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### *Çolpan* ‘THE PLANET VENUS’ IN TURKIC<sup>\*)</sup>

**Abstract.** The planet Venus, which is the brightest celestial body in the sky after the Moon, takes its astronomical name from the Roman goddess of love, beauty and fertility. It is known in Turkic as *Yaruk Yıldızı* ‘light star’, *Akşam Yıldızı* ‘Evening Star’, *Sabah Yıldızı* ‘Morning Star’, *Tan Yıldızı* ‘Dawn Star’, *Seher Yıldızı* id., *Kervan Yıldızı* ‘Caravan Star’, *Kervankıran* ‘Caravan-perishing’, *Zühre* (< Arabic زهرة), *Çolpan* and *Çoban Yıldızı* ‘Shepherd’s Star’. This paper will discuss whether the word *Çolpan* is etymologically connected with the Proto-Bulgarian title *čoban* and the Slavic title *župan*.

**Keywords:** etymology, Turkic, astronomical terms, Proto-Bulgarian, Slavic

*Çolpan*<sup>1</sup> is one of the oldest names of the planet Venus in Turkic and its earliest examples appear in *Kitābü’l-İdrāk li-Lisāni’l-Etrāk* and *İbn Mühennâ Lugati* (Clauson 1964: 361–362; Taymas 1988: 26; Tenišev 1997: 50–51). Clauson (1972) states that the word is “not noted before XIV<sup>th</sup> century, but no doubt older, although the word for *Venus* in the idiosyncratic Turku VIII ff. document *Toyok 8* is the Sogdian loan word *naxı:d* and in Xak. XI *KB sevıt*” (418b). Despite the fact that Venus was previously regarded as a *warrior*<sup>2</sup> in Turkish mythology, the use of the word *sevıt* derived from the verb *sev-* ‘to love’, must have been a result of cross-cultural relations. Thus, the planet Venus was associated with love, beauty and fertility in the 11<sup>th</sup> century Turkic masterpiece *Kutadgu Bilig*, just as in the

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<sup>\*)</sup> I would like to extend my sincere thanks to Prof. Alexander Vovin and anonymous peer-reviewers, who critically read this article and checked my English.

<sup>1</sup> The etymology of the word *çolpan* will not be dealt with in this article, although what has been published on this topic till now is quite inadequate. The word is discussed as a borrowing from Mongolian in the EDAL entry for it (1323–1324). Another explanation proposed by Karaağaç is that the word is etymologically linked with the words *al* ‘red’, *alev* ‘flame’, *alış-* ‘get used to’, *ışık* ‘light’, *çil* ‘speckle’, *yıldız* ‘star’ and *ısın-* ‘get warm’ (2008: 207).

<sup>2</sup> According to the authors of TT VI, Eberhard, Bazin, Németh, Zieme and Roux, *ärklig* ‘powerful’ attested in the 1<sup>st</sup> Altinköl Inscription is one of the alternative names of Venus in Turkic (Eberhard 1940: 226; Bazin 1963: 575; Németh 1968: 3; Zieme 1995: 202; Roux 1998: 100). It was believed in the ancient Turkic religion that *ärklig* was a warrior

Babylonian (*Ishtar*), Sumerian (*Inanna*), Greek (*Aphrodite*) and Persian (*Anahita* > *Nahid*) mythologies. Clauson (1972) thought that *sevit* is a *hapax legomenon* and probably a word invented by the author of KB (785b). Bazin (1963) highlights that the word *sevit* has been influenced by the Greek mythology (1963: 572). Even if the author of *Kutadgu Bilig* did not invent this word, I think, it could be derived from within the high-culture circle where Yusuf Has Hacib belonged, through analogical creation of the concepts, which represent the symbols of ‘Western Aphrodite’ and ‘Eastern Zuhre’.

Clauson is right in stating that Southwest Ottoman Turkish noun phrase *Çoban yıldızı* ‘the shepherd’s star’ is a false etymology. I agree with him on this matter, because the words *gāvān* ‘cowboy’, *šütürbān* ‘camelherd’, etc. in Persian indicate the construction *animal name* + suffix *bān*. In addition, Doerfer has already demonstrated its Persian origin indicating its etymological connection with the Avestan word \**fšu-pāna* ‘Viehhüter’ (TMEN 1130). Menges also claimed that Turkic had borrowed the word *Čoban* from an Indo-Iranian language (Eren 1999: 96). The words *koñu* ‘shepherd’, *yılki* ‘horseherd’, *udi* ‘oxherd’, *toñuzı* ‘swineherd’ (Clauson 1972: 44a; 634b; 527b; 927ab), which were all used in the Old Turkic era, demonstrate the derivation of nouns designating ‘herdman’ in Turkic languages. It is clear that *čoban* does not follow the derivational pattern *animal name* + *ČI*. Moreover, the first component of the *fšu-pāna* is etymologically connected with Germanic words which mean ‘sheep’: Germ. *Schaf*, Eng. *sheep*, Dutch. *schapen* etc. (<http://www.websters-online-dictionary.org>).

It is not clear why *Čoban Yıldızı* is identified with the ‘shepherd’ in Turkic. An answer will emerge by the end of this paper. Another problem concerns the phonetic loss of /l/: Is it just a phenomenon limited to the Ottoman Turkish stage? The answer to this question may come from the oldest West Old Turkic<sup>3</sup> corpus. As is well known, the Nagyszentmiklós treasure found in 1799, consisting of twenty-three golden vessels, is now displayed in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna. On the inner bottom of a golden bowl of this treasure, registered with inventory number 21, there is an inscription in Greek letters that begins with the compound title BOYHΛA ZOAPIAN (*buila zoapan*) which is simply transcribed as *buyla čoban* by Thomsen 1922, Pritsak 1955, Németh 1971 and Tekin 1987. It is noteworthy that another bowl, registered with the inventory number 8, includes an inscription in Runic letters beginning with *buylo čoban*. The word *župan*, which appears in the compound title CNBHN ZOYPIANOC MEFAC

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who killed the stars shortly before sunrise. This belief is possibly related to the Chinese myth of the morning star, which is personified as a male warrior. We find traces of a male personification of the planet Venus even in the western mythologies: The belief is that *Lucifer* is male (Bazin 1963: 575).

<sup>3</sup> The term *West Old Turkic* is recently used by Róna-Tas/Berta (2011) in *West Old Turkic. Turkic Loanwords in Hungarian*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag.

(*sivin županos megas*) inscribed on a Proto-Bulgarian silver vessel, is regarded as the same word with the above mentioned *čoban* by the Tekin (1987: 31, 54).

As it well known, among the official ranks of the Slavic people, *župan* and its various forms has been used since 8<sup>th</sup> century in the territory where the Avars and the Proto-Bulgars ruled over over Slavic and Germanic tribes. The Emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus, who was writing about the middle of the tenth century, states that Croats, Serbs and other Balkan Slavs had no rulers, but were led by their elders, named *zhupans*. Some of the earliest inscriptions and charters in Croatia mention *zhupans*, both as district prefects and as court dignitaries (Curta 2006: 164). As pointed out by Peisker (1913), a number of titles of rank of the Bulgars, Avars, Khazars, and other West and East Turks are to be found among the Slavs: the first princes of the Scandinavian-Varangians bore the title *kogan* (< Turk. *kagan*). The Turkish title *buyla* ‘magnate’ is found in Bulgarian-Slavic and Russian as *boyarin*. The Turkish word *bayan* ‘rich’ was borrowed by Hungarian and by some of the South-Slavic languages as *ban* in the meaning of ‘governor, district director’ (Peisker 1913: 443). His point of view has been supported by Vasmer (1950–1958, repr. 2003), Šipova (1976), Skaljčić (1985) etc; but nobody argued against his proposal that *buyla* and *zhupan* are Persian loan words in Turkic, although the original Persian words cannot be reconstructed with certainty. Since the title *župan* has been used among the Slavic people from the Sklavinian times to the South Slavs, its etymology was discussed by eminent scholars of Indo-European and Slavic linguistics, such as Brugmann and Brückner. Brugmann derived it from Church Slavonic *župa* ‘Bezirk’, but his etymology was severely criticised by Brückner 1908–9 in a paper called ‘Über etymologische Anarchie’, proposing *župa* is a back formation from *župan* (Erdal 1988: 226). According to Erdal, the best information comes from the proposals by Doerfer 1967: 108–110 and Menges 1959, who also accept the Persian origin. In a seminal article on this topic, Erdal presented additional data on Middle Iranian forms (Erdal 1988: 226–227). Róna-Tas also thinks that *zhupan* cannot be a Turkic word because of its initial letter /zh/, assuming that the Slavic *zhupan* could not be derived from Turkic *choban* (1999: 115). Perhaps the most interesting view is that of Helimski, who put forward the idea that the Buyla inscription is in Tungus language and the that the word ЗОАІІА<sup>4</sup> is also in that language (2000: 51). This hypothesis is rejected by Erdal 2007 as “it is far-fetched by itself and is therefore rather unlikely.” (79).

We may well come to the conclusion that the origin of this title has not yet been solved. Most scholars, I think, tend to prefer the simplest explanation by proposing the Iranian etymology that links the title *župan* with the Persian word *šopan* and pointing out a semantic development from ‘the shepherd of the livestock’

<sup>4</sup> For the Hungarian form (*ispán* ‘count’) of the mentioned word see Róna-Tas 1999: 115 and Stachowski 2009: 62.

to ‘the leader of the community’. As far as I have been able to discover, Pritsak was the first Turcologist to explain this word as an Avar title: “Each Sklavinia had its own leadership, headed by a *župan* (Avar title) or *ἐξάρχος*, or *ἄρχων* (Byzantine titles)” (1983: 415). However, he was also referring to its Persian origin in his earlier studies (1977: 260). In M. Erdal’s terms, “the shepherd-of-men metaphor is probably universal”, but there is no proof of a historical connection between these two semantic developments.

It is important that the word *ζοπαν* was written as *čoban* in Runic letters on one of the vessels of the Nagyszentmiklós treasure and that one can also find the same word in Kašgari’s *Divān* transcribed as *čupan* in the meaning of ‘district head’. According to Clauson, it is unlikely that *čupan* ‘minor official, village headman’ is connected with Persian *čupan* ‘shepherd’ (Clauson 1972: 397ab). In my opinion, the Middle Turkic and Proto Bulgarian forms most likely resulted from an earlier phonetic loss of /l/. The name of the Hunnish commander, who served in the Byzantine army in about 493 A.D., was written in Greek letters as *Ζόλβων* in the chronicle of Ioannes Antiocheus. Moravcsik points out that the name can etymologically be connected with Turkish *čolpan* ‘The planet Venus’ (1958: 131). The spellings *Ζόλβων*, *ζοπαν* and *ζωπαν* show that the word in question was written with the vowel /o/ as well as with the vowel /u/ in Greek letters (Moravcsik 1958: 132). As a matter of fact, the entry *ζωπαν* is explained with the word *ζοπαν* in *Byzantinoturcica* by cross-reference. If Moravcsik is right, we may conclude that the word *čolpan* was used as a personal name and its later form *čopan* was used as a title in Turkic since 9<sup>th</sup> century. The Bulgarian diplomatic negotiator, whose name was registered in the Genoese sources as *Jolpani* with reference to a peace treaty in 1387 between Bulgarians and Genoese (Rásonyi 1966–69; repr. 2006: 198) represents another solid and independent piece of evidence for this fact.

In the ED entry for *čupan*, Clauson refers to the entry of DLT but does not connect it etymologically with the word *čolpan* because of the phonetic difference between the vowels in these words, despite the multiple phonetic values of the letter *vav* (و) used in Turkic written in Arabic script. Similarly, Turkic words containing the vowel /o/ occasionally can be written with /u/ in the Byzantine sources and Turkic inscriptions in Greek letters: Turkic *bagator* > Greek *βαγατούρ* [*bagatur*], etc. (Moravcsik 1958: 83). Thus, we can conclude that chroniclers who spoke Byzantine Greek wrote the word *čoban* both as *ζωπαν* and as *ζουπανος* in Greek sources. Consequently, Clauson, on the one hand, prefers the spelling of the word as *čupan* in his dictionary, but on the other hand, notes that its *pronunciation* is *uncertain*. I prefer to read this word as *čopan* for reasons given above. All these examples suggest the possibility that the word *čolpan* has been used both as a common noun and as an anthroponym retaining the /l/ sound, and that *čopan* has been used as a title with no medial *-l-* from the Old (or Proto-) Turkic stage.

Therefore, is it possible that the word *čolpan* illustrates a semantic shift from a name of a celestial body to a title, and are there any other similar examples in Turkic? The fact that *kün* ‘the sun’ and *ay* ‘the moon’ were used as titles<sup>5</sup> since the time of the earliest Turkic states, gives a straightforward answer to this question. In addition to the words *kün* and *ay*, *teŋri* ‘the sky’ was also used as a high title and royal/holy name in inscriptional and post-inscriptional Old Turkic documents: *Teŋri Kagan*, for instance, was the title/name of the son of Bilge Kagan. The Darvi rock inscription found in 1959 in Mongolia consists of the sentence *(a)y or bit(i)d(i)m* ‘I, Ay Čor, have written.’ This inscription proves that the word *ay* modifies the title *or* to construct a compound title. The word *oban*, borrowed into the Slavic languages as *župan*, modifies the title *tarkan* resulting in a compound title *ζουπαν ταρχάνος* (*župan tarkanos*) in Proto-Bulgarian inscriptions (Moravcsik 1958: 131) exactly like *ay čor*. The titles *teŋri kagan*, *ay čor*, *župan tarkanos*, etc., support the the feasibility of compounds constructed on the basis of the pattern *the name of the sky / a celestial body* + title. The remaining problem regarding this issue is that *čopan* occurs as an official title only in a single source<sup>6</sup>: *Divānū Lugāti’t-Türk*. This is probably due to the dialect variation in the lexical domain of vast area occupied by Central Old Turkic. For instance, the titles *bayan*<sup>7</sup>, *kolaguz*<sup>8</sup> and *bagator* never appear in inscriptional and post-inscriptional Old Turkic sources as titles, though they were in use in Turkic languages as remote from East Old Turkic as Proto-Bulgarian or Pecheneg (Menges 1951: 90, 95, 96; Moravcsik 1958: 83, 162; Róna-Tas 1998).

It may also be questionable that the name of a celestial body apart from the moon and sun was used as a title. The sun and the moon have special places in Indo-European mythology and they symbolize the power and authority, but the names of the other stars and planets are not very common. However, Asian mythologies are different from the Indo-European mythologies and influenced by the mythologies of the neighboring cultures. For example, the word *jiangjun* ‘general’

<sup>5</sup> For the use of the word *kün* and *ay* as titles see Rybatzki 2006: 644; 709–711.

<sup>6</sup> Rásonyi, Rásonyi/Baski and Sauvageot give examples for *čolpan* used as anthroponym in the languages of the Cumans, Bulgarians, Mameluks (Rásonyi 2006: 198–199; 327; Rásonyi/Baski 2007: 208; Sauvageot 1950: 47).

<sup>7</sup> The Proto-Bulgarian word *bayan* ‘rich, mighty’ was borrowed in its contracted form as *ban* ‘governer, district director’ into Hungarian and some of the Balkan Slavic languages (Menges 1951: 95). It is attested in the chronicles of Hungary, Serbia, Croatia and Bulgaria. From the 12<sup>th</sup> century it was the title of the governor of Croatia, Slavonia and Dalmatia. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century the title denoted the commander or captain of Hungarian boarder fortresses. From the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the word obtained the simple meaning: ‘Sir, Lord’. The Hungarian word is now used only in the scholarly literature (Róna-Tas 1998: 305).

<sup>8</sup> This word does not occur in inscriptional and post-inscriptional Old Turkic. The earliest examples appear in DLT and KB as *kulavuz* ‘guide’.



is not etymologically related to the Chinese words *jinxing*, *taibaixing*, *taibai jinxing* which all mean Venus, but the planet Venus has been likened to the army commander or the vizier in Chinese astronomy and astrology. It is well known that army commanders carry the symbol of the planet Venus as a rank in ancient Chinese. Chinese people attribute different meanings to this planet depending on the position in the sky. Especially when it is seen in the east, it is regarded as the signs of chaos, war and military coup<sup>9</sup>. One can not ignore the cultural exchanges between the Chinese and Turkic people.

As a result, the word *čoban* in the noun phrase *čoban yıldızı* ‘the Planet Venus’ in Turkish come from the word *čolpan* as stated in ED by Clauson. The forms *čopan/čoban/župan* ‘minor official; village headman’ in Middle Turkic, Proto-Bulgarian and in some of the East European languages, might have resulted from the loss of the second consonant (/l/) in this word. And it was used as a title of persons in charge of state affairs in the above-mentioned languages in accordance with the Turkic tradition of using the names of the heavenly bodies as titles. Thus, this word, on the one hand, preserves its original form (*čolpan*) and meaning in many modern Turkic languages to this day, and on the other hand, it has been used as *čopan*, *čoban* and *župan* in Middle Turkic, Proto-Bulgarian and in some of the East European languages, which have borrowed it from Turkic via Proto-Bulgarian or Avar. After borrowing the word *čoban* ‘shepherd’ from Persian (approximately 13–14<sup>th</sup> centuries) these two separate forms became homophonous in Turkic. As a consequence, the title *župan* with meanings ‘administrator’ and ‘military leader’ in Slavic languages was re-interpreted as ‘the shepherd of the (human) cattle’ by some scholars like Pritsak (1977).

It is known that the North Star (Pole Star) has been used for navigation since the early times because of its fixed position in the northern sky. Venus, in spite of its movable position in the sky, is sometimes confused with the Pole Star and people mistook the former for the latter to determine the northern direction. But since, only the North Star can be used to find direction, whereas the planet Venus can only be used to determine time. *Kervankıran* ‘Caravan perishing’, the alternative name of the planet Venus in Turkish, reflects the possible tragic results of this confusion. The folk song *Kervankıran*, which is sung in almost every part of Anatolia, is believed to have arisen from a legend about *Čolpan*<sup>10</sup>. Since Venus is visible with the naked eye until a few hours after sunset, or shortly

<sup>9</sup> I would like to thank Prof. Alimcan İnyet for the translation of the Chinese web source <http://baike.baidu.com/view/67520.htm#sub5073448>.

<sup>10</sup> ‘Once upon a time a caravan stayed in a caravanserai to take the road early in the morning. The leader of the caravan was waiting for the rising of the Morning Star. Then he saw the Pole Star and thought that it was Morning Star. He ordered the caravan to set off. However they lost their track and were caught in a storm and finally perished. Since then, this ‘star’ has been called as *Kervankıran* ‘Caravan perishing’ (Duymaz 1992: 2).

before sunrise, it has been used as a determinant of time by shepherds to lead their livestock for grazing early in the morning. Thus, people have perceived Venus as ‘a star that serves the shepherds’. The idioms *Čolpan tuvdu tañ kattı* ‘Venus rose, (and) the dawn broke’ in Kumyk and *Čolpan čikmay tañ atmaz* ‘Dawn does not break unless Venus rises’ in Karačay-Balkar (Tenišev 1997: 51) prove that Venus has been put to practical use as a time determiner in other Turkic languages. In short, there is an artificial connection and a pseudo-relationship between *Čolpan* (‘the planet Venus’) and *čoban* (‘the shepherd’). The fact that the words *šolpan* and *šoban* both mean ‘the planet Venus’ in Kazakh, and also *čoban* and *čolpon*, both mean ‘shepherd’ in Kirgiz, can be listed among the examples that gave rise to this misconception.

In conclusion, the Middle Turkic *čopan*, Proto Bulgarian *čoban*, Slavic *župan* and Turkish *čoban* (in the phrase *čoban yıldızı*) come from the root word *čolpan*, which means ‘the planet Venus’. Furthermore, this word in various forms was used in these languages as the title of state officers, conforming with the Turkic tradition of using the names of the celestial bodies as titles. Many of these titles later fell out of use and in the course of time some of them became common personal names, such as *kagan*, *tigin*, *čavuş*, *tarkan*, *alp*, *inal*<sup>11</sup>. The name of the Hunnish commander and of the Bulgarian diplomatic negotiator mentioned above, and the examples listed by Rásonyi, Rásonyi/Baski and Sauvageot support the conclusion Turkic people used the word *čolpan* as a personal name.

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<sup>11</sup> See Rásonyi/Baski 2007: 53–56; 194; 317–318; 402; 713; 727 for further examples.

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