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Remarks on Hungarian *koporsó* ‘coffin’

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Abstract: Borrowed words in Hungarian language from Turkic are one of the most important fields of research in Hungarian Turcology. In this article, the word *koporsó* is examined and an attempt is made to prove that it's of Turkic origin.

Key words: Hungarian, Turkic, loanwords, *koporsó*

Professor Talat Tekin many times dealt with the famous problem of rotacism or zetacism. Papers with this topic are: “Zetacism and Sigmatisation in Proto-Turkic”, *Acta Orientalia Hungarica* 22, (1969), 51-80, “Further evidence for Zetacism and Sigmatism”, in: L. Ligeti (ed.) *Researches in Altaic Languages*, Budapest 1975, 275-284, “Once more Zetacism and Sigmatism”, *Central Asiatic Journal* 23 (1979), 118-137, “Zetacism and Sigmatism: Main pillars of the Altaic Theory”, *Central Asiatic Journal* 30 (1986), 141-160, “New Examples of Zetacism”, *Türk Dilleri Araştırmaları* 1991: 145-150, “Yeni ‘Zetasizm’ örnekleri”, *Uluslararası Türk Dili Kongresi* 1988, Ankara 1996: 81-83, see also T. Tekin, *Makaleler I.* ed. E. Yılmaz, N. Demir, Ankara 2003.

In his paper published in 1969 on p. 61 Tekin dealt also with the Hungarian word *koporsó*. Remembering to our discussions on this word and related problems I offer here a piece from what we will publish in our forthcoming book written with Árpád Berta, *Turkic loanwords in Hungarian*. The details, abbreviations and bibliography see in paper “Old Turkic Loan Words in Hungarian. Overview and Samples”, *Acta Orientalia Hungarica* 55 (2002): 43-67.

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koporsó [koporšō] ‘coffin’. p1372/c1448 *Copor /ōknak* [koporšō-knak], p1456 *koporso* [koporšō]. | *koporsó* <*kopuršay* ← **kopurčag* | OT *kapurčak*, *kapirčak* ‘coffin’, cf. OT *kapiz* ‘coffin’ {<*kāp*+*i-z*} {+čAk}. Cf. Russian *kovʹčeg* <*kovirčag*.

T: OT *qobi* ‘empty, nonexistent, non-present’ (Rirk), *qapiz* ‘coffin’ (UBaratXuanzang403), *qoburčaq* > *qaburčaq* ‘a wooden case, it is usually used to mean »coffin«’, *qodurčuy* ‘doll, they are figures which little girls make to play with, in the shape of people’ (AK), – (B); **MT** – (UOg), – (UYAB), – (UHy), – (UHyS), – (UCiv); – (ABF), – (AGul), – (AHMA), *qavurčaq* ‘laleczka, kukielka’ (AHŠ), *qağurčaq* ‘kukla’ (AHŠF), – (AIM), – (AIMI), – (AKD), – (AKor), – (AM), – (ANeh), *qabarčuk* ‘voldyr [blister]’ (ANehF), – (ARbg), – (ATef), – (AYC); *qobur* ‘vase, soucoupe, etui’, *qoburčuy* ‘petit boîte’, *qoğurčaq* ‘poupée, marionette’ (AChag), *qawurčaq* ‘kukla’ (AChagB), – (AChagMA), *qabarčuy* ‘blister’, *quburčuy* ‘a box’ (AChagSC), – (AChagŠS); *quburčuy* <*chuburcuç*> ‘Schachtel’ (LCC), – (LCCG), – (LCCI), *qaburčaqli bağa* ‘kaplunbağa’, *qaburčuy* ‘ağaçtan içi oyularak yapılan, yahut ağaç kabuğundan yapılan hokka, kutu’ (AAH), – (AAHI), *qabirčaqli bağa* ‘tortue’ (ABul), – (ADur), *qabarčuy* ‘Puppe des chinesischen Schattenspiels’, *qabarčaqli bağa* ‘Schildkröte’ (AHou), – (AKav), *qaburčuyli bağa* ‘tortoise’ (AMGh), *qabarčaq*, *qabaršaq*, *qabirčaq*, *köbürčük* ‘sunduk’, *qabarčakli bağa*, *qabaršaqli bağa* ‘çerepaha’ (ATuh), – (AmTr), – (AmD), – (AmCh), – (AmE); – (AOtT); **NT** *Ch* *χup*, *χupă* ‘kora’ (Chuv); **NW** *kabirčik* ‘rakovina, rakuška; tverdaja češuja (na kožnom pokrove nekotoryh životnyh)’ (Tat), *qabiršaq* ‘rakovina, rakuška; molljusk’ (Bashk), *kabirdzak* ‘tonkij, uzkiy’ (SibT), *kabirčik* ‘tonkij sloj poverh židkosti (napr. sloj slivok na moloke, sloj l’da); češuja (ryb’ja)’ (Kirg), *qabiršaq* ‘scales (fish, etc.)’, (Kaz), ‘plenka; češuja; oboločka’ (KazB), *qabiršaq* ‘tonkij sloj čego-l.; korka; češuja’ (Kkalp), – (Nog), *qaburčaq* ‘rakovina, rakuška’ (CrTat), – (Kar), – (Kum), – (Krch-Blk); **SW** *gapir-jak* ‘jaščik, korobka’ (Tkm), *gapčag* ‘mešok iz rogoži, kul’ (Az), – (Tt), *kabucak* ‘iki kapağı düz, elips biçiminde kutu’, *kapircağ* ‘tahıl tanelerinin kabuğu’, *kaburcak* ‘tahıl kabuğu’, *kaburcak* ‘gelinlik giysisi ile birlikte hazırlanan içine dikiş ve tuvalet eşyası konulan kutu’ (TtD), – (Gag), – (Khor), – (SOg); **Kh** – (Kh); **Turk** – (Uzb), *qaparčuy* ‘a rash on the skin’ (TurkiSh), – (MUig), – (Sal), – (YUig); **S** *kayirčak* ‘jaščik,

sunduk’ (Alt), *qayırçaq* ‘sunduk, jaščik’ (AltR), *kabırçak* ‘skorlupa, rakovina’ (AltQK), *qayırçaq* ‘sunduk, jaščik’ (AltTel), *qabırçak* ‘die Schale, Hülse, skorlupa, šeluha, die Muschel, das Schalthier, rakovina, čerepokožnoe životnoe’ (AltTelR), *qabırčiq* ‘die Schuppen des Zapfen der Zirbelfichte, češuja kedrovoj šiški’ (AltR), *qoğur* ‘der Sarg’ (ChulKüerikR), *χaračax* ‘jaščik’ (Khak), *qārčaq* ‘sunduk, jaščik’ (KhakSR), – (FY), *χārjak* ‘jaščik, škatulka; korobka; grob’ (Tuv), *hāršak* ‘jaščik, sunduk’ (Tof); *Y kuorčax* ‘grob, jaščik dlja vloženiye trupa; grob, vydoblennyj iz cel’nago dereva ili sostavlennyj iz dvuh vydoblennyh polovin cel’nago dreva; grobnica, derevnjaja koloda, v kotoruju kladut telo šamana ili šamanki i kotoruju stavat na vysolih stolbah v otkrytom meste ili pomeščajut na derevo, prostoiz iz tesnicy srub v mogile (jame), v kotoroj hronili mertvyh bez grobov, nine mestilišče v kotoroe vlagajut grob, jaščik, korobočka’, *kuoččax* ‘rod doščatoj obložki v mogile s dnom’ (Y), – (DlG), – (DlGS).

Mo: *qayırçağ*, *qağurçağ* ‘small box, chest’ (L), *χūrsag* ‘gorb’ (Bur), *χayrcag* ‘doboz, kisebb láda [small box]’ (KhalK), *χä:rtsëğ* ‘Kiste, Schachtel’, *χūrtsäğ* ‘grosser Kasten, Sarg’, *χä:rts’ak* ‘boîte rectangulaire’ (Ord), *qağursun* ‘chaff, awn or beard of certain kinds of grasses, the egg of a louse or other parasite’, *qayirsun* ‘scales (as of fishes and reptiles)’ *qayisun* ‘kettle, pot’, *χūrsag* ‘grob’ (Bur).

E/T According to Ligeti (1934: 200–208, 1986: 276–278) *qapırçaq* is a derivation from the verb *qap-* ‘to close, to cover’ with a deverbal suffix *-r* and the suffix *-čAg* (var. *-čUg*) (Ligeti 1934:207). This is hardly acceptable, because there is no deverbal suffix *-r*. Ligeti pointed out that the word has two forms **qapırçaq* and **qopurçaq* which may point to an early, dialectal alternation *a ~ o*. According to Doerfer (1963–1975/1: 392–393) and Clauson (1972: 586–587) our word cannot be connected with T *qobur*, because the latter word is a Mongolian loanword. See *qobuğur* ‘concave’, *qobuga* ‘well bucket (usually made of skin or wicker), trough, ditch, gutter’ (partly misunderstood by Levitskaja (see Levitskaja – Dybo – Rassadin 1997: 277). Clauson (1972: 586) refers to *kabar-* ‘to become a container’ which is a verb from *kab* ‘container’ also with the meaning ‘to form a blister, vesicle and the like’. According to T. Tekin the base of the word is **qawuz* ‘peel, pod, Russian: šeluha, oboločka zerna’ and from **qaβir* ‘the bark of the tree’, *qawırçaq* was

derived by adding the suffix *-čAk*. This was accepted also by Levitskaja (Levitskaja – Dybo – Rassadin 1997: 277).

First we have to separate most of the Siberian data. Most of them with *-y-*, or long vowel, or zero, and with the meaning ‘box’, are of Mongolian origin, including Yakut. Those data, which have the meaning ‘shell, etc.’ are original. The two extant Mongolian words *qayirčağ* and *qağurčağ* go back to an earlier T **kapirčaqa~*kapurčaqa*.

At a second step we have to separate the T words denoting ‘box, coffin’ from those denoting ‘scales of fish, thin layer covering something, peel, shell, pod, hull, capsule, bark’. S. Tezcan (in his work published in 1975 and quoted by Erdal 1991:47, and see now the data also in Barat 2000:Index) is surely right when he connected *qapirčak* with *qapiz* ‘coffin’ occurring several times in Xuan Zang IX and X.

IX33b *kapizın eldtükdä* ‘carrying the coffin’, IX32a13 *kapizların kötürüp* ‘to move the coffins’, X20b18-19 *altun kapiz, kümüş kapiz* ‘gold coffin, silver coffin’, X21a 7-8 *kapizığ* ‘the coffin (was decorated with...)’. Barat translated in the first two cases corpse, relics, the latter is given in the Index, but the correct translation is in all cases ‘coffin’.

From *qapiz* with the suffix *-čAq* (Erdal 1991 47 with our word cited) *qapirčaqa* has been formed. On the *z (+ Č) > r* change see several papers of Tekin (see the bibliography above) though according to him *r + Č > z*. Here the questions arise concerning the morphological structure of *qapiz*. The base of this word is no doubt *kāp* ‘container’ (see also AK *qa, qa qača* ‘vessel, container’). T *kāp* has been dealt with in detail by Doerfer (1963–1975/3: 366), and see **kobak** in our book. Its meaning is ‘vessel, container, sack, peel, anything which contains something’. In any case, as in so many times, T. Tekin was on the right track.

From *qap* with diminutive suffixes we get *qapaq > qabaq, qapčaqa* ‘a small container’. In *qapiz* we have a denominal suffix *+I-* (Erdal 1991: 479–480), and from the verb **qapi-* ‘to contain’ with the deverbal suffix *-(X)z* (Erdal 1991: 323) the noun *qapiz* ‘coffin’ was formed. To this noun the suffix *-čAk* was added, and from **qapizčaqa > qapirčaqa* ‘box for corpse, coffin’ was formed. The Mongolian *qayirčağ* and *qağurčağ* ‘box’ reflect this T word.

The T words denoting ‘scales of fish, thin layer covering smthing, peel, shell, pod, hull, capsule, bark’ have to be connected with T *qabuq*,

qabiḡ ‘shell, seed-coat, husk, shell, etc.’. See *qabuq*, *qabiḡ* ‘die Rinde, Schale, Hülse; kora, skorlupa, šeluha’ (CrTatR, SibTBarR, KarLR, Tt) this goes back to **kāp* ‘bark, rind’. This has been preserved in AAH, AIM *qab*, Chuvash *χup* ‘kora’, see further Tkm *gov* ‘češuja zmeja’ (<**kav* <*kab*>), in some T sources *yilan qabi* ‘koža zmeja’ (see Blagova 2000: 7–8). From Chuv *χup* the words *χupaχ*, *χupankă* ‘skropula, šeluha, oboločka zerna, granka orehov’ have been derived. From the nominal base **kāp* there was formed **kapi-* ‘to form a peel, a hard layer’ (see SibT *kabīrčik* ‘tonkij sloj poverh židkosti (napr. sloj slivok na moloke, slo l’da’), further **kapiž* ‘hard peel, scales’, and, in the same way as above *qapīrčaq* in the Kipchak languages and in Altai dialects. Here pertains TurkiSh *qaparčuq* ‘a rash on the skin’ and the name of the tortoise *qaburčuq(lī) baqa*, etc. In the TtDialects we find side by side the words for ‘box’ and for ‘seed-coat, husk’ (for the data see above). Mongolian *qaḡursun* ‘chaff, etc.’ and *qayirsun* ‘scales’ are the reflections of T **qapīž* ‘hard peely scales’ i.e. **kapur*, **kapīr*. Having now separated *qapīrčaq*¹ ‘box’ (→Mo *qayirčag*, *qaḡurčag*) from *qapīrčaq*² ‘scales of fish, thin layer covering smthing, peel, shell, pod, hull, capsule, bark, tortoise-shell etc.’ (<**qapīr* →Mo, *qayirsun* ‘scales’, *qaḡursun* ‘chaff’) it is a further question whether *kāp* ‘container’ and *kāp* ‘bark’ are originally two different, homophonous words or whether they go back to the same word. It is possible that the material from which the container was made gave the name to the container. For the time being we can leave this question open.

There exist some seemingly aberrant forms like *köpörčök* ‘der Kasten, die Sachtel’ (TatR). This is missing in all Tat dictionaries accessible to me, but nevertheless it has to be authentic, because we find in the LCC *quburčuq* written <*chuburcuç*> and in the ATuh *kübürčük* (read by Fazylov as *köbörčük* ‘sunduk’). ATuh has also *qabarčaq* and *qabīrčaq* ‘sunduk’ and *qaburšaq* ‘igruška, kukla’. In AChag we find *qobur* ‘vase, soucoupe, etui’, *qoburčuq* ‘petit boîte’, *qoḡurčaq* ‘poupée, marionette’. The meaning ‘doll, puppet’ is also present in AHŠ for *qavurčaq*. The relation between the words with *a-ī* and *o-u* vocalism is unclear. Though Levitskaja quotes a literary Mo form *qoḡurčag* (Levitskaja – Dybo – Rassadin 1997: 277), this does not exist (in both places quoted by Levitskaja we find correctly *qaḡurčag* Ramstedt 1935: 202 and Poppe 1960: 133). The

words with labial vocalism go back to *qobur* ‘vessel’. This word is present in Chag. To this word pertain *qoba*, *qobu*, *qobaq*, *qobuq*, all with the meaning ‘something hollow, empty, deepening between mountains, deep, hollow (geographic)’. Most data are collected by Levitskaja (Blagova 2000: 5–7). Compare. Mo *qobuga* ‘well bucket (usually made of skin or wicker), trough, ditch, gutter’, *qobul* ‘gutter, gully, trough, mold for making candles, small copper tube on a helmet in which an ornamental plume or tuft of plumes is placed’, *qobulu* ‘bark of the cork tree’, *qobdu* ‘case, long and narrow box, quiver’, *qobil* ‘groove’, *qobudal* ‘ditch, channel’, and also *gobi* ‘semidesert, Gobi’, *gobil* ‘cavity, hole, pit, hollow, groove, depression’. All these words go back to a base **kob* ‘hollow, empty’. See e.g. LCC *quv* ‘hohl’, *quv ağaç* ‘ein hohler Baum’, *qobi* ‘empty’ (Rlrk), *qovi*, *qovi* ‘hollow (tree)’ (AK), *qowuq* ‘hollow’ (AK). In the legend on the origin of the Kipchak, the name Quman is connected with a tree hollow (cf. Bang – Marquart 1914, Pritsak 1982, Golden 1992: 271).

To sum up, the majority of the words with labial vocalism go back to a word **kobV* with the basic meaning ‘hollow, empty’. The case or box may have been manufactured of bark, or hollowed wood. This is clearly stated by AAH: *qaburčūq* ‘ağaçtan içi oyularak yapılan, yahut ağaç kabuğundan yapılan hokka, kutu’. Thus we have either **koburčuk* or **kaburčuk*. This is also noted by the second hand of the Ms of AK where first *qoburčaq* was written and then altered to *qabirčaq*. East and South Slavic *kovčeg* ‘bark, Noah’s Ark, receptacle’ reflects a MT form **kovurčag* (Vasmer [1953–1958/]²1964–1973/2: 272). The Slavic form may be the result of a shortening *kovurčag* > *kovrčag* > *kovčeg* by a regular T loss of the second vowel and the elimination of the cluster *-vrč-* by the Slavic language. According to Vásáry (2007:445) Slavic *kovčeg* goes back to a “Protobulgarian **qovčaq*.”

The doll is *qodurčūq* in AK. It is perhaps a derivation from *qoduz* ‘woman left without a husband’ from the shadow theatre. Compare also AHou *qabarčūq* ‘Puppe des chinesischen Schattenspiels’. See also Turki *qorčaq*, perhaps to read **qōrčaq* ‘doll’, in Raquette (1927:29) *qo(r)čaq*, MUig *qorčaq* ‘kukla, igruška’, MUigAksu *kōčak* ‘kukla’. It is also possible, that the ‘dolls, puppets, etc.’ were made of bark and *qodurčūq* only influenced the word.

From the original meaning ‘small container’ the meaning ‘blister’ developed. From ‘container, box’ the meaning ‘the box into which the corpse is put, coffin’ evolved very early. This we see in AK, and also in Mongolian where the word also has the meaning ‘coffin’ e.g. in Buriat and Kalmuck. Mongolian is the source of the Yakut term. Kaluzynski (1961: 74) remarks that the suffix *-čAχ* seen in the Yakut word may be of T origin, but the word is a Mongolian loan. In case of an original T word we would expect Yakut **χuorčax*. Yakut *kuorčax* ‘grob, jaščik dlja vloženije trupa; grob, vydoblennyj iz cel’nago dereva ili sostavlennyj iz dvuh vydolblennyh polovin cel’nago dreva; grobnica, derevnjaja koloda, v kotoruju kladut telo šamana ili šamanki i kotoruju stavat na vysokih stolbah v otkrytom meste ili pomeščajut na derevo’, exists in pair with ChulimKüerikR *qoğur* ‘Sarg’. Chulim *qoğur* is also of Mongolian origin (Ligeti 1986: 278). Castren noted from Buriat *χur* [read *χūr?*] ‘Sarg’ (<*qoğur*).

Summing up we have to separate at least four words:

kāp ‘container’ > *kapiz* > **kapizčak* > *kapirčak* (>Mong **kapirčag* > *kayirčag* (>Alt *kayirčag*) > *kārčag* > Tuv *χarjak*, Yak *kuorčax*) > West Old Turkic **kapirčag* > *kapurčag/kopurčag* > Hungarian **kopurčag* > *kopuršay* > *koporšō* ‘coffin’.

kāp scales of fish, thin layer covering smthing, peel, shell, pod, hull, capsule, bark’ > *kapiz* (WOT **kapir* >Mong *kayirsun*, *kagursun*) > **kapizčak* > *kapirčak* > *kapirčak* ‘thin layer covering smthing, peel, shell’.

kob ‘(something) hollow, empty’ > *kobur* > **koburčug* > **kovurčug* (>Russian *kovrčug* > *kovčeg*) ‘box’.

koduz ‘widow, women left without a husband’ > **koduzčak* > *kodurčag* ‘doll’.

Some of these words were later contaminated.

A different word is *kopuz* ‘musical instrument’ (Cumanian *kobuz* >Hungarian *koboz*) > **kopur*- >Mong *kogur* > *χūr*.

E/H The H word was first connected with the T word by Vámbéry (1870: 160). This was accepted by Gombocz (1912b: 198) and Benkő (1967–1984/2: 566) who both reconstructed the original of the H word as **kopurčag* quoting the Chagatai data. Ligeti (1986: 277) correctly recon-

structed **qapīrčaq* but derived it from *qap-* ‘to cover’. Ligeti remarked that the meaning ‘coffin’ is present only in AK and in Buriat and Yakut. The H word originally denoted also ‘grave, pit’. Benkő (1993–1997/1: 793) reconstructed **kopurčak* and derived it from *kap-* ‘to cover’. According to him the most likely reconstruction of the copied form is **kapurčak*. Since the earliest data in the H sources, we find the meanings ‘coffin, grave’. However, in some H dialects, we also come across the meaning ‘two wooden boards, planks fixing the top of the roof made of thatch, reed’ and the like (Lőrinczy 1979–/3: 478). The question is, whether H borrowed the word with the meaning ‘coffin’ or with the meaning ‘box’ and only secondarily, independently from T, did the meaning ‘coffin’ developed. The archaeological material of the conquest period Hungarians (10th century) shows that they used the wooden coffin made of planks. Thus the meaning ‘coffin’ may be of T origin.