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An Old Uighur Receipt Document Newly Discovered in the Turfan Museum

Abstract: This article introduces an Old Uighur document, which had been excavated seemingly in the Bezeklik Caves and was recently re-discovered in the Turfan Museum. It is supposed to be a receipt for the payment of the poll tax (*qupčir*) of the Mongol period, and to be closely related to the Old Uighur administrative orders of the St. Petersburg collection (SI 6544).

Key words: Old Uighur document, Turfan, receipt, taxation, *qupchir*, Mongol Empire

Introduction

The Old Uighur texts unearthed from the Bezeklik Caves (Turfan, Xinjiang, PRC) have been the target of the academic researchers of Central Asian history and Old Turkic philology. In particular, the Turfan Bureau of Cultural Relics excavated a huge number of the texts in 1980–1981.¹ Among them, five Old Uighur Manichaean letter correspondences from the tenth and eleventh century are considered the most noteworthy materials for the history of the religion.² Also, other texts excavated simultaneously, most of which are the Buddhist fragments, are now under cataloguing through the international cooperation.³

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¹ TULUFAN DIQU WENWU GUANLISUO 1985.

² TXM; YOSHIDA, MORIYASU 2000.

³ Cf. MATSUI 2009b, 42.

Besides them, six Old Uighur secular documents had been earlier brought under the preservation in the Turfan Museum: five of them are Old Uighur administrative orders of compulsory requisition for fodder;⁴ and another is a document concerning the transaction of Buddhist portraits.⁵ So far as reported, all of the six should have been excavated in front of one of the Bezeklik Caves in October 1974,⁶ and accordingly they should have been given inventory numbers beginning with 74TB (“[19]74, T[urfan], B[eze-lik]”). However, the precise inventory numbers for them were not informed in the previous scholarly publications, and afterward these texts got substantially inaccessible in the Turfan Museum.⁷

Quite recently, the Turfan Museum has conducted reorganization of their collections and rediscovered those six Old Uighur documents. Actually they had been preserved under a single inventory number 81TB60:6, mistaken as a group. Considering the information in the former publication, the Turfan Museum has now given them new inventory numbers beginning with 74TB.⁸

More notably, they are accompanied by another Old Uighur fragment thus far unpublished. It is highly plausible that the fragment should be excavated in October 1974, on the same occasion with the other six documents. Thus the Turfan Museum has given this fragment a new inventory number as 74TB60:6-2. In this paper, we would present the edition of this brand-new fragment.

The text is written on the sheet of dark yellow paper (14.7 cm in length and 11.5 cm in width) and in the so-called cursive Uighur script which may well date the text to the Mongol period. The upper part of the text is faded for any reason, and rather difficult to decipher (see Pl. 1).

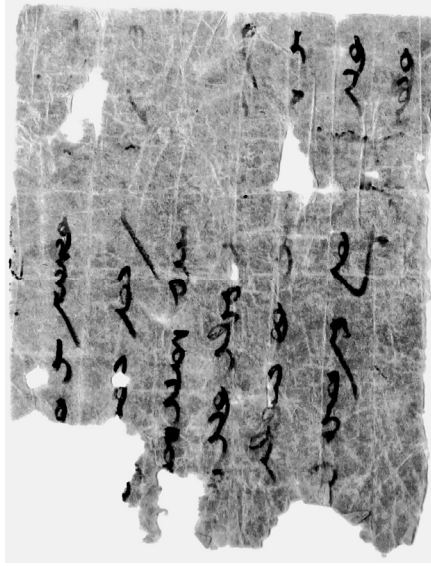
⁴ GENG 1980; cf. UMEMURA 1981; KURBAN 1984. For the latest revised edition, see MATSUI 2009a.

⁵ DOLKUN, UMEMURA, MORIYASU 1990; UMEMURA 1990, 177–182.

⁶ GENG 1980; DOLKUN, UMEMURA, MORIYASU 1990, 13–14; UMEMURA 1990, 177; cf. KURBAN 1984, 105, for another date of excavation as early 1976.

⁷ Cf. MATSUI 2009a, 340, fn. 1.

⁸ 74TB60:6-3, 74TB60:6-4, 74TB60:6-5, 74TB60:6-6 for the four fragments of the five administrative orders, and 74TB60:6-1 for the document of the transaction of Buddhist portraits.



Pl. 1

74TB60:6-2 (Turfan Museum)

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Text

- 1 [](.)L[]
 2 y[] yīl] bešinč ay 'W[]
 3 b(ačaya) (t)[a]r(qan) yūz-i[n]t(ä) (b)[olmīš? taz?]
 4 () iki stīr qu(p)[čīr kümüş]
 5 -tä (b)[ir stīr]r tǎgdi bir s(tīr) [qupčīr? kümüş?-]
 6 -ni s[anap] [alī]p bo yanuđ [berdimiz bo tamya/nišan]
 7 biz-[nin](g) ol mǎn ongš(a)y []
 8 bit(i)[dim]

Translation

1.....

²The [...] year, the fifth month, [on] the [...] day].

³⁻⁴Of two *stīr* of the [*qupčīr*-silver] that B[olmīš-Taz?] of Bačaya-*tarqan*'s century [should pay?], [one *stīr*] has arrived (= we received). ⁴⁻⁵[We?] counted and received (this) one [*stīr* of the *qupčīr*-silver], and ⁵⁻⁶[we issued] this receipt. ⁶⁻⁷[This seal/signature] is ours. ⁷I, Ongšay [...], ⁸wrote (this receipt).

Analytic Reconstruction of the Context

It is rather difficult to reconstruct the whole context of the document, though we would present the text and translation above, based on the analysis as follows.

The first keyword is ${}_3yüz-i[n]t(ä)$ “of/in the century (of).” Uig. $yüz \sim yüz$ “hundred” can be interpreted as “a century, a unit of one hundred households” to correspond to Mong. $ᠵᠠᠭᠤᠨ$ ($>ᠵᠠᠭᠤᠨ$ (pl.)) and Chin. 百戶 *bai-hu*. The following locative suffix $-i[n]t(ä) \sim -intä$ (= $-YNT'$) is well restorable in comparison with other attestations of $yüz-intä$ in the Uighur documents SI 6544 (SI Uig. 14 = USp 53(1–4)) and *U9251: the former consists of four administrative orders for compulsory requisition issued to a single person named Bolmīš-Taz, who belonged to a century of one named Bačaya-*tarqan* and delivered a horse at each of the requisition orders to convert into a part of the *qupčir*-tax imposed on him⁹; and the latter should be a fragment of the record of the grain for land tax, collected by six decuries (Uig. *on* \sim *on-ī* = Chin. 十戶 *shi-hu*, unit of ten households) under a century headed by one named Quduqun.¹⁰

The second keyword is ${}_6yanuḍ \sim yanut$ “something given in return for or in place of.” Even though it is written as if $Y'PD'Z$, it should be read as $Y'NWD = yanuḍ$ ($\sim yanut$): we find the similar stroke for *yanuḍ* in the attestations of *yanuḍ bitig* “a receipt document” (SUK Mi18₄ and U 5960_{v6}).¹¹ Here *yanuḍ* alone must be interpreted as “a receipt.”¹²

These two keywords may well lead us to suppose that this document was a receipt (*yanuḍ* \sim *yanut*) for the payment of any tax or labor service imposed on a person/persons belonging to a century (*yüz*). Taking into consideration such a function of our document, we can further supplement the context.

Line 1 of our document is almost illegible except for a few strokes including $-L-$, and the ductus of the writing is smaller than that of the lines 2–8. Thus, we would be allowed to consider that the document substantially begins with line 2, which apparently concerns the date of the document: other ex-

⁹ MATSUI 2015b, 63–64.

¹⁰ MATSUI (forthcoming).

¹¹ MATSUI 2005a, 28–36; MATSUI 2015a, 102–103.

¹² In an unpublished document *U9326 (T III M 253), we find another attestation of *yanuḍ* to stand alone for “a receipt.” This document has been lost from the Berlin Collection during the Second World War, and is now available only in the photograph taken by late Prof. Reşid Rahmeti ARAT during 1933–1938. We are deeply grateful to Prof. Osman Fikri SERTKAYA (Istanbul) for his kind permission to investigate the photograph.

amples of the Old Uighur receipt document (*yanuḍ bitig*) mentioned above also begin with their date. The beginning of line 2 should be restored as either *y[ilan yil]* “the Serpent year” or *y[unt yil]* “the Horse year,” the definite date of which will be argued below. *’W[...]* after *bešinč ay* “the fifth month” should be any of *(ü)[č]~ üč* “three,” *o[n] ~ on* “ten” or *o[tuz] ~ otuz* “thirty,” evidently concerning the day of issue.

The expression *ṣtägdi* (past tense) < v. *täg-* “to reach, to arrive at” should be interpreted as “was paid, was delivered”¹³ and suggest that the sender of this receipt (*yanuḍ ~ yanut*) did receive something, which should have been described in the preceding text and be related with *iki stür* “two *stür*.” Uig. *stür* was a unit of weight (ca. 40 grams) and then a currency denomination equal to the value of the silver of the same weight. And the stroke following *iki stür* is written as *XW(.)[...]*. From the context, we dare to restore it as *qu(p)[čir kümüş]* “the *qupčir*-silver”: Uig. *qu(p)[čir] ~ qupčir* (~Pers. *qupčür* < Mong. *qubčiri*) is a notorious poll tax installed on the Eurasian-wide under the Mongol rule, and was to be paid in silver cash.¹⁴ And we may note that the combination *qupčir kümüş* is also attested in several administrative orders.¹⁵

The locative suffix *ṣ-T’* (= *-ta/-tä*), however, does not allow us to interpret that *iki stür qu(p)[čir kümüş]* “two *stür* of the *qup[čir]*-silver” wholly arrived at the sender of this receipt. Therefore, we would tentatively restore *ṣ(b)[ir stür]* “one *stür*” in the illegible part following the locative *-tä*, and consider “[one *stür*] of two *stür* of the *qupčir*-silver” as the received material: in other words, this receipt was issued at the partial payment for the *qupčir*-tax, and “two *stür* (*iki stür*)” was the annual burden on a person belonging to the century.

Comparing with the other examples of Old Uighur receipts (*yanuḍ ~ yanut bitig*), we can restore the following context, which confirms the transaction of the silver cash and issue of this receipt: *ṣbir s(tür)* “one *stür*” just after *tägdi* may lend support for our restoration of the preceding *(b)[ir stür]*; in the Old Uighur sale contracts we frequently find the combination *sanap al-* (<v. *san-* “to count” and *al-* “to take”) for transaction,¹⁶ and then we can restore *ṣ[anap] [ali]p* in the lacuna before *bo yanuḍ [berdimiz]* “[we issued] this receipt.” Even though any seal (*tamya*) or signature (*nišan*) is not visible on the extant

¹³ E.g., 3Kr 30c = USp 121, *ṣ[.üü](r) bilä iki šir tarir tägdi* “together with [X] of millet, two *šir* of wheat arrived (= was paid)”; U5960v = MATSUI 2005, 31–33 and MATSUI 2015a, 102.

¹⁴ MATSUI 2005b, 74–76, 78.

¹⁵ *U9252(a) = MATSUI 2014, B5₆; *U9259 = MATSUI 2014, 619, C5₂; *U9255 = MATSUI 2014, 619, C6₁; *U9188(b) = VOHD 13,22, Nr. 470 = MATSUI 2014, C10₁.

¹⁶ YAMADA 1963, 45–46; YAMADA 1967, 98–99.

manuscript, we may restore either of them in the end of line 6. γ *Ongš(a)y* should be the name or title of the scribe: it seems derived from Chinese, but its origin remains unclear.¹⁷

Here, we consider the name of the leader of the century, which should be written before $\text{y}\ddot{\text{y}}\text{z-int}\ddot{\text{a}}$. Though fading into less legible, it can be restored as $P(\check{C}'X')(T)[']R(X'N) = b(a\check{c}a\gamma a)(t)[a]r(qan)$. In SI 6544 mentioned earlier, we find the same name *Bačaya-tarqan*, who was a leader of a century.¹⁸ And the ductus of the handwriting of our document is, even though not identical, rather similar to that of three of SI 6544 (= Matsui 2015b, B1, B2, B4). Now we can consider our document and SI 6544 as contemporary and mutually related, and *Bačaya-tarqan* in these texts as one and the same person. If our identification is the case, we may furthermore restore another personal name *Bolmš-Taz* in the damaged part below *yüz-intä*, as he appears in SI 6544: in fact, a part of the round stroke for *P-* is slightly visible, and it might belong to $(b)[olmš]$.

The “Sheep year (*qoyn yil*)” of SI 6544 has been dated to the 己未 *ji-wei* “*ji*-Sheep” of 1259 CE.¹⁹ Consequently, we can offer two plausible date of our document from either *y[ilan yil]* “the Serpent year” or *y[unt yil]* “the Horse year”: the former would fall on the 丁巳 *ding-si* “*ding*-Serpent” of 1257 CE, and the latter on the 戊午 *wu-wu* “*wu*-Horse” of 1258 CE. Even though we should take into account the possibility of dating twelve years earlier/later than those candidates, these dates may well tally with the socio-economic situation in the Old Uighur history that the *qupčir*-tax was later integrated into other labor services, at the latest before the Chaghataid domination from the late 1320’s.²⁰

Conclusive Remark

Through the analysis above, we can now recognize that the brand-new document should be a receipt for the partial payment of the *qupčir*-tax, and that it concerns the same century (*yüz*) of a named *Bačaya-tarqan*, which is mentioned in the four Uighur administrative orders SI 6544 of 1259 CE. Thus,

¹⁷ It is unlikely that Uig. *ongšay* here should be related to Pers. *WNKŠAY* = *ūngšāy* ~ *YWNKŠAY* = *yūngšāy*, which are corrupted forms of *WANŠY* = *wānšay* ~ *WYNŠAY* = *wīnšāy* < Mong. *’WYNŠ’Y* = *önšai* < Chin. 元帅 *yuan-shuai* “marshal.” Cf. PELLIOU 1963, 858; TMEN IV, Nrn. 1762, 1935; SUGIYAMA 1987, 32–33.

¹⁸ MATSUI 2015b, 63–64.

¹⁹ MATSUI 2014, 617–618; MATSUI 2015b, 62, 64–65.

²⁰ MATSUI 2014, 624–625.

we have five Old Uighur documents belonging to a contemporary period of the mid-thirteenth century. These documents deserve to be further analyzed in comparison with the other secular texts, concerning the *qupčir*-tax or other taxes and labor services.

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