

## DERIVATIVES OF THE NOSTRATIC ROOT KU “PLACE, LAND, SPACE” IN WORLD LANGUAGES

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**Abstract:** This paper deals with the investigation of phonetic variants and different meanings of nostratic root \*ku “place, land, space” in the Turkic and non-Turkic languages. The author proves that the root morpheme \*ku with meanings of “mountain, field, desert, hill” in the Turkic languages has been undergone various morphological changes in different languages. A number of words with meanings of “place, land” had been derived from this root. In the paper for the first time the origin of this ancient root has been investigated, its archetype has also been defined. The phonosemantic development of \*ku root’s allomorphs in the world languages is also considered on the base of comprehensive factual materials.

**Keywords:** Language, Meaning, Nostratic, Turkic, World.

### 1 Introduction

\*Ku “place, land, space” nostratic root that has derivative \*kur in the meanings “mountain, highland, hill” is one of the most ancient root morphemes in Turkic languages. Up to now the problem of homogeneity of the the word *kir* in the meanings “field, step, country, ground” and the word *kur // ur* in the meaning “mountain” had not been touched upon in Turkology. For nostratic languages, Illich-Svitich restored this word in the form of \**kar* (“rock, curved highland”) [17] and pointed out its usage in different world languages. In ancient Turkic languages *qir* had the meaning of “dam, plateau, foothill place”: *yazi tay gir opri tösandi jadip* – the plains stretched and the plateaux and lowlands extended [3].

This ancient lexical unit was reflected in Orkhon-Yenisey writings and in different historical – comparative dictionaries on Turkic languages: the word *Kir* is used in the forms of *xir // xir // kir // kir // kara // qir* in modern Turkic languages and dialects. The main meanings of this root morpheme in Turkic languages are the followings: “plateau, highland, hill, mountain-pass, dessert, mountain peak, high coast, field, arable” [34]. This stem word has different forms and meanings in Altaic languages. Let us compare: in Bashkir language *ür // ur* “mountain, highland”, in Evenk language *üre* “mountain”, *ürel* “mountains”, *hur* “forest”, *oroç xure* “mountain”, *solon ure* means “mountain” [7]. In Mongol languages it is used in the form *ura*. As it seems, in Altaic languages in the development of this stem the transition of meanings *mountain-forest* is mainly observed. Generally, spreading in different languages, isomorphs of this nostratic stem word undergone semantic differentialization.

### 2 Materials and Methods

The words *qur // kur // ur* in the meanings “mountain, highland, hill, mountain pass” — *kir* in the meanings “steppe, country, edge, field” in Turkic languages were formed in the result of phonosemantic differentialization of the stem. Let us have a look at the facts: Crimean — Tatar *qir* “mountain”, Altaic *qur* “mountain, highland”, Chuvash *xir* “field, steppe, area”, Khakas *xur* “mountain, hill, highland”, Kirghiz *qur* “mountain pass”, Tuvan *kur*, Tofalar *kur* “mountain chain” [34]. No matter how different is phonological and semantic transformation of the *Kur* root morpheme in different languages, it is possible to restore its archetype on the basis of comparative method. Although all shades of the meaning of this word were given in “Etymological Dictionary of Turkic Languages” [34], they were also compared with lexical parallels of incognate languages. However, the words *kur // xur* “mountain” used in Semitic languages and *qora* “mountain” in Slavic languages prove both morphological and semantic compliance with homogeneity of the stem *kur // ur* “mountain” in Turkic languages. This word also stands on the etymological basis of some mythological and sacral concepts.

For example, in ancient Egyptian mythology *Ker* was “the God of Earth” [6].

Rasanen supposed that the word *kir* in Turkic languages derived from the word *kira* “forest, steppe, mountain range” of Mongol origin [32]. However, it is wrong to define exactly the relation of this word to any language. But in the dialects of the Azerbaijani language the words *qiy* “top” and *qiyi* “a flat area” according to sound interchange of r-y are of mutual origin with the root *kir*.

According to this alternation, the word *kıy* “coast, edge” in Turkic languages is also of this origin. Parallel usage of the words *kıy – kir* in the meaning of “edge” is based on one of the spontaneous sound transitions in Turkic languages as r-y replacement: *kir // kıy*. In Turkic (Ottoman) sources of the Middle Age the word *kıy* expressed the meanings: “coast, edge, side”. In modern Turkish language *kıy* has the meaning of “coast, edge, side”. Let us compare: German *kai* “coast”, old English *quay* “coast”. In ancient Uyghur language *kıy* had the meaning “border, limit, quarter” [18]. However, in Persian language *kuy* means “dwelling area, quarter, street”. All these words derived from one root morpheme. We should note that r-y alternation in Turkic languages is observed in other words, too. For example: In the dialect of Siberian Tatars *kay* “snow” [40], in other Turkic languages *qar // kar* “snow” or *kir // qır* — “to break” — *kıy // qiy* — “to cut”. Therefore, this ancient root morpheme undergone morphological and semantic changes due to r-y transition. In ancient Turkic languages there was also the word *qiy* “village”. As it seems, through the history this stem word undergone phonosemantic transformation process.

In the Middle Age, a large mountainous territory located previously in Turkistan, but presently in Afghanistan near Herat and Bamian was called Gur. It is known that *kir* is one of the most widely used topofomants in composition of Altaic toponyms. This fact is also one of the factors proving that \**kur* root morpheme refers to the most ancient lexical layer. In the geographical names *kir* also expresses the meanings “foothill, steppe” [28]. Semantic development of this word undergone transitions and transformations from the name of different relief forms up to the names of settlements, i.e. from oronyms to oykononyms. According to dumb umlaut theory in Turkology, phonovariant of the word with the consonant *k* is more ancient.

We can come across ancient traces of the word *kur // kir* in dead languages, too. For example, in Sumerian language a word *kur* has the meanings “mountain, high place” [13], *ku // kur // ku-ur* means “stone” [38], *qu* “land” [13] and *ki* “land, the earth” [13]. Halloran supposes that a word *kur* “mountain” derived from the word combination of *ki* “land” + *ur* “mountain pass” [13]. We can observe the traces of this root morpheme in ancient mythological texts and in other dead languages. In Egyptian mythology *Gor* is “God of sky”, and *qer // qerr* is “sky, heaven” [6], and in the ancient Urartu language *qiura // qira* meant “the Earth” [27].

### 3 Results

\**Ku* root morpheme has a lot of derivatives both in Turkic and non-Turkic languages. The words *kira* meant “field, arable” [18], and *kurqaq* accordingly meant “land” used in ancient Uyghur language [18]. They are also derived from this root morpheme. Let us compare: *Mari kires*, in *Mansi keras* “highland” [23], in other Komi languages: *quryiv* “hill, highland” [23], in the language of Siberian Tatars *kira* “arable, field” [40], in Albanian *karpe* “rock”, in Bulgarian dialect *karpi* “rock” [28], in Kirghiz language *kara* “hill”, in Kirghiz dialects *kara* “the part of the mountain not covered with snow” [28], in Estonian *kuruk* “small highland” [28]. Analogical parallel facts in the languages belonging to different systems indicated that a-u-i vowel transitions in *kir* stem caused formation of new stems. In other words, phonetic variants in of this root word played the decisive role in formation of ancient words. Historically, semantic

differentiation of different meanings occurred in the nostratic root *kir // kur* in the meaning “land”: The semantics of this root may be explained by the following scheme:

The semantics of “fortress, town, village: in ancient Turkic languages *karşı* meant “fortress, palace” [30], in Bulgarian language the word *kar* had the meaning “town, fortress, fortification” [28]. Probably, previously the semantics “fortress”, then the meanings “town, village” were formed. At the same time it is important to take into consideration ethnographic factors in this semantic transition. Let us compare the meanings of this root in Turkic languages *qala* “fortification” — *kale* “town”. In the Komi languages *kar* “town” [23], in Permian languages *kar* “dwelling place, town” [28], in Finno-Ugric languages *kar* “town”, in Chuvash language *kar* “settlement”. Fedotov connects the root of this word with ancient Indian and European languages. He offers to compare this stem with Saxon *gard* “fence”, Latvian *hortus* “garden”, ancient German *gard* “surrounding place”, ancient Ireland *corre* “fence” [9]. However, this stem is of nostratic origin. We should remind that from theoretical point of view, k-g-h sound alternations are natural sound alternations. Let us have a look at the other analogical facts: Tibetan *qar* “domicile, camp”, Khett *qurta* “town, fortress” [21], Mongolian *qer* “camp”, Arabian *qarya* “village”, *qura* “villages”, Lezghin *хьур* “village”, Mongolian *xurə* “fenced location, monastery”, ancient Persian *gird* “fortress”, ancient Egyptian *khar* “quarter of a street, town or village” [6].

The semantics of “forest, garden”: in Mongolian languages *kerü* means “a small forest, a forest behind the mountain” [35]. In Turkic dialects *qür* “woodlands, area, an area covered with bushes” [35], in dialects of Turkish language *koru* means “a place covered with bushes”, “a small forest”, even *xur* “a forest”. Let us compare: Lithuanian *giria // gire* “a forest” [10], ancient German *qarto* “a garden”, ancient Slavic *\*qord* “a garden”, in Slavic languages: Bulgarian *qora* “a forest”, Serbian *qora* “a forest on the mountain”; Lithuanian *qiria* “forest” [30], ancient Russian *qora* “highland covered with forest, peak” [22]. In etymological basis of these words also stands the morpheme *kur*.

The semantics of “mountain, hill, highland, pass”: in Turkic languages *kur // ker* means “mountain, highland”, in Russian *qora* means “mountain”, in ancient Prusk *garbis* – “mountain”, in ancient Indian *giri* – “hill, mountain”, in Arabian *qara* – “hill” [28], in ancient Russian – *qor* “above” [22]. In Turkic toponyms *karka* means “mountain ridge” [28], in Ukrainian *qorqan* means “highland, mountain chain” [30], in Kazakh *karqar* means “high mountain”, in Turkish *kıran* means “mountain ridge, hill”, in Mari *kir* means “mountain” [23], in ancient Indian *giri*, in “Avesta” *gairi* means “mountain” [10], in ancient Indian-Persian languages *giri // gairi*, Yagnob *yar* [30] “mountain” [11], in Udin *gorpun* means “ravine, abyss, valley” [12], in Persian *qariva* “hill”, Umbrella *ukar* “mountain” [4], in Sami *xur* means “mountain”, in Georgian *qora* means “a mountain”, in Polish *qorá* means “mountain”, in Czech *hora*, in Udmurt *qurez* means “mountain”, in Lithuanian *qiria*, in Khakass *xurlay* means “mountain, hill” [40], in Evenk *kirqin* “highland” [15], in Komi-Permyak *kir* means “a mountain”, in Mari *kurək* means “a mountain”, in Tajik *kir* means “highland” [28], in Tungus — Manjur languages *kira* means “mountain chain”, in Komi-Ziryán *kurək // kərək* means “a mountain”, in the Bashkir language *kıraz* means “mountain chain”, in Slovenian *kar* means “highland” [28], in Nanaian *xure* means “mountain”, in Talysh *ku* means “mountain”, in ancient Chinese *qiu* means “a hill” [33], in Egyptian *qrr* means “hill” [28], in Greek *kari* means “highland, peak” [28].

The semantics of “rock, stone”: As the notions mountain and stone are close to each other, it is natural that the root morpheme *kir* in some languages means “mountain”, and in the other languages means “stone”. Let us have a look at the facts, in Mari *ku* means “stone” [23], in Alban *kur* means “stone”, in Hungarian *ko* means “stone”, in Hamito-Semitic languages *\*go* means “stone, mountain” [29], in Alban *karpë* means “rock” [30], in Celt *kar*, in Frank *karpe*, in Romanian *karşi* means

“stone”, in Daghestan languages: Avar *kuuru* means “rock”, in Alban *gur* means “rock, stone” [10], in ancient Indian *karkara* means “stone” [39], in Indo-European languages *ker* means “rock, stone” [15], in Indian-Iran languages *giri // gari* means “mountain, stone” [11], in Urarthu *qarbi* means “stone” [27].

The semantic of “yard”: in Sumerian *kiri* means “yard” [38], in the Azerbaijani dialects *kora* means “a place for keeping lambs”, *qora* means “fenced yard”, in Hamito — Semitic languages *ga'ur* means “yard” [29], in Udin language *qa* means “arable, garden” [12], Svan *qor* “door, yard”. In the language of Siberian Tatars *kura* means “yard, palace, a place for keeping horses” [40]. The word *kura* derived from the morpheme *kir // kur*.

The semantics of “field, steppe, plain”: in the Azerbaijani dialects, according to the reflex x // k *xir* means “melons, gravel, garden beds”, in Turkic languages *kir* means “field, steppe” (e.g., *bozkır* “dessert”) [8], in Khotan *çer* “steppe” [36], in Bulgarian *kir* means “field” [28]. According to laryngeal theory, *hu* in Urartu language in the meaning “field, valley” [27] due to the reflex k // h is also of the same root. Reconstruction of the word in the form of CV (consonant+vowel) is more real. In the dialects of the Azerbaijani language *xir* means “place for planting paddy”. h // x // k // q reflexes in morphonological development of the analysed word caused the formation of new allomorphs in different languages.

The semantics of “edge, coast, bay, corner”: in Komi *kirty* means “edge”, in Karachai-Balkar *kirty* means “edge, side”, in Uyghur dialects *quruq* means “bank of the river” [37], in Tungus — Manjur languages *qiri* means “coast, riverbed” [7], in Arabian *kurniş* means “coast”, in Turkish *kayı* means “coast”, in Celtic *kurro* means “corner”, in French dialects *kor* means “corner, edge, side” [24], in Orok *kerani* means “coast, country” [15], in the language of Siberian Tatars *korqa* means “coast”, in Finnish *karel* means “rock”, in Vepsic *kar* means “bay”, in Afghan *karay* means “bay, port”, in Tamil *karai* means “coast, edge” [28], in Uyghur dialects *quruq* means “bank of the river” [37], in Tungus-Manjur *qiri* means “coast, source of the river” [7], in Dravid languages *kar(a)* means “coast, country” [16], in Korean *ka* means “coast” [31].

The semantics of “road”, “by — street”: in Arabian *qirid* means “road” [26], in Latin *kuruus* means “by-street” [24], in Arami, Akkad *urh* means “road” [26], here the reduction of k is also observed. In Altaic languages *\*giru* means “road”, in Korean *kirh*, protokoreyan *kirh* means “road” [36].

The semantics of “grave, hollow, depth”: in Persian *qor* means “grave”, in Komi means *qu*, in Udmurt *qu* means “grave” [23], in Tatar language *qür* means “grave”, in Turkish dialects *qar* means “grave” [1], in ancient Indian — Aryan languages *karta* means “hollow, hole” [25]. In Arabian *qur* means “depth”, *q'ar* “depth of the sea, generally depth”, in Udin *kur* means “hollow, well, hole” [12], in old Uyghur *qarum* means “well, hole”.

The meaning “earth” of the root *xar* in Khanti-Mansi language belonging to Ural languages actually reflects prasemantics of this root morpheme. In ancient Sumer mythology *ki* is also a “God of Earth”. Existence of the words *kur // kir* in the meaning “mountain” in Turkic languages and *qor // qora* in the meaning “mountain” in Slavic languages gives basis for restoration the archetype of them in the form of *\*ku*. Because, historically, majority of the stems with CVC (consonant+vowel+consonant) structure derived from the stems having CV (consonant+vowel) structure. In the Azerbaijani dialects, the word *qr* in the meaning “uncultivated area” is also used. All these facts prove that in the nuclear semantics of the root morpheme *kir // kur // ur* stands the meaning “land, place”. In different languages there are derivative words derived from this nostratic root. Trubachov, studying etymology of Slavic languages, indicates semantic relationship of ancient Indian words *qiri*, Slavic *qora* in the meaning “mountain” with Albanian *qur* in the meaning “stone”, Lithuanian *qiria* in the meaning “forest”, reconstructs archetype of this word in the following forms: *quor*, *quer* “mountain” [39]. It is supposed that the word *xıram* “sandy place, abyss” used in the dialects of Azerbaijani language, derived from this stem on

the basis of specific k-x alternation. There are words in the following languages which derived from this stem: in the language of Siberian Tatars *kirlan* in the meaning “mountain pass”, in Altaic language *qurlan* in the meaning “mountainous area, highland”, in written Mongolian language *kira* in the meaning “mountain chain”. There is a mountain chain called *Kiraka* in Russia, in the territory where Bashkir Turks live.

Generally, in this stem word took place the transition to the meanings “mountain, stone, hill, highland”, “border, country, land, forest” in different languages.

#### 4 Discussion

In dialects of the Tatar language *kir* conveys the meaning “planting bed, side, near”. In Turkish dialects the variants *kıran* // *kıra* // *kırağ* // *karav* // *kireş* have the meaning of “circle, surrounding area, edge”, “mountain ridge, slope, hill”, *karac* “land”, “forest, a place nearby, horizon” [2], *kıra* “east, rock” [2], *kir* “olive-grove” [2]. Thus, the words *karak* // *qıraq* in the meaning “edge”, *kırı* // *kıyı* in the meaning “coast” in Turkic languages have morphological compliance with these words. Historically the change and differentialization of semantics were quite typical for root words.

Up to the XIII century there was a word *kuri* “west” in Turkic languages. Clauson compared this word with *yr* in the meaning “place” and it was not accidental [8]. Let us have a look at other parallels: in Chinese *qiū* means “hill, kurgan”, *qū* means “area, territory, province” [5], *xī* means “large bare hill” [5], *qu* means “large hill, mount” [5], in ancient Chinese *qū* meant “hill, kurgan” [33]. These analogical facts help to restore the archetype. It allows us to suppose that in some languages the last consonant omitted at the result of reduction or remains in the function of the affix added later undergoing to fusionalisation, i.e. stem+affix “fossilization”. We support the second point of view.

In Turkic languages the words *kir* expressing “steppe, country”, *kur* // *ur* in the meaning “mountain, highland, hill” were formed at the result of flexion (ablaut) and it is one of the ancient word formation means. In ancient Uyghur Turkish the word *kıra* was used in the meaning of “field, planting area” [18]. In ancient Sumerian mythology *ki* is also “God of Earth”. This stem word stands at the etymological basis of the word we analyse, i.e. in Sumerian language *\*ki* morpheme in the meaning “place” can be considered the etymon of the stem *kir* // *kur* // *kuy* // *hur* // *xur* // *ur*.

As it is seen, in different languages an ancient stem conveying the meaning of place undergone transformation and transition to different semantics. In some languages this ancient stem is used with umlaut *v*. It is a bit difficult to prove that the sounds *h*, *v*, *k*, *q*, *x* in umlaut (in the beginning of the word) to be protetic sounds. Actually, these sounds are reflexes of laryngeal consonant *\*k* in modern languages. This thought is also based on laryngeal theory.

According to our conclusion, in the source of all the aforesaid words stands the word *ki* // *kir* “place, land” in Sumerian language. In Lak language belonging to Daghestan languages there also exist the word *kiri* “land, place” [19]. In some research works is indicated a connection between the words *kir* // *kir* and *yer* “place” [20]. The thoughts that the words *kir* and *yer* have the same source confirm our research. Because, k-y spontaneous transition in Turkic languages is being observed in several root morphemes.

In the world mythology *qor* // *xor* is “highland, sky”, and *qora* is “centre of the world”. In ancient written Turkic sources it is also possible to come across this meaning of the word *kir*. For example, in the source known in Turkological literature as Houtsmo dictionary the word *kir* was given in the meaning of “destiny, sky, heaven” [14]. In mythological concept there is no doubt about a logical relation of semantics of the words “highland, sky, mountain, God”.

In ancient Indian-Aryan languages was used a root morpheme *ka* “place, territory” [25]. So, the root of this word should be restored namely as *\*ku* “place, territory”. An initial prasemantics was preserved in the word *xar* “place” in Khanti language belonging to Ural languages [7]. Here traditional *k* // *x* reflex is traced. It is supposed that this word is the allomorph of the stem *ki* // *kir* “place” in Sumerian language. It is not accidental that *kur* in Sumerian language also conveys the meaning “country”. In the Chuvash language *xur* means “village”, in Greek *xora* means “country”. As it is seen from the above mentioned facts, the words with different semantics were established in the world languages from *kur* // *xur* // *qur* // *ur* stem and *\*ku* root.

#### 5 Conclusion

As a conclusion, we can say that the etymology of the morpheme *\*ku* and its derivatives up to now were not explained correctly. This nostratic stem with “place, land, space” prasemantics undergone phonosemantic decomposition in the languages of different systems, as well as in Turkic languages and there took place morphological changes. Our research proves that isomorphs of the root morpheme *\*ku* spread in different languages in the form of distinguishing phono-variants. Namely phonetic variety caused phonosemantic differentialization in this stem. Dozens of words with the meanings “place, land” were formed from this ancient root morpheme. Semantic development of this ancient root word was mainly in the direction of “land — mountain — stone-peak — forest — settlement-country — coast — side-edge — planting bed — field-steppe”.

It is most likely to restore archetype of the root morpheme we have researched in the form of *\*ku*. Archetype of the word can be restored on the basis of the following root words: *ki* “place” in Sumerian language [13], *ka* “place, land” in Indian-Ari languages [25], *qa* “place, land, domicile” in Udin language, one of the most ancient languages of the Caucasus [12], *qaa* “hill, highland” in ancient Egyptian language [6], *gi* “high place” [6], *qi* “field” [6], in Chinese *qū* “territory, area, province” [5], in Oroch language *xo* “hill, highland” [7].

Here we can conclude that the last consonant *-r-* has a “fossilized” affix function in this stem. Etymon can be reconstructed as *\*ku*, allomorphs as *\*ka* // *\*ku* // *\*ki* // *\*qa* // *\*hu* // *\*xu* prasemantics as “place, land, space”.

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**Primary Paper Section: A**

**Secondary Paper Section: AI**