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TURK, MONGOL, TUNGUS

by GERARD CLAUSON

I. INTRODUCTION

Anyone who studies the history of the early contacts between China and her western neighbours and the history of Central Asia in the first millennium A.D. will soon find himself in a state of great mental confusion about the ethnical character of many of the peoples concerned, since different authorities, and indeed sometimes the same authorities at different times, have defined the same peoples in quite different terms. The present article is a modest attempt to bring some clarification to this complicated subject. I present it with some diffidence, since most of the evidence must be taken from the Chinese authorities, and I am no Sinologist. I have taken the precaution of showing it to Prof. E. G. Pulleyblank, and in its present form it owes much to his sage advice. I should however make it clear that he is in no way responsible for the conclusions reached, and indeed on one or two points I have not persuaded him that I am right. The subject is still very much open for discussion, but I hope that I have, at any rate, exposed some earlier widely accepted errors, and paved the way for a better understanding of the facts.

I shall not refer in it to the Chinese themselves, the Tibetans and other tribes related to them, the Koreans, or the non-Chinese peoples with whom the Chinese were in contact in the South, since these constitute a separate set of problems, and generally speaking no great difficulties arise regarding them. Nor shall I refer to the Indo-European peoples in the area, the so-called "Tokharians" (Agneans and Kuchaeans), the enigmatic Yüeh-chih, perhaps identical with them, or the Iranian or supposedly Iranian tribes—Saka, Sogdians, Hephthalites and Wu-sun—since these constitute a separate and very complicated subject with an extensive literature of its own, except to remark that since R. Ghirshman wrote his book, *Les Chionites—Hephthalites*, Cairo, 1948, no-one can reasonably believe that the Hephthalites were other than Iranian. Nor shall I make any reference to the light which field archaeology can throw on the subject, since that light is still pretty dim. Some facts are known; for example that the chieftains buried at Noin-ula were "Huns", while those buried at Pazyryk were not "Huns", and great progress has been made in identifying remains of the Hunnish and Avar periods in some parts of Europe, but generally speaking it is still too

early to attempt to correlate archaeological discoveries with recorded history. My purpose is primarily to attempt to sort out the Turks, Mongols, and Tungus (hereafter called, for the sake of brevity TMT).¹

The earliest workers in this field were greatly handicapped by insufficient knowledge in their attempts to distinguish between the TMT tribes. N. Ya. Bichurin (Père Hyacinthe, or Yakinf, to his contemporaries) made a brave attempt at the end of the first volume of his remarkable *Sobraniye Svedeniy o Narodakh obitavshikh v Sredney Azii v drevniya Vremena*, St. Petersburg, 1851, republished by the Soviet Academy of Sciences, 1950 (the latter hereafter quoted as *Bichurin*) to determine the original habitats of each of the three races, but as he based himself on their locations in the mid-19th century, he was led into grave errors. At about the end of the 19th century a period started during which it was assumed that the Chinese phrase Tung Hu, "Eastern Hu", which is discussed below, meant "Tungus"; this was quite disastrous, since no tribes which really were Tungus were ever called Tung Hu in the Chinese records. This unfortunate error will be found, for example, even in E. Chavannes' great masterpiece, *Documents sur les Tou-kiue (Turcs) Occidentaux*, St. Petersburg, 1900, as well as in O. Franke, *Beiträge aus chinesischen Quellen zur Kenntnis der Türkenvölker und Skythen Zentralasiens*, Abhandlungen der K.P.A.W., Berlin, 1904, p. 9 etc., Père L. Wiegner, *Textes Historiques*, Hien Hien, 1922 and several other works. Most recent scholars, however, have paid little, perhaps even too little, attention to the Chinese nomenclature, and approached the question scientifically from a philological point of view allocating particular TMT tribes to one of the three races, either because words said in the Chinese records to have certain meanings in the language of a particular tribe seem to belong to one of the three languages, or because some other tribe is said to be "descended from" or "related to", or to speak the same language as, some tribe the ethnical character of which has been determined by the previous method. Some of these scholars, however, have allowed themselves to be overcome by a *horror vacui* and, faced with a list of words said to be used by a particular tribe, and finding that some of them can *prima facie* be identified as Turkish, while others cannot, have sought

¹ I use "Turks" for any tribes which spoke a language closely related to the language of the Türkü, a tribe which first appeared in the middle of the 6th century A.D., and "Mongols" for any tribe which spoke a language closely related to that of the true Mongols, who first appeared in the 12th Century A.D. This is simpler than treating these dates as dividing lines, and using for earlier periods such terms as "pre-Turks" and "pre-Mongols", which may carry undesired over-tones and implications. The term "Tungus" has always been a generic one. Its origin is obscure, the most probable explanation being that given in J. Benzing, *Einführung in das Studium der altaischen Philologie und der Türkologie*, Wiesbaden, 1953, p. 17. I am of course aware of the fact that ethnologists, quite rightly, consider it a shocking heresy to regard races and languages as co-terminous. That is just too bad, but in regard to the tribes under discussion language is at present all we have to guide us.

explanations of the latter in Mongolian or Tungus, and so ended up by suggesting, either by implication or quite bluntly, that the tribe must have spoken a mixed language. It cannot of course be denied that many ancient tribal confederations were heterogeneous and included elements speaking a different language from that of the rest of the confederation. But some scholars have surely gone too far in this direction. For example M. A. Castrén, who died in A.D. 1852 at the early age of 38 after collecting invaluable information about some TMT tribes, persuaded himself, on the basis of the very insufficient information at his disposal, that the Huns at the height of their power were a confederation of Turks, Mongols, Manchus, and even Finns, see K. Shiratori, *Über die Sprache des Hiung-nu Stammes und der Tung-hu Stämme*, Tokio, 1900, p. 2. Similar views are expressed very categorically in O. Franke, *op. cit.* But the fact that the confederation was heterogeneous does not automatically carry with it the implication that the language of the confederation was also a sort of amalgam of the languages of its constituent members. Such a state of affairs would be in the highest degree unusual; what would normally be expected is that the common language of the confederation would be that of its leaders. For example, it seems to me that J. Benzing in his article on "Das Hunnische" in *Philologiae Turcicae Fundamenta*, Wiesbaden, 1959, pp. 685ff., is unduly sceptical regarding the possibility of identifying Hunnish as a particular language.²

It seems to me that in approaching our problem we must be guided by a few simple principles. The first is that sometimes absolute certainty is unattainable; all that can be produced is a more or less confident assessment of the balance of probabilities. In making this assessment the simpler explanation is to be preferred to the more complicated, unless there is good evidence to the contrary.

The second is that the Chinese information must be submitted to proper critical scrutiny. For example, a statement in a contemporary, or more or less contemporary, authority that one tribe spoke approximately the same language as another tribe, or quite a different one, is presumably based on direct knowledge and must be accepted without question. But the same respect should not be accorded to a statement that at a date some centuries earlier a word had a particular meaning in the language of some named tribe, since the statement may refer to the language of a contemporary tribe, and that tribe may at the time have inherited the name of

² Incidentally, some of Benzing's etymologies seem to me to be open to serious objection. For example, he reconstructs a Hunnish word **tuqta*- "to seize", which he says is obviously Mongolian *toqta*- "to grasp" and equivalent to Turkish *tut*- "to hold", in the same way that Mongolian *aqta* "gelding" is equivalent to Turkish *at* "horse". But *aqta* is not old Mongolian at all, it is a 13th century loan word, from Persian *axta*, the Past Passive Participle of *axtan* "to geld", and *toqta*- means not "to grasp", but "to be immobile, fixed, still, permanent; to decide, settle a matter".

quite a different tribe, which had previously occupied the area then occupied by the tribe in question. It was for this kind of reason that, for example, in Byzantine authorities of the 6th and 7th centuries *τούρκος* really does mean "Turk", but in those of the 10th and 11th centuries it means "Magyar", see G. Moravcsik, *Byzantinoturcica*, Budapest, 1943, II, 269ff. Again, it cannot always be assumed that Chinese translations of TMT words and phrases are literally and word-for-word accurate. They may be paraphrases, or guesses, or even plain errors. Similarly it cannot be assumed that Chinese transcriptions of "barbarian" words are very close to the original. The phonetic system of Chinese differed profoundly from that of any of the TMT languages, and a study of the systems of transcriptions used by each successive dynasty shows a steady advance towards greater precision, culminating with that of the Ch'ing Dynasty, from whose transcriptions it is relatively easy to reconstruct the foreign original. It seems to follow that the earliest transcriptions, for example in the *Shih Chi* (finished very early in the 1st century B.C.) will prove to be extremely rugged and rudimentary, and this ruggedness is increased by the fact that the Chinese were inclined to limit arbitrarily the number of syllables used to represent a foreign word, whatever its length, and that they tried to represent foreign words by Chinese syllables which not only had the nearest approximate sound but also had an appropriate (usually derogatory) meaning, with some preference for the latter over the former. Moreover it was fatally easy even for the Chinese themselves to mistake one character for another; there are in Chinese authorities on the Türkü, for example in the two *T'ang Shu's*, many cases where one character is quite certainly an error for another. Finally, there is the overwhelming difficulty of determining how the Chinese language itself was pronounced at this remote period. Nothing less than unbounded admiration is due to Prof. Karlgren for the industry and skill which went to his reconstruction of the phonetic structure of "Ancient" and "Archaic" Chinese, but even if these are accepted as accurate for the particular dialects which he has reconstructed, as it is reasonable to do with some reservations on one or two points of detail, it is unfortunately the case that there were in the centuries immediately preceding and following the opening of the Christian era several Chinese dialects and we cannot be sure that the authors of the books on which we rely spoke dialects particularly close to those reconstructed by Prof. Karlgren. This does not mean that the Chinese evidence can be twisted to fit a particular hypothesis, it only means that it must not be used uncritically to prove or disprove one.

The third principle is that it must not be assumed that early languages, regarding which we have only indirect information in Chinese authorities, differed profoundly in character from later languages, regarding which we have the direct evidence of inscriptions and manuscripts. In particular Turkish in the eighth Century was one of the most homogeneous languages

which has ever been spoken. Apart from a few loan words, chiefly Chinese and Tokharian, and perhaps a few more not yet identified, it was absolutely "pure". Its history from that date onwards can be followed in detail; some words became obsolete and were replaced by others, native or loan words, some sounds evolved into other sounds, various changes took place in morphology and syntax; but all in all the process of change was abnormally slow. It is not reasonable to assume that some miraculous process of purification had occurred just before the 8th century and that a language in use before that date, some of the known words of which can be identified as Turkish, was a mixed language, and therefore that the explanation of the other words can be sought in some other TMT language. It is more reasonable to assume that by the 8th century the unidentifiable words had become obsolete or that the Chinese medium has so distorted them that they cannot now be recognized. The same is true, though to a lesser extent, of 13th century Mongolian; apart from a number of easily identified loan words, the overwhelming majority of which are Turkish, in certain limited segments of the vocabulary, it seems to be commendably "pure".

II. THE ALTAIC THEORY

An essential preliminary to any attempt to determine by philological methods the ethnical character of the early TMT tribes is a clear definition of the mutual relationship of the TMT languages, since without this nothing but confusion can ensue. This brings us to the Altaic theory.

The Altaic theory is the theory that the TMT languages are genetically related, that is descended from an older single language (as French, Italian, and Spanish are descended from Latin), and so form a family of languages like the Indo-European, Semitic, and Finno-Ugrian families. This implies in terms of people instead of languages, that at some remote date in the past the ancestors of the various TMT peoples formed a single tribe or small group of tribes living side by side, that at some less remote date or dates this nucleus broke into three pieces which went their separate ways, one staying at home and the other two emigrating, or all three going off in different directions, and that after this separation they lost touch with one another so completely that their languages became mutually unintelligible, but still retained enough common elements to prove that originally they were one! Proof of the genetic relationship of languages is sought in the fields of phonetics, grammar, and lexicography, of which the last is the only really solid criterion, since languages admittedly belonging to different families often have similar phonetic structures and grammars, while languages belonging to the same family often have different phonetic structures and grammars. For example modern English grammar (morphology and syntax) is more like Chinese grammar than it is like Sanskrit grammar. Various scholars have contended that for one or more of these reasons the

TMT languages are genetically related. An admirable account of the development of this "Altaic theory", with an extensive list of the authorities in which it has been expounded will be found in Benzing's *Einführung* (see above) pp. 1ff. As Benzing points out, the theory was launched at a time when knowledge of all the languages concerned, and in particular of their histories, was very insufficient; indeed in its earliest form it was a "Ural-altaic theory" and included the Finno-Ugrian languages in the family. As knowledge increased, it became obvious that the Finno-Ugrian languages did indeed form a family but quite a different one from the rest. Indeed it should be added that recent research has shown that a few little known languages—Kettish, the extinct Kottish, and one or two more—which were spoken on the upper Yenisei River in the immediate vicinity of Finno-Ugrian languages and were originally supposed to belong to that family, are in fact not related to it, or apparently to any other language, and form a little family of their own. Even in the residual field of the TMT languages difficulties began to arise as knowledge increased. It appeared that, while they did have parts of their vocabularies in common, these were not the significant parts, that is, for example, the numerals and basic verbs and nouns but fell in the class of "culture words" which are notoriously often borrowed. In spite of these difficulties some scholars continued to insist that there was a genetic connection between the three languages, relying in particular on the fact that certain groups of words in Mongolian have uniform phonetic differences from the equivalent groups of words in standard Turkish; for example some groups of Mongolian words begin with *d-*, *n-*, *ǰ-* or *y-*, while the equivalent groups of Turkish words all begin with *y-*, see Benzing, *Einführung*, p. 42.³ It was contended that these differences were similar in nature to the phonetic differences between certain groups of words in the Indo-European family of languages, for example *pater/mater*—*vater/mutter*—*father/mother*—*père/mère* and that from these differences TMT phonetic laws, like Grimm's Law in Indo-European philology, could be worked out.

The matter aroused my interest some years ago and in a series of articles⁴ I have tried to prove that these interesting phonetic differences arise not from a genetic relationship but from the fact that various Mongolian-speaking tribes were in contact—at three different periods which I have tentatively defined as:

- (1) before the 8th century, probably in the 5th or 6th.

³ It should be noted that Benzing is careful to point out that the Mongolian words in question may be loan words and not evidence of a genetic connection.

⁴ *The Case against the Altaic Theory*, Central Asiatic Journal, II, 3, 1956; *The Turkish Y and Related Sounds*, Studia Altaica, Ural-Altaische Bibliothek, Wiesbaden, 1957; *The Earliest Turkish Loan Words in Mongolian*, C.A.J. IV, 3, 1959; *The Turkish Elements in fourteenth Century Mongolian*, C.A.J. V, 4, 1960.

- (2) between the 8th and 12th centuries inclusive, and probably late rather than early in this period;
- (3) in the 13th and 14th centuries—
with three Turkish tribes which spoke three rather different kinds of Turkish. If I am right in this, the phonetic laws can still be worked out, but they will be laws governing the evolution of Turkish, not laws governing the evolution of "Altaic".

In the last article mentioned above I have examined the 846 entries in the *Hua-I i-yü* "the Chinese-Barbarian Interpreter," a Chinese-Mongolian vocabulary published in A.D. 1389, and proved, at any rate to my own satisfaction, that what is left of this vocabulary after eliminating the Turkish and other foreign elements, which together account for a little less than 20 per cent of the whole, is the basic vocabulary of a primitive bronze age community of animists—hunters, fishers, and food-gatherers—living in the forest with no larger communities than villages, and that their evolution into the iron age, agriculture, animal husbandry, horticulture, and a more developed economic and social system can be followed in broad outline by a study of the loan words which were added to the language in the three periods mentioned above, insofar as they can be allocated to one or other of them. The basic Turkish vocabulary on the other hand, insofar as we can reconstruct it from the much more voluminous evidence dating from the 8th to 11th centuries, after eliminating known foreign elements, seems to be that of a more advanced people living in the steppes and practising a pastoral economy with some agriculture, although there is a little evidence, and more may be found later, that they learnt their animal husbandry from neighbours, perhaps the enigmatic Yüeh-chih, speaking an Indo-European language. If this was the basic vocabulary of the 8th century Turks, and, as has been stated above, an almost pure one, it is not unreasonable to suggest that, subject to slow secular change, it was the basic vocabulary of their ancestors and that those ancestors led the same kind of life in the same surroundings.

I am not competent to carry out the same kind of exercise for the Tungus languages, and it may not be easy for anyone to do so in the near future, since the basic data are only now being assembled. They will, it is true, include the vocabularies of tribes living in different localities and different natural surroundings, so that the impact of loan words on the various languages should be differential and not uniform, but they lack chronological depth. Apart from the Jurchen, who first appeared in history at the beginning of the 12th century and of whose language little is known, the earliest Tungus people of whose language we have a thorough knowledge are the Manchus who first appeared in the 16th century. However, from such study as I have been able to make of these languages in Benzing's *Die tungusischen Sprachen*, Abhandlungen der Akademie der

Wissenschaften und der Literatur in Mainz, 1955, No. 11, and some other authorities mentioned in his *Einführung*, it seems clear that there is a basic Tungus vocabulary quite distinct from the other two, and that some or all the individual Tungus languages contain a substantial number of loan words from Mongolian, Turkish (probably through Mongolian and not direct) and no doubt Chinese, and in recent times Russian.

III THE PREHISTORIC PERIOD

What exactly the original habitats of the Mongols and Tungus were cannot at present be more than a matter for speculation. In my article in CAJ IV, 3, I suggested as a first approximation that the original focus of the Tungus was in the forests to the west of Lake Baikal and that of the Mongols in the forests to the east of it, that is that the boundary ran north and south. After further reflection I feel sure that this was wrong, and that the boundary ran east and west. There seems good evidence that the Mongols (in the broad sense) when they emerged into open country, the Kitans in the 4th or 5th century and others later, culminating with the true Mongols in the 12th century, did so from the edge of the forest belt a long way east of Lake Baikal, but when the Tungus tribes appeared, first the Jurchen, whose original habitat was in the forests along the Ussuri River, the modern boundary between northern Manchuria and the Maritime Province of the Soviet Union (see R. Grousset, *L'Empire des Steppes*, Paris, 1939, p. 189), and then the Manchus, they came from much further north, and the modern Tungus, except those that had moved down to Manchuria and the Maritime Province, were still located north of the Mongols in the 17th century and remain there to this day, see *Narody Sibiri*, Akademiya Nauk S.S.S.R., Moscow-Leningrad, 1956, map opposite p. 12 (17th century) and large detached map (present day).

If this outline of the pre-history of the TMT peoples is reasonably correct then we can at any rate clear the air to some extent straight off by firmly ruling out the possibility that any Tungus peoples were anywhere near the Chinese frontier before or during the 1st millennium A.D. The problem therefore simply resolves itself into one of sorting out the tribes mentioned in the Chinese records as having been on or near their north-western and northern frontiers before or during that period into Turkish, Mongolian, and "other". Fortunately the "others" present no great difficulty; they were either Tibetan, or of the Tibetan family (e.g. Tangut), or Indo-European ("Tokharian", Yüeh-chih, Saka, Sogdian, Wu-sun). On the north-eastern frontier there were also Koreans. There is a theoretical possibility that there was also at one time some tribe which was none of these, just as there was also a little pocket of Kets, Kots etc. on the upper Yenisei further west, but until evidence for the existence of such a tribe emerges it can provisionally be disregarded. An alternative statement of the problem

would therefore be, given that the primaeval line of division between the Turks in the steppes and the Mongols in the forests was a line running roughly east and west along the forest edge far north of the Chinese frontier, when did the Mongols first cross this line and appear in the frontier area?

The Chinese records of and before the first millennium A.D. mention a very large number of tribal names. Of some of them nothing at all is known except the name; others, though no doubt originally names of tribes, seem at the period at which we first hear of them to be the names of confederations rather than single tribes. If the problem is to be reduced to manageable dimensions some elimination is necessary. We can, of course, because we must, eliminate the names of tribes of which we know nothing. We can also eliminate certain names regarding which no doubt has ever arisen; these include tribes and tribal confederations which do not appear before about the 6th century A.D., the T'u-chüeh (Türkü), the eponymous Turkish tribe, and the other tribes and tribal confederations, Uyğur, Tölis, Tarduş, Kırğız, Basmıl, Karluk, and the rest, whose history was closely connected with theirs. I have included the Kırğız in this list as a matter of convenience although they are mentioned much earlier than the 6th century. They are the only people in this list who have sometimes,⁵ I think quite erroneously, been described as Turcized rather than as Turks. No doubt has ever arisen regarding the rest. Similarly we can eliminate certain names used by the Chinese in connection with very early events in their history to which no ethnical content can be assigned, and which really do not seem to mean more than "non-Chinese barbarians". These are, at any rate, the Jung (戎) and I (夷). Hu (胡), often used in the phrase Tung (東) Hu "Eastern Hu", is very nearly in the same class, but has at various dates been used in a more specific sense, see E. G. Pulleyblank, *A Sogdian Colony in Inner Mongolia*, T'oung Pao XLI, 4-5, pp. 318-19. In the early period it was sometimes used specifically for the Hsiung-nu or some related tribe; at least once in the *Hou Han Shu* for the Yüeh-chih (Franke, *op. cit.*, p. 26); in the 6th century sometimes for the Türkü, and a little later for Iranians of Central Asia in general, or more specifically still for Sogdians. I also exclude the Ti-li (狄歷), Ting-ling (丁令 or 零) and T'ieh-le (鐵勒). These all seem to be alternative representations of the same name, something like *Tıǵlıǵ or *Tıǵrıǵ, originally probably the name of a Turkish tribe (as Ting-ling it appears frequently in the *Shih Chi*, see J. J. M. de Groot, *Die Hunnen der vorchristlichen Zeit*, Berlin, 1921, index s.v. Ting-ling); later, as T'ieh-lê, it was the name of a large but fluctuating confederation, still predominantly Turkish, see Liu Mau-tsai, *Die*

⁵ See, for example, W. M. McGovern, *The Early Empires of Central Asia*, Chapel Hill, 1939, p. 112. to be read in conjunction with Franke, *op. cit.*, p. 17ff. which seems to point to the origin of this theory.

Chinesischen Nachrichten zur Geschichte der Ost-Türken (T'u-küe), Wiesbaden, 1958, *passim*. A good deal of literature has grown up round these names and it seems unnecessary to cover the ground again.

IV. SOME INDIVIDUAL TMT TRIBES

After eliminating these we are left with (i) Ti (狄); (ii) Hsiung-nu (匈奴); (iii) two related Tung Hu tribes, Wu-huan (烏桓) and Hsien-pei (鮮卑), and two, or three, Hsien-pei tribes, Mu-jung (慕容), T'o-pa (拓拔; Tavgaç) and perhaps (iv) T'u-yü-hun (吐谷渾); (v) three other related tribes sometimes described as Tung Hu, Yü-wên (宇文), Hsi (奚; Tatahi), and Ch'i-tan (契丹; Kitan); (vi) Jou-jan (柔然; Avar); (vii) Tatar.

(i) Nothing much seems to be known about the Ti, of whom two kinds, the "red Ti" and the "white Ti" are mentioned. They appear fairly often in the history of the first millennium B.C., for example see J. J. M. de Groot, *op. cit.*, index, s.v. Tik. W. M. McGovern, *op. cit.*, p. 88, says, I do not know on what authority, that they were closely related to the Hsiung-nu. If so, to anticipate my conclusions regarding the latter, they would have been Turks. In that event Ti might have been the earliest transcription of the name later represented by Ti-li, etc. On the other hand Professor Pulleyblank tells me that there is some reason to suppose that the Ti, like the Kiang, belonged to the Tibetan group and this is perhaps the more plausible theory.

(ii) Of the Hsiung-nu, on the other hand, for whose name several scriptions with more or less the same phonetic value occur,⁶ a great deal is known; few scholars could now be found who would deny that they are identical with the *Hun* mentioned in a Sogdian letter of the early 4th century A.D., (see W. B. Henning, *The Date of the Early Sogdian Letters*, B.S.O.A.S. XII, pp. 601ff), the *Hūna* of the Indian records and the European Huns. A great deal has been written about the Hsiung-nu language, the latest contribution being Benzing's article in P.T.F. (see above), and many very various opinions have been expressed, but few scholars have achieved such a remarkable record of inconsistency as Shiratori, who in 1900 (*op. cit.* above) proved that it was Turkish, and in 1923 (*Journal Asiatique*, 1923, pp. 71ff.) proved that it was a mixture of Mongolian and Tungus. There is no reasonable doubt that he was right the first time and wrong the second. Most of the relevant material is collected in his 1900 article; there are many problems still to be solved, but the crucial phrase is in the *Ch'ien Han Shu* (which was finished not later than about A.D. 125) chapter 94A, fol. 7 (Shiratori, *op. cit.*, p. 3) "the people call him (*i.e.* their supreme ruler) *ch'êng-li ku-t'u shan-yü*; the Hsiung-nu call 'heaven' *ch'êng-li*

⁶ See O. Pritsak, *Xun, der Volksname der Hsiung-nu*, C.A.J. V, 1, 1959; pp. 27ff.

and 'son' *ku-t'u*; *shan-yü* is descriptive of breadth and greatness; it means that he (*i.e.* the Shan-yü) resembles heaven in being *shan-yü-like* (*i.e.* broad and great)". I suggest that this is an example of Chinese paraphrasing and that in fact while the first two words together correspond to the Chinese phrase *t'ien tsü* "son of heaven", the title of the Chinese Emperor, the two constituent parts of the two phrases do not exactly correspond. In this and future reconstructions of such phrases I shall give the "Archaic Chinese" (dated to about 800 to 600 B.C.), and the "Ancient Chinese" (dated to the turn of the 6th and 7th centuries A.D.), sounds of the Chinese characters suggested in Professor B. Karlgren's *Grammata Serica*, preceded by the numbers of the characters in that book. It will be noted that the *Ch'ien Han Shu* falls squarely between these two stages of the language. The words quoted above read:—(725, actual character not listed) *t'äng* > *t'äng*—519 g. *liar* > *liei*, 41 c. *kwo* > *kuo*—82 d' *d'o* > *d'uo* 147 a *đjan* > *žjan* (the character is said to have this special sound in this word)—97 a. *giwo* > *jju*. I suggest that this is Turkish, **teğri: kutu: *davğu**: "his divine Majesty, the Yavğu". It has always been agreed that the first word is **teğri:**, and, *pace* Benzing, **teğri:** is a pure Turkish word later borrowed by Mongolian, see my last article listed above. **Kut**, "majesty", is a word which constantly occurs in Turkish royal titles. Professor Pulleyblank is unhappy at my suggestion that *-n* could represent *-v-*, but a sound as foreign to Chinese ears as *-v-* must have presented great difficulties to the transcribers at this very early period; the word first occurs in the *Shih Chi*. ***Davğu:** is a good pre-8th century form of **yavğu:**, a word with a long history; by the 8th century it was usually only a very high title, having been deposed from the top position by **kağan**, a word which is first found among the Hsien-pei, but it was still the title of the supreme ruler of the Tokuz Oğuz as late as the 11th century.

(iii) The Wu-huan—Hsien-pei group can be taken as a whole. The *Hou Han Shu* (finished in A.D. 424) chapter 120 (*Bichurin* I, 142ff. and 149ff.) says that when the Hsiung-nu "destroyed" the Tung Hu early in the 2nd century B.C. the debris coalesced into two tribes, the Wu-huan and the Hsien-pei; that the first were descended from the Tung Hu "in the direct line" and the second "in the indirect line", whatever exactly that may mean, and that both had the same language and customs. The *T'ung-chien Kang-mu*, a late authority compiled in A.D. 1070 and revised by Chu Hsi 100 years later, but drawing on much earlier material, says that when the Hsien-pei disintegrated owing to civil wars in the late 2nd and early 3rd centuries A.D. two tribes took shape out of the debris, the Mu-jung (*Bichurin* I, 159) and the T'o-pa (*Bichurin* I, 167). The memorandum on the T'u-yü-hun in the *Chou Shu* (finished in A.D. 636), translated in Liu Mau-tsai, *op. cit.*, I, 29, says that T'u-yü-hun, the eponymous founder of the tribe, was a step-brother of Mu-jung Hui, who was a Hsien-pei.

The T'o-pa, the Chinese scription of Tavğaç (not Tabğaç, as it is so often spelt), were a tribe of great importance who founded the Northern (or Yüan) Wei Dynasty, which ruled North China from A.D. 386 to 535. We have a good deal of information about their language which has been conveniently assembled by L. Bazin in his article, *Recherches sur les Parlers T'o-pa*, T'oung Pao XXXIX, 4-5, pp. 228ff. As he points out it can all be taken as referring to the 5th century A.D.; I therefore quote only Karlgren's "Ancient Chinese" transcriptions. I regret that a good many of Bazin's explanations, particularly of tribal and clan names,⁷ which are based on a "mixed language" theory, do not seem to me to be tenable, and if these are eliminated some problems are left unsolved, but even so there are enough words left to prove that the language was Turkish. Examples are the following (the numbers preceding the words being those in Bazin's serial order):— 123, "secretary", *pi-tê-chên*, 565g. *pji-* 919k. *tək-* 375a. *tšien*, which is patently Turkish **bitigçi**; 129, "chief of a posting station", *hsien-chên*, 671a. *γām*-375a. *tšien*, Turkish **yamçı**; 134, "cook", *a-chên*, 1m. *·ā*-375a. *tšien*, Turkish **aşçı**; or **alçı** (see below). Two other words are, I suggest, particularly interesting. In the two latest articles mentioned above I have contended that the earliest Turkish loan words in Mongolian were borrowed by the Kitan from the Tavğaç in the 5th or 6th centuries and that some such words have certain phonetic peculiarities, of which two are unusual vocalizations, e.g. *-a-* for *-i-*, as in the second syllable of *balağasun* "city" from Turkish **balık**, and the sound change *-ş-* > *-l-* as in *taulai* "hare" from Turkish **tavışgan**. Two of the words listed by Bazin show the same peculiarities:— 127, "doorkeeper", *k'o-pa-chên*, 1a. *k'ā*—771p. *b'āk*—375a *tšien*, Turkish **kapağçı**; from **kapağ** "door", which is spelt **kapiğ** in 8th ff. century Uyğur and **kapuğ** in 11th century Khakani; and 125 "the man who girds on the Emperor's weapons", *hu-lo-chên*, 49a'. *γuo*—766k. *lāk*—375a. *tšien*, apparently Turkish ***kurlağçı**: from (11th century Khakani) **kurşağ** "belt", which would be ***kurlağ** in an "l/r" dialect of Turkish, such as I believe Tavğaç to have been. It might perhaps be suggested that these are all "culture words", and that Tavğaç might still be a Mongolian language with these, and other, Turkish words as loan words, but this theory is not tenable. It is true that "secretary" in Mongolian is a Turkish loan word, but in a Mongolian shape, *bičigeči*, with the characteristic sound change *-ti-* > *-či-*. Similarly "chief of a posting station" in Mongolian is a Turkish loan word, but in the form *jamči*, for the standard Turkish **yamçı**: which shows that it was borrowed not in the early, Tavğaç, period, but in the second (8th to 12th century) period. On the other hand the Mongols had their own, quite

⁷ In my article "A Note on Qapqan", J.R.A.S. 1956, 73ff. I stated the reasons for which I do not believe that such names have "meanings".

different, words for "cook" (*ba'urči*) and "door-keeper" (*e'üdeči*) and never used **aşçı**: or **kapağçı**:. The conclusion, therefore, is inevitable, that the Tavğaç spoke Turkish, probably not standard Turkish but an "l/r" dialect.

From this it seems to follow inevitably that the whole group were Turks, that is that the Hsien-pei and the Mu-jung, who were both closely related to the Tavğaç, spoke Turkish and also the Wu-huan "who had the same language and customs" (*Hou Han Shu*). Some time ago I suggested (*Journal Asiatique*, 1957, p. 21) that this name (61a. *·o* > *·uo*—163a. (also 164 a and f) *g'wân* > *yuân*) represented Oğuz, and I still believe that this is so. After the Huns, the Türkü, and perhaps the Tavğaç, the Oğuz were the most famous Turkish tribe; it would be very odd if they were not mentioned in the early Chinese records under some recognizable name. They are frequently mentioned in the Turkish inscriptions of the 8th century, and there is no reasonable doubt that they are the *Oğywpoi* of the 5th and 6th century Byzantine authors, Moravcsik, *op. cit.*, II, 196. The name also seems to be part of that of the *᾽Ονόγοροι* "the Ten Oğur", ditto II, 189; and it is possible that *Κοντρίγοροι*, ditto II, 152, is a metathesized muddle of *Tokur Ogouroi*, "the Nine Oğur", the "l/r" form of Tokuz Oğuz, a confederation which played an important part in the history of Central Asia, and formed the subject of E. G. Pulleyblank's recent article, *Some remarks on the Toquzoghuz Problem*, *Ural-Altaische Jahrbücher*, XXVIII, 1-2, pp. 35ff. The name also seems to form part of that of the *Σαράγοροι*, ditto II, 228, which perhaps represents **Sara* (for standard Turkish **Sarığ**) *Oğur* "the Yellow Oğur". It is at first sight odd that Oğuz should appear in an "l/r" form in these western authorities, but I have suggested in C.A.J., IV, 3 that there is a close connection between the two "l/r" groups, the Tavğaç in the far east and the group of which Chuvash (< Tavğaç) is the modern survivor in the far west. It does not of course follow that the Wu-huan/Oğuz (if this identification is correct) themselves talked an "l/r" language; there is in fact, in spite of the *Hou Han Shu*, every reason to suppose the contrary. This tribe was constantly involved in the general rough and tumble of Turkish nomadic life on the north western frontier of China in and even before the 1st millennium A.D. They were installed by the Chinese as frontier guards beyond the Great Wall early in the 1st century B.C., a capacity in which incidentally they proved quite untrustworthy, and are often mentioned in connection with frontier affairs at any rate until late in the 4th century A.D. The Hsien-pei on the other hand, when the Tung Hu were "destroyed" by the Hsiung-nu early in the 2nd century B.C. got as far away from them as possible into the eastern extremity of the steppes in the angle formed by the west bank of the Liao River and the south bank of its tributary the "Yellow" River, and "had no communication with the Middle Kingdom" (*Hou Han Shu*, *Bichurin* I, 149). It seems probable that it was during this period of isolation that the

Hsien-pei > Tavḡaç language developed the phonetic peculiarities which have so much puzzled modern scholars.

(iv) The T'u-yü-hun, however, present a very awkward problem. If the traditional account in the *Chou Shu* (which is, however, it should be noted, only a 7th century authority) is correct, the tribe was closely connected with the Mu-jung, but broke away from them in the middle of the 3rd century A.D. and after a long journey skirting the north-western and western frontiers of the China of that day, established itself in what is now north-eastern Tibet close to the Kuku-nor. It might therefore reasonably be supposed that they talked Turkish. P. Pelliot, however, who incidentally was a strong advocate of the Altaic theory, assembled the basic information about them in his *Note sur les T'ou-yu-houen et les Sou-pi*, T'oung-pao XX, 323ff., and came to the conclusion that on balance it seemed probable that they talked Mongolian. It should also be added, though the point is perhaps not very important, that *MS. Pelliot Tibetain 1283*, a document datable to the middle of the ninth century, says that the 'A-za (the Tibetan name of the T'u-yü-hun) "resembled" the Kitan and another tribe which was also probably Mongolian (see *Journal Asiatique*, 1957, p. 22). Pelliot based his conclusion on four arguments:—

(1) He considered that Shih-wei (室韋), the name of an indisputably Mongolian tribe discussed below, was a "later" form of Hsien-pei. If this was so, it would involve making the whole Hsien-pei group Mongols, but it is not. The Shih-wei are mentioned under that name by an authority as early as the *Sung Shu* (finished in A.D. 488), that is, it is true later, but not much later than the first mention of the Hsien-pei, and the geographical positions of the two tribes were quite different.

(2) He considered that -tu, the final syllable of the names of two 7th century T'u-yü-hun kaḡans was the Mongolian suffix -tu. This is, however, quite inconclusive unless the rest of the names could be shown to be Mongolian.

(3) He considered that the word *ch'ü*, translated by the Chinese "thou" in the T'u-yü-hun phrase *ch'ü k'o-han* (see Shiratori *op. cit.*, p. 27) represented the Mongolian *či* "thou"; and

(4) He considered that *a-kan* said to mean "elder brother" in T'u-yü-hun was the Mongolian *aya*. These two arguments must be taken together and require careful examination by an expert Sinologist. If "elder brother" really was *aya* in T'u-yü-hun then indisputably they talked Mongolian, for *aya* is a pure Mongolian word and did not displace *éçi*: in the sense of "elder brother" in any Turkish language until after the 12th century. Actually according to Shiratori, *op. cit.*, p. 26, the form *a-kan* (阿干) is not found before the *Chin Shih* (mid-7th century); the form in the *Sung Shu* (A.D. 488), the *Pei Shih* (mid-7th century) and the *Wei Shu* (of which the relevant chapter is copied from the *Pei Shih*) is *a-yü* (阿于). This point, however, does not carry much weight, as the two characters

were frequently confused and either reading might be the right one. The vital questions are whether the *Sung Shu* really said that the word meant "elder brother" in the T'u-yü-hun language, and if so whether the passage is likely to have been part of the original (5th century) text. The *Sung Shu* as quoted in Shiratori, *op. cit.*, p. 27, seems rather to say something different, that is that the Hsien-pei call "elder brother" *a-yü* (or *a-kan*). The *Sung Shu* was written in southern China and the author may well have been ill-informed about matters in the far north. By this time the Wei (T'o-pa) Emperors were busily trying to suppress the fact that they had originally been Hsien-pei > Tavḡaç and were not by origin Chinese (see Bazin, *op. cit.*, p. 231), the Hsien-pei proper had ceased to exist as a tribe for nearly two centuries, and the land which they had held in the Liao River/"Yellow" River area had been occupied by the tribes mentioned below, who did talk Mongolian. If what the author of the *Sung Shu* meant, assuming that the words are part of the original text, was no more than that a word *a-yü* (or *a-kan*) which occurred in a T'u-yü-hun context meant "elder brother" in the language of the people at that time living in the old Hsien-pei lands in the Liao River/Yellow River area, then it does not necessarily prove that the T'u-yü-hun proper talked Mongolian. If the conclusion regarding this point is positive in either direction, the third argument can be disregarded. If they spoke Mongolian, *ch'ü* is probably *či* "thou"; if they spoke Turkish, it might well be *éçi*: "elder brother", a respectful periphrasis for "thou".

It may be that all this is no more than special pleading and that the T'u-yü-hun really did call "elder brother" *aya*. If so, Pelliot was right in describing the T'u-yü-hun as Mongolian speakers, but this does not necessarily involve the conclusion that the whole Hsien-pei group were Mongolian speakers also. The evidence that the Tavḡaç spoke Turkish is very strong and there is no doubt that they were a Hsien-pei tribe. The connection of the T'u-yü-hun with the Hsien-pei is much more tenuous. It would certainly be very surprising if a Mongolian tribe broke out of the forests and made the long trek to the Kuku-nor as early as the 3rd century A.D., that is a century before the Kitan, but it is not impossible.

(v) We now come to the Yü-wen, Hsi, Ch'i-tan group. The Yü-wen were of no great importance except that it is stated in the memorandum on them in the *T'ung-chien Kang-mu* (*Bichurin* I, 208) that their language was entirely different from that of the Hsien-pei. They were located somewhere east of the Liao River and played a small part in history in the early part of the 4th century, being "destroyed" by the Mu-jung in about A.D. 330. However, as Professor Pulleyblank has pointed out to me, the "destruction" was not permanent. They became in the 4th century a constituent part of the T'o-pa Empire and later still the ruling house in the western successor state, Northern Chou. By this time they had no doubt become thoroughly Sinified, as the T'o-pa had been before them.

The Hsi, whom the Türkü called Tatabı,⁸ are the subject of a memorandum in the *Sui Shu* (finished A.D. 636) translated in Liu Mau-tsai, *op. cit.*, I, 124, and another in the *Hsin T'ang Shu* (finished A.D. 1060), chapter 219, translated in *Bichurin* I, 370. From these and other authorities quoted by Liu it appears that they were a tribe of the Yü-wên. The earlier memorandum says that after being "destroyed" by the Mu-jung they withdrew to a remote area which has been identified as the forests on the upper reaches of the "Yellow" River (see above), while the later one says that they occupied "the former lands of the Hsien-pei" and that the Ch'i-tan were located to the north-east of them. The *Chou Shu* (finished about A.D. 636) says that they were a tribe not of the Yü-wên but of the Hsien-pei, which shows that at any rate in the 7th century there was a great deal of confusion about the identity of the tribes in the far north-east. The facts seem to be that they were originally located somewhere in the Manchurian forests and came out into the open country only after the Hsien-pei, or rather their "descendants" the Mu-jung and T'o-pa (Tavğaç), had moved south. They became vassals of the Eastern Türkü, probably late in the 6th century and sent their first embassy to China early in the 7th century.

The Ch'i-tan are of course the famous tribe of Kitan, who played a great part in Chinese history and founded the Liao Dynasty, which ruled North China from A.D. 907 to 1154. There are memoranda on them in the *Sui Shu* (Liu, *op. cit.*, I, 125ff.), the *Pei Shih* (*Bichurin* II, 74ff.) and the *Chiu T'ang Shu* (finished about A.D. 945; *Bichurin* I, 363ff.). From these it appears that they belonged to the same "people" as the Hsi but were a different "tribe". The *Sui Shu* says that they fell into two main parts, the Kitan proper in the south and the Shih Wei further north, and that there were five Shih Wei sections, Southern, Northern, Po, Shên-mo-ta (the name of an unidentified river) and Great. Enormous distances were said to separate the two main parts and the five sections of the northern part, and the language of the Great Shih-wei was unintelligible. It is difficult to resist the conclusion that the Shih-wei proper were the northernmost tribe of which the Chinese had any precise knowledge, and that the name was used as a sort of catch-all to include not only the Shih-wei proper who really were Mongolian (the true Mongols are said to have been descended from the Shih-wei, see P. Pelliot, *A propos des Comans*, *Journal Asiatique*, 1920, p. 146) but also other peoples lying to the north of them, Tungus and perhaps even Palaeo-Asiatics and Finno-Ugrians. Like the Yü-wên and the Hsi, the Kitan were "destroyed" by the Mu-jung in about A.D. 330 and withdrew even farther east. They were, according to the *Sui Shu* "the most uncouth and primitive of all the barbarians", but they made a come-back

⁸ See my article *A propos du Manuscrit Pelliot Tibétain 1283*, *Journal Asiatique*, 1957, p. 19.

quicker than the Hsi. They were soon engaged in intermittent warfare with the tribes in North Korea, and according to the *Pei Shih* were again "destroyed" by the Northern Wei late in the 4th century. However, they soon recovered and, according to the *Pei Shih*, started sending annual embassies to the Wei court in about A.D. 441. There is of course no conceivable doubt that the Kitan talked Mongolian, and from this it follows that the Hsi (Tatabı), Yü-wên and at any rate some Shih-wei talked Mongolian also. The fact that the Yü-wên are said to have talked quite a different language from the Hsien-pei is additional confirmation of the theory that the latter talked Turkish.

(vi) Next we come to the people whom the Chinese called alternatively Jou-jan (柔然), Jui-jui (芮芮), Ju-ju (茹茹), and, rather offensively, "wriggling worms", Juan-juan (蠕蠕) (see J. Marquart, *Über das Volkstum der Komanen*, in *Osttürkische Dialektstudien*, Berlin, 1914, p. 73), and who are generally supposed to have been the Avars (see for example Chavannes, *op. cit.*, p. 230), although this theory rests on no more solid foundation than the fact that the Jou-jan disappeared from the history of Asia at about the same time that the Avars first appeared in the history of Europe. The Jou-jan are frequently referred to in the first half of the 1st millennium in Central Asia. Chinese and Japanese scholars, notably Uchida Gimpu, have done a great deal of useful work in collecting the Chinese information about the Jou-jan, but there does not seem to be any comprehensive work about this people in any European language, and *a fortiori* no comprehensive work bringing together that information and the information in European sources about the Avars. It is very much to be hoped that some scholar who is competent in both fields, if such a one exists, will embark upon what might well prove to be a fascinating enquiry into this subject, primarily with the purpose of determining whether the two peoples really are identical. Until one is available, any study of the Jou-jan must largely be based on the memorandum in the *Pei Shih*, chapter 98 (copied by Sung editors into the *Wei Shu* as chapter 103) translated in *Bichurin* I, 184ff. The earliest history of them in this memorandum is merely anecdotal and casts very little light on their origin or early location. It starts in about the middle of the 3rd century with stories about their relations with the early Tavğaç; and seems to indicate that they broke away from the Tavğaç to the west and established themselves in what is now west Mongolia, north of the Gobi desert. At the end of the 4th century they established a powerful nomadic "empire", and their dominions are said (probably with some exaggeration) to have stretched from Karashar in Sinkiang on the west to the borders of Korea on the east. The centre of gravity seems to have been somewhere in the region of the Orkhon River in the area where there was a Hsiung-nu capital at an earlier, and a Türkü capital at a later, period. This "empire" was destroyed by the Türkü in the

middle of the 6th century and the history of the Jou-jan came to an abrupt stop. It was at about this time that the Avars first appeared in Europe, and in the account in the Orkhon inscriptions (IE4; IIE5) of the funeral of a Türkü kagan, apparently Işterni who died in about A.D. 576 (see Chavannes, *op. cit.*, p. 227), the Apar (or Afar?) are mentioned between Tibet and Byzantium (*Porom* or *Forom*? < Rome) as having sent a delegation as a mark of respect; there are of course many references to the Avars and "Pseudo-Avars" in the European historians. I suspect that the "Pseudo-" is merely a typical piece of Byzantine cattishness by Theophylactes Simocatta, and that the latter were perfectly genuine Avars and probably the people who sent the delegation.

The Jou-jan are customarily described as Mongols (see for example Grousset, *op. cit.*, p. 104), apparently for no better reason than that they were connected in some way with the Hsien-pei. That fact, however, points rather to their having been Turks, and such evidence as there is does in fact point in that direction. The memorandum in the *Pei-shih* says that each successive kağan when he ascended the throne took a regnal title, as of course the Türkü and the Uyğur kağans did after them. These titles are given and their meanings explained in "the language of the Wei Dynasty", that is Tavğaç. This is a pretty clear indication that the Avars were Turks, although it seems probable that the practice of assuming regnal titles was originally an Iranian one borrowed by the Turks, but at first sight it looks as if it may be rather difficult to restore the original Turkish titles from the information available.

The conclusion therefore is that, apart from a vague question mark after the T'u-yü-hun, and except for the Yü-wên, Hsi (Tatabi) and Kitan, who were certainly Mongols, all the tribes named:— Hsiung-nu (Huns), Wu-huan (?Oğuz), Hsien-pei, Mu-jung, T'o-pa (Tavğaç), and Jou-jan were Turks.

(vii) Finally I come to the one loose end which I cannot satisfactorily tie up. In the list of funeral delegations just referred to there appear, between the "Three Kurikan", who were certainly Turks, and the Kitan who were certainly Mongols, a people called the "Thirty Tatar". This (A.D. ?576/732) is, so far as I can find out, the first occasion on which Tatar are mentioned. Pelliot (*A propos des Comans*, p. 143), discussing references to them in the Chinese records, says that the earliest one which he could find in those records related to A.D. 842. They are also mentioned in 9th (?) and 10th century Saka documents, see for example H. W. Bailey, *A Khotanese Text concerning the Turks in Kantsou*, Asia Major, N.S. I, 1949, p. 52. References to the Tatar in Moslem authorities, which are later still, will be found in V. Minorsky, *Hudūd al 'Ālam*, London, 1937, Index A s.v. Tatar. Kāşğari, in his *Dīwānu'l-Luġāti'l-Turk* (mid-11th century) says that the Tatar (and also the Kay, Yabaku, and Basmil) had

"dialects" (*luğa*) of their own (that is presumably Turkish dialects) and also spoke good Turkish, while the Çomul had a "separate strange language" (*raṭāna 'āla ḥida*) (presumably non-Turkish) but knew Turkish. In mediaeval and later times the name seems to have been, at any rate partly, switched and was used quite indiscriminately both for Mongols and Turks, with the emphasis usually on the former. Even in China the word was sometimes used specifically for "Mongol". For example in the Chinese-Mongolian Vocabulary of A.D. 1389, the *Hua-I i-yü*, the Chinese phrase translated by "Mongol" is Ta-ta (鞑靼), see E. Haenisch, *Sinomongolische Glossare I: Das Hua-I ih-yü*, A.D.A.W., Berlin, 1957, p. 21. Nevertheless, looking at the evidence as a whole, I am inclined to think, that the original Tatar were Turks, and that the name did not come to be used as an equivalent to "Mongol" until the 13th century. The reasons for the transfer, if one in fact took place, still have to be discovered.

POST-SCRIPT

My friend Dr. Waley has pointed out to me that I have gone too far in saying that "there is no conceivable doubt that the Kitan spoke a Mongolian language." This is indeed the general belief, and it would be chronologically convenient to suppose that it was the Kitan who introduced the oldest Turkish (probably Tavğaç) loan words into Mongolian. But the awkward fact remains that the vocabulary of about 200 Kitan words at the end of the Liao Shih does not *prima facie* bear out this theory. While some of the words in this vocabulary do appear to be Mongolian or Turkish, many others cannot easily be so explained. Until therefore this vocabulary has been scientifically analysed, the possibility must remain that the Kitan had a language of their own, either a completely isolated one, like that of the Kots, Kets, etc. further west, or a member of the Palaeo-Asiatic group, and that some other people not yet identified was the Mongolian-speaking people which introduced the earliest Turkish loan words into their language.