



# The Etymology Of The Word Qalpoq And Its Interpretation In Altaic Languages And Dialects

Toshboyeva Dilnavoz

Basical doctoral student at JSPU, Uzbekistan

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**Abstract:** This article presents a comparative analysis of the etymology of the term “qalpoq”—its origin, interpretations in Altaic languages and dialects, the historical development of this headgear terminology, and its transformations across dialects using Altaic dialectal data as examples. The study is based on linguistic theory, historical sources, and the examination of lexical units specific to various dialects.

**Keywords:** qalpoq, töpä, tebetej, “laxtak,” kalip, yopqich, qalbaṅ, “grechnevik,” “srezok,” Altaic languages.

**Introduction:** Most names for headgear derive from words denoting “head” and “the top part of the head.” In Turkic languages, for instance, the “top part of the head” is called tepö (-ü), and from this root various forms meaning “headgear” have developed: in Old Uzbek literary language tobi, in Ottoman Turkish topi, in (modern) Turkish doppa “headgear” (Gülensoy I, 299), in Uzbek doppi “a round cap, usually with lining and often quilted with cotton, consisting of a crown, side and brim, decorated or plain” (O’TIL I, 243), in Uzbek dialects toppi “do’ppi,” “qalpoq” (Jo’rayev 152), tüpi “a round, pointed girls’ headdress,” in Uyghur dialects töpä “winter headgear” (Nadjip 339), and in Kyrgyz topu “a thin, lightweight cap” (KTTS 608). Likewise, in Turkish dialects tepelik “decorative headgear” (14.04.08), in Kyrgyz tebetej “a fur-lined hat trimmed with fox, sable or beaver fur” (KTTS 585), in Kazakh tebetej “men’s headgear,” in Tatar tübätäj “do’ppi” (Tat.RS 580), and in Bashkir tübätäj “do’ppi” (BRS 556) are also attested. Compare: in written Mongol monuments tobi “a head covering worn under a helmet” (L. MTS II, 1251), and in Mongolian tov “a skullcap,” “a knitted cap worn under a helmet or hard hat” (MRS 401).

In EDAL, the Turkic tepö(-ü) “top part of the head” is recorded as a cognate form with Mongolian tab, tebeg “a lock of hair tied to a metal ring (for a game),” “forelock”; Tungus-Manchu teb “rag, tassel,” “a tail attached to a shaman’s belt”; Korean tapar “bundle, knot”; and Japanese tampua “a hair knot at the nape of the neck.” Their Proto-Altai reconstruction is given as *ṭépá* “a lock of hair, forelock.”

Headgear has held a special place in the history of the Altaic peoples. Nomadic peoples used it as protection from the sun, cold, rain and wind, as well as a kind of shield in battle.

Qalpoq is an outer headgear made of felt, sewn so that the top part comes to a point. In Old Uzbek literary language the form qalpoq occurs; in Turkic kalpak; in Turkmen galpaq; in Uyghur qalpaq; in Tatar qalpaq; in Kyrgyz qalpaq; in Kazakh qalpaq; in Nogai qalpaq; and in (modern) Uzbek qalpaq (ESTY 5, 234–235). There are various opinions regarding the origin of the word kalpak mentioned above. In particular, T. Dadaxonova, discussing the etymology of qalpoq, notes that this word derives from the verb qoplamoq “to cover” and has undergone morphological and phonetic changes of the type qalpoq < qoplamoq, qoploq, qalpoq (T. Dadaxonova 1963, p. 80).

According to M. Asomiddinova, in ancient times, when artistic woven items had not yet appeared, people used to cover their heads with leather or leaves. This item was called qoploq. Later, when people adopted a settled way of life, various types of sewn, patterned and sumptuous headgear made of woven fabric emerged, and the earlier name qoploq, by way of metathesis, took the form qoploq > qalpoq. The root qop here means “cover for the head,” that is, an object that covers the head (M. Asomiddinova 1981, p. 35).

M. Khabichev states that the word qalpoq consists of qal “to remain” and the suffix -paq (Khabichev M., Karachayev, 1971, p. 148). L. Levitskaya criticizes this interpretation for its phonetic weakness (namely, the vowel length in Turkic qäl “to remain”) and for the uncertainty of the supposed base word (Левитская Л. С.). H. Eren argues that kalpak comes from kalip “lid,” “cover” + the diminutive suffix -(a)k, and attempts to substantiate his view by pointing to the existence, in Turkish dialects, of the word kalip with the meaning “lid,” “cover” (Eren H. 1999, p. 203). Sh. Rakhmatullaev explains the structure of qalpoq as formed from the verb qali- “to rise, to be raised” in Old Turkic, with the addition of the suffix -ba to form a noun, and then the diminutive suffix -q (Рахматуллаев Ш. 2000, p. 518).

M. Räsänen (Räsänen M. 1969, p. 227) compares qalpaq and related forms with Mongolian qalbaṅ “a large, four-cornered women’s hat,” reconstructed

earlier by G. Ramstedt (Ramstedt G. J. 1935, p. 164). Later this interpretation is continued in EDAL, where the lexeme qalpoq is treated as genetically identical with qalbaṅ in written Mongolian monuments, with Kalmyk halwṅ “women’s hat” (KW 164); with Korean kok:al “a pointed, tied cap,” kal-mo “a hood worn over headgear in the rain,” and Old Korean kòskár “a pointed, tied cap” (Liu 73; KED 45, 134). Their proto-form is reconstructed as *\*kàla* (k<sup>h</sup>-, -e-) “a type of headgear.” However, for a number of reasons, this reconstruction cannot be regarded as well-founded.

Firstly, the primary form of the word kalpak is kabalak < kapalak, which begins to appear in written monuments from the 15th century onward.

Sources note that the gravestones of Turkish soldiers martyred in the Battle of Çanakkale (1915) were carved in the shape of the “kabalak” caps the soldiers wore in battle. Accordingly, it is reasonable to say that kalpak < kabalak < kapalak < *\*kap(a)*- “to cover,” “to overlay.” Indeed, most headgear names derive from verbs carrying the same “to cover” (compare: *\*börk* < *börü-* // *bürü-* “to cover,” “to wrap”; *\*bürünçük* < *bürü-* “to cover,” “to wrap”).

Secondly, the Mongolian word qalbaṅ “large, four-cornered women’s hat” developed from the root qalbaji- “to be flat and wide.”

Thirdly, the Korean kal-to “a hood-like cap worn over the headgear in rainy weather” had the Old Korean form kat-to, which goes back to kat “hat, cap” (PKD I, 118) and the Chinese to meaning “cap” (PKD I, 2155). Finally, the Korean lexeme kok:al also cannot be included in this group. The word kok:al means “a pointed, tied cap worn by Buddhist clerics or shamans” (PKD I, 411) and is formed from koskal < kos < kot < kol “head” (KPS 52) plus the suffix -al. It is phonetically and semantically more accurate to compare Korean kok:al with Turkic kökil, kökül and with kökül, kökel, gökül attested in written Mongolian monuments, meaning “a lock of hair left on the top of the head after shaving,” “horse’s mane” (L. MTS I, 616, 766–767): kökil // kökül < kök “sky” (DTS 312) + the suffix -(i)l // -(ü)l. The Turkic kökül was borrowed into Persian as kəkül “a lock of hair,” and into Russian and other Slavic languages as куколь “the custom of cutting hair in religious rites,” “a pointed cap worn by monks.”

It is therefore more appropriate to relate Turkic kalpak < kalapak < kap(a)- “to cover,” “to overlay” genetically to the following Altaic word units: in written Mongolian monuments qabta-ya(n) (L 899), Khalkha xavtga, Kalmyk xartəxə, xартыə, in Ordos GabtarGa, in Dagur xartag “bag, sack” (KW 167, 180); in Old Japanese kabut(w)o, in the Tokyo dialect kabuto, in the Kyoto dialect kábútò, in the Kagoshima dialect kabuto “helmet” (JLTT 431).

The Proto-Altaic form is reconstructed as k[ā]p`á “to cover,” “covering, bag.”

We have examined the views of our scholars and great writers on the term qalpoq, including reflections on its dialectal variants and on the history of its formation. One can see that they date the use of the term qalpoq to different periods, but mainly to the time after the 15th century. However, in their monograph “Языковая репрезентация понятия «головной убор»” (“Linguistic Representation of the Concept ‘Headgear’”), Kuzminova I. A. and Loktionova N. M. present a number of ideas about which historical period this type of headgear belongs to. They note that one of the earliest famous kolpak-type caps is the Phrygian cap, which has a triangular shape with the tip bent forward. This very cap became a symbol of freedom in ancient times. During the Roman Empire there was the following custom: at the festival in honor of the god Saturn, masters and slaves were considered equal. On that day everyone wore the Greek pileus—a woolen cap.

Later, this custom was abandoned, and pileus caps (qalpoq) began to be worn only by workers. It was forbidden for Roman slaves to cover their heads, and if someone was granted freedom, they wore a small cap called the “cap of liberty.” Interestingly, it should be noted that from this practice came the Latin expressions *pilleum redimere* – “to obtain freedom” and *servos ad pileum vocare* – “to summon the slaves to revolt by promising them freedom” (Burovik 1991, p. 9). It is possible that in later periods the custom of raising one’s hat in greeting also originated in these ancient times and essentially meant: “I am your servant and ready to serve you.”

Caps also indicated the owner’s property and social status: a peasant would wear “a sheepskin coat made by his own hands” on his head (Burovik 1991, p. 20), a “grechnevik, srezok” cap (Yakovenko 1993, p. 438), or on holidays a coarse woolen cap decorated with ribbons. Wealthy people, on the other hand, had caps adorned with satin, fur and precious stones.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we can safely call the qalpoq a headgear of global significance: the sources above show that it has been not only the national headgear of the Uzbek people, but is also connected with the Altaic languages and even, in ancient times, with Europe. As time passed, changes in the social environment influenced the transformation of the qalpoq, that is, its gradual refinement: at first it was a simple woolen cap worn by slaves, but later it turned into a headgear decorated with fur and precious stones or wrapped with a turban around it, worn by representatives of the upper strata

of society. Today, this term is used as the name of the national headgear of the Uzbek people, mainly in the Bukhara and Samarkand regions.

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