Philology of the Grasslands

Essays in Mongolic, Turkic, and Tungusic Studies

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CHAPTER 23

The Last-Words of Xiao Chala Xianggong in Khitan Script

Wu Yingzhe

The main task of the Khitan study is the interpretation of the scripts, which involves a comprehensive study on the form, pronunciation and meaning of the Khitan scripts. The interpretation of the Khitan native words is recognized as a difficult task in academic circles. Recently, with the emergence of fresh materials, work in this area has also made significant progress. This paper intends to interpret the 'last words' of the tomb owner, Xiao Chala Xianggong 蕭查剌相公, which appear in Line 11 to 12 of newly found *Epitaph of Xiao Chala Xianggong* (hereinafter referred as *Chala*), and the author hopes his study will supplement previous studies.

I On *Epitaph of Xiao Chala Xianggong* in Khitan Small Script

The Khitan version of *Chala* is made up of 27 lines with about 800 characters. According to the current interpretation, the date when the epitaph was carved is recognized as the 3rd year of the Tianqing 天慶 period [1113] during the reign of Emperor Tianzuo 天祚 of the Liao Dynasty. The author was Yelü Gu 耶律固 and the calligrapher who wrote in red ink was Pengzu 彭祖(?),[1] the youngest son of the tomb owner. The tomb owner Chala's courtesy name was Baisaben 擺撒本(?) and his Chinese name Xiao Min 蕭旼, the descendant of Xiao Aguzhi 蕭阿古只. His father is Xiao Taishan 蕭太山, whose epitaph has already been unearthed. The contents of *Chala* are complementary to both the *Epitaph of Xiao Taishan and Princess Yongqing*蕭太山與永清公主墓誌 and the *Epitaph of General Xianwu* (*Xiao Jushi*) 顯武將軍墓誌(蕭居士) and have great value in studying the Xiao family of the Liao Dynasty.

1 The pronunciation of the name can be reconstructed from the text, however, as there is no corresponding onomastic data in the Liaoshi, the question mark means that the Chinese characters here are speculated.

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The Chinese version of *Chala* is made up of 35 lines with over 1460 characters, the author was Yang Qiuwen 楊丘文, and the calligrapher who wrote in red ink was Tian Ji 田濟. Notably, a large number of records on historical activities of Xiao family, names of mountains and rivers, which have great significance in interpretation of the Khitan scripts and the study on Khitan Liao history appeared in the epigraph, like Lanling Mountain 蘭陵山 and Yangchang River 羊腸河. Although several names of the tomb owner are mentioned, the author called him Xianggong 相公 in the epigraph. Therefore, the epitaph is named *Epitaph of Xiao Chala Xianggong* in this paper.

The time and place of discovery, as well as the current location of this epitaph are unknown. Mr. Liu Fengzhu has described how Mr. Guo Yuhai from the Palace Museum offered him a rubbing of the epitaph for identification, further study, and publication in June 2014. The epitaph was carved on both sides, with Chinese on one side and Khitan on the other side; the inscription had been split into two. The epitaph is made from gray sandstone and is 96 cm in height, 100 cm in width, and 13 cm in thickness. Khitan and Chinese transcriptions of the epitaph were published by Mr. Liu Fengzhu at the Second International Conference on Khitan Studies in August 2014.[2] In the *Journal of Chifeng College* 2015, no. 1,[3] besides giving an interpretation of the content of the epitaph, Mr. Liu also published complete pictures of the epitaph, which has offered great assistance to the present study.

II The Last Words of Xiao Chala Xianggong

In Line 14 to 16 of the Chinese version, there are following details:

> In Tianqing 3 [1113], at the end of spring and the beginning of summer, he often said to the others, "One of my daughters has become imperial concubine, and two of my nephews have taken princesses as wives and become Fangshuai 方帥 [a third-ranked general]. I have been blessed to the utmost. I must depart." Waiting for the winter, he was going to depart for the palace to meet the Emperor with a memorial to the throne. Soon, on 6 August that autumn, he died without any illness at his place of office, at the age of 61.

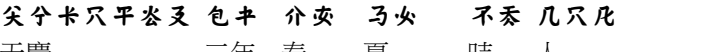
2 Liu 2014.

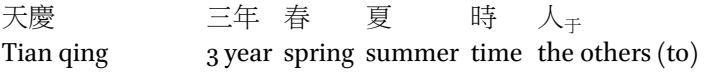
3 Liu 2015 pp. 6–11.

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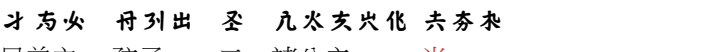
> 天慶三年，自春及夏，常語諸人曰：“吾一女作妃，兩猶子尚主，身起家為方帥，此吾之幸極矣，不去則不可”。俟其冬，即詣闕拜章面訣聖人以去。無何，以其季秋八月六日無疾終於治所，時年六十有一。

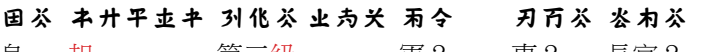
The words above in quotation marks were said by the tomb owner while he was alive, and are called “last words” in this paper. According to the author’s observation, this record is almost consistent with Line 11 to 13 of the Khitan version. Referring to the Chinese content, the meaning of some relevant Khitan words will be interpreted in what follows.

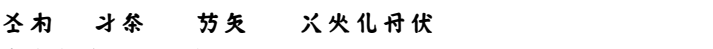

天慶　三年　春　夏　時　人于
Tian qing　3 year　spring　summer　time　the others (to)


常　語
often　said
In spring and summer Tianqing 3, (he) often said to the others.


吾　一　女　妃　成為
My　one　daughter　imperial concubine　became
One of my daughters became the imperial concubine.


兄弟之　孩子　二　諸公主　尚
Brothers’　children　two　princesses　took as wife
Two of my nephews took princesses as wives.

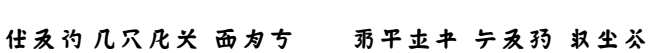

身　起　第三級　軍？　事？　長官？
Body　got up　third-ranked　military?　General?
Being tertiary military general

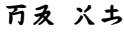

本人之　福　極於　至
My　blessing　extreme　achieved
I have been blessed to the utmost.

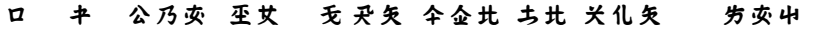
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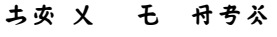

不 去 不 可
Not depart not allow
It is not allowed that I should not depart.


冬 宮於 在 章 拜
Winter palace in memorial to the throne submit
[He] went to the winter palace to submit a memorial to the throne


聖人從 面 見 去 俟
Emperor (with) face to face meet go wait
Waiting to go to meet the Emperor face to face


無何
Soon


該 年 秋 八月 五日於 病 無 治所 終
That year autumn August 5th (on) illness no office place died
In the autumn of that year, on August 5, (he) died without any illness at (his) place of office.


歲 六十 一 在
Age sixty one at
At the age of sixty one

The interpretation of the Khitan word in the square mark is either newly deciphered or further confirmed.

(1) mean 'often say':

The former is a frequently used word which has appeared 30 times in existing materials. Its meaning may relate to 'often' or 'always'. The latter means 'say, tell, talk'. In Line 34 to 35 of *Epitaph of Yelü Xiangwen*, there are following records.

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𐲘	𐲚𐲃	𐲃𐲙	𐲚𐲙	𐲖𐲁	𐲚𐲍	𐲘𐲁	𐲘𐲍
				書		曰	
				The Book		says	

𐲁	𐲄𐲙	𐲎𐲁	𐲚𐲗	𐲘𐲗	𐲉𐲍𐲁	𐲓𐲃𐲙𐲙	𐲀𐲃𐲗
人	生	百	歲	於	□	語	七十於至
Man	born	hundred	age	at	□	said	seventy at

𐲍𐲘	小	𐲍𐲙	
者	稀	謂	
the one	rare	said	

In the book (the title is unknown), it is said that people rarely live to seventy.

According to the previous studies, the sentence between 𐲘𐲁 and 𐲍𐲙 is a quotation "人生百歲， 七十者稀" (a man seldom lives to be seventy years old).[4] The words before 𐲘𐲁 represent the name of the book (or the title of the article), which is not yet known. The interpretation of it is as above.

(2) 𐲚𐲓𐲃 means 'to take princess as wife'

This word might have the same root as 𐲚𐲙 and 𐲚𐲖𐲉 which mean 'to take a princess as wife'. According to the record in *Chala* in Chinese, it reads: "His eldest son named Chuoli served concurrently as *shizhong* [attendant], married the daughter of Emperor Shizong, the Princess Supreme of Qinjin State named Hugudian" (長曰啜裡，兼侍中，尚世宗皇帝之女秦晉國大長公主曰胡骨典).

In Line 5 of *Chala* in Khitan, there are records as follow and their explanations:

𐲉𐲀	𐲖𐲇𐲍	𐲃𐲓𐲚	𐲁𐲘𐲉		𐲇𐲁𐲏	𐲁𐲉𐲀𐲁𐲇𐲏
大	留隱	啜裡	兼		侍中	駙馬都尉
The eldest	Liuyin	Chuoli	concurrently as		*Shizhong*	*Fumaduwei*

[His] eldest son named Liuyin Chuoli served concurrently as *shizhong* [attendant] and *fuma-duwei* [commandant-escort].

𐲉𐲙𐲙	𐲁𐲋	𐲖𐲗𐲃	𐲍𐲁	𐲘𐲁	𐲘𐲙𐲉	𐲚𐲖𐲉
世宗	皇帝之	女	胡骨典	公主		尚
Shi zong	Emperor's	daughter	Hugudian	princess		marry

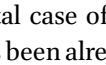
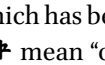
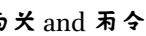
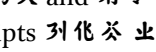
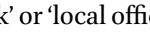
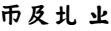
(He) married Emperor Shizong's daughter Pricess Hugudian.

4 Chen 1992 p. 1698.

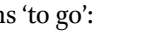
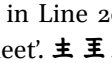
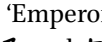
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 here has no genitive meaning, but is the third-person possessive category. Through the explanation, , , are interpreted as 'to take princess as wife' and they are verbs.

(3) mean 'origin, birth':

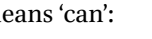
 is the instrumental case of the word  'body', whose beginning graph means 'body' which has been already deciphered. Combined with ,  mean "origin, birth".  has already been deciphered to mean 'the third', but the meanings of  and  are unknown up to now. As "Fangshuai" in the Chinese version means 'third-ranked military chief', the meaning of  and  can be interpreted as 'rank' and 'military'. Therefore, Khitan scripts  may mean 'the third-ranked military'. The scripts  in Line 10 of *Xiao Dilu* 蕭敵魯 mean 'at the third-rank' or 'local official'.  and  have the same meaning, for example,  in Line 19 of *Xiao Jushi* 蕭居士 mean 'to the fifth-rank'; it is not certain what kind of official this may be. At the same time,  may mean 'military official' which still need to be further examined.

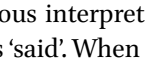
(4)  means 'to go':

 in Line 20 of *Epitaph of the Prince of Liangguo* 梁國王墓誌 mean 'to go to meet'.  in Line 31 of *Epitaph of Yelü Renxian* 耶律仁先 mean 'Emperor □ military go'. Its inflected forms are: , , ,  and  etc., all of which mean 'to go' with different grammatical meanings. According to the pronunciation of the word 'to go' in Middle Mongolian,  may be tentatively reconstructed as "od".

(5) means 'can':

Its meaning maybe confirmed by other materials, for example:

There is a sentence  in Line 33 of *Yelü Nu* 耶律奴. According to the previous interpretation, mean 'a man of noble character', and  means 'said'. When  is interpreted as 'can', the whole sentence maybe interpreted as '(He) can be said to be a man of noble character'.

There is another sentence  in Line 35 of *Epitaph of Yelü Renxian*. The former four words mean 'Song', 'Prince', 'absent' and 'not' which has been interpreted by other scholars and the last word  is an auxiliary verb shown the condition. When  is interpreted

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as 'can', the whole sentence will be interpreted as 'It cannot be allowed for the Prince of Song to not be there.' This is a double negative sentence. 𘰀𘰾𘰴𘰽 𘰼𘰺𘰀 in *Chala* is also a double negative sentence which means 'It is not allowed that (I) should not depart', which can be confirmed in *Chala* in Chinese. As is well known, 𘰽 was corrected in carving to read 𘰀 twice in Line 13 and Line 35 of *Daozong Aice* 道宗哀冊, which indicates that the two words have similar meanings. There are two negative modal particles in *The Secret History of Mongols*: 兀禄 (ülü) and 额薛 (ese).[5] The former one means 'no, not', the latter one 'no, non-, not', from which the pronunciation of 𘰀 and 𘰽 are presumed as "es" and "ul" respectively.

(6) 𘰇𘰺𘰲 𘰶𘰻𘰿𘰾 𘰾𘰺𘰀 𘰼𘰿𘰴 means 'to meet in person':

The first word 𘰇𘰺𘰲 means 'to meet, face to face'. For example, in Line 23 of *Epitaph of Yelü Renxian*, there is the following passage, which can be interpreted as follows:

父冬丰	主王	帅公	几夬	西为方	冈关	只谷
清寧	皇帝	官	誥	當面	制	給
Qingning	Emperor	Imperial	decree	face to face	made	give

Emperor Qingning issued him an imperial decree in person.

The Khitan word 𘰶𘰻𘰿𘰾 is pronounced as "ʤɑu-ul-ɣɑ-ɑi", which is similar with the Mongolian word "ʤɔlgɔx" (to meet). Combined with the context, the meaning of the word can be presumed as 'to meet in person'. 𘰾𘰴𘰀 is the inflected form of the word 𘰾𘰴 meaning 'to go' which is mentioned above. The last word 𘰼𘰿𘰴 may be the counterpart of 俟 'to wait'.

(7) 𘰇𘰽 means 'be', firstly with the meaning of a copula and secondly as a verb of existence:

According to the researches of Mongolian linguists, there are a series of verbs with the roots of "ɑ-" and "bu-" in the Middle Mongolian. The former one is with the meaning of 'be' (existence) and the latter one means 'be' (copula), whose derivative meanings are very rich. Those words very rarely appear in modern Mongolian. The word 𘰇𘰽 is pronounced as "ɑdʒɑ",[6] which may be

5 Li 2012 pp. 40–43

6 Ji 1994.

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cognate with those "ɑ-" verbs of Middle Mongolian, which also means 'be' with the meaning of existence and copula.

(8) 𘥈𘤪 means 'article, book':

This word has already been deciphered to mean 'letter; character, script'. By the usage here, it can be concluded that the word also means 'article' or 'book'. In Mongolian, 'character', 'book' and 'article' are all pronounced as "bitʃig", from which the pronunciation of 𘥈 may be presumed as "bitʃ".

(9) 𘤧𘤫𘤬𘤭𘤮 means 'to submit':

For the meaning of this word, there are different interpretations as 'to confer',[7] 'to appoint'.[8] According to the interpretation of this epitaph, the exact meaning of the word can be concluded as 'to submit'.

(10) 𘤮𘤭𘤬𘤱𘤰𘤲 mean 'soon':

There is 𘤮𘤭𘤬𘤱𘤲 𘤳𘤴𘤵𘤬𘤲𘤶𘤷𘤸𘤹𘤺 in Line 12 to 13 of *Epitaph of the Late Yelüs'*. Compared with the word 𘤬𘤱𘤰𘤲, the second word 𘤬𘤱𘤲 is only short of one letter 𘤱 "ou", which has the same meaning with 𘤮𘤭𘤬𘤱𘤰𘤲, means "soon". 𘤮𘤭 pronounced as "ju", which is just matched with "ju" meant "what" in Mongolian.

(11) 𘤧𘤫𘤻 𘤱𘤻 mean 'no illness':

Through the interpretation of *Langjun Xingji*, previous researchers have deciphered the 𘤬 𘤱𘤼 in the first line to mean 'no matter', which corresponds with 无事 in the Chinese version. Obviously, 𘤱𘤻 and 𘤱𘤼 are words with same root, so it is definite that 𘤧𘤫𘤻 𘤱𘤻 means 'no illness'.

(12) 𘤽𘤾𘤿 means 'at working place':

This word appears at the end of Line 12 of the present epitaph, of which the form of the third character or letter needs to be further examined. 𘤽𘤾 means 'name' which has been already interpreted. According to the context of the present epitaph, this word may also mean 'place of office'.

7 Chinggeltai et al. 1985 pp. 125.

8 Ji 2012 pp. 397.

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(13) 𘲍𘲌𘲏 means 'be':

This word is the past tense of 'be'.

III Conclusion

Chala which is a bilingual inscription in Khitan and Chinese offers rich possibilities for the decipherment of original Khitan words. Firstly, referring to the Chinese version and those Khitan words already deciphered, those words which have not been explored yet have been deciphered. Secondly, through this bilingual record, the root meanings and their derivations for some Khitan words can be examined. Thirdly, this record has indispensable value for research on Khitan syntax, especially the double negative sentence structure. Finally, the content of this epitaph contains a certain mysterious color, with some mythical elements, so it may offer some materials for the studies on primitive religion of the Khitans.

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