegung*) is key in understanding how Heidegger explains the topological

In criticizing the metaphysical notion of language that we find in European history of philosophy from Aristotle to Humboldt, Heidegger writes:

> Speaking implies that making of articulated sounds, whether we make them (in speaking), or refrain from making them (in silence), or are incapable of malting them (in loss of speech). Speaking implies the articulate vocal production of sound. Language manifests itself in speaking as the activation of the organs of speech-mouth, lips, teeth, tongue, larynx. The names by which language has called itself in the Western language, *glossa*, *lingua*, *langue*, language-are evidence that language has since ancient times been conceived in terms of these phenomena. Language is the tongue.[43]

Against this background, we can observe that Balasaguni's notion of language *til* (tongue), or *söz* (word) and *sözlemek* (the act of speaking, saying) is not different from the view that Heidegger considers to be the metaphysical understanding of language as self-expression, one that functions as a means of communication. For Heidegger, the word constitutes our linguistic relation to things, yet this does not mean that the word itself is only a linguistic component of the language. Insofar as the act of "saying" always discloses a certain aspect of the thing while concealing other meanings, at issue is the interplay between the "failure" (*Ver-sagen*) of the "saying" (*Sage*) of language. Here, the etymological relation between saying (*sagen*) and failure (*versagen*) comes to the fore, which links up with the idea of the stillness of language.

The stillness of language is an issue that is related to the notion of no-thingness, as the primary essence of being. Being (*Sein*) is not a thing, thus the question as to what being is can only make sense insofar as it is taken up with a focus on the concept of no-thingness. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger issues the same point that Balasaguni takes up in his poetry: the importance of stillness (*Stille*) as a way of evading idle-talk (*Gerede*) which is the inauthentic form of everyday discourse. As Kün-toğdı asks Ay-toldı why he is remaining silent,

---

connection between speaking, saying, and silence, as well as the relation between "words" (*Worte*) and "signs" (*Wörter*). For more on that topic, see Reinhard May, *Heidegger's Hidden Sources: East Asian Influences on His Work*, trans., Graham Parkes (London & New York: Routledge, 1996), 40.

43   Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, 114.

Ay-toldı replies by saying that "what I am to say, as I have not been asked anything."[44] According to Ay-toldı, one who speaks without first being addressed must be considered a beast.[45] In response to this, confirming Ay-toldı is right in stating that, Kün-toğdı proffers that the human being is nevertheless bound to be a speaking being. If one does not speak at all, this is for two reasons: either one lacks knowledge and wisdom, or one is mute.[46] In Heidegger's case, instead of speaking at length or saying nothing, the authentic possibility of discourse lies in the capacity of hearkening to the silent speaking of the conscience, which says "no-thing."[47] Hearkening to the limits of discourse, instead of losing oneself in "idle-talk" (*Gerede*), indicates the possibility of the disclosure of human being's existence in its wholeness. It places one in the proper temporal direction of one's being-in-the-world, which is being-towards-death. This sense of nothingness can only be brought into language via the poetic word, for it can help us learn hearken to the stillness of saying.[48] Saying (*sagen*) is an astonishing action that calls for our philosophical sense of wonder in a different manner than the philosophers of language and linguists deal with language as an object of scientific inquiry. Here, it is interesting to note that from the word "saying" the adjective "legendary" (*Sagenhaft*) derives, which is also the root of the English word *saga*.[49] To that extent, what matters is not only what we say through language, but also arrive at a certain wisdom of language, where we experience how and why language fails and leaves us speechless.

One of the most important instances where Heidegger lays out his critique of the instrumentalist notion of language can be found in his interpretation of Stefan George's 1919 poem "The Word." Here Heidegger argues that a literary or philosophical clarification of the poem is not necessary for the saying of the poem, as if the poet's words are mere representations of sentiments that lack "argumenta-

---

44   *KB*, 957: 113.
45   *KB*, 962: 113.
46   *KB*, 969: 114.
47   Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 325.
48   For a detailed analysis of that topic, see the fourth section of my "Heidegger's Way to Poetic Dwelling via Being and Time," *Horizon: Studies in Phenomenology* 10:1 (2021), 268–285.
49   Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, 93.

tive clarity." In doing so, "we would have reduced poetry to the serv-
ant's role as documentary proof for our thinking, and [...] in fact we
would already have forgotten the whole point: to undergo an expe-
rience with language."[50] Therefore, for Heidegger, the issue for the
philosopher is not the mere interpretation of the poem, but to con-
front the limitations of our interpretation. In that way, the poem can
be allowed its own hermeneutic space.[51] Here I will not cover Hei-
degger's analysis in its entirety, but only point towards a pertinent
matter that concerns Balasaguni's idea of language.

The last stanza of George's poem "The Word" reads as follows:

> *So lernt ich traurig den verzicht:*
> *Kein ding sei wo das wort gebricht.*

> So I renounced and sadly see:
> Where word breaks off no thing may be.[52]

Here, the colon that follows the word "see" initially suggests as
if the poet aims to provide an explanation. Grammarians call such
a mode of speech "direct discourse."[53] However, the next line of the
stanza does not provide a statement. This is because George does not
simply write "*ist*," but "*sei*." The colon appears as the "relation," that
is, "the between" that brings together the openness and boundedness
of language. This is where the movement between the thing and the
word takes place as the experience of language.[54] This is similar to the
relationship between the captivation of language and our captivation
by language. Balasaguni knows that as a poet he is bound to say the
word and exhaust the possibilities that language opens up for him. The
poetic line has been written and is put forward as if it were a "thesis."

---

50   Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, 63.
51   Considering the link between the idea of the holiness and its relation the poetic
      word, Andrew Mitchell writes astutely: "the poetic word is born from a sacrifice of
      linguistic utility along with the relations that utility privileges and prescribes (clar-
      ity, univocity). As such, the word is allowed to resonate freely. The poetic word is
      released into its sounding. See, Andrew Mitchell, *The Fourfold: Reading the Late
      Heidegger* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2016), 195–96.
52   Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, 60.
53   Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, 63.
54   Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, 65.

Yet, Balasaguni is also aware that this is not the case. He can say the essence of language in an infinite number of ways and language would still be seeping through the existential hole which we as humans cannot fill. Language, as the running water or the air that fills our lungs is quietly continuing its own movement. In George's poem, the poet names the word, although this is not because a representation of the word lacks. The act of naming situates the human existence between the interplay of the world and its coming into meaningfulness. The space of "between" is marked with the colon. The placing of the colon does not permit us to read the poem only as an artistic object ready to be manipulated. The colon discloses the free space, or the between, that in which we are called to attend to the place of language.

It is against this background that Krzysztof Ziarek conceptualizes Heidegger's later thought of language under the title of topographics of language. Accordingly, the interval that exists between the word and the sign emerges from our incapacity to say the poetic word. Ziarek underscores that for Heidegger, the withdrawal of our experience of being comes to show itself through the failing nature of language. He argues, "When the word fails, when it does not reach dictionary words, that is, signs, the word, as it were, escapes and frees itself from signs. This escape marks the opening of the interval between signs and words, and as such it constitutes the hint of being."[55] The openness that is disclosed by the un-defined element of the "statement" is precisely what also de-limits and thus bounds them. In a certain sense, the colon functions as the in-bound of the two-way movement of the "thinking" and "poetizing" that is at issue, putting them into interplay, letting them entering into their respective fields by enveloping one another. In that context, Ziarek talks about the "dis-humanizing" (*Entmenschung*) effect of language. Human beings do not possess the language, but rather, they are "owned" (*eignet*) and "appropriated" (*geignet*); "attuned" (*stimmt*) and "determined" (*bestimmt*) by language. The "essential occurrence" of language is both its "failure" and "accomplishment" in the sense of its coming to completion and fullness.

---

55   Ziarek, 81.

In Balasaguni's work, the poetic experience of language remains within the topological space of meaning, without being topographically inscribed into the signs with which the betweenness of language can make itself be read. Even if Balasaguni had such intentions, we could not trace these signs since we do not have the original text and the archival state of the three existing copies of *KB* does not allow for such an investigation. Nonetheless, his designation of language as the happening of the between hints at such an experience of language.[56] The between (*ara*) as the free space of happening is also that which constitutes the places around itself. It brings them into a site of nearness of openness.

4. *The Limits of Asian Philosophy: From the Between*

Dealing with topology and topographics of language has shown why it is important to focus on the between. Here, let me shift the focus from the thinking of place to the place of thinking. I would like to ask two questions: (1) Where can we locate *KB*, written in a language that situates between East and West? (2) What are the philosophical implications of its situation for Asian philosophical texts? Looking into the place of *KB* opens up to discussion the very limits of Asian philosophies, just as well it urges us to ask the very meaning of betweenness at issue.

KB is the first Islamic work in Turkic literatures. One question that arises is whether it would not be more accurate to locate Balasaguni's work within the context of Islamic philosophy. Historically, Islam appears in the Arabic peninsula in the 7th century, situated in Southwestern or West Asia, in a region that is considered to be the opposite end of what corresponds to our commonplace image of Asia. Indeed, many scholarly works mention Turkic languages and Turkic intellec-

---

56   Readers of Turkish language can find a topographic mode of thinking in the writings of 20th century philosopher-poet Oruç Aruoba (1948–2020). For instance, a detailed study of Aruoba's *Kesik Esintiler* (1994), keeping contemporary French and German philosophy, as well as Aruoba's translation of Bashō's haikus in the hindsight, could show how Aruoba's topographics of language opens up unexplored possibilities of writing in modern Turkish language.

tual heritage only under the label of Islamic philosophy, referring to Turks within the greater Asian context mainly in terms of invasions.[57] More recently Raud whose very important work promises to cover all Asian worldviews and religions "throughout history," considers Islamic philosophy to belong to the Western intellectual tradition due to its connection to Abrahamic-monotheistic religions of Near East.[58] As such, Central Asia is excluded from the rest of the continent once again.

We can argue that more commonly known Asian traditions of thought such as Indic, Chinese, Korean, and Japanese philosophies produced many important philosophical works over the centuries, which is owing to their critical engagement with different religious-spiritual belief systems such as Hinduism, various forms of Buddhism, Shinto religion among other local religions. Comparably, *KB* was written in an age and geography where Islam was gradually becoming the chief religion among the Turkic peoples. Yet that does not mean that it belongs *only* to Islamic philosophy, especially if Islam is considered as a religion that belongs to Middle East as a region cut off from Asia. What is also problematic is that the limits of the so-called Middle East itself remain blurry and can change from one definition to another depending on one's geopolitical stance. Therefore, even the margins of Islamic philosophy need to be reexamined. Furthermore, the very limits of Islamic philosophy exceed the boundaries of West Asia and Islamic religion, since how Islam is practiced in Central Asia (mostly based on local Shamanistic religions) differs significantly from how it is practiced in the Arab world for historical and cultural reasons. While it is true that Islamic philosophy developed mostly on the basis of Plato and Aristotle's thought as well as Neo-Platonist thought, there are others who suggest that Islamic philosophy also came in close contact with East Asian belief systems and philosophies.[59]

---

57   Brian Carr and Indra Mahalingam, eds., *Companion Encyclopedia of Asian Philosophy* (London & New York: Routledge, 2005).

58   Rein Raud, *Asian Worldviews: Religions, Philosophies, Political Theories* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2021), vii.

59   Reza Shah et al., *Common Ground between Islam and Buddhism* (Fons Vitae: Loiseville, 2010), xvi.

Yet, the issue is not solely the place of Islamic philosophy. In Transoxiana region, Islam mostly replaced other religions such as Buddhism, Manicheism, Tengrism and Shamanism, that were being practiced by Turkic peoples up until the 11th century,[60] not to mention the known presence of Zoroastrianism, Nestorian Christianity, and other religions in and around the cities and areas where Turks lived.[61] The region from which *KB* emerges is an important Central Asian hub with profound historical and spiritual connections to Islam, but also to Buddhism and Western metaphysics. Far from being a reiteration of a religious worldview, and as a philosophical reengagement with basic political and ethical questions in human life, *KB* is an expression of a life-world that situates in the center of centuries-long philosophical and religious dialogues. In that light, viewing religion as a static cultural entity that can define the whole of a geographical region is a problematic point of view. In addition, why and how Mongolic tradition, which is a non-Islamic culture, is often separated from East Asia is also questionable.[62]

Here we are entitled to ask: where is Asia located? How and where should we locate it? Of course, this depends on where we are and from which perspective we are looking at the issue. *Asia* is originally an Akkadian word, deriving from the verb *asu* that designated the "region of the rising Sun."[63] However, at the time Asia referred not to the whole of the continent of Asia as we think of it today, but rather only to a region in the Westernmost region of Minor Asia. The historical region of *Anatolia*, which is the homeland of Turkish people since the 11th century, was the first concept of the West in the history of the West. Interestingly, the word Anatolia itself (ἀνατολή), which simply means "orient" in the Greek language, follows the same

---

60   Beckwith, 115.
61   Roux, 148–9.
62   For instance, today the role and place of Buddhism for early Turkic peoples in Central Asia is an ongoing discussion, which point towards the necessity a more comprehensive approach regarding the question of religion See Hans-Joachim Klimkeit, "Buddhism in Turkish Central Asia," *Numen*, 1990 (37) 1: 53–69; Jes P. Laut, *Der frühe türkische Buddhismus und seine literarischen Denkmäler: Veröffentlichungen der Societas Uralo-Altaica* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1986).
63   Ernest Klein, *Klein's Comprehensive Etymology Dictionary of the English Language* (Elsevier: Amsterdam, 1971), 54.

etymological connection that we observe in the words *asu* and *Asia* in Akkadian. What that implies is that every geographical location, insofar as considered to be located in the "between" by its dwellers, may have its own "Asia" and "Europe" antagonism—the latter meaning the "land of the setting Sun" as the "Occident." Thinking the between and thinking from the between, however, requires us to see also the whole, and not only the margins.

Today we tend to consider vast regions that encompass countries such as India, China, Japan as indivisible wholes that exist as independent entities in themselves. This view does not only underestimate the fact that, just as anywhere in the world, peoples and languages of Asia influenced one another in a fundamental way, but it rests grounded in a geopolitical separation of places in terms of various factors such as statehood and religion. An inclination towards political-linguistic classification of places by all-encompassing names is partially related to the kind of Orientalism that emerged during the Occidental colonization of some parts of the Asian continent, which continues to determine the contours of our imagination of and intellectual interest in Asia. Yet, Western colonialism did not think in terms of neighborhoods, but regions and territories divisible in terms of material resources, races, ethnicities, tribes, sects and such.

In a certain way, other than being a mere bridge between the two already established ends such as Europe and Fareast, Central Asia can be seen as a region of neighborhood, a hermeneutic between out of which the very idea of Asia as a continental whole occurred. This is why it is important to get rid of the idea of the in-betweenness of Central Asia and reestablish the betweenness at issue in a hermeneutic way, that is, by engaging with the interpretation of texts from Central Asian region.

Only looking at a map of the Xiongnu as part of the *Wu Hu* from the 4th century, studying western and eastern borders of Göktürk Khanate from the 6th century, dealing with the question of religion in Uyghur Khanate from the 8–9th centuries, reading about the establishment of Yuan Dynasty in China by Kublai Khan in the 13–14th centuries, reviewing the formation of Mughal Empire in the Indian subcontinent by Babur in the 16th century, can already indicate to what extent the exchange and intermingling of cultures (which obvi-

ously was not always in peaceful terms), languages, religions, state-crafts, traditions, oral traditions have been not only influential, but central to the historical development and formation of Asia as a place. Historically, we observe that various nomadic, semi-nomadic and sedentary cultures of the Central Asian region from antiquity to modern ages were vital in making possible the trade routes between East Asia, Middle East and Europe. What is important to note is not only that this movement contributed to the exchange of ideas, sci-entific inventions, art techniques and such,[64] but it was precisely the reason of being of these intellectual human products themselves.

In concluding, I can perhaps try to respond to Beckwith's histori-cal question that I have cited at the very outset of my article: we do not know what happened to all the "barbarians," because we did not sufficiently study the places that they inhabited, just as we did not try to understand what it means to be in the between. Beckwith's historical analysis shows to what extent the idea of "barbarians," a derogatory notion that developed in antiquity to designate Eurasian nomadic peoples, is a Eurocentric Greco-Roman fallacy.[65] In philoso-phy, most famously—and perhaps most unfortunately—Kant rep-resented nomads and nomadic peoples as the destructors of civiliza-tion. In the preface of *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant writes that those "barbarians," namely nomads who "loathe all steady cultivation of the soil, tore up from time to time the civil society" was luckily "few in number," thus the destruction that they could cause were relativized thanks to the foundationalist efforts of dogmatists.[66] Kant's associa-tion of nomadic peoples with sceptics, who, along with dogmatists and indifferentists, treated metaphysics ("the queen of all sciences") with despise to cast her out, is revelatory of a historically ignorant reflection based on wrong stereotypes, instead of historical literacy, or rational thinking, as one would expect from Kant. Although Bala-

---

64   Bruce E. Brooks traces the possibility of Chinese borrowing of certain philosophi-cal ideas from Greeks. See his "Alexandrian Motifs in Chinese Texts," *Sino-Pla-tonic Papers*, No. 96. As for the influence of Greek philosophy on Islamic thought, Majid's article offers a comprehensive historical account. See, Fakhry Majid, *Greek philosophy: impact on Islamic philosophy*, 1998, Routledge Encyclopedia of Philos-ophy, Taylor and Francis: doi:10.4324/9780415249126-H011-1

65   Beckwith, 321–22.

66   Kant, *The Critique of Pure Reason*, Aix–Ax.

saguni was not a nomad himself, given the cultural background and historical development of Turkic civilization in which he was brought up, he can easily qualify as a "barbarian." In the wake of geopolitical events of the last two centuries, Turkic cultures find themselves stuck in-between different political centers of dominance, such as Europe, Russia, Middle East and China. Nonetheless, if this situation of in-betweenness is reinterpreted from a topological standpoint, it shall open up fresh horizons of thought and help us make sense of herme-neutic neighborhoods of Asian philosophies from new perspectives.

References

Arat, R. Reşid, *Kutadgu Bilig*: İndeks III. İstanbul: Edebiyat Fakültesi Basımevi, 1979.

_____. *Kutadgu Bilig:* Metin I. İstanbul: Milli Eğitim Basımevi, 1947.

Aruoba, Oruç. *Kesik Esintiler*. İstanbul: Mephisto Yayınevi, 1994.

Beckwith, I. Christopher. 2009. *Empires of the Silk Road: A History of Central Eurasia from the Bronze Age to the Present.* Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press.

Brooks, E. Bruce. 1999. *Alexandrian Motifs in Chinese Texts. Sino- Platonic Papers,* No. 96. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania.

Burik, Steven. *The End of Comparative Philosophy and the Task of Comparative Thinking: Heidegger, Derrida and Daoism*. Albany: SUNY Press, 2009.

Clauson, Gerard. *An Etymological Dictionary of Pre-Thirteenth-Century Turkish*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972.

Carr, Brian, and Mahalingam, Indira (ed.) *Companion Encyclopedia of Asian Philosophy*. London & New York: Routledge, 2005.

Dankoff, Robert. *Wisdom of Royal Glory (Kutadgu Bilig): A Turko-Islamic Mirror for Princes by Yusuf Khass Hajib*. Translated with an introduction and notes by Robert Dankoff. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1983.

_____. *From Mahmud Kaşgari to Evliya Çelebi.* Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2009.

Debreli, Z. Gizem. *Dîvânu Lugâti't-Türk ve Kutadgu Bilig'de Hidrografik Terimler ve*

Metaforik Kullanımları. Ondokuz Mayıs Üniversitesi İnsan Bilimleri Dergisi (İBD), 1/2, Aralık / December 2020, 139–167.

Dilaçar, Agop. *Kutadgu Bilig İncelemesi*. Ankara: Türk Dil Kurumu Yayınları, 1995.

Fakhry, Majid. *Greek philosophy: impact on Islamic philosophy*, 1998, doi:10.4324/9780415249126-H011-1. Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Taylor and Francis.

Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Truth and Method*. Translated by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall. London and New York: Continuum, 2004.

Heidegger, Martin. *On the Way to Language*. Translated by P. D. Hertz. New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1971.

_____. *Being and Time*. Translated by J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1985.

_____. *Hölderlin's Hymn: The Ister.* Translated by W. McNeill and J. Davis. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996.

Jamal, Gulnisa, Kafkasyalı S. Muhammet. (eds). *Kutadgu Bilig Araştırmaları Tarihi*. Ankara: Karınca Yayınları, 2016.

Karamercan, Onur. *Heidegger's Way to Poetic Dwelling via Being and Time*. Horizon: Studies in Phenomenology 10 (2021): 268–285.

Kant, Immanuel. *The Critique of Pure Reason*. Translated by M. Gregor. Cambridge: Cambridge Universe Press, 2015.

Kazemi, Reza Shah et al. *Common Ground between Islam and Buddhism*. Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 2010.

Klein, Ernest. *Klein's Comprehensive Etymology Dictionary of the English Language.* Elsevier: Amsterdam, 1971.

Klimkeit, Hans- Joachim. *Buddhism in Turkish Central Asia*. Numen, 37 (1990): 53–69.

Laut, P. Jens. *Der frühe türkische Buddhismus und seine literarischen Denkmäler*. *Veröffentlichungen der Societas Uralo-Altaica.* Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden, 1986.

Malpas, Jeff. *Heidegger's Topology: Being, Place, World*. Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2006.

_____. *Heidegger and the Thinking of Place: Explorations in the Topology of Being*.

Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2012.

May, Reinhard. *Heidegger's Hidden Sources: East Asian Influences on His Work*. Trans. Graham Parkes. London & New York: Routledge, 1996.

Mitchell, Andrew. *The Fourfold: Reading the Late Heidegger*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2015.

Raud, Rein. *Asian Worldviews: Religions, Philosophies, Political Theories*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2021.

Rorty, Richard. *Philosophy and social hope*. London: Penguin, 1999.

Roux, Jean-Paul. *Histoires des Turcs*. Paris: Fayard, 2000.

Savelyev, Alexander, and Robbeets, Martine. *Bayesian phylolinguistics infers the internal structure and the time-depth of the Turkic language family*. *Journal of Language Evolution*, 5 (2020): 39–53. https://doi.org/10.1093/jole/lzz010

Ziarek, Krzysztof. *Language after Heidegger*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013.

Žižek, Slavoj. "Language, Violence and non-Violence." *International Journal of Zizek Studies*, 2: 3 (2008): 1–12.