Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hung. Volume 64 (3), 251–256 (2011)
DOI: 10.1556/AOrient.64.2011.3.1

REMARKS ON *QATUN* IN THE YENISEI INSCRIPTIONS

ERHAN AYDIN

Department of Turkish Language Teaching, Faculty of Education
Erciyes University, Kayseri, Turkey
e-mail: erhana@erciyes.edu.tr

In the Yenisei inscriptions, as in Old-Turkic inscriptions in general, a great number of place names occur. However, Old-Turkic toponyms have not been studied satisfactorily. In this article emphasis has been laid on the word *qatun* mentioned in the inscriptions of Uyuk-Turan (E 3), Aldı-Bel I (E 12), Aldıı-Bel II (E 72) and Novosyolovo (E 144). Having dealt with the meanings attributed to this word by previous researchers, it has been concluded that *qatun* in these inscriptions does not mean 'the wife of the khan' or 'woman', as hitherto supposed, but it refers to the river Katun. Furthermore, the name *tarlaγ*, which is often used together with *qatun*, denotes the river Tarlak.

Key words: Old-Turkic inscriptions, Yenisei inscriptions, *qatun*, river Katun, river Tarlak.

Introduction

A large group of Old-Turkic runic inscriptions, known as the Yenisei inscriptions, are spread over a 200 km long area along the upper Yenisei valley. In the east it starts from Sargal-Aksy which is situated 60 km from the capital of Tuva, and in the west it spreads to the Shanchi steppes, near the river Kemchik (Kormuşin 2001, p. 259). Up till now there are approximately 180 Yenisei inscriptions discovered and published in some form or other.

During the past sixty years a lot of work has been done in the former USSR to gather, systematise and publish these inscriptions, and the inventories of the inscriptions were also compiled. Nevertheless, due to the fact that most inscriptions consist only of a few lines and their topics are very limited (being epitaphs they mainly talk about the pain of separation), they unfortunately failed to attract much interest except for the experts of Turcology.

0001-6446 / $ 20.00 © 2011 *Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest*

As in other Old-Turkic inscriptions, in the Yenisei inscriptions too, a number of place names are mentioned. However, the narrowness of the topic mentioned above has made it difficult to find further information concerning the place names, and the fragmentary character of the lines where place names appear has often prevented researchers from making comments on the place names.

In the following I will try to submit the word *qatun* to further analysis, and make an attamot to prove that this word might be referring to a very important river of the area.

Occurrences of the Word *qatun* in the Yenisei Inscriptions

Uyuk-Turan (E 3), 4: *üç yetmiş yaşımqa adrıltım ägök qatun yerimkä adrıltım* 'I died at the age of sixty-three. I departed from my place (which is at the rivers) Uyuk (Öök) and Katun'.

Aldıı-Bel I (E 12), 2: < ... >*on qatun tarlayım* '< … > ten(?) Katun (and) Tarlak (my rivers)'.

Aldıı-Bel I (E 12), 4: *sub yer käm qatun ay kün* < ... > *o/ur*[1] 'water and place, Kem and Katun (rivers), moon (and) sun < … >'.

Aldıı-Bel II (E 72), 1: *çuçuş? qatun tarlayım* '(My name's) Çuçuş. Katun and Tarlak (my rivers)'.

Novosyolovo (E 144), 1: *äsis üsin? alγap? a badgä? säŋirin*[1] *ä käm qatun qab*[2]*ışıp? yeg aş*[1]*ig? qılur biz t*[1]*eyir? biz* '< … > on the slope of (mountain) joining Kem (and) Katun (rivers) we make well, we say < … >.

Previous Views on the Word *qatun*

In this part, previous views held on the word *qatun* will be gathered and analysed in the order of their occurrence.

1. Uyuk-Turan (E 3), 4: Radloff (1895, p. 307) has read the two words in this line as *Ägük-Qatun* and gave them the meaning 'Ägük-Katun', evidently interpreting them as place names (Radloff 1895, p. 351). Malov also read *Ägük Qatun* and gave them the meaning 'Егюк-Қатун'. So Malov (1952, p. 19), referring to Radloff, also interpreted the word as a place name and claimed that the word *qatun* means 'river' in South Mongolian and in South Siberian Turkic languages.

Reading the words as *Egük qatun*, Batmanov *et al*. have come to the conclusion that *Egük* is the Tuvinian name of the river Uyuk, and asserted that it bears the same name as the river Uyuk, which is located in the Biy-Xem region and it is the left tributary of Yenisei; however, unfortunately they have not touched upon the meaning of *qatun* (Batmanov – Aragači – Babuškin 1962, p. 103). Kormuşin, too, has read *ägük qatun* and gave the meaning of 'реки Уюк я разлучился'. Kormuşin has

also stated that the first word refers to the river Uyuk, it followed the phonetic pattern of **öök* < *öük* < **ägük* and its root is *äg-* 'поворачивать' (Kormuşin 1997, pp. 192–193, 196; 2008, p. 94). The sentence where the word appears has been read and interpreted as *ögük qatun yärimkä adrıltım* 'sevgili ana hatun yerimden ayrıldım' by Barutçu Özönder (1998, p. 175). T. Tekin (2000, p. 243) has determined the word *Ägük* as a 'personal name'.

2. As for the *qatun* in the second line, and *tarlaγ,* right after it, of the Aldıı-Bel I (E 12) inscription, these readings and meanings have been reported: *qatun tarlıγım* 'Katun, mein Tarlıg' (Radloff 1895, p. 317); *qatun tarlaγım* 'Мое поле … ' (Malov 1952, pp. 34–35); $qt^{l}un^{1}{:}t^{l}r^{l}l^{l}\gamma m$ (Vasil'ev 1983, p. 20). Apparently, here too the word has generally been interpreted as 'wife'.

3. As for the *qatun* in the fourth line of the inscription of Aldıı-Bel I (E 12), Radloff (1895, p. 317) writes *ökäm qatunım* 'meine Mutter meine *qatun*'. According to Malov (1952, pp. 34–35), the reading and meaning is *äkäm qatunum* 'мая тетка, моя госпожа'. Vasil'ev (1983, p. 20) has identified the letters slightly differently: $km{:}qt^{l}m$. For Kormuşin, the meaning and the reading is *käm qatun* 'госпожа/река Кем' (1997, p. 183; 2008, p. 105).

4. Concerning the *qatun* in the sentence of *çuçuş? qatun tarlaγım* from the first line of the Aldıı-Bel II (E 72) inscription, Vasil'ev (1983, p. 20) corroborates that the reading $qt^{l}un^{1}{:}\ t^{l}r^{l}l^{l}\gamma m$ is correct.

5. As for the phrase *kem qatun qabışıp* which is mentioned in the first line of the Novosyolovo (E 144) inscription, various views have been put forward. I. L. Kyzlasov's reading and the meaning for the first line of the inscription is as follows: *alp sol alγır abadγa täŋri ana kem qatun qabışıp yeg aşı (esi?) ayı qılur biz at yir biz* 'Алп Сол. Когда уничтожается греховное (и) Небо и Мать Кем-река (Енисей) соединяютя в благоустроенности, мы (все), приумножая благое, наживаем богатство (и) пользуемся чинами (титулом)'. So Kyzlasov, too, has interpreted the words *Kem Qatun* as 'река Кем', thereby joining the majority of researchers who supposed that the word *qatun* had the meaning of 'river' (Kyzlasov 1994, pp. 191–192). Barutçu Özönder (1998, p. 175) first emphasised that "Şayet Novosyolovu Kitabesindeki *kem qatun qabışıp* ibaresini 'Kem ve Katun (nehirleri) birleşip' (str. 1) olarak anlamayacaksak …", yet in the sentence at the end of her article, she interpreted the word *qatun* as a proper name: *kem qatun qabışıp* 'Kem Hatun'la birleşip (Kem Hatun'a kavuşup)' (Barutçu Özönder 1998, p. 183).

General Evaluation

As is evident from what has been said so far, some researchers interpreted the word *qatun* as 'wife', while others as 'river'. In his book on the Yenisei inscriptions Malov (1952) attributed to the word *qatun* the meaning 'river'. In doing so he drew on the

information provided by some Russian authors writing on Mongolia, and benefitted also from Mongolian dictionaries. In the Mongolian dictionary of F. D. Lessing there exists a word seemingly similar to this word: *xatun goul ~ xatun dalay* 'Queen river', 'Mongolian name for the Yellow River' (Lessing 1960, p. 946). According to the information disclosed by Lessing, the word *xatun* does not carry the meaning 'river', but it is the name of the river itself. Furthermore, drawing from Pekarskiy's dictionary, Malov referred to the Yakut language in which the word *xatun* bears the meaning 'river' (Malov 1952, pp. 19–20).

Qatun sını is the name of a city which was attested in Kāšġarī's *Dīvān*: *Qatun sını* 'Çin ile Tangut ülkesi arasında bir şehrin adı' (Atalay 1991a, Vol. III, p. 138; *DTS* p. 436). This name at Kāšġarī bears no relation to the meaning 'river' given by Malov and Kyzlasov as the interpretation of the word *qatun*.

According to my mind, the word *qatun*, which is mentioned in a total of four Yenisey inscriptions, does not carry the meaning of 'wife, the wife of the khan'. The fact that there was no conjunction meaning 'and' during the period of the Turkic runic inscriptions, (including the Yenisei inscriptions as well), has led to very different perceptions as far as regards the usages of *ägök qatun* or *käm qatun* in the inscriptions. Furthermore, we have not a single piece of data in the Old Turkic inscriptions which would prove that the word *qatun* has been applied to mean 'wife' (*EDPT* p. 602b). In this regard, it is considered that the word *qatun* bears the meaning of 'the River Katun', that is to say, River Katun was designated with the word *qatun*. With a total length of 688 km, the River Katun unites with the River Biy (Biya) in a distance of 19 km south-west of the city of Biysk, and creates the River Obi, the largest river of Siberia. The Altai Turks must have seen an analogy between the hugging of the husband and wife, and the confluence of the Rivers Biy and Katun (İnan 1987, p. 34).

There is a widespread agreement that the name *ägük* (mentioned in the fourth line of the Uyuk-Turan/E 3 inscription) should be interpreted as the name of River Uyuk. But it can also be read as *ägök*, from which the present-day Tuvan form *öök* developed.

If *qatun* from the phrase *qatun tarlaγım* (second line of the Aldıı-Bel I/E 12) is interpreted as 'River Katun', and *tarlaγ* as river 'Tarlak', the whole phrase can be translated as 'Katun (and) Tarlak (my rivers)'. Similarly, the words *qatun* and *tarlaγ* from the phrase *qatun tarlaγım* (first line of the Aldıı-Bel II/E 72 inscription) should denote the rivers Katun and Tarlak. There is no need to emend the reading of *tarlaγım* to a form *tar<ıγ>laγım*. Namely, here the word *tarlaγ* does not carry the meaning 'field' since the word meaning 'field' has been identified in the Uighur documents as *tarıγlaγ*. Both the word *tarıγ* 'sowing, sown field', 'millet, grain' and *tarıγlaγ* 'field' are derivatives of the the verb *tarı-* (*EDPT* pp. 537b–538a, 541b; *DTS* p. 537). The word *tarıγlaγ* 'field' occurs once in the inscription of Tariat (West 4): *ılaγım tarıγlaγım* vgl. (Kljaštornyj 1980, p. 90; Tekin 1983, p. 806; Katayama 1999, p. 170). It is obvious that the word *tarlaγ* 'field' mentioned once in the *Kutadgu Bilig* (*KB*: 6555, in: Arat 1979, p. 426), is a later development from *tarıγlaγ*. In conclusion, the word *tarlaγ*, which is mentioned in Aldıı-Bel I (E 12), 2 and Aldıı-Bel II (E 72), 1, must be identified with the name of the present-day river Tarlak. Consequently, the sentence

in the Aldıı-Bel II inscription (E 72) would be more meaningful if translated as '(My name is) Çuçuş. Katun and Tarlak (my rivers)'. In addition, the fact that the inscription of Uyuk-Tarlak (E 1) has been discovered in the vicinity of the river Tarlak substantiates our claim.

Conclusion

In this article, the word *qatun*, which is mentioned in five different lines of four Yenisei inscriptions, has been analysed, and it has been put forward that *qatun* does not bear the meanings of 'wife, the wife of the khan' or 'woman'. It is obvious that as a result of the fact that the Old Turks treated rivers with respect, the name of the river Katun (in Russian Katunya), being one of the important rivers of the South Yenisei region, is mentioned in five different lines. It has been further suggested and brought to the attention of the researchers that the word *tarlaγ*, which is used together with *qatun*, must mean the river Tarlak.

Abbreviations and Bibliography

Arat, R. R. (1979): *Kutadgu Bilig* III. Indeks. Prepared by Eraslan, K. – Sertkaya, O. F. – Yüce, N. İstanbul, Türk Kültürünü Araştırma Enstitüsü.

Atalay, B. (1991a): *Divanü Lûgat-it-Türk Tercümesi*. Vol. III. Ankara, Türk Dil Kurumu.

Atalay, B. (1991b): *Divanü Lûgat-it-Türk Dizini*, "Endeks". Ankara, Türk Dil Kurumu.

Barutçu Özönder, F. S. (1998): Yenisey Kitabeleri ve Yer Sular. *Journal of Turkish Studies* Vol. 22 (Special Issues, vol. 2), pp. 171 – 184.

Batmanov, I. A. – Aragači, Z. B. – Babuškin, G. F. (1962): *Sovremennaja i drevnjaja enisejka*. Frunze, AN Kirgizskoj SSR i Tuvinskij Naučno-issledovatel'skij Institut Jazyka.

Clauson, S. G. (1972): *An Etymological Dictionary of Pre-Thirteenth-Century Turkish*. Oxford: Oxford University.

DTS see Nadeljaev *et al.* (1969).

EDPT see Clauson (1972).

İnan, A. (1987): Altay-Yenisey Türkleri. In: *Makaleler ve İncelemeler*. Ankara, Türk Tarih Kurumu, pp. 33 – 35.

Katayama, A. (1999): Tariat Inscription. In: Moriyasu, T. – Ochir, A. (eds): *Provisional Report of Researches on Historical Sites and Inscriptions in Mongolia from 1996 to 1998*. Osaka, The Society of Central Eurasian Studies, pp. 168 – 176.

KB: *Kutadgu Bilig*. *See* Arat (1979).

Kljaštornyj, S. G. (1980): Terxinskaja nadpis'. *Sovetskaja Tjurkologija* 1980/3, pp. 82 – 95.

Kormušin, I. V. (1997): *Tjurkskie enisejskie ėpitafii. Teksty i issledovanija*. Moskva, Nauka.

Kormuşin, I. V. (2001): Kuzey Tuva Öğök-Turan vadisindeki Göktürk anıtlarının bazı özellikleri. *TDAYB* 2000, pp. 257 – 261.

Kormušin, I. V. (2008): *Tjurkskie enisejskie ėpitafii. Grammatika, tekstologija*. Second edition. Moskva, Nauka.

Kyzlasov, I. L. (1994): *Runičeskie pis'mennosti evrazijskix stepej*. Moskva, Rossijskaja Akademija Nauk, Institut Arxeologii.

Lessing, F. D. (ed.) (1960): *Mongolian–English Dictionary*. Berkeley–Los Angeles, University of California.
Malov, S. E. (1952): *Enisejskaja pis'mennost' tjurkov. Teksty i perevody*. Moskva–Leningrad.
Nadeljaev, V. M. – Nasilov, D. M. – Tenišev, E. R. – Ščerbak, A. M. (1969): *Drevnetjurkskij slovar'*. Leningrad, Akademija Nauk SSSR.
Radloff, W. (1895): *Die alttürkischen Inschriften der Mongolei*. St.-Petersburg.
Tekin, T. (1983): Kuzey Moğolistan'da yeni bir Uygur anıtı: Taryat (Terhin) kitabesi. *Belleten* Vol. LXXIX, No. 184, pp. 795–838.
Tekin, T. (2000): *Orhon Türkçesi Grameri*. Ankara, Sanat Kitabevi.
Vasil'ev, D. D. (1983): *Korpus tjurkskix runičeskix pamjatnikov bassejna Eniseja*. Leningrad, Akademija Nauk SSSR.