TWO RECENTLY PUBLISHED *P'AI-TZU* DISCOVERED IN CHINA

BY

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In *Lishi yanjiu* 历史研究 1980: 4, 124—132, the well-known Chinese scholar Ts'ai Mei-piao 蔡美彪[1] has published an interesting and informative article entitled 'Yüan-tai yüan-p'ai liang-chung-chih k'ao-shih 元代圓牌兩種 之考釋 ['Investigation and Interpretation of Two Round Tablets of the Yüan Period'] (hereafter: Ts'ai). In it Ts'ai discusses two *p'ai-tzu* 牌子, or tablets of authority,[2] found in China in the '60s.

The first of these, an iron *p'ai-tzu* of the round, medallion type was found in 1965 in Lan-chou 蘭州, Kansu 甘肅, and is now kept in the Kansu Provincial Museum in that city.[3] Although undoubtedly an important discovery in view of the rarity of such objects,[4] it presents little historical and philological

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[1] Born 1928. Author and editor of several works, including the important collection of Yüan inscriptions in *pai-hua* entitled *Yüan-tai pai-hua-pei chi-lu* 元代白話牌集錄 [*Collected Records of Stelae in Pai-hua of the Yüan Period*], (Peking, 1955), and co-author with Lo Ch'ang-p'ei 羅常培 of *Pa-ssu-pa tzu yü Yüan-tai Han yü* 八思巴字與元代漢語 [*The 'Phags-pa Script and the Chinese Language of the Yüan Period*], (Peking, 1957). At present he is Board Director of the Chinese History Society and of the Chinese Society of Mongolian History, Fellow of the Modern History Research Institute of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, and Member of the Research Committee of the same Academy.

[2] There is a vast literature on the *p'ai-tzu*. See the references contained in B. Laufer, 'Skizze der mongolischen Literatur', *Keleti Szemle* 8 (1907), 193 ff.; idem, *Očerk mongol'skoĭ literatury*, tr. by V. A. Kazakevič and ed. by B. Ya. Vladimirtsov (Leningrad, 1927), p. 29 ff.; F. W. Cleaves, 'Daruya and Gerege', *HJAS* 16 (1953), 256—257, n. 74; the Bibliography in N. Poppe, *The Mongolian Monuments in HP'ags-pa Script*, 2nd ed., tr. and ed. by J. R. Krueger (Wiesbaden, 1957), pp. 134—142; L. Ligeti, *Monuments en écriture 'phags-pa. Pièces de chancellerie en transcription chinoise* (= *Mon. Linguae Mong. Collecta* III) (Budapest, 1972), pp. 109—116; and the important recent contribution by N. Ts. Münküyev, 'A New Mongolian P'ai-tzu from Simferopol', *AOHung.* 31 (1977), 185—215.

[3] For all information concerning the two *p'ai-tzu*, I rely entirely on data supplied by Ts'ai in his paper. Further information on the size and weight of the Lan-chou *p'ai-tzu* can be found in *Kaogu* 考古 1980: 6, 542.

[4] Of the great number of oblong and round *p'ai-tzu* that must have been in circulation in the vast Mongol empire in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, only less than a dozen are known to have survived; and of these the two described by Ts'ai are,

interest, since it is identical with the Bogotol *p'ai-tzu*, as evident from the illustration (I) on p. 132 of Ts'ai's article, which reproduces the rubbing of the face of the *p'ai-tzu* containing the five lines of Mongol text in 'Phags-pa script. The Bogotol *p'ai-tzu*, or 'Vinokurov Tablet' as it used to be called, has been published and written about several times: by A. M. Pozdneev (1881 and 1897), Haneda Tōru 羽田亨 (1930 and 1957), N. Poppe (1941 and 1957), and others.[5] Ts'ai had access to the works of these scholars, which he quotes in his article without, however, mentioning Poppe by name. Since his transcription and translation of the text of the *p'ai-tzu* (pp. 128—129) are essentially in agreement with those of Pozdneev and Poppe it is not necessary for me to dwell on them.[6]

The second *p'ai-tzu* is far more interesting and raises problems of interpretation. It was found in 1962 after demolition work[7] in the unearthed foundation of Yang-chou's 揚州 old western wall dating from the end of the Yüan (1357), near the South Gate.

Like the Lan-chou *p'ai-tzu*, the Yang-chou *p'ai-tzu* is also round, but the top or 'crown' has a perforation for attachment instead of a loop like the Bogotol *p'ai-tzu*. The Yang-chou *p'ai-tzu* is, apparently, of bronze,[8] measuring 17 cm in height by 14 cm in width. An interesting feature is that on one

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apparently, the only ones available in China today. See Münküyev, *op. cit.*, p. 199 ff.; Ts'ai, p. 127.

[5] See A. M. Pozdneev in *Zapiski Imp. Akad. Nauk* 39, 1 (St. Petersburg, 1881), 31—43 and Pl.; and his *Lekcii po istorii mongol'skoï literatury*, II (St. Ptg., 1897), pp. 153—165, and ill. facing p. 153: Haneda Tōru, *Genchō ekiden zakkō* 羽田亨:元朝驛傳雜考 [*Miscellaneous Studies on the Post-Relay System of the Yüan Dynasty*], *Tōyō Bunko Sōkan daiichi fuhen* 東洋文庫叢刊第一附篇 (Tokyo, 1930), pp. 107—108 and Pl. IV; and *Haneda Hakushi shigaku rombunshū* 羽田博士史學論文集 (*Recueil des oeuvres posthumes de Tōru Haneda*), I (Kyoto, 1957), pp. 113—115 and Pl. VI. N. Poppe, *Kvadratnaya pis'mennost'* (Moscow—Leningrad, 1941), p. 80, Text IX; and *The Mongolian Monuments*, p. 58, and Pl. IX facing p. 57; see also *ibid.*, pp. 67—72, n. 1; 101—102, nn. 69 and 70. For other reproductions of the Bogotol *p'ai-tzu* in Soviet and Chinese publications, see Münküyev, *op. cit.*, p. 202, n. 73. This *p'ai-tzu* is exhibited at the Hermitage Museum in Leningrad (Hall 365).

[6] Cf. Pozdneev, *Lekcii*, p. 154; Poppe, *The Mongolian Monuments*, p. 58. See now also Ligeti, *op. cit.*, p. 113. From references on pp. 128 and 130 of his article, it appears that Ts'ai was acquainted only with the first edition (1941) of Poppe's monograph. This is the edition that was translated into Mongolian in traditional script and published in China in 1960. See H. G. Schwarz in *ZAS* 14, 1 (1980), 215. Ts'ai's 'Jar-jiq' in line three of his transcription of the text (p. 128) is, of course, a misprint for 'Jar-liq'.

[7] See Keng Chien-t'ing 耿鑑庭 in *Wen wu* 文物 105 (1959: 5), 41—42; 145 (1962: 11), 48—53; and 155 (1963: 9), 10—20, for reports of finds made during and after the demolition work. See also *ibid.*, 155 (1963: 9), 11, for a plan of Yang-chou showing the position of the various walls and gates of the city.

[8] It is not absolutely clear from Ts'ai's description (p. 129) whether the *p'ai-tzu* is made of bronze or copper.

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face it bears an inscription in Chinese (three lines), and on the other a double inscription consisting of one line in 'Phags-pa script (left) and one line in Arabic-Persian script (right). It is only this face that is reproduced by Ts'ai from a rubbing (p. 132, II). In this respect, the Yang-chou *p'ai-tzu* is similar to the Mongolian-Persian-Chinese *p'ai-tzu* published by Haneda.[9] However, on the latter the line with the inscription in Persian (left) is followed by two lines in Mongolian in 'Phags-pa script (middle) and by two lines in Mongolian in Uighur script (right). Moreover, the contents of the inscriptions in Chinese and Mongolian are different from that of the Yang-chou *p'ai-tzu*;[10] only the Persian inscription has, as we shall see, two words in common with it. The Yang-chou *p'ai-tzu* is, therefore, a unique exemplar of this particular type of round tablet.

The central line of the Chinese inscription is in large characters and reads as follows: *Hsüan-wei shih-ssu tu yüan-shuai fu* 宣慰使司都元帥府 'Pacification Commission and Chief Military Command'. This was the name of the joint military authority in the regional administration that issued the *p'ai-tzu*.[11] As noted by Ts'ai, this information is useful for dating purposes.[12]

The two lateral lines, in smaller characters, read as follows:

Left: *kung wu chi su* 公務急速 'Official business in haste'
Right: *ch'ih tz'u yeh hsing* 持此夜行 'Holding this travel at night'

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[9] *Genchō ekiden zakkō*, Pl. III, and *Haneda Hakushi*, I, Pl. V, showing both faces; Poppe, *Kvadratnaya pis'mennost'*, p. 81, Text X, and *The Mongolian Monuments*, Pl. X facing p. 64, showing only the face with the Persian-Mongolian inscription.

[10] For the Chinese and Mongolian texts of the Mongolian-Persian-Chinese *p'ai-tzu*, see *Genchō ekiden zakkō*, pp. 92—93 (= *Haneda Hakushi*, I, pp. 100—101); Poppe, *The Mongolian Monuments*, p. 58, Text X. This *p'ai-tzu* has, like the Yang-chou *p'ai-tzu*, a serial number engraved near the edge. See *below*, n. 15. The Mongolian-Persian-Chinese *p'ai-tzu* was found near Peking and formerly belonged to the well-known Chinese historian K'o Shao-min 柯劭忞, author of the *Hsin Yüan-shih* 新元史, who died in 1933. Subsequently it became the property of B. I. Pankratov (d. 1979). I do not know its present whereabouts. See Poppe, *Kvadratnaya pis'mennost'*, p. 80, where this *p'ai-tzu* is called 'B. I. Pankratov's Paiza'; *The Mongolian Monuments*, pp. 43 (X) and 102, Note 71; Ts'ai, p. 130.

[11] On the *Hsüan-wei shih-ssu tu yüan-shuai fu* see the *Yüan-shih* 元史 (*Chung-hua shu-chü* 中華書局; ed., Peking, 1976) 91, p. 2309; P. Ratchnevsky, *Un Code des Yuan*, I (Paris, 1937), p. 235, n. 2; Ts'ai, p. 131. Cf. also *Genchō ekiden zakkō*, p. 68 ff. (= *Haneda Hakushi*, p. 83 ff.); P. Olbricht, *Das Postwesen in China unter der Mongolenherrschaft im 13. und 14. Jahrhundert* (Wiesbaden, 1954), p. 51 and n. 115.

[12] Ts'ai, p. 131. The Pacification Commission and Chief Military Command for Huai-tung and Other Localities (*Huai-tung teng-ch'u hsüan-wei shih-ssu tu yüan-shuai fu* 淮東等處宣慰使司都元帥府), from which the Yang-chou Circuit (*lu* 路) depended, was established in 1355. Now, since the major wall rebuilding project in the area where the *p'ai-tzu* was found took place in 1357 (see *Wen wu* 155 [1963: 9], 11—12), we may infer that the *p'ai-tzu* was issued within this short period.

The meaning of this terse formula is that the holder of the *p'ai-tzu*, being a courier on urgent official, i.e. military, business, was authorized to move about and travel at night, availing himself of the government post-service network (*chan* 站 = mo. *ǰam*), and requisitioning horses, equipment, provisions, etc., while *en route*. The 'round tablets' (*yüan-p'ai* 圓牌) in use during the Yüan and variously designated, according to their type and importance, as 'new round tablets' (*hsin yüan-p'ai* 新圓牌) and 'falcon tablets' (*hai-ch'ing-p'ai* 海青牌), were originally meant to be carried only by special messengers and envoys (*shih-ch'en* 使臣 = mo. *elči*) on important assignments; however, as Haneda has pointed out, they were issued not only to military and civil officials, but also to other privileged individuals, such as members of the Mongol aristocracy and the Buddhist clergy, as well as to merchants.[13] According to Ts'ai's investigation, round *p'ai-tzu* of the type found in Yang-chou were issued by the regional military command also to the leading officers of the private armies of powerful landlords during the period of political unrest at the end of the Yüan dynasty.[14]

Near the left edge of the *p'ai-tzu* is engraved its serial number: *Hsüan tzu shih hao* 玄字拾號, i.e. HSÜAN 10. The system employed is the one according to the order of characters in the *Ch'ien-tzu wen* 千字文 or *One Thousand Characters Literary Text*, with each character of this text followed by a number in conventional sequence.[15]

The Mongolian inscription consists of a single line in 'Phags-pa script, which Ts'ai (p. 130) reads as follows: *muqu diqu gereé*.

According to Ts'ai, the word *muqudiqu* corresponds to the verb *muqutqa-* 'to destroy, to bring to an end' occurring in the *Secret History of the Mongols*.[16] As for the word *gereé*, it corresponds — always according to Ts'ai — to *ereé*, which has the force of an imperative, i.e. 'must, for sure' (*wu-pi* 務必).[17] Thus, the interpretation of the Mongol text is 'will certainly be destroyed' (*pi chu-mieh* 必誅滅). With regard to the Persian inscription, Ts'ai has deciphered only the last word, which he reads as *kusht*, meaning 'to be killed' or 'to

put to death, to execute' (*pei-sha* 被殺, *ch'u-ssu* 處死).[18] In his view, the two texts contain identical warnings for the contraveners of the authority conferred by the *p'ai-tzu*: they will be put to death (Persian), they will certainly be destroyed (Mongolian).

In my view, both these interpretations are off the mark and unacceptable as they proceed from an incorrect reading of the two texts. I read the Mongol text as *muquriqu k·er·e* (= *k·ere·e*).[19] The verb *muquri-* 'to go round about; to patrol', is a rare and obsolete word, but it appears in the *Secret History* § 278 in the following sentence: *ordo-yin qoyina'un urida'un kebte'ül muqurituqai* 'The night-guards shall go round about (= patrol) at the rear and the front of the Palace'.[20] *K·ere·e* is, of course, *gere·e* (= *gerege*) 'tablet of authority', the Mongolian term for *p'ai-tzu*.[21] The Mongolian text of our *p'ai-tzu* means literally 'tablet of authority to go round about', or 'tablet authorizing [the holder] to go round about', i.e. to travel and return to the point of departure.

The Persian text consists of three words, the first of which is barely legible. It is, however, almost certainly *bi'llāh* 'by God'. The initial *b* is quite clear, and so is the final *h*. The second word is *šab* 'night', and the third is *gašt* 'going round about', from *gaštan* 'to go round about, to tour, to patrol, etc.'.[22] Thus, the Persian text reads *bi'llāh[.] šab gašt*, lit. 'By God. Night going round about [tablet]'. This interpretation is confirmed by the Persian text of the Mongolian-Persian-Chinese *p'ai-tzu* mentioned earlier, in which the words *šab gašt* also occur, in combination with *lauḥ* 'tablet', in the expression *lauḥ[i] šab gašt* 'tablet of night going round about', i.e. 'tablet authorizing [the holder] to go round about at night'.[23]

In conclusion I wish to thank my friend and colleague, Dr S. A. A. Rizvi of Canberra, for his help with the Persian text of the inscriptions.

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[13] See *Genchō ekiden zakkō*, pp. 94—98 (= *Haneda Hakushi*, I, pp. 103—105; and *Résumé*, pp. 8—9); cf. Münküyev, *op. cit.*, pp. 191—193. The difference between the various types of round *p'ai-tzu* and the range of privileges attached to them deserve further study.

[14] See Ts'ai, *loc. cit.*

[15] The character *hsüan* is the third character in the *Ch'ien-tzu wen*, so that HSÜAN 10 would correspond to our C 10. We do not know, however, the range of the numerical sequence fixed by the authorities at the time. The serial number of the Mongolian-Persian-Chinese *p'ai-tzu* is *Ti tzu wu-shih hao* 地字五十號, i.e. TI 50 (= B 50).

[16] See E. Haenisch, *Wörterbuch zu Mangḥol un niuca tobca'an (Yüan-ch'ao pi-shi). Geheime Geschichte der Mongolen* (Leipzig, 1939; rep. Wiesbaden, 1962), p. 111, *s.v.* 'muḥutḥaḥu'.

[17] I confess that I find this part of Ts'ai's paper rather puzzling.

[18] See F. Steingass, *A Comprehensive Persian-English Dictionary*, New Reprint (Beirut, 1975), p. 1032a: *kusht* 'He killed; killing; the back, belly, waist, side'.

[19] In the 'Phags-pa script the letters *d* and *r* are easily confused because of their graphic similarity. See Poppe, *The Mongolian Monuments*, p. 19, Figs. 8, 7 and 9. There is no doubt that, owing to the inscriber's carelessness, the *r* of *muquriqu* looks more like a *d*. For *k·er·e* = *k·ere·e*, cf. *ibid.*, p. 23, § 28.

[20] See I. de Rachewiltz, *Index to the Secret History of the Mongols* (Bloomington, 1972), p. 168, lines 11604—11605; E. Haenisch, *Die Geheime Geschichte der Mongolen*, 2nd ed. (Leipzig, 1948), p. 142; and *Wörterbuch*, p. 111.

[21] For the confusion between *k·* and *g*, see Poppe, *op. cit.*, p. 33 (1). On *gerege* (~ *gerige*), see the important remarks by Cleaves in *HJAS* 16 (1953), 255—259.

[22] See Steingass, *op. cit.*, p. 1091a.

[23] See *Genchō ekiden zakkō*, Pl. III (1); *Haneda Hakushi*, I, Pl. 5A. The full text of the Persian inscription reads as follows: *i'timād mānand bar lauḥ[i] šab gašt* 'Credentials equal to (i.e. to be relied upon as) the tablet [of] night going round about (i.e. the tablet authorizing [the holder] to go round about at night)'.