Deciphering some demonstrative pronouns in Khitan Small Script*

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During more than 80 years of study, the academic world has been able to decipher most of the Chinese borrowings among the material in the Khitan Small Script. Consequently, based on these Chinese loanwords, scholars have been able to read a number of native Khitan words, even with extreme difficulty. These words include nouns, numerals, adjectives, verbs and particles. However, there was up to now no researcher telling us which Khitan characters denote Khitan pronouns. This paper will deal with the reading of some Khitan demonstrative pronouns relying on the rules of vowel attachment and number agreement in the Khitan Small Script, introduced in my earlier research. I consider the Khitan demonstrative pronouns to be cognate of Mongolic *ede* 'these' and *tede* 'those' and Manchu [ərə] 'this' and [tərə] 'that'. The pronunciation, meaning and declension of the Khitan pronouns still remain to be explored.

Keywords: Khitan language, Khitan Small Script, demonstrative pronouns, Mongolic

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1. Introduction

The study of the pronouns is significant for Altaic studies, since it could provide evidence of the relationships between the different languages. However, in the Altaic Languages, there is always the difficulty in distinguishing the difference between personal and demonstrative pronouns.

2. Demonstrative pronouns 𘰾 (𘰿) and 𘰽

The Khitan character 𘰾 is recorded also as 𘰿 in some materials in Khitan Small Script and scholars agree that both the meaning and pronunciation of the two characters are similar. Khitan Script Research Group (1977) reads the character as [ue], as in 𘰀𘰾 𘰇𘰽 𘰁 denoting *Yue Guo Wang* 越國王.[1)]

In later research, Chinggeltei (2002) reads it as [ə]. This reading must be correct, since the character occurs frequently in Khitan personal names.

For instance, 𘰂𘰉 𘰇𘰾 denote personal name *Xiu Ge* 休哥, 𘰂𘰄 𘰆𘰿 𘰇𘰿 *Xian Sheng Ge* 賢聖哥, 𘰇𘰽 𘰇𘰿 *Gui Ge* 貴哥 and 𘰀𘰋 𘰇𘰾 *Yan Ge* 延哥. This proves that the sound of the character is, in fact, [ə].

The character 𘰾 (𘰿) occurs as a block (independent unit) in Khitan inscriptions. Liu Fengzhu et al. (2009) argue that the meaning of the character is 先 (early). However, I propose that 𘰾 (𘰿) denotes the demonstrative pronoun 'this' in the following cases:

① 𘰾 𘰏𘰐 𘰇𘰽 𘰀𘰽 𘰁 𘰃 𘰍 Han Gaoshi 3 (韓高十)
This Ling Gong's paternal great grandfather
這 令 公之 曾祖

1) The group was founded in 1975 and the members of the group are Chinggeltei, Liu Fengzhu, Chen Naixiong, Yu Baolin and Xing Fuli.

②  Yelü Dilie 6（耶律迪烈）

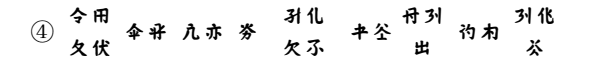
This Hende Irigin[2)]

這 痕得 夷离堇

③  Hai Tangshan 5（海棠山）

This wife's child

這 妻子之 子

④  Gu Yelü 9（故耶律）

Dirun general this prime minister's male children among third

（General Dirun, the third son of this prime minister）

迪伦[3)] 將 軍 這 宰相之 男 孩子 中的 第三

As demonstrated above, we can conclude that the character  denotes the demonstrative pronoun 'this' and is pronounced [ə]. The sound and the meaning both provide evidence of their relationship to Mongolic languages. The following table presents the forms of the demonstrative pronoun 'this' in some Mongolic languages（Hasongerel 2009）:

	Middle Mongol	Dagur	Shira Yughur	Mongour	Dongxiang	Bonan	Mogol
This	ene	ənə	ene	ne	ənə	enə	ɛn′ʌ (inʌ)
These	ede	əd	enes	nesgɜ	ənəlɑ~ ənəslɑ	enəlɑ	ɛn′ʌd

According to this table, in Mongolic Languages the demonstrative pronoun 'this' contains the initial vowel ə. In addition, scholars argue that the most ancient form of the demonstrative pronoun in Altaic languages is *ə. (Tohti 2004)

The table above also demonstrates that the plural demonstrative pronoun 'these' in the Mongolic Languages compose of the root with a

2) Hende denotes personal name and the Irigin denotes official title.

3) Dirun denotes personal name.

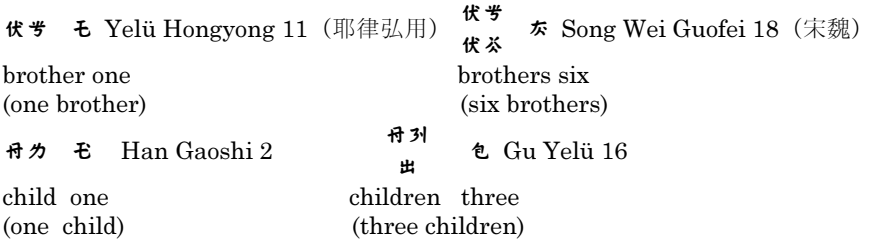
plural suffix. However, it is difficult to identify which character denotes the plural of 𘍿 (𘍾). Examining the Khitan script materials, we have found some blocks that seem promising, like 𘍿𘍽, 𘍿𘍼 and 𘍿𘍻, but there is yet no evidence to identify if they actually do denote plurality. For example,



Yelü Xiangwen 13 （耶律详稳）

these？ (personal name) Irbi's[4] grandson.
她們 夷离畢之 諸孫子

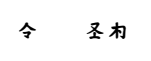
This needs to be studied further. Wu Yingzhe (2007) argues that the Khitan language has a rule of number agreement. For instance:



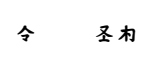
What this means is that the plural of 𘍿 (𘍾) must also be expressed by the character following it.

Wu Yingzhe (2009) has also introduced the idea that Khitan Small Script observes a spelling rule, which I call 'vowel attachment'. Therefore, I consider the character 𘍽 carrying the meaning of the plural demonstrative pronoun 'these', according to the rules of vowel attachment and number agreement. Hence, 𘍽 reads as ədˑ or ədə and means 'these'. Some scholars argue that 𘍽 denotes 等 'and so on', but this is probably incorrect. The following examples clearly show us the meaning of 𘍽:

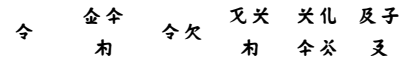
4) The Irbi denotes official title.


Yelü Dilie 7

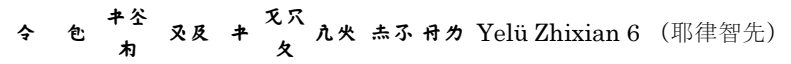
these two (persons') second child


Yelü Dilie 11

these two (persons') children two


Xiao Jushi 34 （蕭居士）

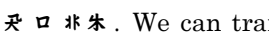
these cities' Du Shi's[5] titles have
(have the titles of Du Shi of these cities)
這些 諸城之 度 使之 諸号 授


Yelü Zhixian 6 （耶律智先）

these three fathers' elder father Shu Guo king's child
(the child of Shu Guo king who is the elder father in these three fathers)
這些 三 父房之 孟 父 蜀 国 王之 子

Within any known Khitan Small Script material, combinations like , and cannot be found, therefore the above interpretation is likely to be correct.

3. Demonstrative pronouns  and 

The meaning of the character is equivalent to Chinese word *gai* 該 (the above-mentioned), according to the bilingual inscription *Langjun Xingji* (郎君行記). This idea is accepted by some other researchers, since it repeatedly occurs in the *Xiao Zhonggong* Epitaph (蕭仲恭), in the passage: . We can translate this as 'at the above-mentioned year, month, day and time' (于該年該月該日該時). However, the author

5) Du Shi denotes official title.

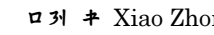
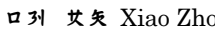
thinks that the character 𘩐 might also be explained as demonstrative pronoun ‘that’, because that passage could also be translated as ‘that year that month that day that time’. On the other hand, I observed that the character 𘩐 tends to precede several suffixes, for example, 𘩐𘩓, 𘩐𘩔, 𘩐𘩟, 𘩐𘩠, 𘩐𘩡, 𘩐𘩢, 𘩐𘩣 etc. According to some scholars, the pronunciation of the character 𘩐 might be related to ‘mun’ , ‘tus’ or ‘uul’ in Mongolian language, but none of these words can carry so many suffixes.

To identify its meaning, it is very important that we reconstruct the sound of the 𘩐 . There is evidence to support some readings of the character 𘩐 , though not yet very decisive. The block 𘩐𘩞 / 𘩤 that occurs frequently in the Khitan inscriptions has a meaning of tribal name *Xi* 奚. Geng Shimin (2005) argues that the tribal name *Xi* 奚 can be read as ‘tatabï’ on the Kül Tigin Inscription in Old Turkic Script. Therefore, based on that pronunciation, we may read the block 𘩐𘩞 / 𘩤 as follows: 𘩐 reads ‘ta’ ~ ‘tat’, 𘩞 ‘bi’ and 𘩤 ‘n’. Of course, we cannot be convinced that the sound ‘ta’ ~ ‘tat’ for 𘩐 is absolutely correct, but it should mean the sound of the 𘩐 at least includes the consonant ‘t’.

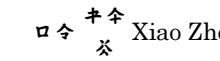
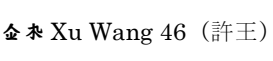
The Khitan language has a grammatical feature of number agreement as mentioned before. It is clear that 𘩐 denotes single number. For example,

𘩐 𘩦𘩧 Yelü Jue 40（耶律玦）	𘩐 𘩦𘩪 / 𘩞𘩫 𘩥 Yongning Langjun 35（永宁郎君）
that night	that sickness died (died of that sickness)
該 夜	該 疾 卒

I assume that 𘩐𘩡 means ‘that’ and denotes single number, for example,

 Xiao Zhonggong 23（蕭仲恭）  Xiao Zhonggong 23
that year that month (at)

There are two forms of plural of  in the materials of Khitan Small Script:

 Xiao Zhonggong 10  Xu Wang 46（許王）
These years these cities

By comparing to the following demonstrative pronouns in the Mongolic languages, we can conclude that the  can be read as 'tədə' and the can be read as 'tədə'.

	Middle Mongol	Dagur	Shira Yughur	Mongour	Dongxiang	Bonan	Mogol
That	tere	tərə	tere	te	hə	tərə	t´ɛ
Those	tede	təd	teres	tesgɜ	həlɑ~həslɑ	tərəlɑ	t´ɛd

Among the Altaic languages, especially in Mongolic and Manchu-Tungusic languages, the demonstrative pronouns *ə and *tə all are complementary. Below a table of demonstrative pronouns in Manchu-Tungusic languages:

	Manchu	Xibe	Nanai	Oroqen	Evenki
This	ərə	ər	əji	əri	əri
That	tərə	tər	təri	tɑri	tɑri

From the tables above, we can easily understand that there are complementary demonstrative pronouns *ə and *tə in most of the

Mongolic and Manchu-Tungusic languages, except the Dongxiang language. This proves the assumption that 𘩐 reads * tə must be correct.

4. Conclusion

There are two demonstrative pronouns in the Khitan Language and their written shapes, meanings and pronunciations are as follows:

Khitan script	Sound	Meaning	Origin (Mongolic)	Number
𘨏 （ 𘨏 ）	ə	this	 (ən)	single
𘨏 𘩷	əɣ	this ?	 (ənxu：)	plural ?
𘨐	əd	these	 (əd)	plural
𘩐	tə	that	 (tər)	single
𘨐 𘩷	təɣ	that ?	 (tərxu：)	single ?
𘩐 𘨐	təd	those	(təd)	plural
𘩐 𘩱	təd	those ?	(təd)	plural?

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