

A Contribution to the Old Uyghur Lexicon: *katit* ‘wife, woman’

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Abstract: This study shows that the Old Uyghur word, which has been read *kat* to date, should be read *katit* in the light of data from modern Turkish languages. The most probable etymology of the word is that it is derived from the verb *kat-* ‘to mix, to mingle, to join’ with the formative *-(U)t*, which means that *katit* originally denoted ‘someone who is joined’.

Keywords: Old Uyghur, etymology, derivation, woman, *kat*, *katit*

Özet: Eski Uygurca Söz Varlığına Bir Katkı: *katit* ‘eş, kadın’

Bu çalışma, bugüne kadar *kat* okunan Eski Uygurca sözcüğün, modern Türk dillerinden elde edilen veriler ışığında *katit* okunması gerektiğini göstermektedir. Sözcüğün en olası etimolojisi, *kat-* ‘karıştırmak, karışmak, katılmak’ fiilinden *-(U)t* biçimbirimiyle türetilmiş olmasıdır; buna göre, *katit* başlangıçta ‘katılan kimse’ anlamına gelmektedir.

Anahtar sözcükler: Eski Uygurca, etimoloji, türetme, kadın, *kat*, *katit*

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1. Old Uyghur *katit* and Common Turkic *katit* ~ *kadit* ~ *kāt* ~ *kat*

Old Uyghur and Common Turkic *katit* ‘woman, wife’, on which we will focus in the present study, has been misinterpreted and incorrectly etymologised up to the present day.

The first and only occurrence of the word in Old Uyghur is found in the seventh line of a text written on the fragments U 2477 (T II 604) + U 2505 (T II 637) (Zieme 1987 [1984]: 275). There it occurs four times in the 1SG possessive form as <q̄’tdym>¹ *kattim* <*katit*+*im*. Zieme (1992 [1987]: 307–308) explained the spelling *-td-* as a rendering of pharyngealization and eventually identifies *qa’t* (sic) with *qa’t* ‘layer’. This is a creative but unsupported idea. There is no indication whatsoever that pharyngealization as found in Tuvan and Tofan has already begun in the Old Turkic period. Kasai (2008: 258, 300) also read the word as *katd* and interpreted it as ‘wife’ without commenting on its form or etymology. She merely referred to Zieme (1992).

In her studies on names for women in Turkic, Çağatay (1961: 17; 1963: 13–14) associated CT (†)*kat* with CT *katun* and regarded the former as the abbreviated form of the latter. Stachowski (1996: 224), who was familiar with all the occurrences of the word in Turkic, including Old Uyghur, tangled up the problem even more. Even though he reconstructed an asterisked form in **kadit*, he ended up relating it to Yakut *xat* ‘pregnant’, which may simply be a semantic development of CT *kat* ‘fold, layer’.² CT ***kadit* would surely yield †*kayit* in Altai. Li (1999: 245–248) listed the surviving forms of *katit* among the modern forms of *hātun* ~ *kātun* without any distinction. On the contrary, Li (2011: 207–208) enumerated the forms of *katit* from various South Siberian languages under *kāt* ~ *kat* ~ *kadit* and compared it with OT *xa:tun* ‘lady’. In his dictionary of Old Uyghur, Wilkens (2021: 324) retained the reading *kat* ‘Frau’ [woman].

Regarding the data, this word must be given as *katit* for Old Uyghur and Common Turkic. The syncope in Old Uyghur *katt(-im)*

¹ 

² Similarly, Uzbek *ikkiqat* and Kazakh *eki qabat* mean ‘pregnant’.

virtually proves that the underlying form was /katXt/ and not /katIt/ or /katUt/. The disyllabic full form is retained in Old Uyghur *kat(-im)* (with syncope), Altai *kadit* ‘žena, ženščina’ (Verbickij 1884: 113), Teleut, Kumandy *kāt (kātīm)* ‘ženščina – eine Frau’ (R II 277), Kumandy *kadit* ‘žena’ (Baskakov 1972: 217), Tuba-kiži *kadit* ‘ženščina, žena’, *katit* ‘žena’, *kaydat*³ ‘ženščina’ (Baskakov 1966: 121, 125) and Tuvan *kadit* ‘žena, ženščina’ (Katanov 1903: 73), *ka’ttaš* (< *katit* + *äš*) ‘žena’ (Tenišev 1968: 233). The disyllabic *katit* is contracted to *kat* and *kāt* through haplology in several languages. The contracted forms occur elsewhere.

2. Etymology

As regards the etymology of *katit* /katXt/, it may be derived from *kat-* ‘to mix, to mingle, to join’ with the formative *-(U)t*. If this is correct, it would have originally meant ‘someone who is joined’. The aorist and converb vowel of Old Turkic *kat-* was /ɪ/. This vowel shows that *katit* may have been derived from **katX-t*. DLT *kat-ut* ‘liquid mixture’ (ED 596; OTWF 314) must then be a later derivative from the same base and with the same formative. Old Turkic *kılık* /kɪlX-k/ ‘character, behavior’ instead of the expected **kıl-ok* (OTWF 237) is a similar derivation in which the prehistoric vowel of the verb dominates the vowel of the formative. Regarding this etymology, it is also important whether *kat-* or its derivatives were used in relation to human beings as subjects or objects. The sentence in *Qışaṣ al-Anbiyā’* *özini olarğa qata yarlıqadı* ‘He deigned to join them’ (Boeschoten & O’Kane 2015: 656) is a good example of such a usage. In the Šine Usu inscription (north 7, south 8) and in Old Uyghur, *katıl-* denotes ‘to join, to join up with, to associate’ as well as ‘to have sexual intercourse’ (Aydın 2011: 65, 83–84; Şirin 2016: 494–495; Wilkens 2021: 345; Röhrborn 2015: 231, s.v. *arhantanč*).

³ This form is clearly a metathesis of **kad(i)tay*. *+Ay* is a suffix of unknown function.

Conclusion: We have shown above that the Old Uyghur word for ‘wife’, which has to date been read as *kat*, should be amended to *katıt*. This form corresponds to Common Turkic *katıt* /katXt/ ‘wife, woman’, which lives on as *katıt*, *kadııt*, *kāt* and *kat* in South Siberian Turkic languages. Common Turkic *katıt* /katXt/ ‘wife, woman’ has been tentatively proposed to derive from *kat-* ‘to mix, to mingle, to join’ with the formative *-(U)t*.

Abbreviations

CT: Common Turkic

OT: Old Turkic

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