

AN ENIGMATIC TURKIC PLANET NAME

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The author gives a philological background of the enigmatic Chagatai planet name *Saqit* (sic!) ~ *Sekit* ‘Mars’, which goes back to the planet name *Sevit* ‘Venus’ in Qutad̡u Bilig. The noun *Saqit* has a clerical error, which can be connected with the punctuation put above the “qaf” letter with three dots in the text of the QB, written with Arabic alphabet. The planet name of Rabyūzī stands for another planet, because Rabyūzī did not know well the Turkic starry sky. Further the author demonstrates the forms *Saqiq* (sic!) ‘Venus’ (in Rabyūzī and Šejx Sulejman efendi’s Dictionary) and Turkish *Sakit* ‘Mars’.

Key words: an enigmatic Turkic planet name; its philological background; clerical errors; survivals of these clerical errors.

In spite of the fact that many of the Turkic peoples followed a nomadic way of life and astronomy did not play such a determining role for them as in the case of the antique cultures settled on fertile plains bound by rivers, there are, nevertheless, some circumstances which let us draw the conclusion that even the ancient Turkic peoples possessed a thorough knowledge about stars. This assertion can be proved within the Turkic name stock of planets which is, possibly, free from any foreign influence.

These names presumably appeared on Turkic ground, and relate to the shape, colour or other astronomical parameters of certain “wandering stars”. To illustrate the above, see, for instance: Turki *Aq yulduz* (Wu-t’i), Tur. *Aq yıldız* ‘Venus’ <: ‘white star’> (Radloff, BdM); Kāšγ. *Yaruq yulduzi* ‘Venus’ <: ‘the star of glamour’>; Chag. *Taŋ yulduzi*, Kipch. *Tang jolduzu*, Tur. *Daŋ yulduzu* (Radloff) ~ Tur. Dial. *Tanyıldızı*, Az. *Dan ulduzu*, Tat. *Taŋ yoldızı*, Nog. *Taŋ yulđızı* ‘Venus’ <: ‘the star of dawn, daybreak’>; Tur. *Akşam Yıldızı* ‘Venus’ <: ‘the star of evening’>, Kir. *Kečki jıldız* id. <: ‘evening star’>; Tur. *Qizil yıldız* ‘Mars’ <: ‘red star’> (Radloff), etc.

In the Turkic name stock of planets, besides the translation of Chinese and Iranian patterns, there are also such denominations in the early Turkic linguistic records,

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especially in the Qutad̡u Bilig (QB), which detain a very special philological background.

Bazin and Clauson have also noticed the fact that some notations of the QB show a semantic parallelism with certain elements of the Greek–Roman mythology.¹ See, for instance, *Arzu tilek* ‘Mercury’ <: ‘request, wish, desire’ >, *Sevit* ‘Venus’ <: ‘lover, who loves’>, etc. The denominations in question could get to the peoples situated in the central area of those inhabited by Turkic nations through the mediating role of Muslim literature, but, even there, they could become well-known only for the more cultivated social strata. This presumption can be proved by the linguistic fact that the relevant nominations can, in fact, be considered as hapax legomenons, and, so that their meaning should be unambiguous, below them we can find, as inter-linear notes, foreign word explanations which, probably, had a clear meaning for the readers of the time.² In the present study I would like to outline the philological background of the appearance of the Chag. *Saq̡it* /sic!/ ~ *Sekit* /sic!/ ‘Mars’ planet name that, ultimately, can also be connected to the above-mentioned culture historical phenomenon.

In the Turkic language records and in the present-day Turkic languages, the analysed noun can be detected in only two places: in the Chagatai–Turkic dictionary of Šeyḫ Suleyman and in the modern Turkish language. See: Chag. *Saq̡it* ‘Mirriḫ sitaresi | Marsstern’ (Kúnos 165) ~ *Sekit* ‘Mirriḫ sitaresi, bešinji yıldız | Planet Mars, der fünfte Stern’ (Kúnos 168); Tur. *Sakit* ‘Yeryuvarlağından sonra güneşe en yakın olan gezegen, Merih’ <‘after the Earth the closest planet to the Sun, Mars’> (TS, TRS1, GökbTerS 88.928).

Among the Turkic historical-comparative dictionaries, the noun in question can be found, besides the work of Pavet de Courteille,³ only at Radloff, though even there in a rather unusual form: namely the author does not give any explanation to the nomination *Saq̡it* /sic!/, what is more, together with quoting the relevant data from Šeyḫ Suleyman’s Chagatai dictionary, he does not give any Russian and German meanings (IV, 251),⁴ though he does it in other places. At the same time it deserves attention that Radloff refers to the planet name *Saq̡it* in the vocabulary entry *Säwit*, see: *Säbit* /sic!/ ‘планета Венера | der Planet Venus’ and in the same place he states that the “سقيت gewiss falsch für سفيت” (IV, 502).

The use of the linguistic geographical criterion, i.e. the isolated occurrence of the word, in the case of the noun *Saq̡it* serving for the denomination of the planet

¹ Bazin, p. 572, Clauson, pp. 361–362.

² In the Herat manuscript of the Qutad̡u Bilig, written with Uygur letters, the copier wrote under the denomination *Sevit* ‘Venus’ the name of Arabic origin of the relevant planet: *Zühre*, which had an unambiguous sense to him and, obviously, also to the readers (Radloff KB Faks. Spb. 16.5, Arat KB I, 30.135). A similar phenomenon can be observed in the relevant manuscript of QB, in the case of the also enigmatic planet names of *Kürüd* ‘Mars’ (= Ar. *Mirrīḥ*) (Radloff KB Faks. Spb. 16.3, Arat KB I, 30.133), *Sekentir* /sic!/ ‘Saturn’ (= Ar. *Zuḥal*) (Radloff KB Faks. Spb. 16.1, Arat KB I, 30.131), etc.

³ See: *Saq̡it* ‘la planète de Mars’ (op. cit., p. 349).

⁴ See: *hāmes Mirriḥ setāresi, bešinji yulduz setāre falak* (Radloff, op. cit.). The meanings of these Chagatai and Osmanli expressions are: ‘the planet Mars, the 5th planet’.

‘Mars’ refers unambiguously to the fact that the history of this nomen is rather enigmatic.

The ultimate source of Şeyḫ Suleyman’s data is, in my opinion, the work of Rabyūzī, where the given star name denominates another planet, ‘Venus’.⁵

This denomination is nothing but the adoption, based on erroneous interpretation, of the nomination *Sevīt* ‘Venus’ in the QB,⁶ which deploys rather peculiar specifications regarding the motives of naming.

In the latest critical edition of Rabyūzī’s work *Qışaṣ al-anbiyā*’ (*The Stories of the Propheth*) Boeschoten and his colleagues state in the index that the planet name *Saqīt* in manuscripts “A”⁷ and “B”⁸ corresponds to the form *Sāwit* in manuscript “C”⁹, however, they do not comment on this and the survival of the planet name in question in the Turkic languages.

The clerical error can be connected with the punctuation put above the “qaf” letter with three dots in the text of the QB, written with Arabic alphabet. See: ق [w], and see Arat KB I, 30.135 too. We can find a “qaf” letter in the same place instead of the ق [w] letter in the manuscripts “A” and “B” of the *Qışaṣ al-anbiyā*’ (see the note nr. 5). As it is known, the astronomical terms of Rabyūzī originate directly from the Qutad̡u Bilig, and, in a number of cases, due to the mechanical copying of the author, as well as to his not thorough knowledge of the denominations of the Turkic starry sky, these star names contain even gross errors.¹⁰ Therefore, the clerical error in question arose probably with Rabyūzī.

Further on another question can be raised: what causes the phenomenon that the denomination *Saqīt* appears for two different planets at Rabyūzī and at Suleyman effendi, and, in the latter linguistic source, also another word, the *Saqiq* /sic!/ can be found for the denomination of ‘Venus’.¹¹ The question can be answered this way: the planet name existing in its original form of *Sevīt* in QB may have been bequeathed on in its variant *Saqiq* containing an erratum. The ‘planet name’ meaning of the mentioned substantive was already faded in the age of Suleyman effendi, what is more,

⁵ See: *Saqīt* ‘Venus’ (Raby. I, 733: A.21v16, B.11r11), but see: ~ *Sāwit* (C.14r9 | A.66v7 ~ *Sāwit* C.43v19 | A.66v11, C.8 ~ Ar. *Zuhra*) too.

⁶ According to Clauson, the connection between the planet Venus and love may have been known in the Qarakhanid royal court, for a smaller group of scholars, dealing with literature, arts and science, and this nomination was actually introduced into the Turkic cultural history by Yūsuf Ḥaṣṣ Ḥājib (Clauson, p. 361).

⁷ msA= London, British Library. Addenda 7851, 15th century, 249 folia. Published in facsimile by Grønbech, see: *Narrationes de Prophetis*. Reproduced in facsimile with an introduction by K. Grønbech. Copenhagen, 1948.

⁸ msB= St. Petersburg, Public Library. T.H.C. 71, early 16th century, 255 folia. The order of the folia is in disarray, and quite a few of them are missing.

⁹ msC= St. Petersburg, Oriental Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences. No. C245, written around 1560. Some pages which had been lost were added later and are referred to as ms. C. About these manuscripts see: Raby. I, XXI, XXIV.

¹⁰ Clauson, p. 357, Gyarmati, p. 81.

¹¹ See: *Saqiq* ‘Zühre, Sabah yıldızı | Planet Venus, der Morgenstern’ (Kúnos, p. 165). See Radloff’s dictionary too: the form *Saqiq* /sic!/ is without Russian and German meanings, but with quoting the relevant data from Şeyḫ Suleyman’s work too (Radloff IV, p. 250).

I have a strong suspicion that the nomination in case in fact was dispersed only through literature, that is the wider strata of Turkic peoples presumably did not know about it. The above is rendered probable by the fact that the relevant word caused problems also to Rabyūzī, and this is why he copied erroneously the *Sevīt* ‘Venus’ planet name from the QB.

The separation from each other of the nominations with similar sound bodies Chag. *Saqīq* ‘Venus’ and *Saqīt* ‘Mars’ could happen with the aim that the two planets should be distinguished. This endeavour led to a newer mistake: in the quoted Chagatai language record the *Saqīt* name cannot be ascertained as the denomination of ‘Venus’, as it would be expected. From all this it can be concluded that Šeyḫ Suleyman effendi (and his contemporaries, what is more, even the predecessors, the Turkic population of the previous ages) were already not at all aware of exactly which planet is denominated by the substantive in question.

The nomination Tur. *Sakıt* ‘Mars’ can be linked with the newest language reforming endeavours. Namely, this nomination is the renewal of an old planet name, known only in Turkic written literature, but presumably never used within larger masses of people. The nomination can be found only in the recent Turkic lexical works; I found no trace of it in the Osmanli linguistic records or in the dialects of the Turkish language of Turkey.

In my present study I tried to reveal the philological background of an enigmatic Chagatai planet name. The analysed denomination can possibly be traced back to the nomination *Sevīt* ‘Venus’ which appeared in the Qarakhanid court, under the effect of the Greek–Roman mythology. The listed denominations may have been bequeathed on through literature, but they were not able to take root among wider strata of the population.

It is worth noting that, though the element in question of the Greek–Roman cultural area could have reached the Qarakhanid Empire that created a rich civilisation in the approximately central area of the living-space of the ancient Turkic peoples through the mediation of the Moslim (Arabic and Persian) literature, nevertheless, the Turkish astronomy that gradually put the Mohammedan traditions more and more into the limelight, did not really accept it. This peculiar “preventive” role of the Moslim–Turkic astronomy can possibly be connected with the endeavour that, in parallel with the preservation of the Islamic traditions, it wanted to favourise its own denominations (i.e. of internal origin) concerning mostly the shape and colour of certain planets. A similar phenomenon can be observed in the Turkic name stock of the denomination of the *Milky Way*, where, in contrary to the European languages, one can find an endless range of calques that were ultimately made upon Greek patterns (possibly through Latin mediation). This derivation cannot be detected at all in the ancient Turkic linguistic records and it can be dated only accidentally in the present-day Turkic languages.¹²

¹² Gyarmati, I.: A Tejút elnevezései a török nyelvekben. *Keletkutatás* 1992 tavasz, pp. 75–81. In English: The Names of the Milky Way in the Turkic Languages. *AOH* XLVI (2–3), 1992/93, pp. 225–233.

The above outlined special function of the Muslim astronomy makes understandable the fact that the Qarakhanid planet name *Sevit* ‘Venus’ has been inherited exclusively through literature, and it was never well known among larger strata of the population (see also notes 1 and 2), thus, in the course of time, the sound body (and sometimes even the meaning) of this denomination underwent changes and suffered even distortions. Therefore, within my present study, I had the opportunity to offer a glimpse into one of the interesting chapters of the Turkic onomastic practice, the surviving of a special star name and also into the problems connected with this phenomenon.

Abbreviations

- Ar. Arabic: Wehr, H. (1952): *Arabisches Wörterbuch für die Schriftsprache der Gegenwart*. Leipzig.
- Az. Azeri, Azerbaijani: *Азербайджанско-русский словарь*. Ред. колл. I–IV. Баку, 1986–2000.
- Bazin Bazin, L. (1963): *Über die Sternkunde in alttürkischer Zeit*. Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur in Mainz, Abh. der Geistes- u. Sozialwiss. Kl., Jg. 1963, pp. 571–582.
- BdM Barbier de Meynard, A. C., see: Tur.
- Chag. Chagatai: *Sanglax. A Persian Guide to the Turkish Language by Muhammad Mahdī Xān*. Facsimile Text with an Introduction and Indices by Sir G. Clauson. London, 1960; Kúnos I. (1902): *Şejx Sulejman Efendi's Čagataj-osmanisches Wörterbuch*. Budapest; Pavet de Courteille, M. (1870): *Dictionnaire Turc-Oriental*. Paris.
- Clauson Clauson, Sir G. (1963): Early Turkish Astronomical Terms. *UJb* 35, pp. 350–368.
- Gyarmati Gyarmati, I. (1986): Die Gestirnnamen des Zodiakus in den türkischen Sprachen. *AOH* XL (1), 1986, pp. 53–106.
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- Kipch. Kipchak: Tryjarski, E.: *Dictionnaire Arméno-Kiptchak d'après trois manuscrits des collections viennoises*. I–II. Warszawa, 1968, III. Warszawa, 1969.
- Kir. Kirghiz: Юдахин, К. К. (1965): *Киргизско-русский словарь*. Москва.
- Kúnos See: Chag.
- Nog. Nogai: Баскаков, Н. А. (ред.) (1963): *Ногайско-русский словарь*. Москва.
- QB Yūsuf Ḥaṣṣ Ḥāḡib: *Qutadγu Bilig*: Радлов, В. В. (1890): *Кудатку-Билик. Факсимиле Уйгурской рукописи Императорской и Королевской Придворной Библиотеки в Вене*. Санктпетербург; Arat, R. R.: *Kutadgu Bilig*. I. Metin. İstanbul, 1947; II. (Tercüme). İstanbul, 1959; III. İndeks. İndeksi neşre hazırlayanlar: K. Eraslan, O. F. Sertkaya, N. Yüce. İstanbul, 1979; Yūsuf Ḥaṣṣ Ḥāḡib (1983): *Wisdom of Royal Glory. (Kutadgu Bilig)*. A Turko-Islamic Mirror for Princes. Translated, with an Introduction and Notes by R. Dankoff. Chicago–London.

- Raby. Nāṣir ud-dīn B. Burhān ud-dīn ar-Rabḡūzī, *Qışaş al-anbiyā'*: Al-Rabghūzī, *The Stories of the Prophets Qışaş al-anbiyā'*. An Eastern Turkish Version. I. Critically edited by H. E. Boeschoten, M. Vandamme, S. Tezcan with the assistance of H. Braam, B. Radtke. II. Translated into English by H. E. Boeschoten, J. O'Kane, M. Vandamme. Leiden–New York–Köln, 1995.
- Radloff W. Radloff/B. В. Радлов, see: Tur.
- Tat. Tatar: Головкина, О. В. (зав. ред.) (1966): *Татарско-русский словарь*. Москва.
- Tur. Turkish, Osmanli: Kızılırmak, A. (1969): *Gökbilim terimleri sözlüğü*. Ankara; Barbier de Meynard, A. C. (1866–1876): *Dictionnaire turc-français. Supplément aux dictionnaires publiés jusqu'à ce jour*. I–II. Leipzig; Eren, H. (den.) (1979⁶): *Türkçe Sözlük*. Ankara; Мустафаев, Э. М.-Э.-Старостов, Л. Н. (ред.) (1977): *Турецко-русский словарь*. Москва; Радлов, В. В. (1893–1911): *Опыт словаря тюркских наречий. Versuch eines Wörterbuches der Türk-Dialekte*. I–IV. Санктпетербург.
- Tur. Dial. Turkish Dialect: *Türkiye'de Halk Ağzından Derleme Sözlüğü*. I–XII. Ankara, 1963–1982.
- Wu-t'i Wu-t'i Ts'ing wen-chien (1957): *Xan-i araxa suñja xacın-i xergen qamčixa Manju gisun-i bileku bitxe*. Beijing.