A NEW ETYMOLOGY OF THE NAME OF THE ROURAN*

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Abstract

This article provides a new etymology of the name of the Rouran, or Ruanruan (330 AD–555 AD), which is attested in Chinese dynastic histories as *Ñuñar/*Ñuñan 柔然, *Ñonñor/*Ñonñon 蠕蠕, *Ñoiñoi 芮芮, *Ñuñor/*Ñuñon 蝚蠕, *Ñoño 茹茹. The author connects this name with Khitan *ñaw '(younger) sibling; younger relative' and Proto-Mongolic *nuxu/n, the Tabghach cognate of which can be regularly reconstructed as *ñu or *ño. A conclusion is made that this *ñu ~ *ño was borrowed from Tabghach by the Rouran for their self-name, which fits perfectly for a term reflecting their claim for a common origin with the Northern Wei emperors. The forms *Ñuñar/*Ñuñan, *Ñonñor/*Ñonñon, and *Ñuñor/*Ñuñon may be analyzed as *ñu ~ *ño 'younger sibling; younger relative' plus the plural suffix *+ñar/*+ñan or *+ñor/*+ñon. The forms *Ñoño and *Ñoiñoi appear to be reduplications that are occasionally observed in Turkic, Mongolic and Tungusic languages as an expression of plurality, collectivity, or distributiveness.

Keywords

the Rouran, Tabghach, Serbi-Mongolic languages, ethnic names, etymology, historical linguistics

1. INTRODUCTION

According to the Chinese dynastic chronicles *Weishu* 魏書[1] (*juan* 卷 103) and *Beishi* 北史[2] (*juan* 98),[3] the Rouran 柔然, or Ruanruan 蠕蠕, the founders of the well-known steppe empire in Inner Asia (330 AD–555 AD), were descendants of the Eastern Hu 東胡,[4] while their immediate ancestor was a man with a surname (*xing* 姓) Yujiulü 郁久閭,[5] who was captured by the Tabghach

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[1] Compiled between 551 and 554 AD.

[2] Compiled between 643 and 659 AD.

[3] The account of the Rouran in the *Beishi* is basically copied from the *Weishu* except for minor changes, but in some cases it preserves better readings. Much of the *Beishi* is known to be a compilation of texts borrowed from earlier histories, including the *Weishu* (Graff 2015: 20). It should be noted that *juan* 103 of the *Weishu* is one of the 30 *juan* that were lost by the Northern Song 北宋 dynasty (960–1127 AD) and later reconstructed from extant sources, especially the *Beishi*, to prepare a new complete edition. The latter was printed twice, between 1111 and 1118 AD (no copies of this version have survived) and in 1144 AD (Olbricht 1954: 92; Klein 2015: 369). The 1144 printing formed the basis for all subsequent editions of the *Weishu* (Klein 2015: 369–70). The compilers of the new edition probably used for their reconstruction also fragments of the original version of the chapter on the Rouran that were still preserved at that time (Olbricht 1954: 92). For the sources of this new edition, see also Ware (1932: 42–45).

[4] A confederation of nomadic peoples, known in Chinese sources as the Eastern Hu 東胡, was first mentioned in the mid-7th century BC as living north of the State of Yan 燕 (the area of modern Beijing) and is currently identified with the Upper Xiajiadian culture 夏家店上層文化, found mainly in the southeast of modern Inner Mongolia, the northern part of Hebei and the western part of Liaoning (Kessler et al. 1995: 37–42). There is little written evidence about the history of the Eastern Hu. It is known that they suffered a crushing defeat from the Xiongnu 匈奴 in the late 3rd century BC and subsequently split into two main peoples, the Serbi (Xianbei 鮮卑) and the Avars (Wuhuan 烏桓) (Taskin (trans.) 1984: 63; cf. Pulleyblank 1983: 452–53; Shimunek 2017: 39).

[5] MSC *yù-jiŭ-lű́*, ONWC *ʔuk-ku*-?-*lio (?) (> *løj) (the reconstruction of the last syllable is based on the reading of the near-homophonous character 呂 MSC *lǚ* in Cob. 0120), STCA ?-*ku* (> *kiu*)-? (Cob. 1172, 0517, 0120), EMC *ʔjuk-kjəuB-ljwo* (Sch. 96, 95, 57), *ʔuwk-kuw'-liɜ̆* (Pul. 384, 161, 204) or *'juwk-kjuwX-ljo* (BaS 142, 57; Kr. 574a, 221b, 285b). Reconstructible as *Ugul or *Ugur. (The character 呂, a homophone of 閭, was used in Old Northwest Chinese to render Sanskrit *ṛ*, *ṝ*, *ḷ*, as shown in Cob. 0120.) Róna-Tas (1999: 210–11) proposes a connection with the well-known Turkic ethnonym *Oghur*, which has a secondary form *Ughur* in several sources. This opinion deserves attention. Other attempts to etymologize this name (see, e.g., Golden 2013: 55 n. 63) are less convincing.

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at the end of the reign of Shen Yuan 神元,[6] i.e. most probably in the late 3rd century AD. Because he could not remember his actual name, his master nicknamed him Mugulü 木骨閭,[7] lit. 'head-bald (*shou tu* 首禿)', which is told to be close in sound to Yujiulü and hinting at the unusual appearance of the slave whose hair started only from the level of his eyebrows. Subsequently, Mugulü was emancipated and became a cavalryman, but during the reign of Emperor Mu 穆帝,[8] he fled to the steppe because of a violation of military discipline. He gathered more than a hundred of the similar deserters and joined the Hetulin 紇突隣[9] or Chuntulin 純突鄰,[10] one of the tribes of the Gaoju 高車 people.[11]

The *Weishu* says:

> 木骨閭死，子車鹿會雄健，始有部眾，自號柔然，而役屬於國。後世祖以其無知，狀類於蟲，故改其號為蠕蠕。車鹿會既為部帥，歲貢馬畜、貂豽皮，冬則徙度漠南，夏則還居漠北。(WS 103. 2289)[12]

> '[When] Mugulü died, [his] son Cheluhui/Juluhui 車鹿會,[13] brave and strong, first came into possession of the people of [this] tribe. [He] gave himself the name Rouran 柔然 and [then] submitted to the [Wei] dynasty. Subsequently [the Wei Emperor] Shizu 世祖[14] changed his name to Ruanruan 蠕蠕,[15] because he was ignorant and looked like an insect (*chong* 蟲).[16] After Cheluhui/Juluhui became chief of the tribe, [he] paid [the Wei] tribute in

[6] The posthumous name given in 398 AD to Tuoba Liwei 拓拔力微, the first chieftain of the Tuoba 拓拔 clan, presumably from 219 to 277 AD. On him, see Taskin (trans.) (1984: 398 n. 2).

[7] MSC *mù-gŭ-lŭ́*, ONWC *mok-kot*-*lio (?) (> *lø) (the reconstruction of the last syllable is based on the reading of the near-homophonous character 呂 MSC *lŭ* in Cob. 0120), STCA *mok-kor*-? (Cob. 1143, 0786, 0120), EMC *muk-kwət-ljwo* (Sch. 161, 311, 57), *məwk-kwət-liə̆* (Pul. 220, 111, 204) or *muwk-kwot-ljo* (BaS 78, 36; Kr. 315b, 140b, 285b). Reconstructible as *Mogol or *Mogor. The Japanese scholars Fujita (1923: 65) and Komai (1961: 39), as well as the Mongolian researcher Süxbaatar (1992: 176–80, 273–74), considered this name to be an early variant of the ethnonym Mongol, which often appears in Western sources of the 13th and 14th centuries in the form Moγol or Moγōl (see Doerfer 1970: 74–75; Serruys 1982: 477; de Rachewiltz 1996: 206). This hypothesis has gained support in a recent paper by de la Vaissière (2021: 268–70). Another etymology was put forward by Shiratori (1902: 018) and Boodberg (1939: 231–32) who connected this name with Written Mongol *muqur* 'mousse, émoussé, rond, dont on a coupé les angles pour l'arrondir; sans cornes, qui n'a qu'un bout de corne; sans bout, sans extrémités, sans suite, sans issue; cassé, estropié, mutilé; fig. stupide, hébété' (Kow. III 2034a), 'blunt, blunted; cropped; hornless, tailless, bobtailed' (L 553b) and Manchu *muhelien* 'rund' (HMS II 672), 'round' (CMED 271b), *muhūri* 'abgerundet, rundgemacht, abgeschnitten, gleichgemacht' (HMS II 672), 'rounded off, leveled off' (CMED 272a) and *moholo* 'hornloser Ochse' (HMS II 662), 'a hornless castrated bovine' (CMED 267a). Vovin (2007b: 200–202) believed that it may be interpreted as a Tabghach word, which he reconstructed as *muqolo ~ *moqolo 'bald' and compared with Eastern Middle Mongol 木中忽剌舌児 *muqular* 'hornless, with blunt horns (無角, 禿角)' (SHM §§ 121, 214), 抹和答黑 *moqodaq* 'blunt (鈍)' (HY I 27b5), Written Mongol *moγutur ~ moqutur* 'ce qui a la pointe émoussé, qui n'a point de pointe, qui n'a point des cornes' (Kow. III 2033b, 2036b), 'blunt; hornless; capricious, stubborn' (L 542a, 544b), Manchu *mohoto* 'kahl (Pferdeschwanz)' (HMS II 662), 'hairless (a horse's tail)' (CMED 267a), *moholo* and *mokto* 'amgeflacht, abgestumpft; kahle Schweifrübe des Prerdes' (HMS II 663), 'docked off, bobbed; bare, bald (said of an animal's tail)' (CMED 267b). Mongol *muqur* and its derivatives also have the figurative meaning 'stupid' (Boodberg 1939: 231–32, Pelliot & Hambis (trans.) 1951: 57). Both etymologies can be reconciled with each other if we assume that the ethnonym Mongol could originally have been a pejorative name with the approximate meaning of 'bald, bald-headed; blunt' > 'stupid.' A similar derogatory etymology of the name of the Mongols, which was allegedly originally a nickname meaning 'helpless, without relief; defective (فرمانده *faro-mānde*)' and 'simple-hearted; stupid (ساده دل *sāde-del*)' (CPED 925a, 639b), is found in Rashīd al-Dīn's *Jāmiʿ al-Tawārīkh* (JT 360; cf. Xetagurov (trans.) 1952: 154; Thackston (trans.) 1998/1: 80b; see also Doerfer 1970: 68).

[8] The posthumous name given in 398 AD to Tuoba Yilu 拓拔猗盧, the sixth chieftain of the Tuoba clan, presumably from 307 to 316 AD, the founder and first ruler of the Dukedom (310–315) and Kingdom (315–316) of Dai 代. On him, see (Taskin (trans.) 1984: 398 n. 2).

[9] This variant is given in the *Weishu* (WS 103.2289).

[10] This variant is given in the *Beishi* (BS 98.3249).

[11] For this tribe, see Taskin (trans.) (1984: 48, 399 n. 4).

[12] This fragment, with minor changes, has been fully copied into the *Beishi* (BS 98.3249), which, however, lacks the important remark 而役屬於國 'and [then] submitted to the [Wei] dynasty.'

[13] 車鹿會 MSC *chē*/*jū-lù-huì*, ONWC *tśha*/*kio* (?) (> *kø*)-?-*ɣuaC*/*ɣuai* (Cob. 0128, 0210), EMC *tśhja*/*kjwo-luk-ɣwâiC* (Sch. 48, 159, 240), *ʨhia*/*kiə̆-ləwk-ɣwaih* (Pul. 52, 162, 201, 134) or *tsyhae*/*kjo-luwk-hwaiH* (BaS 11, 58, 71, 46; Kr. 44b, 285b, 176a). Reconstructible as *Čalugui/*Čalgui or *Gölügüi/*Gölgüi. A connection with Written Mongol *čalaγai ~ čaliγai* 'paresseux, fainéant, qui fait les choses nonchalamment' (Kow. III 2098a-б), 'careless, negligent' (L 162a, 163a), suggested by Golden (2013: 56 n. 67), looks attractive, but it should be noted that this word is unattested in Middle Mongol. One can also compare this name with Written Mongol *gölige ~ gölöge* 'un jeune chien, un petit' (Kow. III 2602a), 'pup, young dog or cat' (L 386b), which seems to appear in Eastern Middle Mongol as a personal name in the form Gülige 古里哥 (HY IIb 16a3; see also Serruys 1959: 142 n. 187; Mostaert & de Rachewiltz 1995: 102).

[14] Reigned 423–452 AD.

[15] The character 蠕 has two readings, *ruǎn* and *rú*, in Modern Standard Chinese. Pelliot (1920: 144; see also Pelliot 1959: 383) pointed out that the oldest Chinese dictionaries give no other reading than *ruǎn*, which is also confirmed by a glossary from the 14th-century *Liaoshi* 遼史 (LS 116.1547), where it is rendered in Chinese transcription according to the *fanqie* 反切 method as 而宣 MSC *ér-xuān*, OM *rr̥-sɥen*, LMC *ri-syan* (Pul. 87, 350). However, Hoong (2005: 13) suggested that this character was more likely to be read *rú* (*ʒu in his reconstruction) in the name of the Rouran, as the alternative transcription of this name in Chinese sources was Ruru 茹茹. This assumption seems unconvincing, as Ruanruan and Ruru were different forms of the name of the Rouran and not variant pronunciations of the same form (see below). In the present paper, I accept Pelliot's point of view, which is based on solid philological arguments.

[16] According to the commentary to the Zhonghua shuju edition of the *Weishu*, the original text had 蠱 MSC *gŭ* 'worms in the belly' (Gil. 783b), 'internal worms' (Mat. 516a), but it has been changed to 虫 MSC *chóng* 'insects and reptiles' (Gil. 366a-b), 'worms, insects' (Mat. 217b), in the *Beishi*, and to 蟲 MSC *chóng* 'insects and reptiles' (Gil. 366a-b), 'worms, insects, reptiles' (Mat. 217c), in the *Tongdian* 通典, written between 766 and 801 AD (WS 103.2314).

horses, cattle, hides of sables and silver foxes (*na* 貂)[17] every year. In winter [he] moved [to the lands] south of the desert, and in summer he returned and lived north of the desert.'[18]

2. The name of the Rouran: forms and transcriptions

The Chinese sources contain several transcriptions of the name of the Rouran. Following Pelliot (1959: 382), they can be grouped into northern and southern forms, as they are attested in the histories of northern and southern dynasties respectively. The northern forms are found in the above-cited legend about the origin of the Rouran from the *Weishu*/*Beishi*. The form Rouran is described as the original one, adopted by Cheluhui/Juluhui, the founder of the Rouran confederation, while the alternative form Ruanruan is told to be a later one, allegedly invented by the Wei Emperor Shizu as a derogatory term. The southern forms are recorded in the dynastic histories *Songshu* 宋書,[19] *Nan Qishu* 南齊書,[20] *Liangshu* 梁書,[21] *Bei Qishu* 北齊書,[22] *Suishu* 隋書,[23] *Zhoushu* 周書,[24] and *Jinshu* 晉書,[25] which provide brief accounts of morals and customs of the Rouran or simple mentions of them when describing various historical events. All the forms and their reconstructions are given below.

Northern forms:

(1) *Ñuñar/*Ñuñan[26] 柔然 MSC *róu-rán*, ONWC and STCA *ńu-*ńan*[27] (Cob. 0506a, 0684), EMC *ńźjəu-ńźjän* (Sch. 180, 258), *ɲuw-ɲian* (Pul. 267, 264) or *nyuw-nyen* (BaS 94, 92; Kr. 389a, 383a). See e.g. WS 103.2289; BS 98.3249;

(2) *Ñonñor/*Ñonñon 蠕蠕 MSC *ruǎn-ruǎn*, ONWC and STCA — , EMC *ńźjwän^{B}-ńźjwän^{B}* (Sch. 273) or *ɲwian-ɲwian* (Pul. 269). See e.g. WS 103.2289; BS 98.3249.

Southern forms:

(3) *Ñoiñoi 芮芮 MSC *ruì-ruì*, ONWC and STCA — , EMC *ńźjwäi^{C}-ńźjwäi^{C}* (Sch. 357), *ɲwiaj^{h}-ɲwiaj^{h}* (Pul. 269) or *nywejH-nywejH* (Kr. 392b). See e.g. SoS 95.2357; NQS 59.1023; LiS 54.817;

(4) *Ñuñor/*Ñuñon 蝚蠕 MSC *róu-ruǎn*, ONWC and STCA *ńu-?[28] (Cob. 0506a), EMC *ńźjəu-*ńźjwän^{B}*[29] (Sch. 180, 273) or *ɲuw-*ɲian*[30] (Pul. 267, 264). See e.g. JS 125.3130;

(5) *Ñoño 茹茹 MSC *rú-rú*, ONWC *ńo-ńo > *ńø-ńø, STCA *ńø-ńø*[31], EMC *ńźjwo-ńźjwo* (Sch. 57), *ɲiə̆-ɲiə̆* (Pul. 268) or *nyo-nyo* (BaS 94; Kr. 390b). See e.g. BQS 4.56; SS 84.1863; ZS 50.907. This form is also found in the northern *Bei Qishu*, most probably as a borrowing from a southern source.

My reconstructions of different forms of the name of the Rouran based on their Chinese transcriptions require some explanation. Early Middle Chinese lacked syllables with the coda *-r*, which has developed from *-t* only in Late Middle Chinese, apparently not earlier than during the mid-Tang period (Vovin et al. 2016: 127a-b; Vovin & Sagart 2016: 121b n. 18; see also Coblin 1991: 67–70; Cob. 55; Kasai 2014: 100). To approximate final *-r* in foreign words, Early Middle Chinese sources normally used syllables with the codas *-n* or *-t* (Coblin 1991: 68–69; Vovin 2007b: 194–95; Rykin 2019: 293–94). Therefore, EMC *-n* could equally likely render either foreign *-n* by the principle of phonetic identity or foreign *-r* by the principle of phonetic substitution.[32] Hence the alternative variants of our reconstruction: *Ñuñar/*Ñuñan (1), *Ñonñor/*Ñonñon (2), *Ñuñor/*Ñuñon (4). Simple labial finals *-u* and *-o* in 6th and 7th-century Chinese were probably found only in the Shazhou dialects, notably in Sui-Tang Chang'an (Coblin 1991: 49–66). In other varieties of Early Middle Chinese, they are recorded only in combination with medials *-j-* and *-w-*, with the exception of the use of simple *-u* in syllables with onset *m-* (Baxter 1992: 65, 82; Baxter & Sagart 2014: 17, 19).

[17] The identification of this animal is the subject of much controversy. In medieval Chinese dictionaries, *na* 貂 has a number of conflicting definitions, with some obviously fantastic details. For example, the *Guangyun* 廣韻 rime dictionary, compiled from 1007 to 1008 AD, describes it as follows: 獸名似狸蒼黑無前足善捕鼠 '[This is] the name of an animal looking like a wild cat (*li* 狸), blue-black [in colour], without front legs (sic! — *P.R.*), good at catching rodents' (GY 5.468, quoted from https://ctext.org/library.pl?if=en&file=77414&page=42#50). For problems with the taxonomic identification of *na* 貂, see Taskin (trans.) (1984: 307 n. 4).

[18] Here and elsewhere, English translations of the Chinese sources are my own.

[19] Compiled from 492 to 493 AD.

[20] Compiled between 515 and 520 AD.

[21] Completed in 635 AD.

[22] Completed in 636 AD.

[23] Completed in 636 AD.

[24] Completed in 636 AD.

[25] Compiled between 646 and 648 AD.

[26] Here and elsewhere, reconstructions of the Rouran forms based on their Chinese transcriptions are my own.

[27] The reconstruction of the first syllable is based on the reading of the near-homophonous character 揉 MSC *róu* in Cob. 0506a.

[28] The reconstruction of the first syllable is based on the reading of the near-homophonous character 揉 MSC *róu* in Cob. 0506a.

[29] The reconstruction of the first syllable is based on the readings of the near-homophonous characters in Sch. 180.

[30] The reconstruction of the first syllable is based on the readings of the near-homophonous characters in Pul. 267.

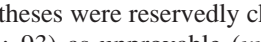
[31] The reconstructions are based on the reading of the near-homophonous character 如 MSC *rú* in Cob. 0122.

[32] For the principles of phonetic identity and phonetic substitution in Chinese transcriptions of Late Middle Mongol/Early Modern Mongol, see Rykin (2012).

There were also other distributional restrictions on the compatibility of Early Middle Chinese initials and finals. These restrictions are observed in transcriptions of some variants of the name of the Rouran as well. For example, nuclear /u/ in the syllable *ñu in (1) and (4) is rendered by the complex final *jəu* (Sch.), *-uw* (Pul.) or *-juw* (BaS), and nuclear /o/ in syllable *ño in (5) by the complex final *jwo* (Sch.), *-ɨə̆* (Pul.) or *-jo* (BaS), as in some Early Middle Chinese transcriptions of Sanskrit (Coblin 1991: 52–53, 57, 64; Cob. 54). The transcription of the syllable *ñon as *ńźjwän*^{B} (Sch.) or *ɲwian* (Pul.) in (2) and the syllable *ñoi as *ńźjwäi*^{C} (Sch.), *ɲwiaj*^{h} (Pul.)or *nywejH* (Kr.) in (3) is also due to the phonotactic constraints of Early Middle Chinese, primarily to the absence of combinations of the palatal nasal with finals *-on* and *-oj*, which could only occur with a few types of initials (Baxter 1992: 65; Baxter & Sagart 2014: 17).[33]

3. Previous scholarship

The etymology of the ethnonym Rouran has long attracted scholarly attention. The earliest etymologies can be called impressionistic, as they were based on passing similarities between transcriptions of this ethnonym in their Modern Standard Chinese pronunciation and some unlikely related words in Mongolic, Turkic and other languages. Thus, Fujita (1923: 67) derived it from Mo. "*jušun*" = WM *yosun*[34] 'usage, coutume, mode, manière, rite, cérémonie, règle, principe, fondements, principes fondamentaux; exemple, ordre, méthode; doctrine' (Kow. III 2381a), 'generally accepted rule, traditional custom, habit, or usage; etiquette; doctrine, dogma, principle; regime, system; policy; mode, manner, method' (L 435b), Shiratori (1934: 67–71) considered it to be related to Mo. "*tsetsen*" = WM *sečen ~ čečen* 'sage, prudent, sensé, plein d'esprit, spirituel, qui a une grande capacité' (Kow. II 1358a), 'wise, sage, intelligent; prudent' (L 168b, 680a), while Boodberg (1939: 231 n. 6) connected it to Tu. "*ǰavčan*" 'artemisia' > 'artemisia-coloured' > 'purple' = OT *yabčan ~ yavčan* 'koljučee rastenie' (DTS 235b, 248b), 'wormwood, Artemisia' (EDT 872a-b).[35] These hypotheses were reservedly characterized by Olbricht (1954: 93) as unprovable (*unbeweisbar*). Haussig (1953: 356) argued that *Ñuñar/*Ñuñan (1) was a Chinese transcription of the 'Altaic' (in fact Mongolic) word "*ǰoǰin*" 'Fremdling' = WM *ǰočin* 'hôte, voyageur, pélerin' (Kow. III 2392b), 'guest, visitor' (L 1066a). According to Golden (1992: 76 n. 31), "this seems very unlikely as a self-designation." Bailey (1979: 209–10) believed that the Chinese forms represent a foreign *varvara- and *vavara-, reduplicated from *var-*, which may be traced to Iranian *var-* 'to be strong, victorious,' also found in the name of the European Avars, supposed descendants of the Rouran. But no Chinese transcriptional data confirm the initial /v/ in the Rouran's name. Xandsürėn (1993: 71) compared this name with the Mongol word "*zuzagan*" = WM *ǰuǰaγan* 'gros, grossier, rude; épais, compact, fort' (Kow. III 2393a), 'thick, dense; strong, massive, powerful' (L 1081b), which supposedly stressed the powerful nature of the Rouran nomadic empire. However, this hypothesis does not take into account Early Middle Chinese readings of the transcriptional characters, totally excluding the reconstruction of onset *ǰ and intervocalic *g. Woo (1995: 18) claimed that the name of the Rouran could come from Chinese *cao* 草 'grass',[36] as the forms (3) and (4) are written with the characters having the radical ⺿ 'grass' that may refer to a nomadic people, but this is absolutely fantastic and untenable.

Several etymologies deserve to be discussed in more detail. The Mongolian scholar Süxbaatar (1988; 1992: 164–76) reconstructed the name of the Rouran as *Nirun and connected it with the term نيرۇن *nīrūn*,[37] which is used by Rashīd al-Dīn (JT 353–54, 450–51; cf. Xetagurov (trans.) 1952: 152, 178; Thackston (trans.) 1998/1: 79b, 98a) as a special designation for the descendants of Alan Qo'a, the legendary foremother of Činggis Qan's clan and all the Mongol tribes. This term is most probably identifiable with Eastern Middle Mongol 你舌魯兀/你舌魯温 *niru'u/n* 'back, spine, backbone (脊梁, 脊)' (SHM §§ 128, 140, 147 ff.) ~ 你舌里兀/你舌里温 *niri'u/n* 'id. (脊)' (SHM §§ 147, 259), 米[38]魯兀 *niru'u* 'sacrum (腰節骨)' (YY No. 559), 你魯文 *niru'un* 'spine, backbone (春[39]骨)' (YY No. 573), 你奴温 *niru'un* 'mountain ridge (嶺)' (ZY No. 17), also in the NP 格舌侖你舌里温 *ger-ün niri'un* 'roof ridge (屋脊)' (HY I 08b8), 格侖你里溫 *ger-ün niri'un* =  *ger-ün niriγun* 'id.' (DGZ No. 240), 圪利努陸 *ger-in nurū* 'ridgepole, roof joist (樑木)' (DY No. 91), Western Middle Mongol نيرون *nirūn* 'back; rear part' (MA 075b3, 126a4, 246a1), نرُوْن *nirūn* 'Rücken' (AL 68a8), نيرغُن *nirγun* 'back' (IMÍ 213), نيرغون *nirγun* 'waist' (RH 199A7), نيْرُغُنْ *nirγun*

[33] Probably with the exception of the Shazhou dialects, where the final *-on* had a wider distribution (Coblin 1991: 94–95).

[34] Here and elsewhere, (Preclassical) Written Mongol, Middle Mongol, Old Turkic, Middle Turkic, and Manchu forms are cited in standard academic transcription. Modern Mongolic, Turkic and Tungusic forms are given in IPA-based phonemic transcription.

[35] In his earlier paper, Boodberg (1935/1979b: 125–28) proposed an even less convincing connection with the "Turco-Mongol" word *šipün ~ *yipin 'red, crimson, purple.'

[36] MSC *cǎo*, ONWC and STCA *tshaʊ* (Cob. 0425), EMC *ts*^{h}*âu*^{B} (Sch. 180), *ts*^{h}*aw* (Pul. 45) or *tshawX* (BaS 9; Kr. 34b).

[37] For this term, see TMEN I No. 390.

[38] Read 你 instead of 米 (Apatóczky 2009: 135).

[39] Read 脊 instead of 春 (Bürgüd 2017: 147).

'dos, reins' (VI 150a2). Süxbaatar was the first to reconstruct a nasal onset unambiguously suggested by our data, but otherwise his etymology is obviously problematic, as neither the unrounded *i in the first syllable nor the intervocalic *r[40] is supported by the Chinese transcription. One can agree with Golden (2013: 54) that "it bears a superficial resemblance, with the initial *n-*, to the reconstructed Chinese forms begin[ning] in *ń-* or *ŋ-*."[41]

According to Kljaštornyj (Kljaštornyj & Savinov 2005: 58), the name of the Rouran may be reconstructed as *Nönör and related to Mongolic *nökör* 'friend; spouse', which also has the meaning 'bodyguard, a member of the military retinue' in Middle Mongol.[42] This reconstruction is phonologically impeccable, but the proposed connection with *nökör* is unconvincing[43] for two main reasons. First, none of the cognates of *nökör* in historical and modern Mongolic varieties show intervocalic *n or even *ŋ for *k.[44] To explain this discrepancy, Kljaštornyj (Kljaštornyj & Savinov 2005: 58) assumed "the onomatopoeic progressive assimilation of the second-syllable consonant, quite common for Chinese transcriptions of foreign names, which led to the substitution of *-n-* for *-k-*,"[45] but it is hardly possible to call such an assimilation common, as it is totally unknown in the philologically attested materials. Second, Mongolic *nökör* has developed from an earlier form *nöker with an unrounded *e in the second syllable (Nugteren 2011: 463), which was preserved in some Western Middle Mongol sources, e.g. in MA نوكر *nöker* 'friend' (247a1, 297a1, 462b2 ff.), IMI نُوكر *nöker* 'id.' (215), VI نوكَر *nöker* 'compagnon' (152a3), and in early borrowings into other languages, such as Cum. *nöger* 'Genosse, Kamerad' (CC 172), 'yoldaş, arkadaş' (KTS 202b), Khwar. نوكار *nöker* 'sluga, nuker' (Faz. II 164), 'arkadaş; emir subayı, yardımcı' (HATS 436b), 'prince; follower, companion; friend' (DEMT 205b–6a), Chag. نوكر *nöker* 'ami, compagnon; conseiller; client; serviteur' (PdC 510), 'birinin hizmetinde veya maiyetinde olan kimse' (ÇTS 852a), Rus. *nuker* 'teloxranitel', sluga' (ĖSRJa III 89), WYu. *nü^{h}ker ~ nö^{h}ker* 'friend' (Roos 2000: 327),[46] as well as in Dgx. *nok^{h}ie* 'spouse; comrade, companion (爰人; 伙伴)' (DüKÜ 31) < *nöker. A similar early form would be expected for Rouran.[47]

The Turkish scholar Yıldırım (2012/2013; 2013) suggested that the name of the Rouran may be traced back to Turkish *ʤyʤe* 'dwarf; tiny' and its presumable Mongolic plural *ʤyʤe-n* 'dwarves', probably also underlying the name of the Jurchens, which occurs as "*zürced*" = 主舌児扯惕 *Jürčet* in Middle Mongol (SHM § 274) and as "*Çürçüt*" = 𐽆𐽀𐽆𐽀𐽆𐽀𐽆 *Čürčäd ~ Jürčäd* in Middle Turkic in Uighur script (LOK 29:9, 30:3, 30:7, 30:8). This view is totally untenable, as Modern Turkish *ʤyʤe* 'dwarf' (TEL 687a), 'karlik, liliput; malen'kij, nizkoroslyj, karlikovyj' (TRS 161a), is an obvious loan from Persian جوجه *jūja* 'chicken, a poult' (CPED 377a), 'ptenec; cyplënok' (PRS I 448a-b), which seems to have entered the Turkic languages not long before the 14th century, and besides Turkish, is also registered in Uzbek, Uyghur, Turkmen, Karaim, Kumyk, and Azerbaijani (ĖSTJa 1989: 35–36; see also Tietze & Lazard 1967: 144 No. 58; TETL I 456b; ÖTS I 839a-b).[48] The word is expectedly absent from the earliest historically attested Turkic idioms, such as Orkhon Turkic, Old Uyghur, and Karakhanid. The idea of a possible connection between the names of the Jurchens and the Rouran, first expressed by Bang (1916: 1239 Anm. 2), was convincingly disproved by Pelliot (1959: 385–86) in his posthumously published brilliant monograph *Notes on Marco Polo*. The name of the Jurchens first appears in Chinese sources at the beginning of the 10th century in the form 女真 MSC *nǚzhēn*, LMC *nriə̆/nryə̆-tʂin* (Pul. 228, 401), (C)SZ *ńi [^{n}dźi]/ńy [^{n}dźy]-tśin (Cob. 0111, 0801), which is neither

[40] For the lack of grounds for reconstruction of an *-r- in the name of the Rouran, see the important remarks in Pelliot (1959: 385–86).

[41] In fact, the onset nasal in all medieval Chinese transcriptions of the name of the Rouran is reconstructible only as a palatal *ñ and not a velar *ŋ.

[42] For this meaning, see Vladimircov (1934: 87–96), Németh (1953: 10–11), TMEN I No. 388, Golden (2001: 164–65), and de Rachewiltz (trans.) (2006/1: 257).

[43] As rightly noted by Golden (2013: 58), "this is an interesting conjecture in light of the origins of the Rouran polity as a band of warriors (or bandits in the Wei-based account), but one with some philological hurdles."

[44] For *nökör* and its cognates in Mongolic, see Nugteren (2011: 463).

[45] "*Vpolne obyčnuju dlja kitajskix transkripcij čužix naimenovanij zvukopodražatel'nuju progressivnuju assimiljaciju soglasnogo vo vtorom sloge, obuslovivšuju zamenu* -k- *na* -n-."

[46] For borrowings of PM *nöker into other languages, see also Németh (1953), TMEN I No. 388, and Róna-Tas & Berta (2011/2: 623–25).

[47] A possible Para-Mongolic cognate of PM *nöker can be identified in the root *ñögər-/*ñögə- of the form *ñögərčü/*ñögəčü 辱紇主 MSC *rǔ-hé-zhǔ*, ONWC and STCA ńuok-?-*tśuo* (Cob. 1209, 0145), EMC ńźjwok-*ɣwət/*ɣiet-*tśju^{B}* (Sch. 159, 149), ɲuawk-ɣət-ʈɕuă' (Pul. 269, 122, 414) or *nyowk-hot-tsyuX* (BaS 94, 157; Kr. 391b, 157a, 617b), recorded in the *Zhoushu* (ZS 49.899) and the *Beishi* (BS 94.3127) as the name of one of the five groupings of the Kumoxi 庫莫奚, and later as a tribal title among the Khitan. Shimunek (2017: 62) reconstructs it as *ñɔʁʊrču, but his reconstruction is methodologically problematic. For this form, see Xu (2005: 76), Marsone (2011: 62–63, 203–4 n. 104, 204 n. 108), and Golden (2022: 59 n. 77). The element *+čü appears to be related to the Middle Mongol and Written Mongol denominal noun-forming suffix *+čU*, which is most often attested in terms for various social groups and proper names. For this suffix, see Vladimircov (1929b: 289–90), Poppe (1974: 41 § 115), Godziński (1985 : 25 § 19), and Orlovskaja (2010: 57–58).

[48] Yıldırım (2012/2013: 37 n. 20) puts this etymology into question and argues that this word originates from the 'Altaic' languages, but does not provide convincing arguments in favor of his point of view.

phonologically nor historically compatible with Early Middle Chinese transcriptions of the ethnonym Rouran.[49]

A recent etymology has been put forward by Aydemir (2021: 359–61; 2022: 146–48) who claims that the underlying forms of the Chinese transcriptions of the Rouran's name should be *Nānai/*Nanai or *Nūnain/*Nānain, the latter being a Mongolic exonym for the modern Tungusic Nanai people. This etymology is also unsatisfactory, as it is based on the highly idiosyncratic EMC reading *ɲiə̆-ɲiə̆* for the form 茹茹 (5) provided by Pulleyblank (Pul. 268), while in fact no Chinese transcription suggest an initial-syllable *a but only rounded *o or *u. The vowel *i can be reconstructed only in the form (3), which is not accounted for by Aydemir, not only word-finally but also at the end of the initial syllable. *Nānī*, lit. 'person of the land/earth, local person', is first recorded as a self-designation of the Lower Nanai and the Oroch peoples in the materials of the 1897 Russian Imperial Census (Patkanov 1906: 29; Mal'ceva et al. 2022: 694). Its earlier attestations are unknown. None of the variants of this name in the modern Tungusic languages (*Na:nai ~ Na:ni:*) contain labial vowels (SSTMJa I 573a). There are no data in our sources pointing to a Tungusic component in the ethnic composition of the Rouran or their ruling elite, and Helimski's (2000a; 2000b) view about possible Tungusic traces in the language of the European Avars, the supposed descendants of the Rouran, has been reasonably criticized by Alonso de la Fuente (2015).

4. Rouran or Tabghach?

Before I proceed to present my own etymology of the name of the Rouran, I would like to dwell on the important issue of what language this name belongs to. It would seem obvious that if it was first adopted as a self-name by the founder of the Rouran confederation, then it had to be originated from the Rouran language. Although this does not appear to be true (see below), I decided it would be appropriate to say a few words about the linguistic affiliation of the Rouran. It should be noted that there is no consensus among scholars as to the language spoken by the Rouran. Janhunen (1996: 190) suggested that the latter may well have been linguistically related to the Turks and probably spoke a General Turkic variety which lacked the innovation of rhotacism-lambdacism. Vovin (2004: 128–30; 2011) initially considered the Rouran language to be a source of a number of non-Turkic and even non-'Altaic' elements in Old Turkic and assumed on this basis that it could be an isolated language characterized by idiosyncretic phonological, morphological and lexical features. However, most scholars, beginning with Pelliot (1921: 328) and Boodberg (1933/1979: 102), have been in favor of the Mongolic origin of the Rouran and their language (see e.g. Taskin (trans.) 1984: 49; Golden 1992: 77; Pan 1997: 46; Pulleyblank 1999: 44; 2000: 85; Beckwith 2005: 9, 12; Kljaštornyj & Savinov 2005: 56–58; de la Vaissière 2021). The situation is complicated by the fact that most of the Rouran words preserved in Chinese sources are personal names and titles, which usually say little about the linguistic affiliation of their bearers. Nevertheless, among these words one can find several ones that might shed light on the ethnolinguistic identity of the Rouran. One of them is especially noteworthy. In the *Weishu* (WS 103.2296), there is a record of an embassy of the Rouran khaghan Yucheng 予成[50] to the Tabghach court, led by a person who bore the title *maga *köbün 莫何去汾 MSC *mò-hé qù-fén*, ONWC *mak-ɣa k^{h}io* (?) (> *k^{h}ø*)-*bun,[51] STCA *mak-ɣa k^{h}ø*-*bun[52] (Cob. 0890, 0018, 0132, 0849), EMC *mâk-ɣâ k^{h}jwo^{C}*-*bjwən[53] (Sch. 74, 210, 47, 331), *mak-ɣa k^{h}iə^{h}-bun* (Pul. 218, 122, 261, 94) or *mak-ha khjoH-bjun* (BaS 77, 40, 91, 29; Kr. 313a, 155b, 378b, 113a). *Maga probably goes back to Sanskrit *mahā* 'great, mighty, strong, abundant' (SED 794a), 'bol'shoj; sil'nyj; vysokij; veličestvennyj; važnyj; blagorodnyj' (SRS 501a-b),[54] while *köbün seems to be a genuine Rouran word, meaning 'son; prince,' that has obvious cognates in historical and modern Mongolic varieties (Atwood 2013: 63–68; see also Boodberg 1935/1979b: 141). This may be used as an argument for the Mongolic affiliation of Rouran, although the existing evidence is currently too scarce to draw definitive conclusions. But

[49] For the history of the Jurchens' name and its various transcriptions in Eastern and Western sources, see Pelliot (1959: 366–90) and Janhunen (2004). See also Serruys (1955: vii–viii n. 1).

[50] MSC *yŭ-chéng*, ONWC *io* (> *iø*)-*dźeŋ*, STCA *iø-dźeŋ* (Cob. 0117, 1078), EMC *jiwo^{B}-źjäŋ* (Sch. 55, 139), *jiə'-ʤiajŋ* (Pul. 382, 54) or *yoX-dzyeng* (BaS 142, 12; Kr. 566b, 48b). Reconstructible as *Öjïŋ. This name may hypothetically be viewed as a derivate of a verb stem, cognate to Written Mongol *öjï-* 'nager dans les délices; mener une vie déréglée, courir le bon bord' (Kow. I 548b), 'to be lewd; to be troublesome, irksome; to be rude; to gloat over the misfortune of others' (L 647b), however, unattested in Middle Mongol. If so, this can be an example of a pejorative name among the Rouran leaders. Of course, this is a mere conjecture.

[51] The reconstruction of the last syllable is based on the reading of the near-homophonous character 分 MSC *fēn* in Cob. 0849.

[52] The reconstruction of the last syllable is based on the reading of the near-homophonous character 分 MSC *fēn* in Cob. 0849.

[53] The reconstruction of the last syllable is based on the readings of the near-homophonous characters in Sch. 331.

[54] Possibly borrowed via Sogdian; cf. Sog. *mγ'*$^{(')}$, which occurs only in a few collocations, such as *mγ''nsm'wtry* ← Skt. *mahā-smudra* 'ocean', *mγ'k'r* ← Skt. *mahākala* '(name of a) god', *mγ'pwδy* ← Skt. *mahā-bodhi* 'Buddha's title', *mγ'r'c* ← Skt. *mahārājan* 'Maharajah' (SD 211a).

if indeed the Rouran or at least their ruling elite spoke a Mongolic language, what branch of the Serbi-Mongolic language family could it represent? Rouran *köbün is significantly different from other cognates of this word in early Mongolic and Serbi, or Para-Mongolic, idioms, namely Proto-Mongolic *köxün ~ *kexün 'son; prince'[55] and Khitan *xiw 𘟙𘟥 <x.iú> / 𘟙𘠅 <x.iu> ~ *kiw 𘟪𘟥 <k.iú> 'boy, son; younger sister.'[56] Compared to these two innovative forms, it clearly reflects an earlier stage of development of Proto-Serbi-Mongolic *köbepü/n 'son, prince,' preserved as a relic in Written Mongol (*köbegün*) and several Middle Mongol sources (*köbü'ün*, *kübe'ün* or *köbewün*). From this we can conclude that the Rouran language has to be identified neither with Serbi[57] nor with Proto-Mongolic. It is more likely to be regarded as Pre-Proto-Mongolic, in Janhunen's (2003a: 2) terms, i.e. representing the diachronic stage of the Mongolic branch that preceded Proto-Mongolic. But of course there is still much to be done to clarify this issue.

Rouran has recently been considered to be the language of two previously enigmatic Brāhmī monuments found in Mongolia, the Bugut (dated between 584 and 587 AD) and Khüis Tolgoi (between 604 and 620 AD) inscriptions. These inscriptions remained long undeciphered, until in 2014, an international research team, including Étienne de la Vaissière (France), Dieter Maue (Germany), Alexander Vovin (France), and Mehmet Ölmez (Turkey), undertook a thorough study of them and have made a sensational discovery that they are written in an early Mongolic language, quite closely related, although not identical to Middle Mongol of the 13th and 14th centuries. The identification of this language with Rouran, first proposed by de la Vaissière (2018), has been supported and further elaborated by Vovin (2019a; 2019b), who thereby abandoned his initial assumption about the isolated position of Rouran. One of the most salient features attested in the language of the inscriptions is a contraction of the Proto-Serbi-Mongolic sequence *-epü- into a short *-ü-* without any traces of vowel length (Vovin 2019a: 166), which is also observed in the above transcription of the presumably Rouran word *köbün < *köbepü/n 'son; prince' from the *Weishu*. The results obtained from the study of both inscriptions suggest that Rouran was used as an official written language of the First Turkic Khaganate (552–603 AD), as well as the Tiele 鐵勒, or the Tokuz Oguz,[58] a multilingual

[55] Cf. Eastern Middle Mongol 可兀/可温 *kö'ü/n* 'son, boy (子, 児, 児子); prince (大王)' (SHM §§ 2, 3, 10 ff.), 口 *keü* in the NP 阿赤口 *ači keü* 'grandson (son's son) (孫子)' (ZY No. 80), 可温 *kö'ün* 'son (子, 児); prince (王子, 大王)' (HY I 15a2, 16b3, IIa 3b1 ff.), 可卜温 *köbü'ün* = 𐮈𐮉𐮀𐮜 *köbegün* 'son (子)' (DGZ No. 424), 扣兀 *kewü* 'son (兒子)' (YY No. 208), 可伯文 *köbe'ün* 'child (孩兒)' (YY No. 212), 𐮈𐮉𐮀𐮜𐮣 *ke'ün-ü* 'son-GEN' (Ph XL 13), 𐮈𐮉𐮀𐮜𐮀𐮜 *kübe'ün* 'son' (Ph XL 4), Western Middle Mongol كووں *kö'ün* 'son' (MA 081b1, 081b4, 082a1 ff.), كونى *kūn-i* 'son-GEN' (MA 333b3, 440b1, 518b2), كاووت *kewüt* (pl.) 'sons' (MA 082a3), كُون*kūn* 'baby' (IMI 209), كِون *kūn* 'child; son, boy' (IMI 215), كَوُنْ *kewün* 'grudnoj rebenok' (IMM 148), كَوُن *kewün* 'Säugling' (IMR 15:8), كُبَاوُنْ *köbewün* 'son, boy; slave' (AL 65a6, 75b1), كباوُنْ *köbewün* 'son' (AL 75a13), كاوُنْ (corrupted from كَاوُنْ) *ke'ün* in the NP دِيُو كاوُن *diyü ke'ün* 'younger brother' (AL 65a8), كون *kūn* 'son' (RH 200B22), كَاوُنْ *ke'ün* 'fils, garçon' (VI 151b3), Written Mongol *köbegün* 'fils, garçon, jeune homme' (Kow. III 2576a), 'son, boy; pawn (chess)' (L 494b), *keü ~ küü* 'son; young boy' (L 461b, 509a), Written Oirat *köböün* 'boy, son' (MOM III 735a), *köbüü/n* 'lad, son, boy' (MOM III 736a), Khalkha *xuː* 'syn, mal'čik; ditja; otrok; sluga' (BAMRS IV 195a), Ordos *kʰʉ:* 'fils, garçon; se dit aussi d'un homme adulte, par mépris; s'emploie comme mot de tendresse en caressant un animal mâle' (DO 433b), Khorchin *xuː* 'son (儿子)' (Čaγanqada 1995: 178b), Buryat *xubun* 'syn; mal'čik, otrok, paren', molodoj čelovek; detënyš; peška; valet; sluga, batrak' (BRS II 478a), Mongolian Khamnigan *kʰuː* 'boy, son' (Yu 2011: 148), 'son' (Gruntov & Mazo 2022: 127 No. 46), Manchurian Khamnigan *kʰupeː* 'son' (Janhunen 1990: 24), Siberian Khamnigan *kʰupuːn* 'syn; mal'čik, paren', molodoj čelovek' (XRS 177a), *kʰuː/n* 'mal'čik' (XRS 188a), Kalmuck *køwyn* 'Sohn, Knabe; Bauer (im Schachspiel)' (KWb 242b), Eastern Yugur *kʰyn* in the NP *hatʃɤ kʰyn* 'nephew (brother's son) (侄儿)' (JYKÜ 55), *kʰyːn* in the NP *kʰyːn hkʰon* 'sons and daughters; children (子女)' (JYKÜ 72), Mongghul *kʰːo ~ kʰuː* 'son, child (儿)' (MKÜ 88, 90), Mangghuer *kʰau* 'son (儿子)' (Čenggeltei 1991: 380), Baoan *kʰuŋ* 'son (儿子)' (BKÜ 82), Kangjia *kʰukɔ* 'son, boy (儿子, 男孩)' (Sečenčoγtu 1999: 287b), Dongxiang *kʰewaŋ* 'boy (男孩子); son (儿子)' (DüKÜ 74), Moghol *koun* 'Kind; Sohn; Knabe' (Ramstedt 1906: 30b), 'Sohn; Kind' (Weiers 1972a: 170b). Khalkha *xowuŋ ~ xowguŋ* 'mal'čik; otrok; syn; sluga' (BAMRS IV 125б, 124a), Ordos *kʰɵwɵkʉ:n* 'fils' (DO 433a) and *kʰɵwʉ:t* (< pl.) 'esclave du dernier rang' (DO 433b) seem to be reading pronunciations. For this word, see Vladimircov (1934: 99, 104, 107 n. 1, 111, 112, 115), Pelliot (1935: 916; 1963: 651), TMEN I No. 321, Kałużyński (1978: 124–25), Mostaert & de Rachewiltz (1995: 21, 93, 107), de Rachewiltz (trans.) (2006/1: 476–78, 601; 2006/2: 645, 835, 898, 967), Rybatzki (2006: 531a–32a), Nugteren (2011: 422), and Rykin (2011: 33, 34, 45; 2013).

[56] For this word, see Wu (2007: 116), Kane (2009: 25, 116), Wu & Janhunen (2010: 167), Čenggeltei & Wu & Jiruhe (2017/1: 456, 477–78, 480), Shimunek (2017: 348–49), and Wu & Róna-Tas (2020b: 675).

[57] This is further supported by the fact that the Rouran form has a coda *-n which is absent in the Khitan cognate. Coda *-n appears to have been a feature distinguishing the Mongolic branch from Khitan and other Serbi languages (see Shimunek 2017: 339 n. 216).

[58] The tribal confederation known in Old Turkic runiform inscriptions (see, e.g., KT S2, E14, N4; BK N1, E1, 12, 29, 35; T1 S2; O E6; MČ N3, 5, E10) as Tokuz Oguz 𐰇𐰃𐰆𐰑𐰏𐰣 ~ 𐰇𐰃𐰆𐰑𐰃𐰣 and in Chinese sources (see, e.g., SS 84.1879; BS 99.3285, 3303) as Tiele 鐵勒 MSC *tiě-lè*, ONWC *thèt-lək*, STCA *thiar-*? (Cob. 0756, 0984), EMC *tʰiet-lək* (Sch. 227, 110), *tʰɛt-lək* (Pul. 308, 184) or *thet-lok* (BaS 110, 65; Kr. 454a, 256a), included a large number of ethnic groups, both Turkic-speaking, such as the Uyghurs, and those which may have spoken Proto- or Para-Mongolic (Konovalov 1999: 105–6; Golden 2011: 32) or even Iranian (Maljavkin 1989: 203) idioms. According to de la Vaissière (2015: 453–61), during almost the whole of the 7th century AD, the Tokuz Oguz = the Tiele (for this identification, see Pulleyblank 1956: 35–36; Czeglédy 1982; Senga 1990: 58; Golden 1992: 155–56) held power over most of the originally Turkic lands north of the Gobi Desert and dominated virtually all the different tribes living there, until these territories were brought back under the control of the Eastern Turks as a result of the military campaigns led by Tonyukuk and Ilterish Khagan, probably in 685 or 686. An earlier form of the name Tiele, rendered in Chinese as Dingling 丁零 MSC *dīng-líng*, OC *têŋ-rêŋ* (Sch. 137, 140) or **tˁeŋ-[r]ˁiŋ* (BaS 23, 69), LHC *teŋ-leŋ* (Sch. 137,

tribal confederation that, after the collapse of the First Khaganate, seized control of nearly all the territory of the Mongolian steppes and held it almost until the very end of the 7th century (de la Vaissière 2018: 317–19; Vovin 2019b: 133; cf. de la Vaissière 2015).

However, the possible Mongolic affiliation of the Rouran language can hardly be used to shed light on the etymology of the very name of the Rouran. The matter is that all the throne names and titles of the Rouran khaghans attested in the Chinese dynastic chronicles are explicitly explained in the "language of the Wei [dynasty]" (*Wei yan* 魏言)," i.e. Tabghach. For example, relating the adoption of the title of *Qiudoufa kehan* 丘豆伐可汗 by the first Rouran khaghan Shelun 社崙 (402–410 AD), the *Weishu* goes on to say:

> 「丘豆伐」猶魏言駕馭開張也，「可汗」猶魏言皇帝也。(WS 103.2291)
>
> '*Qiudoufa* means 'controlling and expanding'[59] in the language of the Wei [dynasty], and *kehan* means 'emperor'[60] in the language of the Wei [dynasty].'

The same formulation is used in explanations of the throne names and titles of all the other khaghans, successors of Shelun (see, e.g., WS 103.2291, 2292, 2293 ff.). A conclusion can be made that the Rouran leaders deliberately used for their titles the language of the Tabghach Wei empire, which seems to have been regarded by them as the language of culture and civilization. In view of this, I believe that a proper etymology for the name of the Rouran can also be sought in the Tabghach language. This is further confirmed by the fact that the form *Ñuñar/*Ñuñan (1), taken by the Rouran as their self-appellation, and the form *Ñonñor/*Ñonñon (2), invented by the Wei Emperor Shizu, allegedly with the aim of humiliating them, are in fact no more than different transcriptions of the same name, as rightly pointed out by Pelliot (1959: 384). Since it is unlikely that the Tabghach emperor could stoop to using vocabulary of the "ignorant (*wu zhi* 無知)" nomads, it remains to be assumed that the Rouran themselves borrowed for their self-name a Tabghach word that was understandable and usable even at the Wei court.

What do we know about Tabghach? The Tabghach were the most powerful of the Serbi peoples, who created their independent state in the northern part of Shanxi province, founded the Northern Wei dynasty (386–535 AD) and in 439 unified all of northern China. According to Chinese sources, they had their own writing and literature, which, unfortunately, have not survived to the present day (see, e.g., Ligeti 1970: 279–80; Luvsandėndėv 1997: 145–46). Their language is represented by a corpus of glossed clan names and titles preserved in the *Weishu* and *Nan Qishu*, as well as the Chinese transcriptions of the titles *kagan 可寒[61] and *katun/*kadun

140), has been used since the Han dynasty (206 BC–200 AD) to refer to a powerful Turkic people that originally was part of the Xiongnu 匈奴 confederation and later played an important role in the political history of barbarian dynasties in China in the 4th and 5th centuries (Boodberg 1935/1979a: 116–17; Hamilton 1962; Pulleyblank 1962: 230–31; 1983: 448, 455; 2000: 85–86; Czeglédy 1982: 89; Golden 1992: 93–95) The names Dingling and Tiele are most likely to have been Chinese transcriptions of a foreign ethnonym, which Hamilton (1962: 26), interpreted as *tägräg and identified with Karakhanid تكرگ *tägräk*, occurring in the *Dīwān Lughāt al-Turk* by Maḥmūd al-Kāšgharī (DLT 240) with the meaning of 'the rim of anything' (EDT 485b), 'obodok, obruč, krug' (DTS 549a). However, Golden (1992: 94) puts this into doubt and argues that "this is a less than perfect match." In Chinese sources, the Tiele also appears under the alternative, genuine Chinese name Gaoche 高車, lit. "High Carts," probably semantically related to their original Turkic name (Hamilton 1962: 25–26; Pulleyblank 1983: 48; 1990: 22).

[59] 丘豆伐 MSC *qiū-dòu-fá*, ONWC *khu-dou-buat*, STCA *khu* (> *khiu*)*-dou-buar* (> *bvuar*) (Cob. 0519, 0472, 0731), EMC $k^hjəu$-$dəu^C$-*bjwɐt* (Sch. 95, 149, 238), k^huw-$dəw^h$-*buat* (Pul. 257, 81, 89) or *khjuw-duwH-bjot* (BaS 90, 23, 26; Kr. 373a, 91b, 104a). Reconstructible as *kudubar. The etymology of this title is unclear. Shiratori (1934: 71–72) considered it to be a contraction of two verbal roots, cognate to Written Mongol "*kütele-*" = *kötel-* ~ *kötöl-* 'mener, conduire, guider' (Kow. III 2595a-b), 'to lead by the hand, lead; to conduct, guide; to instruct' (L 493b), and *badara-* 's'étendre, se répandre, se propager, s'augmenter; devenir considérable' (Kow. II 1069a), 'to spread, expand, develop' (L 66a). Boodberg (1935/1979b: 140–41) connected it only with the former of these verbal roots, while Fujita (1923: 56–57) identified it specifically with a derivate of this root, Written Mongol "*kütelebüri*" = *kötelbüri* ~ *kötölbüri* 'action de mener, de conduire, de guider; une rêne, guide; guide, manuel' (Kow. III 2591a, 2595a), 'leadership, guidance; leading' (L 493b), in which he isolated the suffix *bUri*, forming deverbal nouns (for this suffix, see Poppe 1974: 44 § 141). All these etymologies are highly speculative.

[60] 可汗 MSC *kě-hán*, LHC k^hai^B-gan^C (Sch. 210, 251), ONWC *kha-*?, STCA *kha-*? (Cob. 0009), EMC $k^hâ^B$-*ɣân*^{C} (Sch. 210, 251), k^ha'-*ɣan* (Pul. 173, 118) or *khaX-hanH* (BaS 61, 39; Kr. 239b, 152a). This is the well-known title *kagan, first attested in the *Jinshu* (JS 125.3113) among the Serbi-speaking Qifu 乞伏 in the early 3rd century AD (Pelliot 1921: 328; Shiratori 1926: 5–6; Taskin 1986: 213–14; Shimunek 2017: 368 n. 443). Pulleyblank (1962: 260–62) suggested that it could be behind the name of one of the highest categories of nobility among the Xiongnu 匈奴, preserved in Chinese transcription as 護于 MSC *hù-yú*, OC *gwâkh-wa (Sch. 67, 50) or *[G]$^{w\varsigma}$ak-s-ɦ^{w}a (< *G^w(r)a) (BaS 43, 141), but this suggestion, although supported by de Rachewiltz (1989: 289–90 n. 32) and Vovin (2007a: 180–84), does not seem to be sufficiently convincing (TMEN III 179). In the late 3rd century AD, this title was found to be used by the Tuyuhun 吐谷渾, and somewhat later, at the turn of the 5th century, by the Rouran and the Tabghach (Pelliot 1921: 326; Shiratori 1926: 1–8; Boodberg 1936: 171–72; Bazin 1950: 310–311 No. 140; Ligeti 1970: 306 n. 71; Taskin 1986: 216; Doerfer 1992: 42–43, 45; Shimunek 2017: 162, 188, 190). Most probably from the Rouran, this title have been taken over by the rulers of the First Turkic Khaganate, and subsequently it passed to other Turkic peoples, such as the Uyghurs, the Khazars, and the Kyrgyz. It came to the Mongols of the imperial period not earlier than in 1229, when it was officially adopted by Ögödei, apparently under the influence of the Uyghur advisers at the Mongol court (Pelliot & Hambis (trans.) 1951: 212; Pelliot 1959: 302–3; de Rachewiltz 1983).

[61] MSC *kě-hán*, ONWC and STCA *kha-ɣan* (Cob. 0009, 0616), EMC $k^hâ^B$-*ɣân* (Sch. 210, 252), k^ha'-*ɣan* (Pul. 173, 118) or *khaX-han* (BaS 61, 39; Kr. 239b, 151b). See the previous note.

可敦[62] in the so-called Serbi Cave inscriptions 鮮卑石室 from Oroqen Autonomous Banner, Inner Mongolia, dated to 443 AD (Shimunek 2017: 162–63; Liu 1989). Early attempts to study the Tabghach titles, clan and personal names in Chinese sources, made by Boodberg (1935/1979a: 120–22; 1935/1979b: 137–40; 1936) and Bazin (1950), led these scholars to conclude that the Tabghach were predominantly Turkic-speaking. However, this conclusion has been largely based on outdated methodology of linguistic reconstruction and was rightly criticized by Ligeti (1970) and Doerfer (1992; 1993), who convincingly demonstrated that most of the extant Tabghach vocabulary has obvious cognates in Mongolic languages. Despite the recent revival of the pro-Turkic theory by Chen (2005) and Yıldırım (2015a; 2015b), which expectedly turned out to be unsuccessful, the Mongolic affiliation of Tabghach is currently recognized by most researchers (see, e.g., Luvsandėndėv 1997; Pulleyblank 2000: 81–82; Beckwith 2005: 9–12; Kljaštornyj & Savinov 2005: 55; Vovin 2007b; Golden 2013: 48).

After the publication of the seminal articles by Janhunen (2003c) and Vovin (2007b), and especially the fundamental monograph by Shimunek (2017), it became commonly accepted that Tabghach belongs to the Serbi, or Para-Mongolic, branch of the Serbi-Mongolic language family. This family is subdivided into two main branches, Serbi (alias Para-Mongolic) and Mongolic proper (alias Proto-Mongolic), possibly sprung from a common proto-language, termed Common Serbi-Mongolic, around the end of the 1st millenium BC. It is tempting to connect this split of Common Serbi-Mongolic with the division of the Eastern Hu 東胡 confederation into the Serbi 鮮卑[63] to the north and the

[62] MSC *kě-dūn*, ONWC and STCA *kha-ton* (Cob. 0009, 0773), EMC *k^{h}â^{B}-twən* (Sch. 210, 337), *k^{h}a'-twən* (Pul. 173, 84) or *khaX-twon* (BaS 61, 25; Kr. 239b, 96b). This is the earliest historically recorded form of a title for a ruler's wife or a female ruler among the (Para-) Mongolic and Turkic peoples. The alternative Tabghach form *kasun 可孫 MSC *kě-sūn*, ONWC and STCA *kha-son* (Cob. 0009, 0779), EMC *k^{h}â^{B}-swən* (Sch. 210, 339), *k^{h}a'-swən* (Pul. 173, 297) or *khaX-swon* (BaS 61, 107; Kr. 239b, 436b), glossed as 'empress (皇后)' in the *Nan Qishu* (NQS 57.984; see Shiratori 1926: 34; Boodberg 1936: 169–70; Bazin 1950: 305–6 No. 135; Shimunek 2017: 155–56), and Tuyuhun *kagčun/*kagǰun 恪尊 MSC *kè-zūn*, ONWC and STCA ?-*tson* (Cob. 0776), EMC *k^{h}âk-tswən* (Sch. 65, 339), *k^{h}ak-tswən* (Pul. 173, 424) or *khak-tswon* (BaS 160; Kr. 240b, 635a), attested in the *Weishu* (WS 101.2240) and *Zhoushu* (ZS 50.913) as a title born by the wife (妻) of the Tuyuhun khaghan Kualü 夸呂, who ruled from 541 to 591 AD (Shiratori 1926: 34; Boodberg 1936: 170; Shimunek 2017: 130, 189), are of later date. From the Tabghach or the Tuyuhun, or possibly from the Rouran (see TMEN III 135–36 No. 1159; cf. Doerfer 1993: 80, 82), this title has been borrowed by the Turks, among whom it was first registered by the *Zhoushu* (ZS 50.909; see Shiratori 1926: 35; Boodberg 1936: 170; Liu 1958/1: 7; 1958/2: 493 Anm. 32, 33) in 552 AD as *kagatun/*kagadun 可賀敦 MSC *kě-hè-dūn*, ONWC *kha-ɣa-ton*, STCA *kha-?-ton* (Cob. 0009, 0020, 0773), EMC *k^{h}â^{B}-ɣâ^{C}-twən* (Sch. 210, 212, 337), *k^{h}a'-ɣa^{h}-twən* (Pul. 173, 123, 84) or *khaX-haH-twon* (BaS 61, 41, 25; Kr. 239b, 158b, 96b). In Old Turkic runiform inscriptions of the 8th century AD (KT E11, 25, 31, N9; BK E10, 21; T1 N1; Tar. S6, W1; MČ N10, W8), it is known only in the form *katun* 𐰴𐰀𐰆𐰣. It appears as *katun 𐰴 <qatun> in the corpus of the 11th and 12th-century epitaphs in the Khitan Small Script (Yu 31:24, 34:22, 50:54, 52:57; Ren 5:8; Qing 3:3; Di 17:30; Wu 28:24; Zhong 14:18, 14:56, 15:44; Xian 8:23, 32:28; for a list of the attestations, see Čenggeltei & Wu & Jiruhe 2017/3: 2222; see also Kane 2009: 22–23, 75; Wu & Róna-Tas 2020b: 679) and as *kadun 可敦 MSC *kě-dūn*, LMC *k'â^{2}-t^{w}ən^{1}* (Tak. 0009, 0773) or *k^{h}a'-tun* (Pul. 173, 84), OM *k^{h}ɔ^{ˇ}-tun* (Pul. 173, 84), one of several words meaning 'empress (皇后)', in the Khitan vocabulary of the *Liaoshi* (LS 71.1198; see also Wittfogel & Fêng 1949: 430a; Menges 1953: 70; Franke 1969: 25; Kane 2009: 20, 22–23, 74, 96; Wu & Róna-Tas 2020b: 679 n. 54). Thus, the earliest phonetic variants of this title clearly fall into two groups: (1) *katun*, *katun/*kadun and *kasun < (*kaθun <) *katun, (2) *kagatun/*kagadun and *kagčun/*kagǰun < *kagačun/*kagaǰun < *kagatun/*kagadun. Eastern Middle Mongol 中合敦 *qadun* ~中合禿/中合屯 *qatu/n* 'lady of high rank (娘子); wife, married woman (婦人)' (SHM §§ 54, 55, 64 ff.), 下敦 *xadun* 'lady of high rank (娘子)' (ZY No. 39), 哈敦 (corrupted from 中合敦) *qadun* 'id.' (HY I 15b1), 中合禿惕 *qatut* (pl.) 'wives (婦人每)' (HY IIb 18a2, 18b1), 哈敦 *qadun* = 𐰴𐰀𐰆𐰣 *qadun* 'lady of high rank (娘子)' (DGZ No. 438), 哈敦 *qadun* = 𐰴𐰀𐰆𐰣 *qadun* 'empress (皇后)' (XHY II No. 128), 哈屯 *qatun* 'wife, married woman (婦人)' (YY No. 206), 哈敦 *qadun* 'emperor's consort (官家娘子)' (DY No. 218), Western Middle Mongol خاتون *xatun* (?← Persian) 'woman' (MA 057b3, 057b4, 114b4 ff.), قَاتُون *qatun* 'znatnaja dama' (IMM 140), قاتون *qatun* 'lady, mistress' (IMI 209), قَاتُون/قاتُون *qatun* ~ خاتون *xatun* (?← Persian) 'id.' (AL 70a3, 75a6, 75a8), قاتون *qatun* 'lady, queen' (RH 198A30), as well as all their modern cognates (see Nugteren 2011: 405), go back only to the first of these variants. The second variant has left no traces in historical and modern Mongolic languages. The etymology of this title is debatable. According to the view first expressed by Bang (1918/19: 120; 1925: 248) and later accepted by many scholars (see, e.g., Wittfogel & Fêng 1949: 272a n. 173, 430a n. 21; Menges 1953: 70; VEWT 157a-b; EDT 602b; Gabain 1974: 336a; Golden 1980/1: 197), it has been borrowed from Sogdian *γwt'ynh ~ γwtynh/xwt'ynh ~ xwt'yn ~ xwtyn* (*xutēn*, *xwatēn*) 'queen, lady, mistress' (SD 178b, 179a, 440a-b), 'queen' (DMSB 223b), 'lady, mistress, queen' (DCS 227) < *x^{v}atăunī- < *hụa-tâunī- (ĖSIJa III 426). However, this etymology is both phonologically (see, e.g., Benveniste 1966: 30–34) and chronologically problematic: the Sogdian forms are dated no earlier than the first half of the 8th century AD (TMEN III 138–39), while the earliest mentions of the title *katun/*kadun in Chinese transcriptions are almost three centuries older. Müller (1920: 314) was the first to propose a possible connection between both variants of the term for the ruler's wife with the corresponding male titles: (1) *kan — *katun and (2) *kagan — *kagatun. The element *+DUn in *katun/*kadun and *kagatun/*kagadun is most likely to be considered a fossilized feminine gender marker that may have lost its productivity in both Mongolic and Turkic at a very early date (Kotwicz 1932: 52; Boodberg 1936: 170; TMEN III 139; Ligeti 1970: 287 n. 41; Doerfer 1992: 43; 1993: 82; Vovin 2007a: 177–78). The onset of this marker seems to have undergone irregular fricativization in Tabghach (Bazin 1950: 306) and affrication in Tuyuhun (Pulleyblank 1962: 263–64; Shimunek 2017: 130, 189). For this word, see also de Rachewiltz (1989: 297–98), de Rachewiltz (trans.) (2006/1: 306), Rybatzki (2006: 473a–76b), and Shimunek (2017: 316–17).

[63] MSC *xiān-bēi*, OC *sen/san-pe (Sch. 248, 127) or *[s][a]r-pe (BaS 120, 3), LHC *sian-pie* (Sch. 248, 127). The reconstruction of this ethnonym as *Särbi or *Serbi, first proposed by Pelliot (1921: 331; 1928: 142 n. 6), has been embraced by many historical linguists dealing with Chinese transcriptions of early (Para-)Mongolic and Turkic languages, including Ligeti (1970: 274), Pulleyblank (1983: 452–53;

Awar 烏桓[64] to the south in the late 3rd century BC,[65] but this issue is complicated by the lack of reliable evidence on linguistic differences between these two groups. The Serbi branch consists of extinct languages that were remotely (collaterally) related to Mongolic: in addition to Tabghach, also Serbi proper (Xianbei), Tuyuhun, and Khitan. Serbi proper, or the language of the early Serbi people, known from Chinese sources between the 2nd century BC and the 3rd century AD, can presumably be identified as Proto-Serbi, and the languages of various later Serbi groups, including the Tabghach, who settled along the northern borders of China in the 3rd and 4th centuries AD and founded their own local dynasties, as separate Serbi idioms branched off from it (Shimunek 2017). The best documented of these idioms is Khitan. The Khitans were descendants of the Serbi clan Yuwen 宇文,[66] their name first appears in historical records in the late 4th century AD (see Taskin (trans.) 1984: 154; Xu 2005: 6–7; Marsone 2011: 39–40; Golden 2022: 50). The growth of their power that began during the Tang dynasty led to the formation of the Liao 遼 Empire (907–1125 AD) in northern China, and subsequently the state of the Qara Khitai, or Western Liao 西遼 (1124–1218 AD), in Central Asia. Khitan is represented by a corpus of language materials, mostly epitaphs, in two idiosyncretic writing systems, the so-called Khitan Small and Large Scripts, dating from the 10th to the 12th centuries AD (Čenggeltei & Wu & Jiruhe 2017; see also Róna-Tas 2016; 2017; Wu & Róna-Tas 2019; 2020a; 2020b; Róna-Tas & Bai 2023), as well as a significant number of Khitan lexical items in Early Middle Chinese and Late Middle Chinese transcriptions, attested in Chinese historical sources (Vovin 2003; Shimunek 2007; Talpe 2010). Currently, several hundred Khitan words have been phonetically and semantically identified (Kane 2009; Wu & Janhunen 2010; Janhunen 2012a: 115–16; Shimunek 2017: 197–281), and this number is steadily growing as a result of discovering new Khitan epitaphs and successes in deciphering already known texts.

5. The Khitan connection and beyond

It is specifically in Khitan that one can find a cognate of the Tabghach word that was presumably borrowed by the Rouran for their self-name. The Khitan word in question has several phonetic and semantic variants:

(a) *ñaw 伏㚇 <ñ.iau> 'sibling.'[67] Occurs 10 times in the Khitan Small Script corpus, the earliest attestation (Guang 35:5) is dated to 1053 AD (Čenggeltei & Wu & Jiruhe 2017/3: 1970; see also Čenggeltei & Wu & Jiruhe 2017/1: 421). In some Khitan monuments, it is attested with the plural suffixes *+ñər 伏爻 <ñ.ᵉr> ~ *+ñəñ 伏叉 <ñ.ᵉñ>,[68] cognate to Proto-Mongolic *+nAr, and *+ñət 伏今 <ñ.ᵉt>,[69] cognate to Proto-Mongolic *+nAd[70] or *+nUxUd.

The derived forms are as follows:

(aa) *ñaw-ñər 伏㚇伏爻 <ñ.iau.ñ.ᵉr> 'siblings.' Occurs 7 times, the earliest attestation (Guang 25:18) is dated to 1053 AD (Čenggeltei & Wu & Jiruhe 2017/3: 1970; see also Čenggeltei & Wu & Jiruhe 2017/1: 422);

(ab) *ñaw-ñəñ 伏㚇伏叉 <ñ.iau.ñ.ᵉñ> 'id.' Occurs 6 times, the earliest atestation (Hu 27:14) is dated to 1091 AD (Čenggeltei &Wu & Jiruhe 2017/3: 1970; see also Čenggeltei &Wu & Jiruhe 2017/1: 421);

(ac) *ñaw-ñət 伏㚇伏今 <ñ.iau.ñ.ᵉt> 'id.' The only attestation (Nu 10:30) is dated to 1099 AD (Čenggeltei &Wu & Jiruhe 2017/3: 1970; see also Čenggeltei &Wu & Jiruhe 2017/1: 421).

(b) *ñawui 伏㚇火 <ñ.iau.ui> 'younger sister.' Occurs 2 times, the earliest attestation (Guang 35:18) is dated to

2000:71), Chen (1998: 73), Vovin (2015: 159), and Shimunek (2017: 39 et passim).

[64] MSC *wū-huán*, OC *ʔâ-wân (Sch. 51, 267) or *ʔˤa-ɦwˤar (< *[G]wˤar) (BaS 116, 44), LHC ʔɑ-ɣuɑn (Sch. 51, 267). See Pulleyblank (1962: 258–59; 1983: 452–54; 2000: 71–72) for the reconstruction of this ethnonym. See also Golden (1992: 76; 2013: 59), Atwood (2013: 56), and Shimunek (2017: 39 et passim).

[65] For this division, see Schreiber (1947: 147–48, 162–63), Mullie (1969a: 248–49; 1969b: 250), Pulleyblank (1983: 452–53), de Crespigny (1984: 290, 360), Taskin (trans.) (1984: 63), and Golden (1992: 69; 2022: 52).

[66] MSC *yǔ-wén*, LHC *waᴮ-mun* (Sch. 50, 332), ONWC *uo-*mun* (Cob. 0850). (The reconstruction of the first syllable is based on the reading of the near-homophonous character 于 MSC *yú* in Cob. 0165.) Reconstructible as *Omun/*Omur or *Ömün/*Ömür. The etymology of this clan name is unclear. Boodberg (1938: 244 n. 67) connected it with Mongol "ümüne ~ emüne" 'front,' 'south,' cf. Western Middle Mongol اومونه *ümüne/ömüne* 'front, in front of' (MA 044b1, 068b2, 159b2 ff.), but this connection seems problematic. The reconstruction *waᵡmbər, proposed by Shimunek (2017: 53) according to Beckwith's idiosyncretic system of "Northeastern Late Old Chinese" character readings (see, e.g., Beckwith 2007), is totally unacceptable.

[67] For this word, see Kane (2009: 3.186) and Shimunek (2017: 356–57).

[68] For this Khitan plural suffix for nouns denoting humans, see Wu (2007: 111–22), Shimunek (2017: 264–65, 299–300), and Čenggeltei & Wu & Jiruhe (2017/1: 539–42).

[69] For this Khitan plural suffix for nouns denoting humans, see Wu (2007: 122) and Čenggeltei &Wu & Jiruhe (2017/1: 542–43).

[70] This suffix is found only in the *Secret History of the Mongols*, where it occurs three times solely with the kinship term *beri* 'daughter-in-law': *beri-net* 'daughter.in.law-PL' (SHM §§ 177, 189). Historically, it is a double plural that can be analyzed as a combination of the original plural markers *+nAr and *+d. For this suffix, see Poppe (1955: § 124; 1974: § 262), Godziński (1985: 80 § 134), Street (1990: 348, 372), Janhunen (2003a: 13), and Baγatur (2007: 45–46). The examples "*aq-a-nad* 'elder brothers'" and "*degüü-ned* 'younger brothers'" in Poppe (1974: § 262) appear to be artificial forms taken from "some ancient Written Mongolian texts as yet undiscovered" (Ibid.).

1053 AD (Čenggeltei &Wu & Jiruhe 2017/3: 1970; see also Čenggeltei &Wu & Jiruhe 2017/1: 422).

(c) *ñawui 𘮩𘮐𘮓 <ñ.iau.i> '(younger?) brother.' The only attestation (Xian 25:27) is dated to 1175 AD (Čenggeltei &Wu & Jiruhe 2017/3: 1971; see also Čenggeltei & Wu & Jiruhe 2017/1: 422).

It is also attested as part of the compound

(d) *ñawui *baq 𘮩𘮐𘮓𘮊 𘮈𘮃 <ñ.iau.ui b.aq> 'niece (brother's daughter),' lit. 'younger sister+child.' Occurs 2 times in a monument (Nan 11:24-25, 33:5-6) dated to 1092 AD (Čenggeltei &Wu & Jiruhe 2017/3: 1970; cf. Čenggeltei &Wu & Jiruhe 2017/1: 422).

The exact meaning of Khitan *ñaw is not fully clear. Khitan had special terms for each of the older and younger siblings: *ya 𘮇 <ia> 'elder brother,'[71] *dew 𘮆 <deu> 'younger brother,'[72] *aw 𘮋 <au> / 𘮌 <aú> 'elder sister'[73] and *xiw 𘮉𘮏 <x.iú> / 𘮉𘮍 <x.iu> ~ *kiw 𘮅𘮏 <k.iú > 'younger sister.'[74] In some occurrences, *ñaw is clearly used as a generic designation for all male and female siblings (see, e.g., Shimunek 2017: 234), but in other ones, for example, in the Epitaph of Yelü Zongjiao 耶律宗教 (Guang 35:5), this word is only attested with the meaning of 'younger sister,' i.e. as a synonym of *xiw ~ *kiw (Kane 2009: 3.159; see also Wu 2007: 115–16; Čenggeltei & Wu & Jiruhe 2017/2: 1112). A study of the distribution of *ñaw and its derivatives *ñawui (b)–(c) and *ñawui *baq (d) in Khitan Small Script inscriptions leads to the conclusion that, at least in some contexts, they have the meaning of 'younger sibling' or, more broadly, 'younger relative.' At the same time, the sources do not contain any evidence confirming that the word *ñaw also meant 'child,' contrary to Shimunek's (2017: 356) claim. For the concept of 'child,' there was another word in Khitan, *baq/*baqa/*boqo 𘮈𘮃 <b.aq/b.qa/b.qo> 'child, son and daughter' (Róna-Tas & Bai 2023: 39; see also Kane 2009: 3.022; Wu & Janhunen 2010: 76; Róna-Tas 2016: 118; Shimunek 2017: 327; Wu & Róna-Tas 2019: 56), possibly cognate to Preclassical Mongol *baγa* 𐲈𐲋𐲍𐲠 'small' (Qqot. IV 14; Turf. LXII 3, 8), Written Mongol *baγa* 'peu, petit; jeune, le plus jeune' (Kow. II 1055b), 'small in size or quantity, little, tiny, a little, not much,' 'young, younger; childhood' (L 67a-b).

Khitan *ñaw is rightly considered by Shimunek (2017: 356–57) to be a cognate of Eastern Middle Mongol *nu'un* 訥温 'son, boy, child (児, 児孩)'[75] found in the *Secret History of the Mongols* (SHM §§ 65, 185). Other cognates include Eastern Middle Mongol *nu'un* 訥温 'child, boy (孩児, 児)' (HY I 15a1, III 18a3, 18b1), *nu'u* 訥沃 'child (孩児)' (ZY No. 71), *nu'un* 訥温 = *nuγun* 𐲚𐲓𐲍𐲠 'child (孩児)' (DGZ No. 422), *nu'un* 訥温 = *nuγun* 𐲚𐲓𐲍𐲠 'little servant, page, boy (小廝)' (XHY II No. 150), *nu'un* 奴文 'id.' (YY No. 210), *nūŋ* 能 in the NP *nūŋ kōgen* 能可干 'son (兒子)' (DY No. 213), Western Middle Mongol ?*nügün* نوكون (?misspelled for *nuwun* نووون) 'little son, little boy' (RH 200B23), Written Mongol *nuγun ~ niγun* 'garçon, enfant' (Kow. II 646b), 'fils, enfant, garçon' (Kow. II 679a), 'boy, son' (L 580a). All these forms go back to Proto-Mongolic *nuxu/n < Pre-Proto-Mongolic *nixu/n. Its modern reflexes are Dagur *ɲɔ:n ~ nɔ:n* 'boy (男孩, 男儿)' (DKÜ 61, 65), 'boy, child (男孩, 孩子, 孩儿)' (DHXC 163b, 164a) and Mangghuer *noŋ* in the NP *noŋ kʰoŋ* 'man' (<*nuxun 'boy' + *küxün 'man') (DS 235b). Khalkha *nʊgəŋ* 'syn; mal'čik' (BAMRS II 423a) and Buryat *nʊgən* 'id.' (BRS I 617b) are reading pronunciations of the Written Mongol form (Nugteren 2011: 458). The Khitan and Mongolic forms clearly belong to the same etymon, as (1) Para-Mongolic *ñ regularly corresponds to Proto-Mongolic *n (Janhunen 2003c: 397; Shimunek 2017: 289, 291), (2) Proto-Mongolic *VxV groups are often represented by diphthongs in Khitan (Janhunen 2003c: 398; Shimunek 2017: 221, 289–90 n. 20), e.g. Khitan *aw = Proto-Mongolic *oxu and *axu,[76] and (3) coda *-n has a rather complex and irregular distribution in Para-Mongolic and Mongolic proper (see, e.g., Finch 1987; Janhunen 2003c: 400; 2012b: 66–68; Thompson 2008; Shimunek 2017: 260, 338 n. 213), so that its presence vs. absence in the compared forms is not an obstacle to their identification.

Para-Mongolic *ñ is also well documented for Tabghach (Vovin 2007b: 199–200; Shimunek 2017: 288, 291), but the Proto-Mongolic *VxV groups usually have contracted shapes in Tabghach, e.g. Tab. *+lo 'COM', cognate to PM *+luxa 'id.' (Vovin 2007b: 201) and Tab. *bučin 附眞 'a person who makes food for noble people (貴人作食人)' (NQS 57.985), cognate to PM *baxurčin 'cook' (Shimunek 2017: 151). According to Shimunek (2017: 164),

[71] For this term, see Kane (2009: 3.145), Wu & Janhunen (2010: 82, 85, 157), Čenggeltei & Wu & Jiruhe (2017/1: 317, 476), and Shimunek (2017: 161 n. 45).

[72] For this term, see Kane (2009: 2.101), Wu & Janhunen (2010: 75, 79, 85, 89, 155), Róna-Tas (2016: 122–23), Čenggeltei & Wu & Jiruhe (2017/1: 197–98, 387–88), Shimunek (2017: 251, 406), and Wu & Róna-Tas (2020a: 75).

[73] For this term, see Wu (2007: 115), Kane (2009: 2.161, 3.057, 3.166, 3.190), Wu & Janhunen (2010: 167), Čenggeltei & Wu & Jiruhe (2017/1: 404, 418), and Róna-Tas & Bai (2023: 34).

[74] For this term, probably also meaning 'boy, son,' see note 56.

[75] For this word, see Rybatzki (2006: 627b–28a) and Nugteren (2011: 458).

[76] See, e.g., Khitan *bawl 暴里 'vile person, villain (惡人)' (LS 116.1535) = PM *boxul 'slave' and Khitan *ñaw 裊 'lake (泊)' (WJZY 16B.31a8, 31b6) = PM *naxur 'id.' For these forms, see Shimunek (2017: 328–29, 358). See also Franke (1969: 38–40).

> "this was an innovation in Taghbach distinguishing it from Mongolic, Kitan, and probably other Serbi languages as well."

In view of all this, we can reconstruct the Tabghach cognate of Khitan *ñaw and Proto-Mongolic *nuxu/n as *ñu or *ño. I assume that this *ñu ~ *ño, meaning 'younger sibling(s)' or 'younger relative(s),' was borrowed from Tabghach by the Rouran for their self-name.

Let us dwell on the variants of this name in more detail. The northern forms *Ñuñar/*Ñuñan (1) and *Ñonñor/*Ñonñon (2), as well as the southern form *Ñuñor/*Ñuñon (4), may be analyzed as *ñu ~ *ño 'younger sibling; younger relative' plus the plural suffix *+ñar/*+ñan or *+ñor/*+ñon, cognate to Khitan *+ñər 伏父 <ñ.ᵉr> ~ *+ñəñ 伏夏 <ñ.ᵉñ> and Proto-Mongolic *+nAr. In Khitan (Wu 2007: 111–22; Shimunek 2017: 264–65, 299–300; Čenggeltei & Wu & Jiruhe 2017/1: 539–42) and Middle Mongol (Godziński 1985: 79 § 133; Street 1990: 348, 375–76; Orlovskaja 2000: 34; Rybatzki 2003: 66; Baγatur 2007: 44), this suffix occurs only with certain categories of nouns denoting humans,[77] in particular with non-lineal kinship terms, and this is most likely to have been its original meaning in Common Serbi-Mongolic (cf., however, Vovin 2019a: 169–70). The first medial *-n- in *Ñonñor/*Ñonñon can be interpreted as another plural suffix *+n, well documented in Tabghach (Shimunek 2017: 165, 319, 330, 342, 350, 351), cognate to Khitan *+an 出 <.an> ~ *+ən 当 <.en> (Kane 2009: 142 § 4.21; Wu & Janhunen 2010: 51, 76; Shimunek 2017: 266, 318; Čenggeltei &Wu & Jiruhe 2017/1: 543) and Proto-Mongolic *+n > Middle Mongol +*n* (Haenisch 1950: 4–13; Godziński 1985: 78–79 §§ 131–32; Street 1990: 352–56; Orlovskaja 2000: 33–34; Rybatzki 2003: 66; Baγatur 2007: 140–68). Thus, *Ñonñor/*Ñonñon < *ño+n+ñor/*ño+n+ñon (younger. relative-PL-PL) is presumably a double plural, i.e. a form containing a combination of two original plural suffixes. Double plural marking is commonly attested in historical Mongolic varieties, notably Written Mongol (Poppe 1974: 73 § 277; Janhunen 2003b: 45; Baγatur 2007: 203–8), Middle Mongol (Street 1990: 372–73; see also note 70; but cf. Baγatur 2007: 200–203), and Written Oirat (Jaxontova 1996: 42; Birtalan 2003: 216), and can be traced back at least to Proto-Mongolic (Janhunen 2003a: 13). The southern forms *Ñoño (5) and *Ñoiñoi (3) appear to be reduplications, as first suggested by Bailey (1979: 209). Full reduplication is occasionally observed in Turkic, Mongolic and Tungusic languages as an expression of plurality, collectivity, or distributiveness (Benzing 1956: 76; Khabtagaeva 2001: 86; Gorelova 2002: 139; Janhunen 2012b: 104; Stachowski 2014; Mahmudova 2023). This type of reduplication is found in both Old Turkic (von Gabain 1974: 161–62) and Middle Mongol (Rybatzki 2003: 66). Most probably it was calqued from Chinese, where it has been amply attested since the Old Chinese period (Sun 1999: 165–83; see also Lu 2017: 31–37).

The ø ~ *i alternation, as in *Ñoño ~ *Ñoiñoi, is typical for personal, place, and ethnic names in the 'Altaic' languages, as pointed out by Atwood (2012: 36–38). In Written Mongol (Vladimircov 1929a: 295–99), Middle Mongol (Poppe 1938: 43; Rybatzki 2003: 63; de Rachewiltz (trans.) 2006/1: 375), and some modern Mongolic languages (Ramstedt 1906: 50; Vladimircov 1929a: 295–99), it is also irregularly observed in the ordinary vocabulary. The *u ~ *o alternation in *Ñuñar/*Ñuñan/*Ñuñor/*Ñuñon ~ *Ñonñor/*Ñonñon/*Ñoño/*Ñoiñoi is most likely due to the peculiarities of Early Middle Chinese transcriptions of foreign languages. Early Middle Chinese usually had difficulties in rendering foreign syllables with rounded vowels /o/ and /u/, which could be transcribed either by the same characters, or by those differing only in tones, as demonstrated by EMC transcriptions of Sanskrit (Coblin 1991: 50). This may be explained by the fact that at least in the northwest varieties of Early Middle Chinese *u* and *o* appear to have been allophones of the same phoneme: they were in complementary distribution in most of the Shazhou dialects, but probably in free variation in the Chang'an dialect (Coblin 1991: 49–50). For that reason, it is currently not possible to establish the exact vocalism of the original form of the Rouran's name based on its Chinese transcriptions.

The Dagur unusual form *ɲɔːɲɔː* 'children, babies (孩子, 娃娃)' (DKÜ 65), closely resembling the reduplicated shape of the Rouran's name, as well as Manchu *nionio* 'zraček, zenica oka, zenočka moja! glazočik moj! laska k kroxotnym detjam, detočki, kroški' (Zax. 222b), 'Kosename: Herzblatt, Augenstern' (HMS II 707), 'an expression of affection used by adults to children' (CMED 286b), seem to have been borrowed from a Para-Mongolic variety other than Khitan, presumably from Tabghach or its daughter language. It is known that a significant part of the Dagur vocabulary consists of loanwords from the Tungusic languages or even directly from Manchu (see, e.g., Cybenov & Ėnxbadrax 2020), but such a scenario is hardly possible in the present case in view of the greater semantic and pragmatic specificity of the Manchu form compared with the Dagur one. It is more likely that the ancestors of the Dagurs and Manchus have borrowed these forms independently from each other, possibly in the context of the Shirwi 室韋,[78] a vast

[77] In Middle Mongol also deities.

[78] MSC *shìwéi*, ONWC *śit-ui (Cob. 0826, 0405), STCA and MTCA *śir-ui (Cob. 0826, 0405), EMC *tśiᶜ-jwei* (Sch. 299, 292),

and highly heterogeneous confederation of Serbi, Mongolic and Tungusic peoples that existed on the territory of modern Manchuria from the early 6th century to approximately the late 9th century AD.[79]

6. Historical context

The relations between the Rouran and the Tabghach Wei dynasty had a long and complex history of peaceful coexistence and military conflicts.[80] The Rouran leaders alternated between sending tribute missions to the Tabghach emperors[81] and making devastating raids into the Wei territories, which were in turn followed or preceded by military campaigns of the Chinese armies against the steppe.[82] However, even such a fragile balance between war and peace, periodically disrupted by either of the parties, could not put into question the recognition of kinship ties between the Rouran and the Tabghach that appear to have been considered indisputable. The status of "younger relatives" of the Wei dynasty the Rouran assigned to themselves was equally recognized and confirmed by the Tabghach emperors, as is clear from the well-known *Beishi* account of the visit of Rouran khaghan Anagui 阿那瓌[83] to the Wei court in 520 AD:

> 阿那瑰再拜跽曰：「臣先世源由，出於大魏。」詔曰：「朕已具知。」(BS 98.3259)
>
> 'After bowing twice and prostrating, Anagui said: "The ancestors of your servitor derive [their] origin from the Great Wei [dynasty]." [The Emperor] has deigned to reply: "We know [this] very well".'[84]

After the audience, the emperor granted Anagui the title of King of the Rouran (*Ruanruan wang* 蠕蠕王), as well as a ceremonial attire (*yimian* 衣冕), an awning on a light carriage (*yaogai* 軺盖), a salary (*lucong* 禄从)[85] and an honorary escort (*yiwei* 儀衛), similar to those of the feudatory princes who were imperial relatives (*qi fan* 戚藩) (WS 103.2299–300; BS 98.3260; see also Taskin (trans.) 1984: 282). The only thing that the Tabghach emperors did to distance themselves from their dangerous nomadic kinsmen was to humiliate them symbolically by retranscribing their name in characters with the radical 虫 'insect, worm.' But that was merely an orthographical convention that did not affect the very idea of a common ancestry between the Rouran and Tabghach elites.[86]

The ease with which the Wei emperors confirmed their kinship with the Rouran khaghans may be largely explained by the fact that in medieval nomadic societies of Inner Asia, the status of a younger relative was closely related or even equivalent to the status of a vassal (Vladimircov 1934: 159, 174, 176; see also Krader 1955: 83–85; 1963: 322–26, 349–50, 367–70). As I wrote in another paper (Rykin 2005: 35–36), the medieval Mongols used the word *aqa* 'elder brother' as a respectful form of reference to a person of higher status. The more powerful, influential and respected of two leaders was called *aqa*, while his "socially younger"

ɛit-wuj (Pul. 285, 320) or *syit-hjw+j* (BaS 101, 114; Kr. 416a, 473a), LMC *ʂir-yj, revised from Pulleyblank's reading **ʂit-yj (Pul. 285, 320). Pulleyblank's reconstruction of the coda **-t for Late Middle Chinese is incorrect, as Early Middle Chinese *-t has changed to *-r in Late Middle Chinese, at least in the northwest dialects (Coblin 1991: 67–70; Cob. 55; Vovin et al. 2016: 127a-b).

[79] For the history and ethnic composition of the Shirwi confederation, see the fundamental study by Ratchnevsky (1966). See also Eberhard (1942: 42–43), Taskin (trans.) (1984: 46, 135–39), Janhunen (1996: 184, 187), and Shimunek (2017: 64–66). The name *Širwi is nothing more than a later form of the ethnonym *Serbi (Pelliot 1928: 142 n. 6; Pulleyblank 1983: 453). This fact indicates that the ruling elite of the confederation may well have been Serbi-speaking and probably descended from the Serbi proper (Shimunek 2017: 65; see also Golden 2022: 49). An interesting example of possible linguistic interaction between Mongolic and Tungusic within the Shirwi confederation is discussed in Shimunek (2018).

[80] According to Kradin (2005: 156), the Rouran "chose the method of applying distant pressure on the Chinese domains, alternating raids with periods of peaceful extortion of rich gifts".

[81] Forty one Rouran tribute missions to the Wei court and at least five Wei embassies to the Rouran khaghans are recorded for the period between 428 and 532 AD (Süxbaatar 1992: 26–28; see also Eberhard 1949: 156, 158, 159).

[82] The first military campaign of the Wei against the Rouran took place in 391 AD (Taskin (trans.) 1984: 267–68, 400 n. 11; see also Miyakawa & Kollautz 1969: 184), while the first Rouran raid into the Tabgach territories occurred in 402 AD (Taskin (trans.) 1984: 270). In total, twenty two Wei campaigns against the Rouran and twenty seven Rouran raids into the Northern Wei empire are recorded for the period between 391 and 523 AD (Süxbaatar 1992: 28–40; see also Miyakawa & Kollautz 1969; Barfield 1989: 123–24; Xandsürèn 1993: 75–87; Kljaštornyj & Savinov 2005: 50–52; Kradin 2005: 156–57).

[83] MSC *ā-nà-guī*, ONWC и STCA *ʔa-na-*? (Cob. 0016, 0005), EMC *ʔâ-nâ-kwâi* (Sch. 211, 215, 292), *ʔa-na^{h}-kwəj* (Pul. 23, 221, 115) or *'a-naH-kwoj* (BaS 25, 38; Kr. 98a, 330a, 146a). Reconstructible as *Anagui. This name is possibly related to Mongolian Khamnigan *anakʊ* 'bad, ugly' (Gruntov & Mazo 2022: 124 No. 4), which in itself has neither clear etymology nor known cognates in other Mongolic languages. If this is correct, it may be regarded as another example of pejorative names borne by the Rouran leaders (see notes 7, 13, and 50). This etymology is purely conjectural.

[84] The *Weishu* record of this event (WS 103.2299) is nearly identical to the *Beishi* version, except for the absence of the character 知, which is important for understanding this passage, and the use of the character 之 instead. It is likely that at this point both sources contain alterations of the original text, which can presumably be restored as *「朕已具知之。」 *"We know this very well". See also Taskin (trans.) (1984: 414 n. 56).

[85] *Lucong* is a later corruption of the term *luxu* 祿邹 ~祿恤 'salary, allowance' (see WS 103.2316; BS 98.3279).

[86] For this idea, see also Kljaštornyj & Savinov (2005: 56) and Golden (2013: 57).

partner was referred to as *de'ü* 'younger brother' (see also Cleaves 1962–63; Rykin 2003: 31a-b). During the Mongol empire, vassal rulers usually called the Mongol *qa'an* "elder brother" (*aqa*) or "father" (*ečige*) (TMEN I No. 22 134–36).[87] When the Uyghur *ïdok kut* Barčuk Art-tegin submitted to the Mongols in 1209 AD, he was granted the status of the "fifth son" (*dabtu'ar kö'ün*), i.e. a vassal, of Činggis Khan (SHM § 238; see Mostaert 1952: 339 n. 197). In 1218 AD, Činggis Khan offered to make a peace treaty with the Khwārazm-Shāh Muḥammad and to place him "on a level with the dearest of his sons" (Barthold 1928/1968: 397; see also Barthold 1963: 464), thereby recognizing his vassal dependence on the Mongols. The position of "younger relatives" was also beneficial to those who occupied it, since it allowed them to obtain a legitimate privileged status in the imperial social system (Rykin 2003: 30a–31a). The vassal nature of the relationship of the Rouran with the Wei empire is clearly indicated in the sources. According to the *Weishu* (WS 103.2289; see Taskin (trans.) 1984: 267), Cheluhui/Juluhui submitted to the Wei dynasty and began to pay tribute immediately after he adopted the name Rouran. Initially, the Rouran were classified as ordinary vassals (*chen* 臣), in 506 AD they received the status of an outlying feudatory state (*fanli* 藩籬), and with the weakening of the Wei dynasty, this status was changed to that of a "hostile equal neighbouring state" (*lindi kangli* 鄰敵抗禮) (Kradin 2005: 157; Kyčanov 2010: 95). That was a real tangible benefit received by the Rouran leaders from recognizing themselves as "younger relatives" of the Tabghach emperors.

7. Conclusion

To sum up, the Tabghach word, presumably underlying the name of the Rouran, and its possible cognates in the Serbi-Mongolic languages are presented in the Fig. 1 below.

Thus, the ethnonym Rouran belongs to clan or tribal names derived from kinship terms. Such names are well known among the Serbi-Mongolic peoples. A list of Tabghach clans from the *Weishu* (WS 113.3008) contains the name 阿伏于[88] MSC *ā-fú-gān*, ONWC *ʔa-buk-kan*, STCA *ʔa-buk* (> *bvuk*)-? (Cob. 0016, 1174, 0608), EMC *ʔâ-bjuk-kân* (Sch. 211, 113, 251), *ʔa-buwk-kan* (Pul. 23, 98, 102) or *'a-bjuwk-kan* (BaS 25, 30, 32; Kr. 98a, 118a, 127a), reconstructible as *Abugan and comparable to Proto-Mongolic *abaga 'paternal uncle, father's younger brother'[89] (Bazin 1950: 241 No. 1), whose reflexes, attested with several plural suffixes, including *+nAr, are used as ethnonyms by some modern Mongolic peoples, notably the Khalkha (Rinčen (ed.) 1979: 58; Očir 2016: 9–10), Southern Mongols (DO 36a; Todaeva 1985: 107), Buryats (Nanzatov 2005: 40–41), and Kalmyks (Ėrdniev 1985: 52–55). The same list includes another Tabghach name 乙旃 MSC *yǐ-zhān*, ONWC *ʔit-tśan*, STCA *ʔir-tśan* (Cob. 0827a, 0676a), EMC *ʔjet-tśjän* (Sch. 306, 258), *ʔit-tɕian* (Pul. 367, 396) or *'it-tsyen* (BaS 135, 149; Kr. 544a, 589b), meaning 'descendants of the father's younger brother (叔父之胤),' which has subsequently been changed to the synonymous Chinese name *shusun* 叔孙 (WS 113.3006). This name may be reconstructed as *Ičen or *Ečen.[90] It has no known cognates in Khitan or the Mongolic languages, but probably, following Boodberg (1936: 178 No. 28) and Bazin (1950: 291 No. 44), it is worth connecting it with Old Turkic *ečі* "'a close male relative younger than one's father and older than oneself', i.e. both '(junior) paternal uncle' and 'elder brother'" (EDT 20a), 'staršig brat, djadja (?)' (DTS 162a), 'älterer Bruder' (HAU 250b) and considering it as a Turkic borrowing in Tabghach.

The *Secret History of the Mongols* repeatedly mentions the ethnic name 兀舌魯兀惕 *Uru'ut* (SHM §§ 46, 170, 171 ff.), historically a plural in +(*U*)*D* (for this suffix, see Godziński 1985: 75–76 § 125; Street 1990: 356–69; Orlovskaja 2000: 32–33; Rybatzki 2003: 66; Baγatur 2007: 38–41) of 兀舌魯黑 *uruq* 'relative, clansman (親, 宗族, 親族); descendant, offspring (子孫, 子嗣, 孫孫)' (SHM §§ 51, 103, 105 ff.), a loanword from Old Turkic *urug* "originally a Conc[rete] N[oun] 'seed, pip, kernel', but with metaph. extensions like 'progeny, descendants', and even 'clan', i.e. descendants of a common ancestor" (EDT 214b), 'zerno, semja, kostočka; rod, potomstvo' (DTS 615a), 'Saat, Samen, Saatgut, (Frucht) Stein, Spross, Beere, Korn; Nachkomme, Nachfahre; Verwandter' (HAU 803b).[91] This name is

[87] The *Tārīkh-i Jahāngushāy* by Juwaynī recounts the words of the wife of a Činggisid prince, clearly characterizing the status of the Mongol *qa'an* in relation to his vassals: "Mengü Qa'an is the *aqa* and in the position of a father: thou must go to him and submit thyself to his command, whatever it be" (Boyle (trans.) 1958/2: 586).

[88] The text erroneously uses the character 于 MSC *yú* instead of 干 MSC *gān* (see WS 113.3019 n. 27).

[89] For this word, see TMEN I No. 2, ÈSTJa 1974: 64–65, Rybatzki (2006: 6b–7a), Nugteren (2011: 263–64), and Rykin (2011: 31, 45). Eastern Middle Mongol 阿不合 *abuqa* (ZY No. 76) ~ 阿補阿 *abuγa* (YY No. 195) and Dongxiang *awuqa* (DüKÜ 6) show /u/ in the second syllable, as does the Tabghach form.

[90] Coblin (1991: 67) points out that in late sixth century Chinese transcriptions of Sanskrit "QYS (= EMC. – *P. R.*) -t in effect disappears or seems to have no value of its own in compounds where it is followed by a dental initial of any manner group. Put another way, it could be said to take on the articulatory manner of the said initial… And it can be observed that the same phenomenon occurred when the following initial was a retroflex stop or nasal."

[91] For the ethnonym *Uru'ut* in the SHM and its etymology, see Pelliot & Hambis (1951: 32–33), Shastina (1975: 234–35), Bese (1988: 39), and Rybatzki (2006: 151b). For the word *uruq* and its

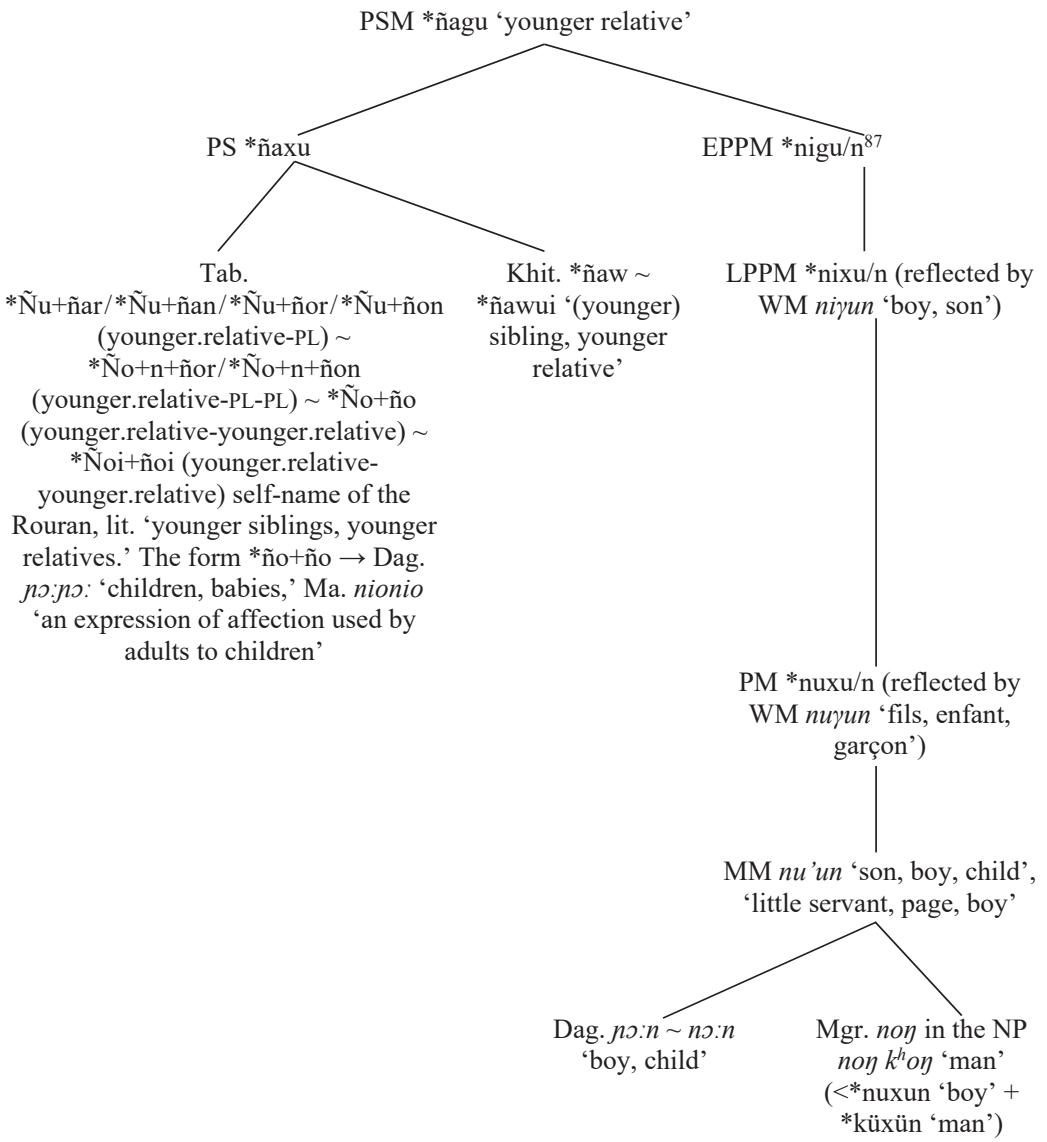


Figure 1. Reflexes of Proto-Serbi-Mongolic *ñagu ‘younger relative’

attested in the Chinese sources among the Ordos in the 16th century (Hambis 1970: 178 No. 19; Serruys 1984: 71 No. 33) and remained in use at least until the early 20th century, when it was recorded by Mostaert (DO 743a; see also Mostaert 1934: 36 No. 35) in the form *ʊ̃rʊːt*. The ethnonym *Pirəɢʧʰut ~ Pirəɢɪ*, going back to Proto-Mongolic *berigen ‘elder brother’s wife,’[92] is documented in some areas of Mongolia (Rinčen (ed.) 1979: 74; Očir 2016: 64–65). Also there are ethnic names derived from Proto-Mongolic *guči ‘great-grandson’[93] that are used by the Khalkha (Rinčen (ed.) 1979: 70; Očir 2016: 70–71) and Buryats (Nanzatov 2005: 53). The name of the Rouran, borrowed from Tabghach, also takes its place in this group.

cognates in Turkic and Mongolic, see Poppe (1955: 42), TMEN II No. 468, VEWT 516a, ÈSTJa 1974: 604–6, Kara (2001: 116), de Rachewiltz (trans.) (2006/1: 254–55, 295), Rybatzki (2006: 150a-b), and Nugteren (2011: 535).

[92] For this word, see TMEN I No. 88, Rybatzki (2006: 266b), Nugteren (2011: 280–81), and Rykin (2011: 37, 45).

[93] For this word, see Rybatzki (2006: 455b).

Abbreviations

Glosses

gen	Genitive
NP	Noun phrase
pl	Plural

Symbols

<	Developed from
>	Developed into
←	Borrowed from
→	Borrowed into
~	Alternating with
=	Corresponding to
*	Reconstruction
**	Misreconstruction or misreading

Languages and dialects

Chag.	Chagatai
CSZ	Common Shazhou
Cum.	Cuman
Dag.	Dagur
Dgx.	Dongxiang
EMC	Early Middle Chinese
EPPM	Early Pre-Proto-Mongolic
Khit.	Khitan
Khwar.	Khwarezmian Turkic
LHC	Later Han Chinese
LMC	Late Middle Chinese
LPPM	Late Pre-Proto-Mongolic
Ma.	Manchu
Mgr.	Mangghuer
MM	Middle Mongol
Mo.	Mongol
MSC	Modern Standard Chinese
MTCA	Mid-Tang Chang'an
OC	Old Chinese
OM	Old Mandarin
ONWC	Old Northwest Chinese
OT	Old Turkic
PM	Proto-Mongolic
PS	Proto-Serbi
PSM	Proto-Serbi-Mongolic
Rus.	Russian
Skt.	Sanskrit
Sog.	Sogdian
STCA	Sui-Tang Chang'an
Tab.	Tabghach
Tu.	Turkic
WM	Written Mongol
WYu.	Western Yugur

Primary sources

AL	the Mongol-Persian and Arabic-Mongol glossary *Kitāb Majmūʿ Turjumān Turkī wa-ʿajamī wa-Muǧalī* by Xalīl b. Muḥammad b. Jūsuf al-Qunawī (?) (1343 AD) (Poppe 1927–28; Saitô 2006)
BK	the Bilgä Khaghan Old Turkic runiform inscriptions (735 AD) (Ölmez 2015: 131–78; Aydın 2018a: 72–101)
BQS	*Bei Qishu* 北齊書 'The Book of Northern Qi,' a Chinese dynastic history completed in 636 AD by Li Baiyao 李百藥, the Zhonghua shuju 中華書局 edition of 1972.
BS	*Beishi* 北史 'The History of the Northern Dynasties,' a Chinese dynastic history compiled between 643 and 659 AD by Li Yanshou 李延壽, the Zhonghua shuju edition of 1974.
CC	the *Codex Cumanicus*, a Latin-Persian-Cuman and Cuman-German dictionary and manual (1303 AD) (Grønbech 1942; Argunşah & Güner 2015)
Di	the Epitaph of Yelü (Han) Dilie 耶律(韓)敵烈 in Khitan Small Script (1101 AD) (Čenggeltei & Wu & Jiruhe 2017/1: 727–34; 2017/2: 1250–67)
DLT	the *Dīwān Lughāt al-Turk* 'Compendium of the Turkic Dialects' by Maḥmūd al-Kāšgharī (completed in 1077 AD) (Maḥmūd al-Kāšγarī 1982–85)
DY	the Sino-Mongol glossary *Dada yu* 韃靼語/*Beilu yiyu* 北虜譯語 (between 1567 and 1603 AD). The Mongol material is reconstructed by the author.
DGZ	the Sino-Mongol glossary *Dada guan zazi* 韃靼館雜字 (late 15th cent. AD?) (Šongqor 2017: 1–104, 343–401)
Guang	the Epitaph of Yelü Zongjiao 耶律宗教 in Khitan Small Script (1053 AD) (Čenggeltei & Wu & Jiruhe 2017/1: 672–78; 2017/2: 1099–1112)
GY	the *Guangyun* 廣韻 'Broad Rimes,' a Chinese rime dictionary compiled from 1007 to 1008 AD under the patronage of Emperor Zhenzong 真宗 of Song 宋. Quoted from an electronic version with dictionary lookup: https://ctext.org/library.pl?if=en&res=77357&by_title=%E5%BB%A3%E9%9F%BB
Hu	the Epitaph of Xiao Dielide 蕭迭里得 in Khitan Small Script (1091 AD) (Čenggeltei & Wu & Jiruhe 2017/1: 823–27; 2017/2: 1496–516)
HY	the Sino-Mongolian glossary *Huayi yiyu* 華夷譯語 (1389 AD) (Mostaert 1977; Mostaert & de Rachewiltz 1995; Kuribayashi 2003)
IMI	the Istanbul manuscript version of the Arabic-Mongol glossary *Kitāb Ḥilyat al-Insān wa Ḥalbat al-Lisān* by Jamāl al-Dīn ibn al-Muhannā (early 14th cent. AD) (Gül 2016)
IMM	the manuscript versions of Ibn al-Muhannā's glossary published by Melioranskij (1904)
IMR	the Rome manuscript version of Ibn al-Muhannā's glossary (Weiers 1972b)
KT	the Kül Tegin Old Turkic runiform inscriptions (732 AD) (Ölmez 2015: 79–123; Aydın 2018a: 43–71)
JS	*Jinshu* 晉書 'The Book of Jin,' a Chinese dynastic history compiled between 646 and 648 AD

	under the supervision of Fang Xuanling 房玄齡, the Zhonghua shuju edition of 1974.
JT	the *Jāmiʿ al-Tawārīkh* 'Compendium of Chronicles' by Rashīd al-Dīn (completed between 1306 and 1311 AD) (Rashīd ad-Dīn 1968)
LS	*Liaoshi* 遼史 'The History of Liao,' a Chinese dynastic history completed in 1344 AD under the direction of Toqtō 脫脫, the Zhonghua shuju edition of 1974.
LiS	*Liangshu* 梁書 'The Book of Liang,' a Chinese dynastic history completed in 635 AD by Yao Silian 姚思廉, the Zhonghua shuju edition of 1973.
LOK	the *Legend of Oghuz Khaghan*, a Middle Turkic manuscript in Uighur script (15th cent. AD?) (Bang & Rachmati 1932; Danka 2019)
MA	the Arabic-Persian-Turkic-Mongol dictionary *Muqaddimat al-Adab* (14th cent. AD) (Hasanov & Saitô (eds.) 2008; Saitô (ed.) 2008)
MČ	the Moyun Čor (Shine Usu) Old Uyghur runiform inscription (759 or 760 AD) (Ölmez 2018: 109–86; Aydın 2018b: 49–65)
Nan	the Epitaph of Yelü Dilie 耶律迪烈 in Khitan Small Script (1092 AD) (Čenggeltei & Wu & Jiruhe 2017/1: 692–98; 2017/2: 1165–87)
NQS	*Nan Qishu* 南齊書 'The Book of Southern Qi,' a Chinese dynastic history compiled between 515 and 520 AD by Xiao Zixian 蕭子顯, the Zhonghua shuju edition of 1974.
Nu	the Epitaph of Yelü Nu 耶律奴 in Khitan Small Script (1099 AD) (Čenggeltei & Wu & Jiruhe 2017/1: 699–709; 2017/2: 1189–206)
O	the Ongi Old Turkic runiform inscription (between 716 and 735 AD) (Ölmez 2015: 207–16; Aydın 2018a: 120–27)
Ph XL	the Juyongguan 居庸關 'Phags-pa inscription of the right wall (1345 AD) (Kögǰiltü & Saraγul 2004: 435–49, pl. 40; Tumurtogoo (ed.) 2010: 106–9)
Qing	the Epitaph of Xiao Taishan 蕭太山 and Princess Yongqing 永清 in Khitan Small Script (1095 AD) (Čenggeltei & Wu & Jiruhe 2017/1: 757–62; 2017/2: 1315–32)
Qqot. IV	a Preclassical Mongol manuscript fragment from Qara Qoto (Doc. G 110 verso) (14th cent. AD?) (Kara 2003: 5–7, 9 fig. 3; Tumurtogoo (ed.) 2006: 182)
Ren	the Eulogy for Empress Renyi 仁懿 in Khitan Small Script (1076 AD) (Čenggeltei & Wu & Jiruhe 2017/1: 606–9; 2017/2: 880–89)
RH	the Arabic-Persian-Turkic-Greek-Armenian-Mongol dictionary *Rasūlid Hexaglot* by al-Malik al-Afḍal al-ʿAbbās b. ʿAlī (between 1363 and 1377 AD) (Golden (ed.) 2000; Ligeti & Kara 2012)
SHM	the *Secret History of the Mongols* (mid-13th cent. AD) (Kuribayashi & Choijinjab 2001; Kuribayashi 2009)
SoS	*Songshu* 宋書 'The Book of Song,' a Chinese dynastic history compiled from 492 to 493 AD by Shen Yue 沈約, the Zhonghua shuju edition of 1974.
SS	*Suishu* 隋書 'The Book of Sui,' a Chinese dynastic history completed in 636 AD under the supervision of Wei Zheng 魏徵, the Zhonghua shuju edition of 1982.
T1	the Tonyukuk Old Turkic runiform inscriptions of the 1st stele (ca. 716 AD) (Ölmez 2015: 179–85, 188–93, 198–203; Aydın 2018a: 102–13)
Tar.	the Tariat (Terxin) Old Uyghur runiform inscriptions (753 AD) (Ölmez 2015: 276–91; Aydın 2018b: 38–48)
Turf. LXII	the Preclassical Mongol letter of Tuγluγtemür (1352 AD) (Cerensodnom & Taube 1993: 173–76, Taf. XXXI; Tumurtogoo (ed.) 2006: 167)
VI	the Arabic-Persian-Turkic-Mongol dictionary Šāmil al-Luğa by Ḥasan b. Ḥusain b. 'Imād al-Qarāḥiṣārī (late 15th to early 16th cent. AD) (Ligeti 1962; Saitô 2013)
WJZY	the *Wujing zongyao* 武經總要 'Complete Essentials for the Military Classics,' a Chinese military encyclopedia compiled between 1040 and 1044 AD under the supervision of Zeng Gongliang 曾公亮, the *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書 undated facsimile edition.
WS	*Weishu* 魏書 'The Book of Wei,' a Chinese dynastic history compiled between 551 and 554 AD by Wei Shou 魏收, the Zhonghua shuju edition of 1974.
Wu	the Epitaph of Yelü Wumo 耶律兀沒 in Khitan Small Script (1102 AD) (Čenggeltei & Wu & Jiruhe 2017/1: 781–91; 2017/2: 1387–408)
Xian	the Epitaph of Xiao Jushi 蕭居士 in Khitan Small Script (1175 AD) (Čenggeltei & Wu & Jiruhe 2017/1: 799–804; 2017/2: 1430–48)
XHY II	appendix (*xuzeng* 續增) II to the Sino-Mongol glossary of the Bureau of Translators (late 15th cent.?) (Lubsangbaldan & Bousiyang 1959: 24–33; Šongqor 2017: 232–64)
Yu	the Epitaph of Yelü Renxian 耶律仁先 in Khitan Small Script (1072 AD) (Čenggeltei & Wu & Jiruhe 2017/1: 658–70; 2017/2: 1023–83)
YY	the Sino-Mongol glossary *Yiyu* 譯語 from the *Dengtan bijiu* 登壇必究 (1598 AD) (Apatóczky 2009; Bürgüd 2017)
Zhong	the Epitaph of Xiao Zhonggong 蕭仲恭 in Khitan Small Script (1150 AD) (Čenggeltei & Wu & Jiruhe 2017/1: 634–41; 2017/2: 945–78)
ZS	*Zhoushu* 周書 'The Book of Zhou,' a Chinese dynastic history completed in 636 AD by Linghu Defen 令狐德芬, the Zhonghua shuju edition of 1974.
ZY	the Sino-Mongol glossary *Zhiyuan yiyu* 至元譯語 (alias *Menggu yiyu* 蒙古譯語) from the *Shilin guangji* 事林廣記 (between 1279 and 1294 AD) (Ligeti 1990; Kara 1990)

Dictionaries and general works

BAMRS Pjurbeev, Grigorij C., ed. 2001–02. *Bol'shoj akademičeskij mongol'sko-russkij slovar' = Mongol-oros dėlgėrėngüi ix tol'* [A large Mongolian-Russian academic dictionary]. 4 vols. Moskva: Academia.

BaS Baxter, William H. & Sagart, Laurent 2014. Baxter-Sagart Old Chinese reconstruction, version 1.1 (20 September 2014), available at https://ocbaxtersagart.lsait.lsa.umich.edu/BaxterSagartOCbyMandarinMC2014-09-20.pdf

BKÜ Chen, Naixiong 陈乃雄 et al. 1986. *Boo an kelen-ü üges = Bao'anyu cihui* 保安语词汇 [Baoan vocabulary]. (Mongγol töröl-ün kele ayalγun-u sudulul-un čuburil; 011.) Kökeqota: Öbör Mongγol-un arad-un keblel-ün qoriy-a.

BRS Šagdarov, Lubsan D. & Čeremisov, Konstantin M. 2010. *Burjaad-orod toli = Burjatsko-russkij slovar'* [A Buryat-Russian dictionary]. 2 vols. Ulan-Udė: Respublikanskaja tipografija.

CMED Norman, Jerry; with the assistance of Keith Dede and David Prager Branner 2013. *A Comprehensive Manchu-English Dictionary*. (Harvard-Yenching Institute Monograph Series; 85.) Cambridge, MA — London: Harvard University Asia Center.

Cob. Coblin, W. South 1994. *A Compendium of Phonetics in Northwest Chinese*. (Journal of Chinese Linguistics Monograph Series; No. 7.) Berkeley, CA: Project on Linguistic Analysis, University of California.

CPED Steingass, Francis 1963. *A Comprehensive Persian-English Dictionary, Including the Arabic words and phrases to be met with in literature*. 5th impression. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

ÇTS Ünlü, Suat 2013. Çağatay Türkçesi Sözlüğü [A dictionary of Chagatai Turkic]. Konya: Eğitim.

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