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URBAN LEGENDS: TURKISH *KAYIK* 'BOAT' AND "ESKIMO" *QAYAQ* 'KAYAK'*

Abstract

The main goal of this paper is to show that the proposed relationship between Turkish *kayık* 'boat' and Eskimo *qayaq* 'kayak' is far-fetched. After a philological analysis of the available materials, it will be proven that the oldest attestation and recoverable stages of these words are *kay-guk* (11th c.) < Proto-Turkic */kad-/ in */kad-ï/ 'fir tree' and */qan-yaq/ (see Greenlandic pl. form *kainet*, from 18th c.) < Proto-Eskimo */qan(ə)-/ 'to go/come (near)' respectively. The explicitness of the linguistic evidence enables us to avoid the complex historical and cultural (archaeological) observations related to the hypothetical scenarios concerning encounters between the Turkic and Eskimo(-Aleut) populations, so typical in a discussion of this issue. In the process of this main elucidation, two marginal questions will be addressed too: the limited occasions on which "Eskimo" materials are dealt with in English (or other language) sources, and the etymology of (Atkan) Aleut *iqya-x̂* 'single-hatch baidara'.

In memoriam Árpád Berta (1951–2008)

*Unfortunately, as all lexicographers know, 'don't look
into things, unless you are looking for trouble: they near-
ly always turn out to [be] less simple than you thought'.*

John Ronald Reuel Tolkien (1892–1973), *Lett.* 316

*To kill an error is as good a service as, and sometimes
even better than, the establishing of a new truth or fact.*

Charles Darwin (1809–1882)

1. Introduction

1.1.   In the context of historical linguistics "urban legends" are those words whose similarity both in shape and meaning precludes, according to non-specialists, either an obvious and manifested quasi-genetic relationship or contact between different ethnic groups which is otherwise impossible to demonstrate. Of course, two similar given words may in fact be related. Nevertheless, it is a totally different matter to know how such a relation must be understood, or to put it in another way, by what means the words have become similar, regardless of the final answer, i.e. whether they are related or not.[1]

1.2.   Nobody would deny that in commenting on the affinity of Modern Turkish *kayïk* (‹kayık› in standard orthography) 'boat' with, say, (West) Greenlandic *qayaq* 'kayak' (in following paragraphs I will explain why "Eskimo" with quotation marks appears in the title of the present paper instead of the name of the actual Eskimo language) are a perfect basis on which to make a good case for an "urban legend" in the field of comparative and historical linguistics. In fact, although this (recurrent) comparison is well-known among Turkologists, it is certainly not reciprocated among their colleagues studying Eskimology.[2] It is very probable that only C.C. Uhlenbeck, W. Thalbitzer, K. Bergsland and M. Fortescue, all extraordinarily widely-

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[1]   For illustrative purposes, Igartua (1999) demonstrates perfectly the methodological considerations and the far-reaching aspects which must be taken into account when dealing with such comparisons.

[2]   Generally speaking, comparisons involving Turkic and Eskimo materials are rather unusual. Leaving aside the systematic lists arranged by the Pro-Nostraticists, only one other instance is from time to time revived in the literature. Uhlenbeck proposed at the very beginning of 20th c. (*apud* Bergsland 1959: 25) that the Turkish suffix *-lïk* indicating *nomina possessoris* is the result of grammaticalization after the Eskimo postbase */-ləγ-/ 'one provided with or having' (cf. CED 404: CAY *-lək-*, GRI *-lik-*, and probably the Aleut passive *-lγa-*, *-sxa-* (after consonants), cf. AD 519). This comparison was again mentioned more recently by Krejnovič (1978: 98–9). To the best of my knowledge, the subject was last raised by Cavoto (2004: 13–4) in a paper also devoted to *res Nostraticæ*. Nobody has either refuted or

read (and also highly esteemed) Eskimologists, were/are aware of this comparison, but none make it explicit in their works on Eskimo-Aleut historical linguistics. Far from trying to offer a full report on previous research (Malkiel's *l'histoire du problème*), it is worth noting that although Thalbitzer (1952) devoted a paper to the hypothetical connections between Eskimo and the languages of the so-called "Old World", he said nothing concerning this Turkish-"Eskimo" comparandum. As for Bergsland, he even contributed to a monographic volume devoted to the study of kayaks (Bergsland 1991), but he failed to mention anything regarding this popular comparison, perhaps because his contribution dealt with the Aleutian's baidaras (also "baidarkas", on which see §§3.3–3.4), rather than with the Eskimo kayaks themselves. Be that as it may, both Thalbitzer and Bergsland were very conservative scholars, so perhaps in their opinion there was no room for such *a priori* speculative comparison. Rather more surprisingly, considering the anti-conservativeness of some of his statements, Fortescue (1998: 219–230) also ignored the question in his book on the Uralo-Siberian hypothesis, in spite of the fact that the (Proto-)Turkic population plays a relatively important role in his hypothesis regarding the expansion of (Proto-)Uralo-Siberian speakers, since according to Fortescue, at some point they, i.e. the Proto-Turkic and Proto-Uralo-Siberian populations, had to have met as a result of certain economic undertakings near the Sayan region.[3] Ingenious as Fortescue is, one tends to accept that he simply considers this comparison between Turkic and "Eskimo" totally irrelevant. Even Swadesh (1962), another supporter of long-range comparisons, says nothing about the matter. This, of course, could also hold true for Bergsland and Thalbitzer. More recently (but perhaps now so surprisingly!), Mudrak (2008) does not address the question either, even though his paper deals with "Altaic" and (Pseudo-)Eskimo comparisons in the hope of finding some Nostratic traces in both "families". All in all, Eskimologists seem not to know the answer or to simply ignore the question. However, what about Turkologists?

1.3.   The first record of a scientific discussion on the "*qayak* file" should be ascribed to the Hungarian historian and linguist, D. Sinor (1961[1977/1990]: 163–8, 2008), who in a paper devoted to the etymological analysis of water transport in the Eurasian world comments that beyond the obvious phonetic similarities, Turkish *kayïk* could actually be an Eskimo loanword. Sinor notes that the first person to point to the hypothetical relation between the Eskimo and Turkish words (via Mediterranean loanwords, e.g. French *caïque*, Italian *caicco* 'a k. of boat', see MacRitchie 1912: 493 ft. 1 or Eren 1999: 221a-222a s.v. *kayık*) was the Scottish Orientalist, Sir Henry Yule (1820–1889). It goes without saying that Sinor's account is the most popular and without doubt the source of the subsequent spread of this urban legend (see for example ÈSTJa V: 213). Unfortunately, Sinor did not

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accepted this comparison, but according to what will be commented upon in this paper, "great skepticism" seems to be a good point-of-departure.

[3]   Fortescue (1998: 219) maintains that his Proto-Uralo-Siberian was spoken around 8000–1000 B.P. "in the southern Siberian and in the region between Lake Baykal and the Sayan […] and extending eastward up the Lena, Aldan valleys and westward almost as far as the Ob'".

elaborate further, as if he had the existence of the obvious philological problems would have perhaps prevented him from reaching such a conclusion. Fortunate or not, it is this inadequate analysis of the matter in question, by none other than such a specialist as Denis Sinor, which will become of central importance in the following paragraphs, moreover partially justifying the existence of the present paper, whose main goal is to shed some light on this far-fetched comparison and, as has already been mentioned, to clarify that both words are without doubt unrelated. During the course of the explanations (as illustrative and clear as is possible), it will be demonstrated that the materials that provide the basis for this infamous comparison offer a very interesting etymological exercise, which will be resolved by proposing new approaches not only to the historical understanding of both Turkic *kayïk* and "Eskimo" *qayaq*, but also to the Aleut word *iqya-x̣* 'one-hatch boat', linked without a suitably critical approach to the "Eskimo" word as a result of mere phonetic similarity.

2. Turkic

2.1.   If Turkish *kayïk* is in some way connected with "Eskimo" *qayaq*,[4] or vice versa, both words must be incredibly old, i.e. they should be attested in the oldest records of the languages. The logic behind this reasoning is as follows: since the modern Turkish and Eskimo languages are currently not in contact with each other, it has to be assumed that they were in prehistoric times. Thus, both words must also be prehistoric (understanding "prehistory" literally), and therefore already "available" when the first written words appeared. Unfortunately, as far as the Turkic materials are concerned, this chronological assumption can immediately be demonstrated to be false as the word is recorded for the first time in Kāšγarī's dialectal dictionary, which was published during 11th c. in the state of Qarakhanid. Kāšγarī's dictionary is the most relevant document belonging to the so-called "Middle Turkic", so its importance is not to be underestimated. The word appears as *kaygïk ~ kayguk*, i.e. there is an additional phoneme, namely /g/ (probably a voiced velar fricative /γ/, transliterated by means of the grapheme ‹g›), which does not appear in the modern Turkish word.[5] Notwithstanding the problematic phonology, the semantics

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[4]   According to Erdal (2004: 70), the grapheme ‹y› used in transliterating Old Turkic does not render a semi-consonant, but rather a kind of fricative (supposedly by means of the voiced correlate of /č/). In Eskimo, however, ‹y› stands for a semi-consonant.

[5]   In his famous paper, Sinor proposed that Hungarian *hajó* 'boat' is actually an Old Turkic loanword (this is mentioned in ÈSTJa V:213), as does Róna-Tas (1999: 108). Neither, however, seems to be interested in solving the difficulty of the existence of the additional sound (Róna-Tas even reconstructs Proto-Turkic */kayuk/, in spite of the fact that elsewhere he has acknowledged that this loanword arrived only very recently on the coast of the Black Sea, *i.a.* Róna-Tas 1997: 245). For Turkic-Hungarian loanwords in general see Berta & Róna-Tas (2002). The presence of this word in Siberian Russian dialects with no trace of the original */yg/ is understandable given the recent nature of this loanword (such a cluster is already reduced to /y/ in Turkish or Crimean Tatar, the two probable sources of the loanword, see Anikin 2003: 256–7, 772 s.v. *kajuk*).

apparently remains the same, i.e. 'boat', since that is the meaning which is recorded from the first attestations of the word in Kāšyarī's dictionary:[6]

tāg-ig ukruk-ïn äg-mǟs /	*kār būs kamug är-üš-d-i /*
täŋis-ni kaygïk-ïn bög-mǟs (MK I 100)	*tāg-lar suw-ï ak-ïš-d-ï /*
	kökšin bulït ör-üš-d-i /
	kayguk bol-up ügri-š-ör (MK I 186)
mountain_AC lasso_INSTR bend_NEG.PERF /	snow_NOM ice_NOM all melt_REFL-PERF-3SG /
sea_AC boat_INSTR dam.up_NEG.PERF	mountain_PL water_POSS.3SG run_REFL-PERF-3SG /
	bluish cloud rise_REFL-PERF-3SG /
	boat be_CV move_REFL-PERF-3SG
'the (lofty) mountain cannot be bent with a lasso /	'all the snow and ice have melted /
The sea cannot be dammed up with a boat'	the mountain streams have flowed /
	a bluish cloud has risen up /
	sways (in the air) as a boat rocks (in the water)'

The word *kaygïk ~ kayguk* can be safely segmented: the stem *kay-* plus the suffix *-gXk*, where X stands for /i ï u ü/. Both stem and suffix deserve equal attention, but let us start from the beginning, i.e. with the stem.

2.2.   To determine the meaning of the stem actually means the etymology of the word would be solved, a challenge which has already been taken up by none other than Sir Gerard Clauson.[7] Clauson said: *kayguk* derived from *kay-* ['to turn, bend']: 'a small boat': etymologically perhaps (a boat of which the prow, and perhaps stern are) 'turned upwards': smaller than a *kemi*' (EDT 676b) and he explains that the form survives in all the modern dialects although with some phonetic changes.[8] It is worth-noting that *kay-* should be starred for this stem as it is not attested in Old Turkic as an independent verbal stem, but only appears in compounds, the origi-

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[6] Dankoff & Kelly (1985.I: 131, 188), but the translation has been modified to render the text more literally and the transliteration has been adapted to harmonize with that of the rest of the paper. See also DTS (407a ss.vv. *qajyuq* and *qajyïq* 'lodka, čeli').

[7] What Clauson has in mind is that the rest of the historical forms have undergone a well-known change *-y-* < */-yg-/*, as in */ed-gü/* 'good (things)' > */ey-gü/* > Turkish *iyi*, Tatar *iye, iyge*, Turkmen *eygi-lik* 'good action' or Kirgiz *iygi*. Examples where the cluster reduction favoured the preservation of g instead of y are also known, e.g. */doy-gan/* 'falcon' > Old Turkic *togan*, but Kazakh *tuygïn*. As for the historical reflexes of *kaygur*, only Uygur *qeyiq*, with the root *e* after umlaut, and Yakut *xoyūk*, maybe from */hoy(g)uk/* < *kayguk* (Marek Stachowski p.c.), are worth noting.

[8] For an exhaustive list see ÈSTJa V:212–3. Curiously enough, the authors of the ÈSTJa offer a rather lengthy review of the previous attempts at an etymological solution, quoting Räsänen, Radlov, Doerfer, Korš, etc., but with not one word concerning Clauson's solution, by far the most plausible. The root *kay-* 'to slide, swim' (EDT 635b, ÈSTJa V: 197–8) could be perfectly related to the word under discussion, but unfortunately it is not attested either in Old Turkic or Kāšyarī, only in modern languages. It is the origin of Turkic *kayak* 'ski', which was also derived in very recent times. It would be too naïve to quote this word as additional comparandum for Eskimo *qayaq*.

nal meaning rather being 'to turn back'. Thus, this is the change from which *kaygXk* leads to modern Turkish *kayïk*. As far as the semantics are concerned, Clauson could have been right, possibly even more so than he thought, despite the "perhaps" which appears in his etymological comment. This is because the etymological nature of boat-names in other languages shows that the use of verbal constructions such as 'turn' or 'bent' are relatively common. Polish *okręt* 'ship' (maybe a loanword from dialectal Russian where one can find *окрут*) is a verbal noun, in PS */o(b)krǫtъ/, lit. 'turned, curled, twisted', of *kręcić* 'to turn, bend' < */o(b)-krǫtiti/ 'id.' (Boryś 2005: 388b, Vasmer 1971.III: 131).

So far, the stem of *kay-gXk* seems to present no problems. What about the suffix(es)?

2.3.   The vowel alternation *ï ~ u* in the suffix is not at all surprising in itself for in Turkic synharmonic terms the alternation /i ï u ü/ is allowed (and traditionally noted /X/ as explained above), but the fact that the same stem *kay-* displays two variants is indeed remarkable. Erdal (2004: 131) explains that Turkic texts are not free from irregularities in synharmonism, particularly when dealing with rounding, e.g. *öt-im-in* {advice_{1SG.POSS-AC}} 'my advice (in AC)', instead of the more expected */öt-üm-ün/. There are a few examples where it can be observed that /I/ is replaced by /U/ or vice versa, e.g. *üšüt-* from *üši-t-* 'to chill' or *toyïn-lar* from *toyun-lar* 'monks'. Some could even argue that, since *kaygVk* must be a loanword from Eskimo, there is nothing surprising in the vowel alternation, since there are similar (but not identical!) precedents of such irregular behaviour, *i.a.* there are many cases where the borrowed stems acquire suffixes in back variants when they also have front vowels in violation of synharmonism (Erdal 2004: 133). However, all these potential scenarios are pointless because they do not provide the answer to the central problem, i.e. vowel alternation is recorded in the suffix, not in the stem, and there are no harmonic incompatibilities, but on the contrary, two allowed harmonic variants are recorded for the same item. When this happens, one is automatically forced to think of two different words, as in the well-known case of *altïn* 'below' vs. *altun* 'gold', although there is no doubting the fact that here we are dealing with the very same word. Notwithstanding this, the solution to the problem is simply a matter of common sense: since there is no suffix */-gXk/, but only *-gOk* and *-gUk*, one should conclude that *kayguk* is, say, the original form, whereas *kaygïk* could be considered to be the result of a secondary process. In fact, as *kaygïk* only attested as an inflected word in the instrumental case, i.e. *kaygïk-ïn*, it is possible to argue that this form comes from */kaygukïn/, in the same way *ötimin* comes from */ötümin/ (this time *-in* is AC), or as an even better example, *yumïš-či* from *yumuš* 'command' (see Erdal 2004: 87). In conclusion, */kaygïk/ is only a variant conditioned by the vowel of the instrumental case suffix.[9] As for the

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[9]   This is the solution adopted by Dankoff & Kelly in their edition of MK. They transliterated the original Arabic QAY·ΓIQN as <qayɣuqin> despite the obvious scribal error, especially noticeable when the individual lemma is quoted (MK III 175): QAY·ΓⴀIQ· (1982.I: 240, see also "Vowel only" in the scribal and other errors section on pp. 25–31).

meaning, since Clauson proposed a verbal stem, the suffix must be instrumental *-gOk ~ -gUk*, as in *asgok* 'banner, flag' from *as-* 'to hang up' or *tirgök* 'pillar, post' from *tirä-* 'to drop up' (Erdal 1991[I]: 359–60).

2.4.   Curiously enough, although the analysis of *kayguk* appears to be in agreement with what responsible researchers would consider to be a appropriate application of etymological methods, there is still the possibility of an alternative etymology. The well-known sound change */d/ > y*, which took place in the second half of the 11th c., can still be of some help.[10] I propose that the original stem in *kaygXk* could be in fact */kadï/ 'fir tree', very probably itself related to the isolated *kadïk* 'wooden trough' (DTS 404b s.v. *qaδïɣ* 'rez'ba po derevu [?]'), perhaps also to PT */kadïŋ/ 'birch tree' (DTS 404b, 407b s.v. *qaδïŋ, qajïŋ* 'bereza'), and even to *kadu-* 'to sew, to stick in' (DTS 405a s.v. *qaδu-*), all documented in Kāšɣarī's dictionary (see also Clauson 1957: 40). In fact it has long been accepted that */kadï/ is in fact a Samoyedic loanword (Helimski 1995: 75, 79; 2000: 301).[11] Since boats among Turkic people were made mainly of wood, the name could have eventually been derived from a word meaning 'wood'.[12] Again, parallel etymologies for boat-names can be illustrative, for instance, Russian *пóдка* (dialectal *падья*, cf. Old Russian *подьá, подька*), Polish *łódź*, Czech *loď*, Slovene *ládja* 'small (wooden) boat', from PS */oldьji/ 'trough, root' < PIE */aldʰ-/ 'trunk, trough', maybe related to Sanskrit *ālu-* 'an esculent root, *Arum Campanulatum*', Latin *ālum* 'a k. of root' and to Russian *лут*, Polish *łęt* 'potato root' < Proto-Slavic */lǫtъ/ 'young lime', Lithuanian *lentà* 'board' or German *Linde* 'lime' from PIE */(e)lent-/ 'a tree with soft or flexible wood', all traditionally derived from different stems, but showing an obvious semantic link (see Boryś 2005: 299b, Vasmer 1967.II: 536). As for the suffix, Erdal (1991: 158–9, see also Gabain 1950[2], §§114–5: 71–2) comments that Kāšɣarī's dictionary is the only document where the denominal noun suffix *-gOk* 'characteristic of X', where 'X' is the noun to which the suffix is attached, e.g. *čamgok är* 'a slanderous man' ← *čam* '(groundless) objection' or *bašgok* 'promontory' ← *baš* 'summit' is recorded. Thus, *kayguk* could mean 'having wood as main feature' (*vel sim.*) > 'boat'.

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[10] Clauson's proposed stem is one of the many examples of this change, since *kay-* is the historical continuation of the PT */kād-/, for example in PT */kadā/ 'a leaning object' > Old Turkic *kaya* 'stone', but cf. an ancient loanword retaining the PT */-d-/ in the Mongolian *kada* 'rock' (already actively used in naming toponyms as can be learnt from *The Secret History of the Mongols*, e.g. Keltegei Qada in §175; not to be confused with *kadā* 'outside' < *kada'a*, w.f. *ɣadaɣa*, of Mongolian pedigree, see De Rachewiltz 2006.II: 998).

[11] Unless the "Samoyedic-loanword" option is invoked, this word could still be perfectly well related to PT */kād-/ 'to bend, turn oneself' on semantic grounds, given the obvious semantic parallels such as PS */kor-/ 'to bend' > Russian *кокóра* 'trunk with crooked branches', Polish *krzywy* 'crooked' < PS */krivъ/, see also Latin *curvus*, Lithuanian *kreĩvas* (Boryś 2005: 268a–b, Vasmer 1967.II: 282–3).

[12] This is the assumption behind, among others, Koivoluhto's reasoning to explain Finnish *vene(h)* 'boat' < Finno-Mordvin */vënëš/ ← Early Indo-Iranian */wen-‰-/ > Sanskrit *ván-a-* 'wood, tree; timber, wooden vessel', despite Helimski's (2001: 203[2000: 500]) strong criticism.

2.5.   Whichever solution is accepted, what has been made very clear is that */kaygOk/ (< PT */kad-/) is the oldest form one can recover by means of philological resources as the antecedent of Turkish *kayïk* 'boat'. Eskimo speakers too in the past had to deal with such a word, but at a similar point in history what did the Eskimo word look like?

3. "Eskimo"

3.1.   When considering the world as a whole, the second most widely spread Eskimo word is probably *qayaq*, with the first most likely being [Western Inuit] *iɣlu*, in standard English orthography ‹igloo›.[13] *qayaq* (English orthography ‹kayak›) is characteristically a small wooden boat, which has decks enclosed by the skins of seals or other animals.[14] The word is attested in every Eskimo language, e.g. CAY *qayaq*, Sir *qayaX*, GRI *qayaq* (CED 283a s.v. (*)*qayar*). From a philological perspective, the word is, contrary to the Turkic case, attested in the oldest documentation. But this fact, obvious as it is, is by no means surprising.[15] Kayak appears in the earliest descriptions of Eskimos as a cultural curiosity, even before the gathering of any linguistic material (Bonnerjea 2004). Notwithstanding this favourable situation, the reconstruction of the Proto-Eskimo word does not automatically become a simple task and without doubt it is not to be recommended that */qayar/ be postulated as the most convenient solution. However, research will soon reveal that the internal facts, i.e. the philological details, about the etymology of "Eskimo" *qayaq* have always been quite clearly stated, and thus an explanation can be provided relatively easily. However, before addressing this particular question, it is necessary to explain why the title of this paper contains the word "Eskimo" using inverted commas. This is due to the manner in which etymological dictionaries, especially the so-called English etymological dictionaries, account for the origin of the word *kayak*. To make this clear at this point is essential as usually the Turkish-Eskimo comparison is based on superficial quotes from English dictionaries. But what could English etymological dictionaries have to say about the etymology of an Eskimo word? Indeed, do they have anything to say about it? In fact, they say nothing, or at least nothing relevant to the present discussion. To highlight this let us take a look at the *lemma* under scrutiny, i.e. *kayak*, in several English etymological dictionaries:

(a) Skeats (1963²: 319): "'a light Greenland canoe' (Eskimo). An Eskimo word; common in all the dialects." Skeats takes the explanation from (Onions') *Oxford English Dictionary* (at that time *New English Dictionary on Historical Principles*);

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[13] Cultural-material definition in Stern (2004: 140–1) s.v. *snowhouse*, comparative linguistic materials in CED 112b s.v. (*)*əŋlu* 'house'.

[14] Cultural-material definition in Stern (2004: 90), further details in the numerous cross-referenced index in Damas (1984), or monographic studies like Arima (1987), Zimmerly (2000 [1986]).

[15] The first documentation of any Eskimo-Aleut language goes back to the end of 16th c., when two English mariners, Christopher Hill (1576) and John Davis (1589) decided to take down several words in East Canadian Inuit and Greenlandic, during their participation in expeditions to Baffin and West Greenland respectively.

(b) Onions (1966: 502): "'sealskin canoe', s. XVIII Eskimo."; this is an abbreviation of the *lemma* in (the non-etymological) *Oxford English Dictionary*;

(c) Klein (1971: 400a): "an Eskimo canoe made of sealskin stretched on a wooden frame. Eskimo (Inuit) *qayaq*."

(d) Hoad (1986: 251): "XVIII Eskimo";

(e) Room (2000: 330): "the Eskimo (Inuit) and Alaskan canoe, made of sealskins stretched on a light wooden framework. 18c. Eskimo (Inuit) *qayaq*." Room takes the explanation from Klein.

It seems that it is enough to write "Eskimo" or "Inuit", with no concern about the fact that such labels, in this context, actually means less than nothing. As Urban (2008, esp. 191–3; see also Liberman 2008: xi–xxi) has carefully explained, English etymological dictionaries are the result of one copying from another, with few reliable sources when it comes to explaining words like *qayaq*. However, interestingly enough, all do provide primary or secondary sources to confirm their statements.[16]

3.2. Now we can return to those facts relating to the Eskimo language itself. Fortunately, *qayaq* is one of those examples in Eskimo philology whose history can be traced back to ancient times as the word is accurately recorded in Old Greenlandic orthography. Thus, the modern Greenlandic plural form *qaannat* (old orthography ‹qáinat›, in 1750 ‹kainet›) points to the fact that the original singular form had to contain */qan(ə)-/, rather than */qay(ə)-/.[17] According to the authors of the CED, *qayaq* should be analysed as a derivative composed of the verbal root */qan(ə)-/ 'to come near', where */-ə-/ is a sort of thematic vowel, plus the postbase */-yaq/ whose meaning, although difficult to determine, can be assumed to be 'place or thing where action takes place' (CED 434b).[18] The reconstruction of the resulting forms */qanyaq/ and, after assimilation */qayyaq/, is possible due to the partial etymological character of Greenlandic orthography as well as to the evidence in those Inuit languages that retained the archaic plural forms, for example, Eastern Inuit *qainnat* or Alaskan (Inuit) *qayyat*. The singular forms reflect the systematic reduction of */-ny-/ to *-(y)y-* that took place on both sides of the Bering Sea and which was eventually metathesized in Greenlandic at least, while in Western Eskimo (Yupik) it was regularly abbreviated to *qayaq* (pl. *qayat*).

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[16] Cutler (1994: 92–101) devotes several pages to describe the very few Eskimo-Aleut loanwords in English, although many of his comments are not entirely accurate.

[17] Curiously enough, it can be learned from Clauson's *lemma* on *kayguk* that in the Arabic-Turkish vocabulary of 14th c. it is recorded as ‹kāngāk› 'small boat' (EDT 676b). Far from being a reveling relic confirming the common Eskimo-Turkic origin, this written form is an obvious script erratum for the correct /kāygāk/, which immediately links it to the already discussed *kayguk*.

[18] This etymology was proposed for the first time by Bergsland (1966: 215–217) in a seminal paper on Eskimo-Aleut historical linguistics. As a semantic parallel, albeit not perfect, one can once again quote Polish *statek* 'ship, boat' < PS */statъkъ/ 'order, arrangement' (cf. Old Czech *statek* 'article, commodity; power, strength', Ukrainian *státok* 'goods', dial. 'cattle') ← */stati/ 'stand, remain' > Polish *stać* 'id.' (Boryś 2005: 576a). In this case, both the Eskimo and Polish words make reference to the state of the boat on the water, whether moving or being able to remain in it.

Although usually quoted as a possible member of the comparandum, the (Atkan) Aleut *iqya-x̂* 'baidar, umiak' actually has its own etymology, a remarkable fact which will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

3.3.   Bergsland proposed that (Atkan) Aleut *iqya-x̂*, (Eastern) *iqa-x̂*, *niqa-x̂*, and (Attuan) *iyɣ.a-x*, *iyy.a-x* 'single-hatch baidara'[19] (AD 210b) come from */qiyaq/, which in turn comes from */qayar/.[20] Thus, it is necessary to assume that what has been postulated for Eskimo also holds true for Eskimo-Aleut, i.e. in PEA */qanyaq/ > */qayyaq/ > PA */qayaq/, and in PA */qayaq/ > */qiyaq/ > *iqya-x̂*, with both vowel dissimilation and the loss of a radical vowel as a result of prothesis. However, and this is despite the cautiousness with which Bergsland undertook etymological analysis, the proposed chain of changes is totally *ad hoc*. First and foremost, vowel dissimilation is far less common than assimilation, and to the best of my knowledge this would be the only case which could be used to exemplify it (Bergsland 1986: 90–98, esp. 90–2, where it is said that "A *iqya-x̂*, E *qayaq*, is exceptional but difficult to dismiss"). In order to account for the prothetic *i-*, Bergsland (1986: 93–4) proposed *imli-x̂* 'single hair of head' (AD 198a) < PA */mələ́-r/ < PEA */mələ-r/ 'plug or cover' (CED 197a-b: CAY *mələk* 'door', GRI *milik* 'plug, stopper, nail head') as a parallel formation. This word contains an unexpected initial epenthetic vowel (with secondary vowel assimilation */i…a/ > /i…i/), whose origin can be safely ascribed to the need to avoid misunderstandings with the similar *hla-x̂* 'son; boy, child' < PA */məl(á)-r/ < PEA */məlu(ɣ)-/ 'suck (breast)' (AD 253b, CED 197b-198a s.v. ⁽*⁾*məluɣ*. Neither Bergsland nor the authors of the CED propose an etymology for this word, see Alonso de la Fuente [in press] and §3.1 for further details). The authors of the CED seem to uncritically accept this solution, even though neither the loss of the vowel in the first syllable[21] is explained nor what noun provoked the need for the prothesis. As has been argued in a recent study on Aleut historical phonology (Alonso de la Fuente 2010), the only way Aleut could have lost vowels is by accepting that an unstressed PEA */ə/ was dropped, while a stressed one was preserved with later vocalization. Thus, Aleut *iqya-* could go back in theory to */qya-/ < */qnyaq/ < PA */qə̣nyáq/ or the like. However, Eskimo languages clearly demonstrate that

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[19]   Dialectal variants *iqa-x̂*, *iyɣ.a-x*, and *iyy.a-x* are easily explained as regular alternations of/with respect to the Atkan *iqya-x̂* (see AD xxiv–xxix for further details). The variant *niqa-x̂* needs more elaboration, see Alonso de la Fuente (in press b).

[20]   Though an official writing system was designed for Aleut in 1972 by Bergsland (see AD xvi–xxiv), this paper will use the orthographical conventions in Bergsland (1986: 66–7), the main differences being that the aspirated consonants are written with capital letters instead of combinations of h + C, e.g. ‹W› and not ‹hw›; the uvular and velar fricatives are written ‹x›, ‹ɣ›, and ‹ɣ.›, instead of ‹x̂›, ‹g›, and ‹ĝ›, respectively; the voiced dental fricative is written ‹δ› instead of ‹d› (conventionally this sound is written ‹ř› or even ‹ð›, but for the sake of clarity we will adopt the same orthography as in Aleut); the palatal stop is written ‹č› instead of ‹ch›; and the voiced velar nasal is written ‹ŋ› instead of ‹ng›.

[21]   There is at least one more example where the same irregularity can be observed: PE(A) */kinər-/ (CED 175a: CSY *kinər-, GRI kinir- 'have run off (water)' > PA */kinə́r-/ > */k(i)na(r)-/ > A *kna-δɣu-* 'dry, not dressed' (AD 243b). However, I cannot offer an explanation for this at the moment.

any reconstruction must be */qanyaq/, and not */qənyaq/. Therefore, the only con-
clusion which can be reached is that the Aleut *iqya-* has nothing to do with the
PE *qanyaq after all.

3.4.   As an alternative solution, I propose that the Aleut word is the continua-
tion of PEA */qətyVγ/ 'skin (of animals)' (> PE */qəciγ/, CED 294a–b: CAY *qəcik*,
SPI *qizik*) via PA */qə̑tyáγ/ > */q(t)ya-/ > *iqya-*, with the dropping of the mid-con-
sonant as usual, e.g. PEA */mətyu(γ)-/ (verbal) ~ */mətyur/ (nominal) 'moisture,
liquid' > PE */məcu(γ)-/ ~ */məcur/ 'id.' (CED 196b), and A *hyu-x̂* 'id' (AD 465a) <
*/m(t)yu-r/ < PA */mə̑tyúr/.[22] Skin is an essential part in the construction of kay-
aks: the skeleton is made of wood or bones, after which the entire construction
is covered with animal skin. Moreover, the (derivational) semantic link between
'skin' and 'boat' actually already exists, e.g. CSY *amiq* 'skin, hide' (and *amir-* 'cover
(skin boat)') → *amiraq* 'skin prepared for use on hull of skin boat; newly covered
boat' (Badten, Kaneshiro & Oovi 1987: 31 s.v. *amiq*, *amigh-*, *amighaq*, *vid.* CED 23b
for the PEA reconstruction and cognates) It is necessary to change the skin cover-
ing every year, since after one complete hunting season the skin is inevitably dam-
aged. In the case of the Aleuts, the baidara had/have to be covered with such skins
every time the hunters went/go out, especially the *ulux̂-ta-x̂* 'two-hatch baidara'
(Jochelson 1990: 394–5 nº 56[23]):

₃*Mayaaγ.iiγ.-an maayu-na-x̂, itaanγasix mayaaγ.asi-txin aγuδa-x̂.* /
₄*Ulux̂ta-an iγluqa-lix, iγlaγ-in, asxu-x̂, taanγaδγusi-x̂, ahnax̂, muunhma-, x̂aačx̂iilu-x̂,
taamx̂aa-x̂ aγu-δa-x̂.*

hunting_{REL.3A.SG} prepare_{AN-SG} first hunting.gear_{POSS.3SG} make.habitually_{SG}. /
baidara_{REL.3A.SG} put.skin.cover_{CV} spear_{REL.3A.PL} spear.thrower_{ABS.SG}
water.bottle_{ABS.SG} club_{ABL.SG} pump_{ABL.SG} hook.for.paddle_{ABL.SG}
spear.pocket_{ABL.SG} make.habitually_{SG}.

'The one who prepares for hunting first generally makes his hunting gear. /
He puts a skin-cover on his baidara (and) makes spears, a spear thrower, a water
bottle, a club, a pump, a hook for the paddle, and a spear pocket'.[24]

In the same way that the Turkic word could be a derivative from the noun naming
the main material of which the boat is constructed, i.e. wood, I assume that in Aleut
something rather similar could have happened. Although Eskimo-Aleut boats are also
made of wood, skin plays an essential role in preserving the integrity of the main con-
struction from water, any encounters with animals and poor weather conditions.

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[22] For the merge in the Aleut *h-* of the PEA */p-/ and */m-/, maybe the most characteristic sound
change in the (pre)history of the Aleut, see Bergsland's description (*i.a.* 1986: 69–70). For a detailed
account of the evolution of the PEA */-ty-/ in Aleut see Alonso de la Fuente (2008: 100–3).

[23] Transliteration has been adjusted to that used throughout this paper and the translation is
presented with minor modifications to render the text more literally.

[24] A very clear reproduction of an illustration showing Aleut boats (single-hatch kayak and
baidara) and their structure can be found in Black (2004: plate 4). Terminology regarding covers
for the Aleut kayak is extensively treated in Bergsland's specialized article (1991: 144–6).

However, it is necessary to account for the prothetic vowel. In the parallel case, albeit only alleged, which is mentioned above and repeatedly quoted by the authors of the CED and Bergsland, there is a pair of words: *imli-x* 'single hair of head' vs. *hla-x* 'son; boy, child', however, in the case of *iqya-x* the second member of the pair is missing. I propose Aleut *qya-* 'to be tight (as a rope)' and *qya-lu-* 'hair throat of male caribou' (AD 340b),[25] are both probable derivatives of */qya-/ < PA /ə̣qə̣-yár/ 'rope, line', lit. 'way of or device for loosing, tying', from PEA */ə̣qə̣-/ 'shrink or contract' (CED 114b-115b, see specially some derivatives, e.g. PY-S */qəpə-/ 'squeeze together, tie up' > CAY *qəppaɣ-* 'hug or squeeze vigorously', Sir *qəpərətaX* 'rope'). Therefore, the prothesis was added to PA */qya-r/ → */i-qya-r/ 'sth. made of skin > boat' to avoid confusion with */qya-r/ 'sth. to squeeze, hug or tie up > rope, line', now only preserved in derivatives.

3.5.   Since it has been demonstrated that Eskimo and Aleut have different words to name one of the most important objects in their everyday life, it is legitimate to think that the word *qayaq* cannot be not older than four millennia, when Eskimo and Aleut branched off from Proto-Eskimo-Aleut (Woodbury 1984: 61). This linguistic evidence is more or less in accordance with archaeological evidence, since kayaks are associated with the Dorset Eskimo epoch, i.e. 800 B.C.

4. What is left: chance similarity

4.1.   In a celebrated paper on language contact in the Caucasus and the Near East, the Russian scholar Igor Diakonof applied (but did not coin!) the expression *Sirene des Gleichklangs* (1990: 59) to name those cases where the specialist faces a chance similarity: like the Sirens from Classical times, magical charms are sung to drive, in this case the researchers, to the wrong conclusions. Anyone studying one language, or even a number of languages, is aware of this phenomenon, but not everybody can understand what the consequences of such an identification might be from a his-torical and comparative perspective. Chance (= accidental) similarities take place when more than two words, regardless of their space and time parameters, are by chance (almost) homophonous and/or homographic. Among the many examples that one can use to exemplify this phenomenon, there are a few that are simple and easily to explain:

(a) Japanese 名前 *na-mae* and English *name* or German *Name*;
(b) Chinese (Mandarin) 餐厅 *cāntīng* 'dinning room' and English *canteen*;
(c) Jaqaru [Aymaran] *aska* and English *ask*;
(d) Sanskrit *da-* and Cora [Uto-Aztecan] *da-* 'give';
(e) Spanish *lengua* < Latin *lingua* and Hopi [Athapaskan] *línga* /leng'i/ 'tongue';

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[25] Bergsland does not link this word with the previous one, nor offers any internal segmenta-tion, despite the fact that it seems to be a clear: *-lu-* 'a group of, with characteristics of X' (AD 527 without meaning), e.g. in *tana-* 'island' → *tana-lu-* 'a group of islets', although no more productive.

(f) Mbabaram [Pama-Nyungan] *dog* and English *dog*;
(g) Thai *rim¹* and English *rim*;
(h) Teda [Nilo-Saharan] *kulo* and Spanish *culo* /kulo/ 'anus';
(i) Songhay [Nilo-Saharan] *mana* and Quechua *mana* 'no';
(j) Turkish *tepe* 'hill' and (Classical) Nahuatl *tepē-tl* 'mountain';
(k) Turkish *iyi* and Japanese いい *ii* 'good'.

These examples illustrate what is meant by "accidental similarity": neither geneal-ogy nor borrowing can be used as an explanation to account for the phonetic and semantic identity which all these forms display. Therefore, the only solution which is acceptable is that they are the result of chance similarity.[26]

4.2. Other instances, however, require further explanation, given the historical and philological features of the words involved:
(l) Romanian *fiŭ* 'son' < Latin *filius* and Hungarian *fiú* 'son, boy' < Proto-Finno-Ugrian **poji* 'boy' (cf. Finnish *poika*);
(m) French *feu* 'fire' < Latin *focus* 'heart, fireplace' and German *Feuer* 'fire' < Proto-Germanic **fūr-i* (cf. Old English *fȳr*) < Proto-Indo-European **pūr-* [**ph$_x$ur-*];
(n) Aleut *uku-* 'to get sight of, to find', *uku-xta-* 'to see' vs. Old Russian *око* 'eye' < Proto-Indo-European **ókʷ-* 'eye; to see' (Alonso de la Fuente [in press, a]), also involved in another classic example:
(o) Modern Greek *μάτι* 'eye' (apocopate of the diminutive *ομμάτιον*, from *όμμα* 'eye' < **óp-ma* < PIE **ókʷ-mn̥*) and Malay *ma-ta* 'eye' (we could add Dura [Tibeto-Burman] *mata* 'look, match' too);
(p) Spanish *mucho* < Latin *multus* and English *much* < Old English *mycel* < Proto-Germanic **mikil-* (cf. Gothic *mikils(a)* 'great, many') < Proto-Indo-European **meǵ$^{(h)}$-* 'big' (cf. Latin *magnum*);
(q) Toponyms: *Colima*, one of the states of Mexico, and *Kolyma*, river (and a vil-lage) in Northern Siberia.

In first three cases, i.e. (l m n), the languages in question have long been in contact, so one could argue the case for loanwords (this fact enables us to rule out the pos-sibility of chance similarity). The fourth and fifth examples (o p) require the analysis of at least one of the words as its origin is not self-evident and needs grammatical elaboration. The sixth instance (q) is even more exasperating: *Colima*, although it has several alternative etymologies, is certainly of Nahuatl origin, whereas *Kolyma* seems to be Yukaghir, i.e. the Tundra dialect *kulumaa* (a river), *kulumskaj* (a village), with the quoted form corresponding to Russian *Колыма*, but no internal etymology can be offered for this (Nikolaeva 2006: 218 [874]), and thus the word could have come from a third unknown language.

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[26] The mathematical foundations, and eventually the economic application of chance can be easily mastered via the elementary on-line courses offered by the prestigious University of Dartmouth at the following electronic address: www.dartmouth.edu/~chance.

a continuation of a Proto-Nostratic phoneme or cluster, but that goes well beyond the specific Eskimo and Turkic data presented here, and consequently it would require a rather convincing amount of extra data that for the time being seems not to be available. Besides, even leaving the phonological problems aside, it would be still necessary to face the fact that the semantics are totally incompatible, and difficult to be reconcile: '(to do something with) wood' and 'to go/come (near)' respectively.

5.4.   In conclusion, although it is true that the phonetic and semantic similarities between the Turkic and Eskimo words naming a very specific kind of boat are grounds for raised eyebrows, as well as the fact that nautical terms are easily borrowed as frequently happens with cultural terms (*Kulturwörter*),[27] the philological reality behind the matter only confirms how damaging superficial observations are. Far from wanting to emulate the (sadly) famous (re)constructed dialogue of Helimski in which one speaker of a particular proto-language tries to determine why another speaker of another very definite proto-language might wish to borrow a word for boat (2001: 203–5[2000: 500–1]), I would like to conclude that in this case, West Greenlandic *qayak* and (Modern) Turkish *kayï̈k* are just another example of chance similarity, i.e. they are chants of the Sirens.

Abbreviations

1, 2, 3	person	PA	Proto-Aleut
A	anaphoric	PART	participium
ABL	ablative	PE	Proto-Eskimo
AC	accusative	PEA	Proto-Eskimo-Aleut
AN	agent noun	PERF	perfect (tense)
AUX	auxiliary (verb)	PIE	Proto-Indo-European
CAY	Central Alaskan Yupik	PL	plural
CSY	Central Siberian Yupik	POSS	possessive
CV	converb	PS	Proto-Slavic
EA	Eastern Aleut	PT	Proto-Turkic
GRI	West Greenlandic	REFL	reflexive
INSTR	instrumental	REL	relative
NEG	negation	Sir	Sirenik(ski)
NOM	nominative	SG	singular

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[27] The monographic study by Kahane, Kahane and Tietze (1958), still a classic in the field, offers a brilliant analysis of the interaction of Italian, Greek and Turkish nautical specialized vocabularies.

4.3.   The words under discussion, i.e. "Eskimo" *qayaq* and "Turkish" *kayïk*, fall into the second category of similarity between lexemes, which means it is necessary to investigate more deeply into their (pre)histories in order to understand why they are not related by any known means, i.e. areal (borrowing) or genealogy (inherited from a common antecessor).

5. Conclusions

5.1.   As has been demonstrated in this paper, neither "Eskimo" *qayaq* nor Turkish *kayïk*, i.e. the Old Turkic *kayguk* meet the requirements which would permit even an attempt at a serious philological comparison. To begin with, methodological considerations would be enough to refrain from such speculative links. First and foremost, although both the Eskimo and Turkic words currently demonstrate an intervocalic /y/, it cannot be automatically assumed that this /y/ was always /y/ or that the previous (proto-)phoneme which yielded the /y/ was the same in both PE and PT. Thus, it is necessary to analyse carefully the historical antecedents (history of the languages) and the proposals based on hypothetical prehistoric facts (reconstruction of the proto-languages). Secondly, in assuming from the very beginning that the words were borrowed, it should be kept in mind that in ancient times loanwords did not normally travel across great distances while leaving the intervening areas untouched. When considering this it should be borne in mind that between the Turkic and Eskimo linguistic areas there is a densely populated land, with many different languages which do not demonstrate any evidence of the influence, or even a trace, of such word(s).

5.2.   Philological considerations are also less than optimistic. The established etymology of the Turkic word considers it to be derived from PT */kād-/ > */kay-/ 'to turn, bend'. Alternatively, I have proposed PT */kad-ï/ 'fir tree' (suffixes are identical in shape, i.e. -*gOk* ~ -*gUk*, although barely different in function), in an analogy with what can be inferred from the parallel etymologies of other boat-names. In the last scenario, since the root is in origin a Samoyedic loanword, it should be concluded that the Turkish word and its derivatives are, in terms of PT chronological limits, rather recent. On the other hand, the Eskimo word has a widely accepted etymology: */qan(ə)-/ 'to go/come (near)' plus the postbase */-yaq/ 'place or thing where action takes place' (*vel sim.*). The fact that Aleut has a different etymology for (almost) the same object (*iqya-x̣* ← *qya-x̣* < PEA */qətyVγ/ 'skin of animals'), and a very important cultural artifact at that, demonstrates that the age of both the Eskimo and Aleut words is not as great as has been considered by some. All in all, there is an obvious chronological obstacle in setting up a common scenario in which PT and PE (without Aleut!) would have been able to establish some kind of contact.

5.3.   The ultimate (desperate) solution, i.e. to consider that the Eskimo and Turkic words are genealogically related through Proto-Nostratic or the like, makes the case appear even worse. One could argue that PT *-*d(g)*- and PEA *-*n(y)*- are

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