

# Analysis on the Semantic Change of “Ayag” in the Uyghur Language\*

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**Abstract**—The word “ayag” owns four basic meanings in modern Uyghur language, while in the old Uyghur language, it owned as many as twenty meanings. In this paper, mainly from the perspective of the historical evolution of the semantic change of “ayag”, the author researches into the in the development and changes in the meaning of Uyghur language in different historical periods. The semantic change of the word “ayag” in Uyghur language is analyzed with the method of literature retrieval.

**Keywords**—ayag; semantic change; Uyghur language

## I. INTRODUCTION

The historical evolution of semantics refers to the changes of semantics in different historical periods. Semantic changes usually begin with temporary changes in context, which occur over and over again. In the Uyghur language, the word “ayağ” owns different meanings in different historical periods in the development of Uyghur language. Previously, the overseas researchers such as Talat Tekin and M. Ölmäzät once studied the grammatical features of the word “ayağ” and the phonetic features of various Turkic languages in the Turki language books in 1998<sup>1</sup>. Professor Abduraop · Polat · Teklimakaniy in China also analyzed the phonetic change phenomena of the word “ayağ” in his book *Introduction to Chaghatay Uyghur Language* in 2017<sup>2</sup>. The word “ayağ” in modern Uyghur language can be traced back to the old Turkic inscriptions period in the 8th-9th century. In Uigurica, the “old Turkic inscriptions” basically appear in the form of “azaq” and “adaq”. The consonant z in “azaq” changes to be d and z as Uyghur language develops. In ancient Uyghur documents (in which the early literatures on Chaghatay are included), it basically appeared in the form of

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The adaq here means trample or ravage, and this meaning is limited to the noun phrase adaq asra bolmiš, which means ravage.

<sup>1</sup> An Introduction to Turki Language (in Uyghur language) [M]. Beijing: The Ethnic Publishing House, 2014: 231

<sup>2</sup> Abduraop · Polat · Teklimakaniy, *Introduction to Chaghatay Uyghur Language* [M]. Beijing: The Ethnic Publishing House, 2017:100

ayağ. In modern Uighur language, the consonant ğ in the word ayağ is replaced by q, and sometimes it appears in the form of ajaq. Also its meaning changes with time, that is, some of its original meaning was retained, while some got disappeared. Research on the route of the semantic change of the word of “ayağ” and the meaning correlation in modern Uyghur language is so little, so in this paper, first the author made an analysis of the meaning of the word “ayağ” in different historical periods, then he analyzed the route of semantic change of “ayağ”. Finally, the author offers us the result of his analysis of the semantic change of the word “ayağ”.

## II. THE MEANING ENTRIES OF “AYAĞ” IN THE OLD UYGHUR LITERATURE AND THE SEMANTIC CONNOTATION IT REVEALED

### A. “Ayağ” Meant “Basis” When It Was Used as a Noun

When it was used as a noun, it meant “basis”, and the noun “ayağ” can be traced back to the old Turkic inscriptions period in the 8th-9th century. In the old Turkic language, it appeared in “Bilga-Qağan tablet” and “Tonyukuk tablet” in the form of adaq.

türük bodun adaq qamšat <d>I yawlaq<sup>3</sup>

Turuk bodun adaq qam š at <d> I yawlaq

The foundation of the Turkic people was in turmoil and they got into trouble.

### B. “Ayağ” Meant “Trample, Ravage” When It Was Used as a Noun

In the Uigurica “Golden Light Sutra (altun yaruq)”, it appeared in the form of adaq.

alqu ya ğ I yawla ğ lar bar č a adaq asra bolmi š lari kozunur<sup>4</sup>. Saw all the enemies trampled.

<sup>3</sup> Alken · Aroz, Alhan · Eyiden, *Old Turkic Inscriptions*, [M] Xinjiang People's Publishing House, 2014:136

<sup>4</sup> Turshion Ayub, Mytirim Shaety, *Golden Light Sutra in Uighur script* [M] Xinjiang People's Publishing House, 2001:221

C. "Ayağ" Meant "the End" When It Was Used as an Adjective

In the "Golden Light Sutra", adaqta bir oq yigip sözlöp<sup>5</sup> appeared, which means "at the end of all". The adaq right here means "the end".

D. "Ayağ" Meant "Respect, Expensive" When It Was Used as a Noun

ärdinilig pra kuşatrin ağır ayağ tapiğ uduğ qilip<sup>6</sup>, which means "raise the banner", shows great respect. Here the ayağ means "respect".

E. "Ayağ" Means "Bad" When It Was Used as an Adjective

biz qamağun yilqilarniğ öñrä yalañuq azunlartaqi ayiğ qiling (lar kü) qintä bu oğurta yilqi azun (in)ta

toğdumuz ärti<sup>7</sup>. All our animals, because of the bad things they did in the human world previously, were born in the animal world.

ayağ here appears in the phrase ayiğ qiling lar, meaning "bad things".

F. Usage of the Word "Ayağ" in "The Encyclopedia of Turk Ethnic Group Languages"

- "ayağ" meant "feet" when it was used as a noun  
azaqliq näj<sup>8</sup> means "the living things with feet".
- "ayağ" meant "shoes" when it was used as a noun  
Azaq<sup>9</sup> means "feet, shoes".
- "ayağ" meant "wood used as a jacking for a pergola" when it was used as a noun  
Adaqliq<sup>10</sup> means "wood used as a jacking for a pergola".
- "ayağ" meant "small wooden bowl or gong, an ancient wine vessel made of horn" when it was used as a noun

Ayaq<sup>11</sup> means "small wooden bowl or gong, an ancient wine vessel made of horn".

G. Usage of the Word "Ayağ" in "Kutadgu Bilig"

- "ayağ" meant "standing" when it was used as an adjective

<sup>5</sup> Turshion·Ayub, Mytirim·Shaety, Golden Light Sutra in Uighur script [M] Xinjiang People's Publishing House, 2001:19

<sup>6</sup> Turshion·Ayub, Mytirim·Shaety, Golden Light Sutra in Uighur script [M] Xinjiang People's Publishing House, 2001:24

<sup>7</sup> Turshion·Ayub, Mytirim·Shaety, Golden Light Sutra in Uighur script [M] Xinjiang People's Publishing House, 2001:433.

<sup>8</sup> Turshion·Ayub, Mytirim·Shaety, Golden Light Sutra in Uighur script [M] Xinjiang People's Publishing House, 2001:433

<sup>9</sup> Mahmud Kashgari, The Encyclopedia of Turk Ethnic Group Languages (Episode One) [Z]. The Ethnic Publishing House. 1981.25

<sup>10</sup> Mahmud Kashgari, The Encyclopedia of Turk Ethnic Group Languages (Episode One) [Z]. The Ethnic Publishing House. 1981.88

<sup>11</sup> Mahmud Kashgari, The Encyclopedia of Turk Ethnic Group Languages (Episode One) [Z]. The Ethnic Publishing House. 1981.111

Hajip kirdi ilig tapa yüz urup

Iligkä ötündi adaqin turup<sup>12</sup>

The courtier turned and came to the king.

He told the king that Yue Yuan had come to the temple.

- "Ayağ" Meant "Feet" When It Was Used as a Noun

inančsiz tururqut wäfasiz yayıñ

yorirda utšar tärk adaqi yayıñ<sup>13</sup>

Luck can not be depended upon, since it changes unpredictably.

It may fly away or flee swiftly, with its feet being light and graceful.

- "ayağ" meant "feet" when it was used as a noun

kümüš kursi urmiš özä oldurur,

bu kursi adaqi üç adri turur<sup>14</sup>

The king sat in a chair with silver feet,

The silver chair was supported by three legs.

- "ayağ" meant "title" when it was used as a noun

wäzirliq añar bärdi tamğa, ayağ,

tuği, köwrüki birlä bärdi quyağ<sup>15</sup>.

Give him the title of Minister, and a gold seal,

Give him a big army banner, an armor, and an order drum.

H. Meaning of "Ayağ" in a Collection of Words and Expressions in Classical Uyghur Literature

"Ayağ" owned the meanings of feet, legs, back, hips, beach, hooked meat rack, season, quarter, island, wilderness, chance, thoroughly - from the beginning to the end. Small wooden bowl, ancient wine vessel made of horn, time, times, respect, honor and bad<sup>16</sup>.

### III. ROUTE OF SEMANTIC CHANGE OF "AYAĞ"

To meet the needs of the communication, the meaning of the word "ayağ" changed in various degrees with the development of the society in different historical stages of the old Uyghur language. Because of the development of social life reason and linguistic reasons, in modern Uyghur language, the word "ayağ" owns the core meaning entry

<sup>12</sup> Uginp·Has·Hajip, Kutadgu Bilig, Collection A [M]. Xinjiang People's Publishing House, 2013, 59

<sup>13</sup> Uginp·Has·Hajip, Kutadgu Bilig, Collection A [M]. Xinjiang People's Publishing House, 2013, 200

<sup>14</sup> Uginp·Has·Hajip, Kutadgu Bilig, Collection A [M]. Xinjiang People's Publishing House, 2013, 67

<sup>15</sup> Uginp·Has·Hajip, Kutadgu Bilig, Collection A [M]. Xinjiang People's Publishing House, 2013, 63

<sup>16</sup> Ulam, Mi·Eblain H·Fnus, A Collection of Words and Expressions in Classical Uyghur Literature [Z], The Ethnic Publishing House. 1986:12,25,26

“feet”. On this basis, it was also used to refer to some relative meanings such as legs, shoes, foundation, back, from the beginning to the end” and so on, which are all meaning entries of “ayağ”.

In the 15th century, the famous poet, Navoiy, who lived in Central Asia, wrote various forms of “ayağ” such as *äyni fälak ättin ayağı yalañ, toni yoqidin täni dağı yalañ*<sup>17</sup>, in his work “Gentleman's Longing (Hayratul abrar)”. *Toni yoqidin tani da ğ I yala ñ*. Here the word “ayağ” means “feet”. The previously owned meanings like hips, beach, hooked meat rack, season, quarter, island, wilderness, good luck and so on, had been lost, only leaving the meanings of the legs, shoes, foundation, back, from beginning to end and so on. In the 17th century, the well-known poet, Zhailily, who also lived in Central Asia, also wrote the word “ayağ”, such as *irur zänjir ilä başdin ayağ däryani yığmağliq*<sup>18</sup> in a gazal. Here, the word “ayağ” means “from the beginning to the end”. *fäyiz ayağidin iq tälbä zälili bugün*, the word “ayağ” here means “small wooden bowl or gong, an ancient wine vessel made of horn”. The meanings like “titles”, “wood used as a jacking for a pergola” and so on had been lost.

With the above contents, the author had an analysis of the basic meaning “feet” and its extended meaning “from the beginning to the end”, “the other end” and so on. Through the extended meaning, the word “ayağ” turned to be polysemantic from being monosemantic. Turning from being with only one meaning entry to being with multiple meaning entries, each word has its own evolution track. In the semantic evolution of “ayağ”, in every step in the evolution process, some words of the same function experienced paralleled evolution, and the whole semantic evolution is the same with “ayağ”. In our opinion, this is mainly caused by semantic factors, also it is relative to syntactic and pragmatic factors.

#### IV. RESULTS OF SEMANTIC CHANGE OF THE MEANING ENTRIES OF THE WORD “AYAĞ”

The semantic change of Uyghur language is the result of the development and change of Uyghur language in different historical periods. Of course, these changes are caused by the internal causes of language, which include the content of semantic meaning, the generality, specificity and mutual restriction of words and other factors. There are also external factors beyond the language itself, such as social development, historical changes, cultural exchange and cultural shock, changes in religious faith, changes in political system, scientific and technological progress, changes in living environment and ways of life, and the evolution of customs and so on. These factors may lead to changes in the meaning of words in a language. New meaning is gained and existing meaning got lost. The semantic change of words has a certain impact on the development of language.

<sup>17</sup> Emin·Tursun, On Navoiy [M] The Ethnic Publishing House. 1999, 81

<sup>18</sup> Compiled by Emin·Tursun, Zhailily's Collection [M], The Ethnic Publishing House, 1985, 165, 105

The reasons discussed led to the result of semantic change of the word “ayağ”. The result is got after the historical semantic change, so the changes can be seen only by comparing the different synchronic layers of the same linguistic unit “ayağ”. For example, “ayağ” means “foundation” in the “Bilga-Qağan tablet”, while it means “feet, shoes” in the synchronical “Stele of Kul-tegin”. The word “ayağ” means “titles”, “small wooden bowl” and “ancient wine vessel made of horn” and alike in Kutadgu Bilig that was written in the Karakhanid Empire. Thus we know that “ayağ” meant “foundation”, “feet, shoes”, etc. in Old Turkic Inscriptions. In The Encyclopedia of Turk Ethnic Group Languages, it means “wood used as a jacking for a pergola” “feet, legs, and shoes”, “small wooden bowl, ancient wine vessel made of horn”, etc... In Kutadgu Bilig, it means “feet, legs and shoes”, “standing”, “titles”, “small wooden bowl”, etc., and in A Collection of Words and Expressions in Classical Uyghur Literature, it means “feet, legs, back, hips, beach, hooked meat rack, season, quarter, island, wilderness, good luck, thoroughly-from the beginning to the end, small wooden bowl, ancient wine vessel made of horn, time, times, respect, honor, bad” and so on.

In modern Uyghur language, the word “ayağ” has the following meanings: (1) The feet part of people, animals or other creatures; (2) the leather shoes; (3) the other end, the other side; (4) at the end, finally, in the end.

From the deeply probed meanings as listed above, we can see that the word “ayağ” owns almost consistent meanings in different historical sages of the Uyghur language. In comparison, in different historical stages, the meanings represented by Uyghur language are different in some way. The word “ayağ” has lost its meanings of “hips, beach, hooked meat rack, season, quarter, island, wilderness, good luck, small wooden bowl, ancient wine vessel made of horn, time, times, respect, honor, bad, titles, wood used as a jacking for a pergola” and so on, only leaving the meanings of “the feet part of human, animal or other creatures, shoes, the other end, the other side, at the end, in the end, on earth” and so on. It can be concluded that the meaning entries of “ayağ” has been narrowed to specifically referring to “feet, shoes, end, in the end”.

#### V. CONCLUSION

The word “ayağ” owns different meaning entries in different historical periods as well as its modern application, and some of its original meanings have got lost. In semantic evolution process, its meaning entries have been narrowed.

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