

Re: Etymology of "Ketzer"

Source: <http://sci.tech--archive.net/Archive/sci.lang/2006-06/msg00090.html>

- *From:* "Neeraj Mathur" <neemathur@xxxxxxxxxxxx>
 - *Date:* Sat, 3 Jun 2006 02:23:50 +0100
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"Heidi Graw" <heidigraw@xxxxxxx> wrote in message
[news:AH4gg.223546\\$P01.64478@xxxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:news:AH4gg.223546$P01.64478@xxxxxxxxxxxx)

"Neeraj Mathur" <neemathur@xxxxxxxxxxxx> wrote in message
[news:e5qing\\$5qo\\$1@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:news:e5qing$5qo$1@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx)

Neeraj wrote:

Well this is obviously wrong – the idea that a word play based on the Modern English plural of 'Cathar' to the Modern English words 'cat' and 'arse' could yield a German word like 'Ketzer' is clearly ridiculous, as you rightly say.

All right, Neeraj...just to be clear in my own mind: Does the word Ketzer have anything to do with the word "cat," "Katze" or "Kater?" Because this seems to be the issue in this other forum regarding the work "Ketzer". For example: Someone who keeps a bunch of cats might have been considered a "Kätzer". It's not too far a leap to go from "Kätzer" to "Ketzer." Witches and cats tend to be associated together. One can't be a witch unless one owns a cat, preferably a black one.

I think that the word has nothing to do with 'Katze'. It sounds to me like this is a classic folk-etymology, as Brian's data further suggests.

Heidi wrote:

Going from quetschen to Ketzen appears more reliable and realistic. If anyone else has more information to add about this word, I'd love to hear about it.

Re: Etymology of "Ketzer"

Neeraj wrote:

This I find less plausible than you do. There is no reason why 'quetschen' should give 'Ketzer' at all – the sound changes are highly unlikely, and you certainly wouldn't get both reflexes. It could only work if there was a double borrowing – if another language borrowed 'quetschen' or its ancestor, lost the labial element and moved the affricate, and then this was later re-borrowed back into German. If this were the case, it should be relatively easy to find the other language, and my guess is that the dictionaries would know about it. It's not an uncommon scenario, but it's also far more complicated than seems likely on the evidence; I certainly wouldn't commit to this myself unless I knew what the intermediary language was.

Yes, it's seems a bit of a stretch. ;–)

Frustrating that Brian should seem to have the intermediary despite all that! But oh well, it's happened before I suppose; I'm still not convinced that this is the truth, although Brian's giving us a Low German 'ketser' beside 'quetser' suddenly makes it seem a lot more possible.

Neeraj wrote:

Based on the evidence presented here, the most likely seems that it comes from 'Katharos', from a language that pronounced the stem [katar–] (which could well have been as the name for the group). The change of [t] > [ts] (written <tz>) is absolutely regularly in this position in German, as part of the High German sound shift. With an early enough date for the borrowing (before 800 I think) the data fits perfectly.

Where the analysis you referred to was wrong was in pretending this was some sort of pun; that is clearly the view of the uninformed (with a bit of linguistic nationalism and/or linguistic racism to boot). But the evidence does seem to support the idea that that was the origin of the word.

I find your last sentence in the above paragraph a bit confusing. Given what has been posted about this word Ketzer, what is your best guess of this word's origin?

My best guess is that it comes from 'katharos', and that this derivation has nothing to do with either cats or butts. Brian's blown apart my chronology (and exposed my gaping knowledge hole about the history of northern and eastern Europe in the Middle Ages), and I'm a little bit considered about how the affrication could have happened (t > ts), but if I had to guess that's what I'd say. I suppose that really what we need is more evidence to establish the timelines.

Re: Etymology of "Ketzer"

Neeraj Mathur