



ON THE ETYMOLOGY, HISTORICAL ROOTS AND MEANINGS OF THE *YURT* 'HOMELAND'

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Abstract

From the moment that words first appear in the language of speech, they continue their existence by making changes in sound, structure, and meaning over time. Sometimes the words lose their usage frequency; they remain in dictionaries, in the historical works, but not in the living vocabulary. The word *yurt* 'homeland' is among the words that has been in the vocabulary of the Turkic languages since the earliest written sources. Preserving its initial meaning, the word *yurt*, has gained new meanings in the Turkic literary languages and in its dialects in time within the frame of this basic meaning. In this article, usage forms of the word *yurt* in contemporary Turkic languages, its history, prevalence, origin, and meanings, in short, its features in terms of lexicology, have been studied.

Keywords: *yurt* 'homeland', lexicology, phonetics, morphology, etymology.

Introduction

One of the words, which is used in common in Turkic literary languages and dialects, is *yurt* 'homeland'. The usage frequency of the word *yurt*, which has been in vocabulary of Turkic languages since the first written sources, has increased in Turkic literary languages and dialects and it has expanded its field of concept by gaining new meanings in time. Today the word *yurt* is used with small or big

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sound differences, such as *yurd* ~ *yürt* ~ *yort* ~ *jurt* ~ *curt* ~ *çurt* ~ *sürt* ~ *şurt* ~ *şort*, from east to west, from north to south in the languages of people with Turkic origin.

Besides these differences, the word *yurt* has gained a variety of meaning in the Turkic literary languages and in its dialects in time within the frame of this basic meaning. However, it is seen that all these different meanings are based on the earliest form found in written sources of the word and that it has reached concept richness with some sub and side meanings within this domain of meaning, in Turkish languages and dialects. The word has also been a source for the derivation of sociological concepts and terms in time. Today, it is seen that the word is used as the base in the derivation of sociological terms in the majority of Turkish writing languages and dialects.

The history of the word: The word, which has been used as *yurt* ~ *yurd* (Clauson 1972: 958; *Наделяев* 1969: 282) since the first sources of the Turkish languages, means 'place of residence, homeland'. In the sentence written on the eastern side of the Tonyukuk Inscription: *Şantun balıkka taloy ügüzke tegürtüm üç otuz balık sıdı usın buntutu yurtda yatu kalur erti tabgaç kağan yağıımız erti on ok kağanı yağıımız erti* (Tekin 1994: 9). 'I took (my Khan) Shantung cities far as Yellow River. (My Khan) restrained three cities. (At first) he was staying in the yurt losing his sleep. (Because) Chinese khan was our enemy, On Ok khan was our enemy', the word *yurt* means 'headquarters, center' (Tekin 1994: 72). In the sentence written in Köl Tigin Inscription: *Ögüm katun ulayu öglerim ekelerim keliñünüm kuunçuyılarım bunca yeme tirigi kün boltaçı erti ölügi yurtda yolta yatu kaltaçı ertigiz.* (Tekin 2010: 38-39) 'My mother Khatun being in the first place, all my (other) mothers, my sisters, my princesses, the survivors would be bondswomen (and) the dead ones would lie and stay in homeland and on the way' *yurtda yolta* means 'in the place of residence and on the way to go'. Other examples of this kind of reduplication actually form one of the verbal forms. These constructions, which are formed by spoken language or opposite words, are a concept, a meaning in themselves. In the sentences written on Tonyukuk (Tekin 1994: 9) and Köl Tigin Inscriptions (Tekin 2010: 38-39), giving the meaning of 'funeral tent' to the word *yurt* does not fit the context of the text (User 2010: 301). In Old Turkic, it is seen that the word gains *collocation* with the verb *kalmak* 'stay' also in other examples just like this one: *usın buntatu yurtda kalur erti* (Tekin 1994: 9), *yurt(a) kalmış* (Tekin 2013: 13), *yurtı kalıp* (Atalay 2006: III/258).

The most interesting data in historical sources is that in Mahmud al-Kashgari's *Divan Lugat at-Turk*, the meaning of 'old ruins' (Atalay 2006: III/7), 'place of settlement in ruins' (Ercilasun, and Akkoyunlu 2015: 351) is given to the word *yurt*. Also in Irk Bitig, the word *yurt* was used with the meaning of abandoned accommodation: 'A religious old woman left alone at the campsite. She survived by licking an oily scoop that she found. She escaped death.' The fact that the lonely woman in the camp cannot find food shows that the word *yurt* is used in the meaning of 'ruins' as also suggested by

Kashgari. Along with that, the word *yurt* that Kâşgarlı Mahmud gave in the example to explain *küçedi*, it means ‘place’ (Atalay 2006: III/258):

Kördi közüm tavrakın ‘My eyes have seen your coming and going’
Yurtu kalıp aglayu ‘Your leaving your place in tears’

Yusuf Has Hacıp in Kutadgu Bilig:

Ölümüg unıtma gürün yurtuñ ‘Don't forget about death, your grave is your homeland’
Özüñni unıtma savı yurtuñ ol ‘The saying don't forget yourself is your homeland’

It is noteworthy that the word *yurt* is used with the word *orun*, which means ‘place’, in reduplication as ‘place homeland’ in Altun Yaruk, one of the Uyghur period works. With this reduplication which is similar to today's *yer yurt* reduplication, the place that is lived on is meant (Kaya 1994: 461/19): *burkanlarnıñ togguluk belgürgülük orunı yurtı üçün...* ‘For the home where Buddhas emerge, appear...’

From first written sources, it is seen that the word carries the meanings of ‘place of residence, settlement unit, place of shelter; ruins where was once settlement but later became abandoned.’ In Old Anatolian Turkish, the historical period of Turkey Turkish (Turkish), it also gained the equivalent meaning of ‘settlement place, dwelling, home’ in the century XIV (TDK 2009: 4731-4733):

Ne aña karşı durup savař kılubilirven ne daki bu makâmı terk idüp gidebilirven kim yavlak hoş makâm ve taze yurtdur (Kelile and Dimne)

Eger tutavan üşbu mişede yurt
Beni yırtı aslan ya ayu ya kurt (Suheyl and Nevbahar)

Ol geldüğüñ yiri saña yurd virdük... Erenler bize Konya şehrin yurd verdiler anda gidevüz, didi. (Velayetname Hacı Bektash)

Uçmakı aña dibelik yurt bağışladum (Tuhfet al-Letaif)

Bize dahi yurd yeri göstersiz didi. (Aşıkpaşazade)

Şu denlü emn buldı kim kamu yurd
Gelüp çobanı oldı koyunun kurd (Zati)

In the examples mentioned, its collocation with the verbs such as *yurt (~yurd) tut-*, *yurt (~yurd) vir-*, *yurt (~yurd) idin-* draws attention. In the XVII century, the words *yurd vermek*, *yurd eyesi*, *yurd sahibi*, *yurd ekisi* ‘yurt sahibi’, *yurd yeri* gains a special area of usage in Evliya Çelebi's *Seyahatname* (Dankoff and oth. 1999-2007):

Hicaz'a götürüp Bağdad çölünde yurd verüp Keys, Keys urbanına melik oldu...Ejderhan fethinden sonra Bozodok kavmi Çerkes vilayetinde kuh-ı Obur dibinde yurd verüp anda kaldılar...Ve bu kabail-i Mansurlu Kırım'ın yurd ekeleridir, yani Kırım ceziresinin sahibleridir (II).

Andan Osmanlıya gidüp bin seksen yılında Malta'da Kandiye fethinde bulunup yurd sahibi bolasın, deyü (VII).

Büyük oğlu ile beş aded karındaşlar Kırım'ı üleşemeyüp yurd eyesi olmak için... (VIII).

Evliya Çelebi names the area where the army is billeted and where the military quarters is as *yurd yeri* (Dankoff and oth. 1999-2007):

Anı gördüm, ordumuz tarumâr olup yurd yerinde hakîrden gayri bir ferd kalmayup... (VI)

...altı aded atlarım ve on bir aded hüddâmlarımla bir gece nihânîce yurd yeri değışdirir şeklinde olup... (VII)

Bu hâl üzere yurd yerinde bir huccâc ve bir yük kalmayınca paşa yerinden hareket etmedi. (VIII).

It is seen that the concept area of the word, which is 'place of living, residence, place, country', began to expand and it gained the meanings of 'range, digit, place of residence, land, estate, homeland' in the Ottoman Turkish over time. In his dictionary *Lehce Osmanî*, Ahmed Vefik Pasha gives the meanings of 'residence, homeland, absolutely country' to the word *yurt* (Toparlı 2000: 432). Şemseddin Sami, on the other hand, lists the meanings of the word *yurt* in *Kamus Türkî* as follows: 'place, country; home, residence, household; possessed land, estate' (Yavuzarslan 2010: 1340). Hüseyin Kazım Kadri, after defining the word *yurt* in four separate items with their equivalent send it to the *yurt* item in Chaghatay item (Kadri 1945: 830-831):

یورد ، یورت - [yurt]- western - name - residence and settlement place, home, property, manor; homeland, country, land.

This item has the following definitions:

اورت ، یورت - [yurt urt] - Chagatai - homeland, home, residence, tent; place to shelter in a metaphorical way.

Hüseyin Kâzım Kadri lists the meaning of the word in Kazan Turkic as follows:

یورط ، یورت - [yurt] - name - country, home; homeland.

After giving 'yurt' as the equivalent of it in Azerbaijan Turkish, he gives an example sentence from the work of Şayık Talipzade:

*İsteyorum kent salup idem bu yurdu âbâd
Bir dahmalık bu yerden menga veresen olan şad*

All these examples show that the word **yurt** was in the concept area of 'settlement place' in the beginning whereas over time the meaning has expanded and diversified within this frame. The word has earned the meaning of 'homeland' as a social concept in the near future.

Prevalence of the word: The word is used in the following ways: Along with Turkey Turkish, in Uzbek, Karaim, Kumuk, Nogay, in the Yugur language and in the Crimean Karaim dialects as *yurt*, in Azerbaijan and Crimean Turkic as *yurd*, in Turkmen and Halaç Turkish *yürt*, in Tatar and Bashkir Turkic as *yört*, in Uyghur Turkic and dialects as *yu(r)t ~ ju(r)t*, in Lob nur dialect as *yuyt ~ yut*, in Kazakh, Karachay, Balkar and Karakalpakstan writing languages as *jurt*, in Kirgiz Turkic as *curt*, in Altai *d'urt*, in Khakas and Shor Turkic as *çurt*, in Tuva and Tofa Turkic as *çürt*, in Yakutia as *sürt*, in Dolgan as *hurt*, in Chuvash as *śort* (Тенишев 2001: 490-491; Starostin 2003: 1000).

The word *yurt*, which is very widespread in Contemporary Turkish writing languages and dialects, has passed on to the neighbor languages from Turkish writing languages. In Persian, *yurt* has been used in the meanings of ‘pasture; residence tax; range, host; cottage, tent, country’. In Persian, also the word *yurtçı*, which has the meanings of ‘headquarters officer, the one who has undertaken the responsibility of a land or nomad group’, has been detected. In Armenian *yurt* means ‘tent’. In the dialects of Arabic, *yurtta ~ urut* have been used in the meaning of ‘tent, nomad group’. In Russian, *yurt* means ‘pasture, estate, land, country’ and *yurta* means ‘nomad tent’. In Czech language *jurta* is the name given to ‘Samoyedic, Lap and Kirgiz tents’. In Bulgarian, the word *yurt* has the meaning of ‘the empty space between houses’; the word *yurta* means ‘tent, house, home, residence, nomad group’; the word *yurtluk* means ‘household goods, property; food, beverage; openness, open area, empty land’ (Karaağaç 2008: 936).

Etymology: Eren (1999: 461) has written that the etymology of the word *yurt* is not known and he evaluates the research on this issue as follows:

Although Kononov wrote that *yurt* as ‘migration area’ came from the root of Turkish *yur-* ‘to walk’, ‘to migrate’, Doerfer objected to this explanation. According to him, the root that Kononov gave as *yur-* exists in Turkish as *yoru-*. Sevortyan agreed with Doerfer and also stated that there were a few derivatives in Turkish made with the affix {-t}. Brockelmann reviewed main derivatives with {-t}, however, he did not count the word *yurt*.

Leksika, who dealt with the vocabulary of Turkic languages in details, gave the word *yurt* based on the opinion of Kononov, although its development is questionable: **yu:rtʔ < *juru:t < *joru:t* (Тенишев 2001: 490).

In his printed dictionary, Nişanyan (2009: 680) has not made an explanation about the origin, however, he repeated the opinion of Kononov later in his on-line dictionary (<http://nisanyansozluk.com>).

Gülensoy (2007: 1181) also mentioned Kononov's definition based on the origin of *yur-* ‘to walk; to migrate’ and Doerfer’s objection to it; however, he has not made any statement about the origin of the word.

Əhmədov (2015: 281) suggested that *yurd* may have come from the combination of the word *yer* ‘seat’ and the verb *otur-* ‘to sit’ as *yerot*.

These explanations cannot be accepted because the oldest form of the word known as ‘to walk’, as mentioned in the etymological descriptions, is *yori-*, and the word *yer* is *yir*. Also the archaic form of the word *oturmak* is *olturmak* ‘to sit’.

The assumptions of the word in the Altaic languages also make these explanations controversial. According to the Etymological Dictionary of the Altaic Languages, it is assumed that it has taken the following forms: In Proto-Altaic the **nūru* form, which means ‘residence, place of settlement’, in Proto-

Mongolian the **niruyu* form, which means 'country, homeland', in Proto-Tungus-Manchu, the **nora* form which means 'house', and in Proto-Turkic the **yūrt* form. It is assumed that these words combine with the word **nūri* in Proto-Korean which means 'world, place of living' (Starostin 2003: 1000).

Tekin (2013: 312) compared the Turkic word *yurt* with Mongolian word *nutug*. Stating that the two words are very close to each other, Tekin notes that the Turkic word *yurt* is not taken from Mongolian and the Mongolian word *nutug* is not taken from Turkish. According to Tekin, two words are relatives.

The vocabulary of Khalach language, which carries traces from Turkic and is still being spoken in Iran, gives clues about the origin of the word in the Turkic language. The word *yūr-* which means 'sitting in a place; staying, stopping' at a place, is regarded as the most significant evidence regarding the existence of such a word (Tezcan 1975: 83; Erdal 1991: 310). In this case, it is stated that the word *yurt* may have been derived from the verb **yūr-*, which means 'sit' with derivational affix *{-t}* (Erdal 1991: 310; Taş 2009: 167). Considering both the meaning of the word *yurt* in Old Turkic and the sound structure, it is more convincing that it is derived from the verb **yūr*, which means 'to sit, to stay', rather than the verb *yoru-* which means 'walk'. Since the Old Turkish, *{-t}* has been among the affixes used to derive nouns from verbs.

Another evidence that the word *yurt* was derived from the word **yūr-* 'to sit' is that voicing can be seen in the affix that it took. The word today in Azerbaijani Turkic is in the form of *yurd*. *Yurd* is frequently seen in Old Anatolian Turkish and Ottoman Turkish in the written form *یورد*. While it is being used plainly in the form of *yurt* in Turkish and some Turkic writing languages, voicing occurs when the vowel is added and the forms such as *yurdu*, *yurdun* come into existence.

Semantic: The word *yurt* is being used today almost in every Turkic literary languages and dialects with the diversity of meaning. In *Turkish Dictionary* (TDK 2012: 2617) it is recorded that the word *yurt* has nine meanings in Turkish: 1. A piece of land on which a certain group of people live, constitute its culture, motherland. 2. Homeland is the place where a person is born and raised. 3. Region. 4. The place where the nomads live in summer or winter. 5. The tent where nomadic Turks live. 6. An institution where a group of people in need of shelter are placed, raised or looked after. 7. The place where the students stay, where they live. 8. The place where something is grown first or in abundance, homeland. 9. Owned land, real estate.

Apart from these meanings, it is seen that it is widely used in various organization names such as sports club (*Mersin İdman Yurdu* etc.), vocational course (*biçki dikiş yurdu* etc.). The use of the word in these names indicates that the seventh and eighth meanings have also begun to expand. The words such as *yurtlandırma*, *yurtlandırmak*, *yurtlanma*, *yurtlanmak*, *yurtluk*, *yurtsama*, *yurtsuz*, *yurtsuzluk* derived from this word have taken their places in *Turkish Dictionary* (TDK 2012: 2617). Besides these,

new words have been derived as a sociological concept such as *yurttaş*, *yurttaşlık*, *yurtsever*, it has gained value as a term.

Three meanings are given in the *Azərbaycan Dilinin İzahlı Lügəti* (Axundov 2006: IV/627) for the word *yurd*: 1. The place where a person is born and grows up, native land, country, homeland. 2. The place of living, home, residence. 3. Nursery school. In this dictionary, there are also derived words such as *yurddaş*, *yurddaşlıq*, *yurdlama*, *yurdlamaq*, *yurdlu*, *yurdsuz*, *yurdsuzluq*. Apart from this, there are also derived words such as *yurdcul*, *yurdçu* in the *Orthographic Dictionary of Azerbaijan Language* (Axundov 2013: 758).

The usage of the word *Yurt* for the new concepts that emerged over time in society ensured the emergence of new operating areas. The naming of the word, whose basic meaning is 'place to live', as *öğrenci yurdu* for the place that students live, *kız öğrenci yurdu* for the female students, *erkek öğrenci yurdu* for the male students have been included in the vocabulary. However, as a result of the least effort law in the language, the word *yurt* is again being used in an elliptical (Akalın 2014) way as the 'place where students stay'.

Firth, who works on semantics, states that the meaning of an item varies with the pattern of relationships established with other units (Firth 1957: 16). As we will see from the examples below, the word *yurt*, the meaning of the word has become varied through the relationships established by other words of speech, however, the basic meaning has never changed.

In the vocabulary: Besides the derived words, the following compound words among the ones that were formed with the word *yurt* are striking: *yurt bilgisi*, *yurt dışı*, *yurt içi*, *yurt özlemi*, *yurtsever*, *ana yurt*, *baba yurdu*, *bakım yurdu*, *biçki dikiş yurdu* / *biçki yurdu*, *düşkünler yurdu*, at first *talebe yurdu* later *öğrenci yurdu*, *sıhhat yurdu* later *sağlık yurdu*, *yaşlılar yurdu*, *yetiştirme yurdu*. As reduplication, there are vocabulary elements such as *yer yurt* 'the place of settlement, residence', *yersiz yurtsuz* 'without a place to go to'.

In Azerbaijan language, there are compound nouns and verbs, reduplications such as *ana yurd*, *ata yurd*, *ata-baba yurdu*, *yurd-yuva*, *yurd-yuvasız*, *yurdsuz-yuvasız*, *yer-yurd*, *yersiz-yurdsuz*, *yurdda qalan* 'falling behind of everyone', *yurdu kor olmaq (qalmaq)* 'becoming extinct after dying'; *yurd etmək*, *yurdundan olmaq*, *yerinden-yurdundan eləmək*, *yurd salmaq*, *yurd-yuva salmaq*, *yurd tutmaq*, *yurdu dağılmaq* (Axundov 2006: IV/627), *yurdağrısı*, *yurddaşlı-soydaşlı*, *yurddaş-soydaş*, *yurd-itkisi*, *yurdlu-yuvalı*, *yurdsevər*, *yurdsevərlik*, *yurdsuzluq-yuvasızlıq*, *yurd-yuvalı*, *yurd-yuvasızlıq* (Axundov 2013: 758-759). *Odlar Yurdu* is 'used as an artistic expression in the sense of Azerbaijan' (Axundov 2006: III/512). This statement is another example of the word gaining the meaning of 'country, homeland'.

The word *yurt*, which is one of the cultural words within the thousands of years of life of Turks, also took place in the formation of our idioms: *yersiz yurtsuz kalmak* 'having no place to live or settle';

being in a very difficult situation due to losing all possessions', *yurt edinmek (tutmak)* 'accepting a place as homeland for oneself, for the family; hold dear as homeland'.

Yurdda qalmaq 'not to get married'; *yurduna su calamaq* 'break up a home'; *yurduna su ələnmək* 'be destroyed', *yurduna süpürgə çəkilmək* 'having one's home scattered', *yurdunda bayquşlar ulayır* 'an expression telling that there is no one left living at home'; *yurdunda turp əkmək* 'mahvetmək' are also idioms used in Azerbaijani language (Məhərrəmli 2015: 281).

In proverbs, the word *yurt* exists in the thousands of years of experience and in the views of life of sayings that contain advice for the future generations in the meanings of 'place of residence, dwelling, large nomad tent, country'.

Yurdu otlusundan kutlusu yeğdir 'it does not matter that the place is fruitful if the place where the person lives on is not comfortable and peaceful'.

Asilini alamazsan (zengine yetişemezsen) yurduna kon 'if you cannot join a noble family, or get a girl from such a family, it would be useful to settle in the place where such a family lives.'

Dolaşan tilki yurt bulur atasözü and *değirmi yurt tutmaya değirmi g...t ister* 'in order to be successful in a place or a job you need to work with steadfastness.'

Evi ev eden avrat, yurdu şen eden devlet 'it is the woman that ensures the order of the house it is the state that ensures the order of the country'.

Evvel komşunu bul sonra yurdunu tut 'the people whom you will live together and who will be your neighbors are important rather than the properties of the place to be lived.'

Gurbette sultan olacağına yurdunda züğürt ol 'staying poor in your homeland is better than going through difficulties in a foreign land.'

Konduk yurda varmayınca göçtük yurdu kiymeti belli olmaz or *göçülen yurdu kadri konulan yurtda bilinir* veya *göçtük yurdu kadri konduk yurtda bilinir* 'It expresses the fact that the value of a place is only understood after migrating to another place or losing that place.'

Oba göçer yurdu kalır 'people come and go but the homeland is permanent.'

Yurdu yuvam köyüm, ben köyümdə beyim 'a person who suffers the difficulties of being a stranger in foreign lands lives the life of riley in his or her homeland.'

Yad elde beylik sürmeden, yurtda züğürt gezme yeğdir 'a person far away from his or her homeland longs for his or her birthplace no matter how wealthy his or her life is in the foreign land.'

Conclusion: Today, it is seen that the word *yurt* is used in collocation with a variety of meaning, with a wide range of vocabulary in all Turkic writing languages and dialects with voice changes. The word *yurt*, which refers to the place of living, permanently or temporarily, this first meaning, which was found in the earliest written sources, has reached today, expanding like rings formed around a stone that has been thrown into the water. Although each new meaning serves as a source in the emergence of another meaning, all of these have been formed within the area of the first concept of the word. Language

brings affixes or words for the new concepts it needs and new words are derived. It also enables the expansion of the vocabulary by adding new meanings to the existing meaning. Turkic written languages and dialects vocabulary develop and expand with each passing day. The word *yurt* is one of the most interesting examples of it.

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