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On the Terms Concerning Longevity in Khitan and Jurchen Languages[1]

Longevity is one of the predominant motifs in Chinese culture. The typical character for the word is 壽*shòu*, although it can also be represented by other expressions such as 萬歲*wànsuì*. The concept has had a deep influence on the neighboring Altaic peoples.

The earliest native Altaic writing system to date—Khitan script—includes many mentions of longevity (either in Khitan documentation or in Chinese transliteration), as well as in the Jurchen writing system.

1. "Longevity" Recorded in Khitan Scripts

The extant Khitan writing system includes two different types of scripts, both of which are Siniform (that is, the form of their characters are based on Chinese): the so-called Khitan macroscript (大字*dàzì*, literally "Large Script") and the Khitan microscript (小字*xiǎozì*, literally "Small Script"). The former style of writing is logo-syllabic, similar to Chinese logography; the latter is logo-phonetic, derived from the Uighur abjad spelling system, in which single components are called protoscript (原字*yuánzì*, literally "Primitive Script"). Although in Khitan scripts more undeciphered documentations exist than deciphered ones, native recordings concerning longevity can be found in the Khitan writing systems.

First of all, reign titles are recorded uniquely in two Khitan scripts. One of the Khitan-Liao reign titles refers directly to the concept of longevity as "Longevity Prosperity" (壽昌*Shòuchāng*, 1095–1100).[2] In the extant Khitan macroscript (Kma.) records, this reign title is written as 夬 已沓 (Liu 1998a: 221; EYQ 25, Liu 2006: 60). In the extant Khitan microscript (Kmi.) records, this reign title is written as 仝朽 (Chinggeltei 2002: 142–143) or 乂仝朽 (Chinggeltei 2002: 163).

1. All Khitan and Jurchen words appearing together with the native graphic recordings retain Romanized transcriptions of capitalized logograms and lowercase phonograms. It must be noted that, rather than using Khitan font software, I created all of the Khitan and Jurchen characters in this paper (basing them on the Chinese character font in the computer); accordingly, these characters may appear differently than those commonly found in modern media. Chinese characters appear either with the untoned italic pinyins for Altaic transliterations or with the toned italic pinyins for semantic notations.
2. All English translations of Chinoiserie nomenclature in this paper, if not noted otherwise, refer to Kane (2009).

Per Urales ad Orientem. Iter polyphonicum multilingue.
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Since Kma. 𗼇 and Kmi. 𗼈 both mean "great", these Khitan recordings suggest that the reign title "壽昌*Shòuchāng*" refers to "great longevity". Likewise, common reference is made by both Kma. 𗼇𗴲 and Kmi. 𘓱𘓳.

The other reign title of Khitan-Liao concerning longevity is "Bright Happiness" (景福*jǐngfú*, 1031), which is recorded in Kmi. 𗼈 𘓱𘓳 (Liu 2001: 235; EDCY 13, 32, Chinggeltei 2002: 116) with a literal translation of "eternal longevity" (Gai et al. 2008: 87). It is far from obvious that Kane (2009: 159) was ignorant of the preceding explanation.

In fact, this reign title includes an allusion from verses found in the *Shijing* (詩經), the earliest existing collection of Chinese poems (ca. 1000–500 BC):

> Offer in sacrifice, with prayer, / That Chow may hold in brightening way, / Nor o'er its fortunes come decay.[3] (Legge 1876: 360)

In the underlined part of the citation, one finds a reflection of the original meaning of the term "景福*jǐngfú*". However, in relation to this Khitan-Liao reign title, the Chinese characters "景*jǐng*" and "福*fú*" should also be alluded to. The following verses are also found in *Shijing*:

> And brightest happiness / thus crown *latest days*.[4] (Legge 1876: 308)

> Great king, *for ever may you live* / with brightening happiness![5] (Legge 1876: 308)

The literal meaning appears here in the underlined part of the citation, and is closely related to the meaning of the italicized section. Therefore, "brightening happiness" must be a metaphor for "long life".

Identical or similar Kmi. spellings also appear on some Khitan coins and on a bronze mirror excavated in Baodi (寶坻) County, Tianjin (天津):

> 1) Khi. inscription on coins: 𘓱𘓳 𘓱 𗹦𗵘 𗴲𗴷 "福壽永昌*fúshòu yǒngchāng*" (Chen 1985: 72)

> 2) Khi. inscription on Baodi bronze mirror: 𘓱 𘓱𘓳 𗹦𗵘 𗴲𗴷 "壽長福德 *shòucháng fúdé*" (Liu et al. 1982: 311)

In the above inscriptions, 𘓱𘓳 𘓱 and 𘓱 𘓱𘓳 reflect the concept of "long life" (analogous to Kmi. recording of the reign title "景福*jǐngfú*"). Since it is now

3. The original Chinese verses are: 以享以祀，以介景福 (《詩·周頌·潛》).
4. The original Chinese verses are: 壽考維祺，以介景福 (《詩·大雅·行葦》).
5. The original Chinese verses are: 君子萬年，介爾景福 (《詩·大雅·既醉》).

known that Kmi. 𐰴 means "eternal", Kmi. 𐰃𐰍 (together with Kma. 𐰚𐰀[6]) can be understood as referring semantically to "longevity".

As the Khitan microscript is somewhat phonographic, present deciphering (Chinggeltei 2002) indicates that some protoscripts have been reconstructed as 𐰃*s (No. 2.244, Kane 2009: 64) and 𐰍*en (No. 2.140, Kane 2009: 51). Accordingly, the short spelling becomes 𐰃𐰍*s-en.

Some common indigenous personal names in the Khitan-Liao Dynasty also carry the meaning of longevity. In Chinese transliteration, 乙辛*yixin* / 乙信[7]*yixin* (HLD, Yu 1998: 333) and意辛*yixin* (EYN 21, Shi et al 2001: 62) have been reconstructed as *isin, cognate with Mo. esen "bright" (Sun et al. 2008: 122).

A prerequisite correction to the Kma. expression is in order. Liu et al. (2005: 236) erroneously thought that the parallel forms of Chi. 乙信隱*yixinyin* represented Kma. 𐰋𐰚𐰀𐰾. In fact, 𐰢𐰋𐰚𐰀𐰾 (EYXn 9) should be compared with 𐰢𐰋𐰀𐰴𐰇 (EYXn 22),[8] as it is indicative of the character 𐰋 agglutinating to the preceding character 𐰢 "son".

There is sufficient historical data to prove a connection between this *yixin* and Kmi. 𐰃𐰍 and Kma. 𐰚𐰀. Here the Kmi. spelling 𐰃𐰍 (just like the Uighur abjad) would be revised as *(e)s-en = *esen;[9] this seems more in alignment with the paralleling Kma. 𐰚𐰀*es-en. Based on the phonetic reconstruction of 𐰚, it is erroneous to present Kma. 𐰚𐰇𐰏 (EYXn 18) as being equivalent to the Chinese transliteration "闢離剌*pilila*" (Liu 1996: 38; Liu 1998b: 333).

As for the Mongolic item "esen", there is a probable etymological explanation: esen "healthy, good health; calm, quiet" < Uig. äsän "in good health, sound, safe" < Pahl. 's'n [âsân] "at rest, easy, peaceful". It is related to the personal name Ḥasan, which is common in Arabic and Persian languages (Rybatzki 2006: 176–177). This connection suggests that Khitan, the so-called "Para-Mongolic" (Janhunen 2003: 391–402), had been partly influenced by Near Eastern culture, as well as by the significant Uighur compacts.

In addition, there exist several transliterations of the Chinese character 壽 *shòu* in Khitan microscript: 𐰇𐰉𐰖*š-eu-ú, appearing in the following personal names: 𐰀𐰓 𐰇𐰉𐰖*d-ei š-eu-ú for "德壽*déshòu*", 𐰢𐰢𐰢 𐰇𐰉𐰖*p-iá-ŋ š-eu-ú for "彭壽*péngshòu*", 𐰋𐰴𐰢 𐰇𐰉𐰖*h-i-ŋ š-eu-ú for "慶壽*qìngshòu*", 𐰠 𐰇𐰉𐰖 *žuŋ š-eu-ú for "榮壽*róngshòu*", and 𐰚𐰴 𐰇𐰉𐰖*č-aŋ š-eu-ú for "長壽*chángshòu*" (Chinggeltei 2002: 148, 152, 160, 162, 164).[10]

6. In Kma., there often appears a ligature of two single characters. In EXPl 1, there appears a ligatured character 𐰓 (Yan 1988: 28; Liu 1998b: 327); in fact, however, according to the rubbing this character should be recovered as 𐰋𐰚 (Feng 1988: 34, 35). Thus, 𐰚𐰀 appears once in EXPl 1.
7. This Chinese transliteration also appears in the Chinese version of EYXn.
8. Toyoda (1995: 302) deciphered these two Kma. series, dividing the characters into some lexical sets in a correct manner (although some errors remained in the decipherment of personal names).
9. Kane (2006: 123, note 7) mentions the similarity or connection between Khi. *sen ~ Ma. se and Kmi. *isin.
10. Toyoda (1991: 105–106) had deciphered most of these Chinese words transliterated in Khitan microscript.

2. "Longevity" Recorded in Jurchen Script

The Jurchen people established their native writing system, which was based on Chinese characters and Khitan macroscript, in the early 12th century. This Jurchen script lasted until the middle of the 15th century. Among the extant Jurchen recordings, there are some items concerning "longevity":

1) Probably cognate with the above Khitan term 仐礽 for the reconstruction *s-en,[11] Jur. 爪方*se-ger "years of age" and Ma. se "age" (Aisin Gioro 2004: 96) could be retrospected up to PTung. *sē "year, age" together with some other proofs: Ul.-Na.-Orch. sē, Ud. se (EDAL 2003: 1512). In my opinion, the cited Jurchen proof sejŋ-ŋer (No.82, EDAL 2003: 1512) could be revised by EDAL's editors vis-à-vis their references to the Jurchen corpora (Grube 1896: 98; EDAL 2003: 239). In fact, EDAL's Jurchen reconstruction seems much more complicated than it was; Aisin Gioro's reconstruction seems more plausible.

2) Another direct graphic connection for the above Jurchen item lies in Jur. 方吉*gə-ən (Jin 1984: 6), which should follow the earlier phonetic reconstruction as *ger-en; see also the references to *PTung. gere-n "many, all", including the following proofs: Ma. geren "many", Ul.-Ork.-Na.-Orch. gere(n) "many/all", Ud. gele "all" (EDAL 2003: 541).

Therefore, both these Jurchen words developed themselves from Jin to Ming Dynasties: 爪方*se-ger > *se-ge, 方吉*ger-en > *ge-en.

3) Jur. 方爪方*TUMEN se-ge "long life" (No. 866, Kiyose 1977: 146), reflecting a later phonetic reconstruction, becomes a literal translation of Chi. 萬壽*wànshòu*. This is analogous to the neighboring item 圭礼屯*MIƊAN BOLO ERIN "thousand years" (No. 869, Kiyose 1977: 146), literally Chi. 千秋*qiānqiū*. The literal expressions here could offer an indirect proof to Jur. 爪方, as they are semantically close to Chi. 壽*shòu*.

All of the native documentations mentioned above suggest that the Jurchen language tended to utilize indigenous expressions to translate the exotic concept of longevity, differing sharply from the Khitan language.

3. Khitan-Jurchen "Longevity" only Transliterated in Chinese Characters

Aside from the native recordings discussed above, sporadic documentations concerning "longevity" exist in Chinese historiography.

1) In some special oral occasions, the so-called Khitan word "治夔離 *zhikuili*" can be reconstructed as *jiküli (Sun et al. 2008: 123). Furthermore, this Khitan word (with the meaning of "萬歲wànsuì") seems parallel to Jur. 尼亦 *ĴALA-γan "determination" (GJVHI 26, Aisin Gioro 2002: 178) and Ma. jalgan "living" by means of metathesis in the radical syllables. In terms of closer proofs, there are some other examples for syllabic inversion between Mongolic

11. Kane (2006: 123, note 7) realized that Kmi. *isin could be faux amis of Jur. *sege, maybe questionably.

and Tungusic languages: Mo. emegel ~ Jur. 高孛伏*en-MERGE-mei (Ulhicun's normalized transcription: *əmərgən) > *engemer ~ Ma. enggemu ~ "saddle" (Ulhicun 1998: 240); Mo. güyilesü ~ Ma. guilehe ~ Jur. 鬼及天*gui-pha-la "apricot" (Kiyose 1977: 103; Kane 1989: 204); Mo. ilama ~ Jur. 卡*IMMALA (GJS 8: 10, Ulhicun 2001: 195, 203) ~ 卡亮天*im-ma-la "mulberry" (No. 108, Kiyose 1977: 103). Based on these examples of metathesis, and on the close connections between Khitan and the Tungusic languages (Menges 1968), the Chinese transliteration 治夔離*zhikuili* in Khitan should be connected etymologically with the recorded Jurchen-Manchu cognates.

2) The so-called Jurchen word "只魯歡*zhiluhuan*" (found in some personal names in HJD) could be reconstructed as *jilhon, parallel to Ma. jalgan "living" ~ jalafan "longevity" (Sun 2004: 292). Obviously, in the Jurchen documentations there remain several cognates, such as 足亮*JALA-γan "determination" (GJVHI 26, Aisin Gioro 2002: 178), 足卡*JALA-an "generation" (GJVHI 31, Aisin Gioro 2002: 178), and 几友卡*ǰa-la-an "generation" (No. 848, Kiyose 1977: 145). These have different spellings, indicative of the diachronic nature of the Jurchen language.

Either Jur. 足亮*JALA-γan "determination" or Ma. jalgan "living" seems closer to PMo. *ǯalga- "to fasten, join", though it developed likewise from the PA. *ǯǎ́lo- "to fasten, bind, hang" (EDAL 2003: 1526). Thereafter, Proto-Mongolic influences seem hidden in the Jurchen language.

Furthermore, if both of the Khitan and Jurchen words are etymologically similar to PTung. *ǯala-n "joint, shoe straps, generation, world, plummet" (EDAL 2003: 1526) only in Chinese transliteration, it would suggest that there are difficulties with this reconstruction as regards diachronic development inside only one subfamily (e.g., Manchu-Tungusic), let alone the PA. *ǯalo "to fasten, bind, hang" (EDAL 2003: 1526).

4. Some Further Notes on the Terms for "Longevity" in Khitan and in Jurchen Languages

The Khitan and the Jurchen scripts, both Siniform under the strong influence of the Chinese writing system, sometimes indicate a bifurcated cultural heritage. The main reason for this could lie in the significant impact made by Uighur culture, with the Uighur writing system leading to the establishment of the Khitan writing system.

Both Khitan and Jurchen are important to the ancient recordings of the Altaic languages. The existence of relevant documentation in the field of multilingual historiography is sporadic, collected in native inscriptions or glossaries which have yet to be deciphered. The present Altaic manuals suffer from a lack of inclusion of the research achievements of novices, so that the ultimate conclusions are weakened. Only if there is more documentation of old Altaic languages, with multilingual data being excavated and deciphered, will the so-called Altaic Theory be acknowledged or disproved.

Abbreviations

Chi.	Chinese
EDCY	Epitaph of Deputy Commander Yelü (耶律副部署墓誌銘)
EXPl	Epitaph of Xiao Paolu (萧袍魯墓誌銘)
EYN	Epitaph of Yelü Nu (耶律奴墓誌銘)
EYQ	Epitaph of Yelü Qi (耶律祺墓誌銘)
EYXn	Epitaph of Yelü Xinie (耶律習涅墓誌銘)
GJVHI	Great Jin Victory Hill Inscription (大金得勝陀頌碑)
GJS	Glossary of Jurchen Script excavated in Xi'an Monumental Forest (西安碑林女真文字書)
HJD	History of Jin Dynasty (金史)
HLD	History of Liao Dynasty (遼史)
Jur.	Jurchen
Khi.	Khitan
Kma.	Khitan macroscript
Kmi.	Khitan microscript
Ma.	Manchu
Mo.	Mongol
Na.	Nanai
Orch.	Orochi
Ork.	Orok
PA.	Proto-Altaic
Pahl.	Pahlavi
PMo.	Proto-Mongolic
PTung.	Proto-Tungusic
Ud.	Udehe
Uig.	Uighur
Ul.	Ulcha

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