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CATALOGUE OF GRAPHEMS OF THE KITAN SCRIPT
(First variant)

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A great many of scholars in different countries have investigated the Kitan script. The peculiarity of this script had been the reason why its decipherment has been delayed during more then one decade. Till today the catalogue of the graphems, without which the decipherment is quite impossible, has never been published by any researcher.

One of the main and typical features of the Kitan script is, that its graphems have many variations. This causes much trouble to the researchers. This special feature is one of the chief reasons complicating the decipherment of this script. The unsuccessful attempts of decipherment, made by some researchers, showed that before starting the study of Kitan texts and their decipherment, it is necessary to prepare thoroughly all the present materials. The systematization of all those graphems, encountered in the known texts, became of a primary importance. This was the main aim of the research work upon large and small texts, which made it possible to compose a catalogue of the Kitan graphems including their allographs.

The identification of some allographs with an exact graphem, already known in the standard writing, did not came any complication, as they do not much differ from the standard. Such, for example, was the case with graphems N 12 and N 15. The dot of the allographs of these graphems which is situated to the right of the central vertical line, becomes a whole line, going to the left end of the lower horisontal line of these graphems (N 13 and N 16).

The occurance of allographs may depend on the position of the graphems in the block, in other words, it depends on the place of the given graphem - whether it is on the left or the right side of the block of two-, four- or six elements and whether the given graphem is a final one, when it stands in the end of the block, consisting of three-, five- or seven elements.

The shortening of lines going to the right in lefthanded graphems was caused by the necessity of maximum compactness when writing graphems in these positions. This situation forced to write the lower line going downwards to the right, convexed (NN 504, 512, 513 and others), but not concaved, as we may see in the usual writing or in the position of such graphem (NN 503, 506, 510 and others).

In some cases the changing in the writing of the graphems may depend on the handwriting or on the style of the writing (calligraphical writing, shorthand etc.). This is especially demonstrated in the graphem N 220 and its allographs NN 221, 222, 223, 224. In this case the variation of the graphem does not depend on its location, but on the peculiarity of the shorthand writings. Such changes of some graphems we may see not only in the same text and in the same line, but often even in two side by side standing blocks, for instance, in the blocks 0883 and 0884. (In the course of the researches every block of the used Kitan texts got its own series or inventory number, from 0001 and further, which, if necessary, makes it easy to find its adress - its situation in every text).

It was not difficult to identify the allographs by comparison of the suitable graphem in analogical words-blocks, occurring in the texts. For instance, the block, consisting of the graphems 157-052-303 occures in the following adresses: 0120, 1021, 1088, 1824, 2467. Block, consisting of the graphems 074-066-144 we may find at the adresses: 0048, 0095, 0265, 0748, 1642, 2305.

Much more complicated was the work connected with the identification of the graphems, which occures in unique

blocks. This was the most often case and here the preliminarily established principle of distribution of graphems in the blocks was of great use, when we came to know, that every exact graphem may take its certain position in the block and may stand only with a certain graphem, written to its right or left.

The allographs of some graphems differ so much from the standard writing, that often even to a scholar, aware of the principles of the chinese hieroglyphic script and shorthand, it is difficult to identify them. Such are, for instance, graphem N 11 and its allographs from N 65 to N 71.

The analysis of allographs shows that in most cases of changing graphems we may see a certain principle, connected with the history of the Kitan script. On the whole this principle almost wholly corresponds with the usual norms, established in the process of the development of the Chinese hieroglyphical shorthand. Such a phenomenon is quite comprehencible and comes from the fact that the Kitan scholars created the graphems of their own national script, taking the Chinese hieroglyphic script as a model. That is why there appeared some analogy of the Kitan graphems with the chinese hieroglyphic shorthand which naturally influenced for a certain part the inventors of the Kitan script. Here we have to add the fact that the Kitans also used the brush in writing and this made them imitate the analogical Chinese norms of writing, when shortening lines in Kitan shorthand graphems. This gave an enormouse quantity of allographs.

It took a lot of time to determine the graphems. In the course of this work, demanding much labour, it seemed necessary to classify a great many of index cards, identifying graphems, written on them, (the quantity of this cards grew more and more), a special system had to be applied, which was convenient to continue this work and to make use of the accumulated materials.

It seemed that the most convenient type of systematization was to classify the graphems on a graphical principle in the order of the increasing of their simple elements

and of the increasing complication of their writings. This method gives important convenience in the work, the more as this system was quite usual to the Soviet sinologists. This system had been built on the basis of the Russian traditional graphical system (academician V.P.Vasiliev - professor O.O.Rozenberg - professor V.S.Kolokolov) appliable to the classification of Chinese characters according to the lower right corner of the character. So, all the Kitan graphems have now been divided into five main groups such as those, in which usually the Chinese characters are divided on the principle of five main directions of the lines, applied in the Chinese graphic and accepted in the guide for finding out Chinese characters in the Soviet Chinese-Russian dictionaries.

The specific character of the Kitan graphic with its abundance of allographs, made it necessary to bring an additional sixth group, including those graphems, which, by their configuration, can not be included in the five former groups. This last group was made up, mainly, of shorthand allographs. The work of more precise definition to this group is still going on.

Each group of graphems in the Catalogue is preceded by its index, consisting of two lines, with ciphers. In the upper line are the Roman ciphers, giving the number of the group. The ciphers in the lower line are divided by hyphen. The ciphers, left from the hyphen, give the number of the section, the ciphers on the right give the number of the subsection, in which the graphems with analogical direction of the main lines are gathered.

The numbers of these five groups and their subsections entirely correspond to the numbers, accepted in the Russian graphical system for the classification of Chinese characters on the principle of the five main line directions.

No doubt Kitans could have used much more graphems than those preserved in the known texts. In connection with this, inside these groups, some sections and subsections are missing. They will be filled by graphems, which doubtless will

be found in the future in new texts. Therefore, for instance, in group 1, after the section and subsection 1-3 goes section and subsection 1-7, and in group II, after 4--14 goes 4-16 etc.

All graphems,we know from the preserved texts, are written in compact black inking throughout this Catalogue, which reproduces their original writing. The graphems,which are given only in thin lines, without inking, reproduce the copied handwritings from two lost epitaphies. In many cases they show the peculiarities of the writing of the modern copyist. (This copyist menaged to make their copy by sight and not by estampage). But this is not the handwriting of the Kitan scribe and therefor it forces us to doubt about the exact reproduction of the original writing (NN 10, 22, 24 and others).

Some of the variations of the graphems don't show much difference and therefore they are not difficult to recognize. Obviously they may be excluded out of the Catalogue without great loss for all, who don't know the basis of the Chinese hieroglyphics. For instance, graphems NN 35 or 36, 72 or 73 and others.

Obviously we'll have to replace some graphems, not only inside the sections, but, possibly, even to replace them from one group to another in order to get the best possible exactness, when placing every graphem in the Catalogue.

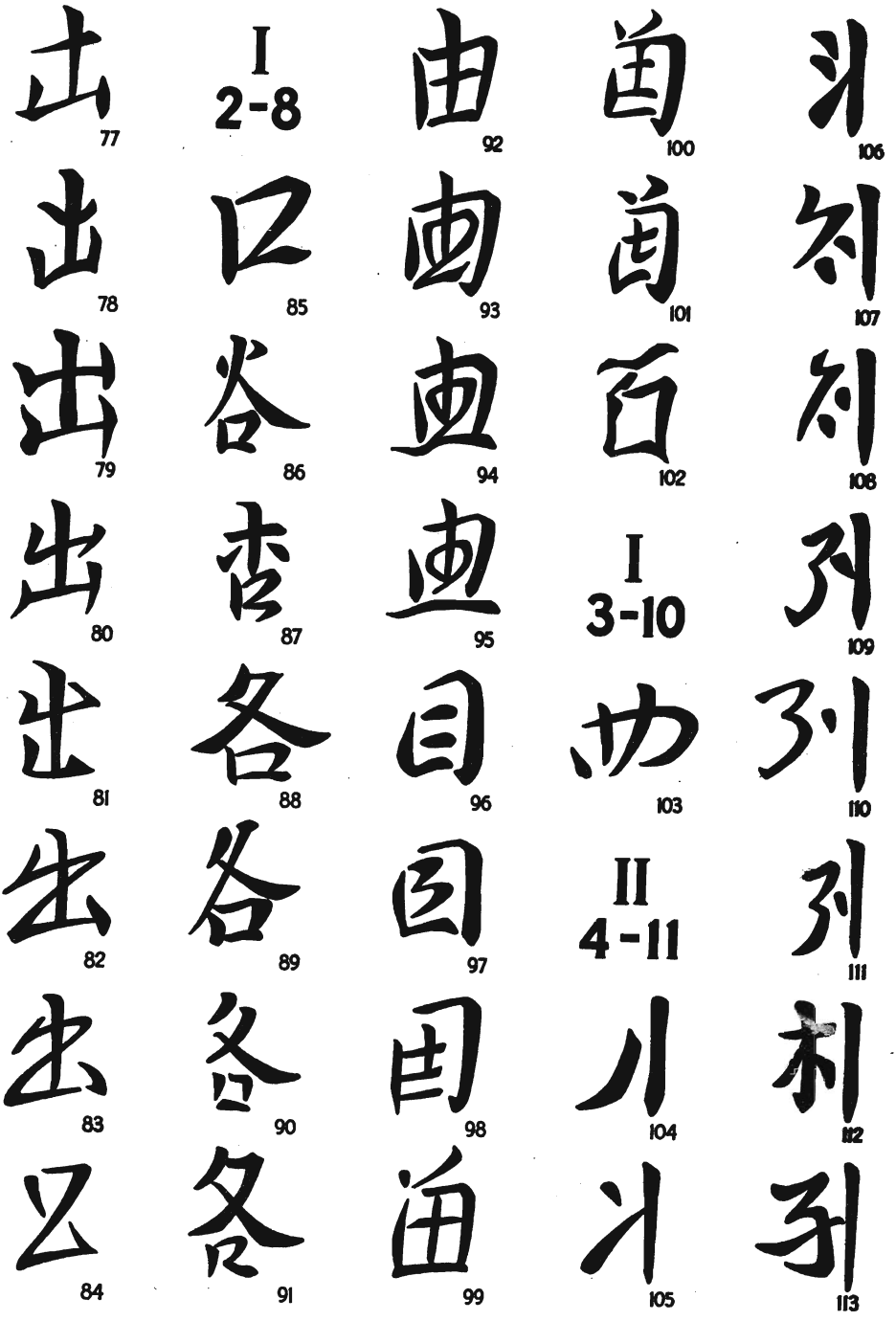
So, as a result of the definition of the overwhelming majority of the Kitan graphems and by placing them in a graphical system, the first sufficiently reliable variant of a graphem Catalogue has been prepared. This Catalogue will be continued and made more exact in the course of this work on decipherment of the Kitan script. This first variant of the Catalogue already gives a real possibility to start a systematic study of Kitan texts and of their research with the help of the positional statistics (as a variation of the method, worked out under the direction of Dr. Y.V.Knorozov) - at first by hand, and later, using computer technique. The results of this study have been published by

the author and V.M.Nadeliaev in "Preliminary report on the decipherment of the Kitan script" in the collected articles under the same title edited in Moscow, 1964, by the Institute of scientific and technical information and the Institute of Ethnography of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR.

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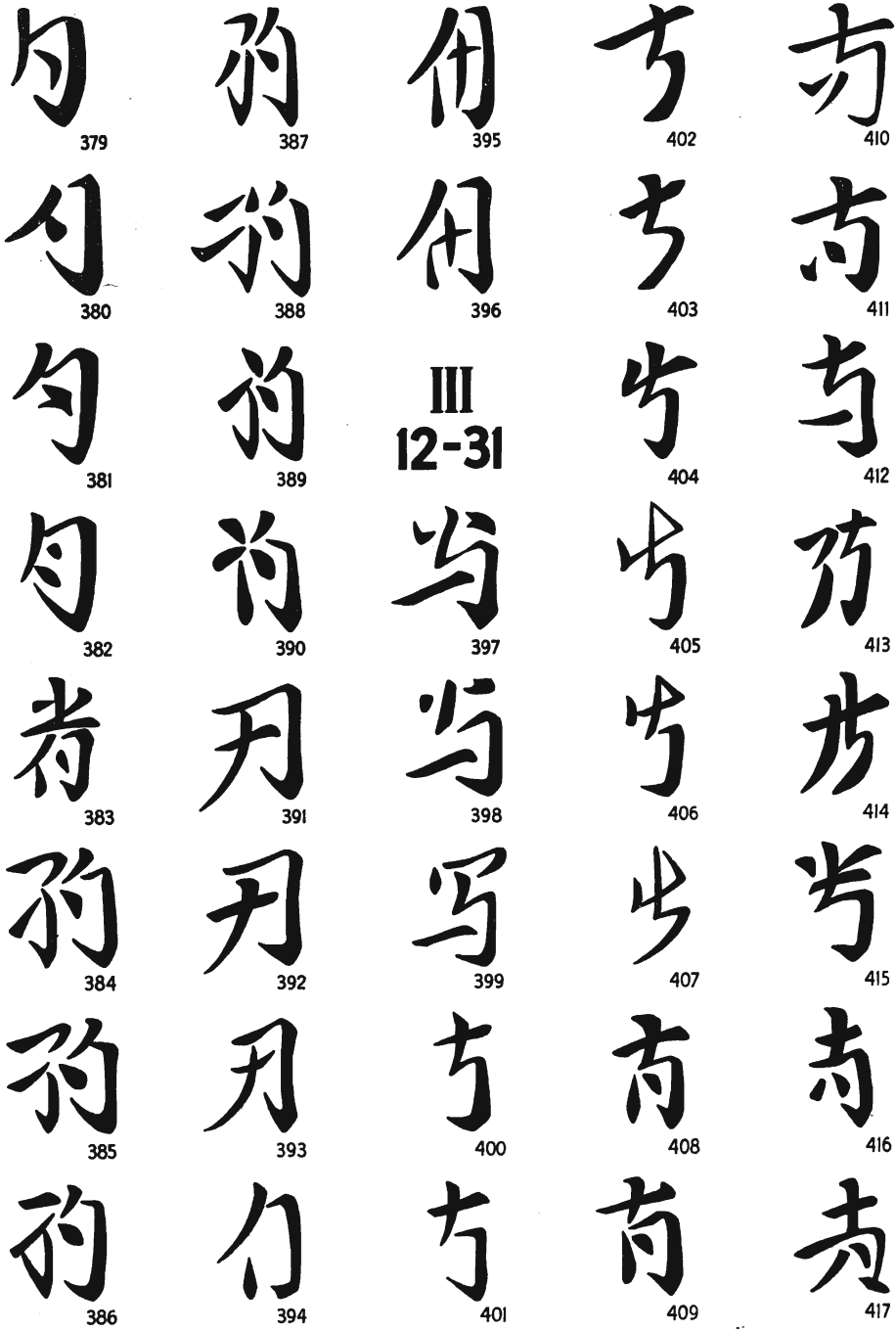

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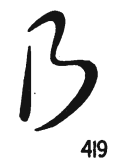

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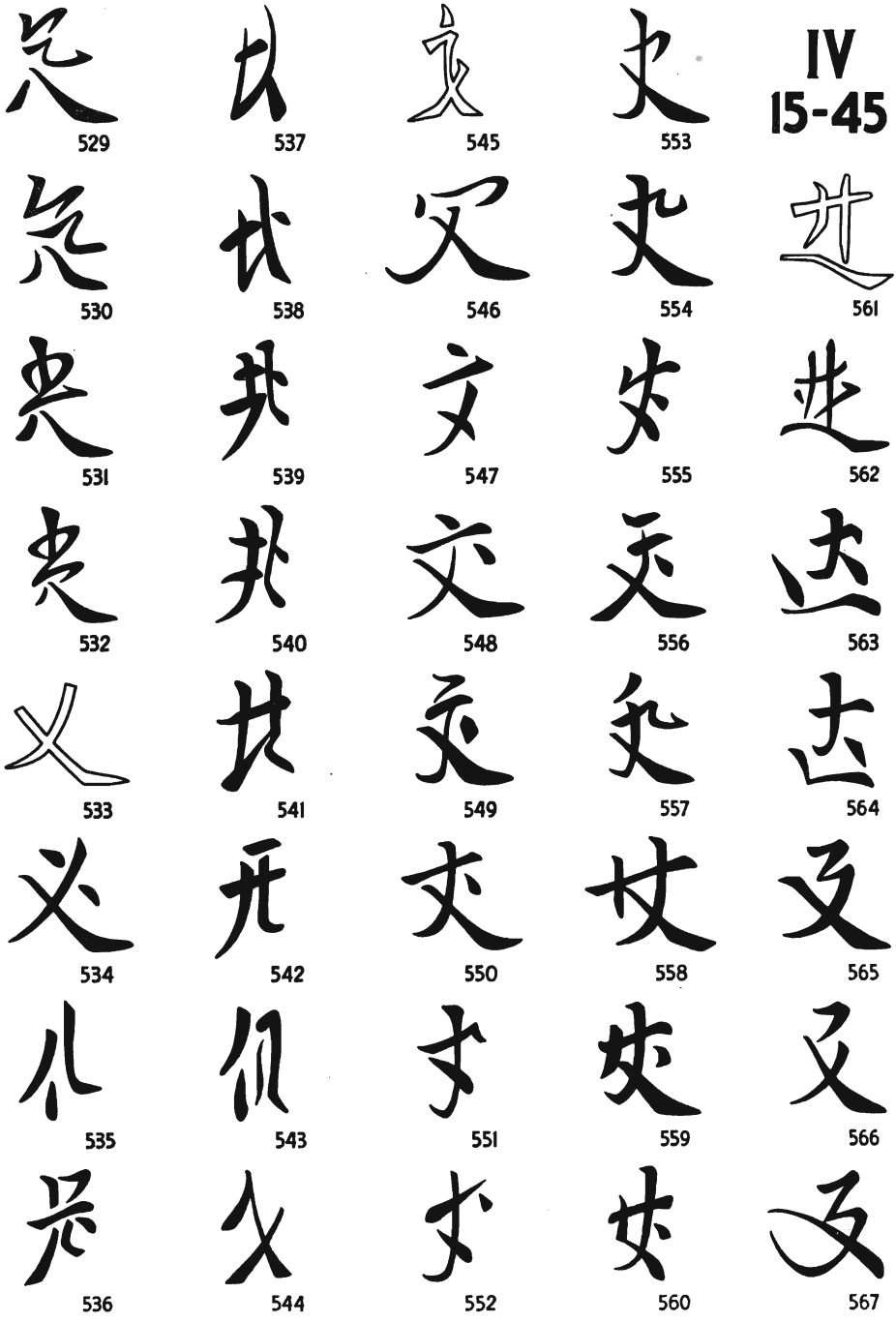

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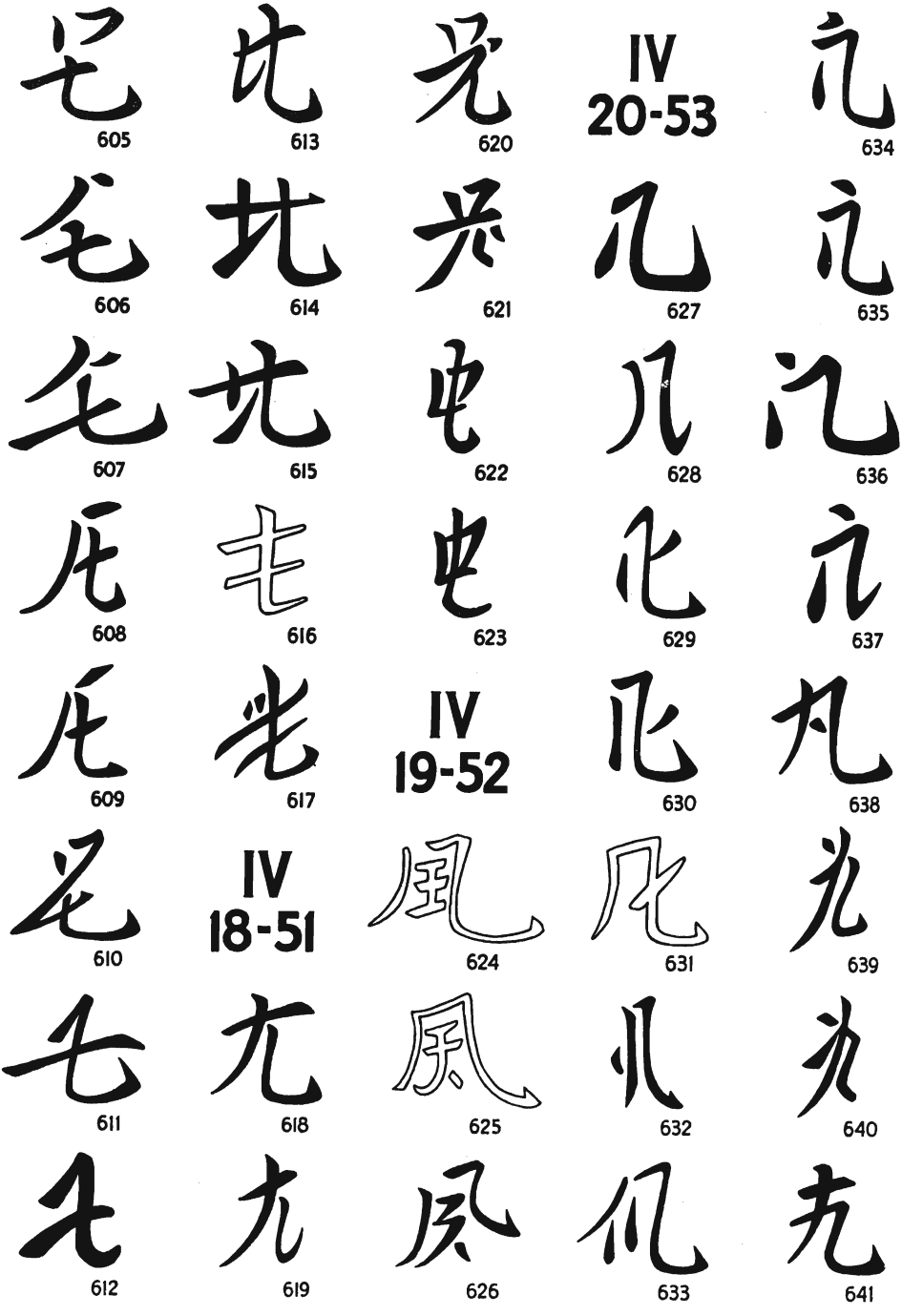

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