

OLD TURKIC KINSHIP TERMS IN EARLY MIDDLE CHINESE

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Abstract:

In this article we attempt to demonstrate that most of the new kinship terms in Middle Chinese denoting elder members of the family that first appeared in the Tang period replacing the Old Chinese terms (and some of them still being the main colloquial terms in Mandarin) come from Old Turkic, or in one case ultimately from para-Mongolic, but via Turkic. We perceive this discovery as a major blow to the Chinese linguistic nationalism that denies the existence of foreign loanwords in Chinese. It also demonstrates that the Northern Steppe 'barbarians' were not always on the receiving side in their interaction with the Chinese, and, as a matter of fact, managed to influence Chinese language and society to the great extent.

Key words: *Old Turkic, Middle Chinese, Old Chinese, para-Mongolic, kinship terms, cultural influence.*

Eski Orta Çincedeki Eski Türkçe Akrabalık Terimleri

Özet:

Bu makalede Tang Hanedanlığı zamanında Eski Çince biçimlerinin yerini alan (ve bugün hâlâ Mandarin Çincesinde kullanımda olan) ailedeki yaşlı bireyler için kullanılan Orta Çince birçok akrabalık kavramının Eski Türkçeden ya da çok sıra dışı bir şekilde para-Moğolcadan en nihayetinde Türkçe bir kökenden geldiğini göstermeye çalışmaktayız. Bu bulguyu Çincedeki her türlü ödünçlemeyi reddeden ırkçı Çin dil bilimi anlayışına ağr bir darbe olarak nitelendiriyoruz. Üstelik bu bulgu, kuzey step "barbarlarının" Çinlilerle kurdukları etkileşimlerde her zaman alıcı taraf olmadığını ve aslında Çin dilini ve toplumunu büyük ölçüde etkilediklerini de

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*göstermektedir.**Anahtar kelimeler:** Eski Türkçe, Orta Çin, Eski Çin, para-Moğol, akrabalık terimleri, kültürel etki.*

During the early Tang period, several new terms for elder, honored family relations entered the Tang lexicon. As the following chart demonstrates, these terms co-existed with the old native terms well attested from Old Chinese.

Chart 1: Old and new kinship terms in Early Middle Chinese

Gloss	Old term	New term
elder brother	兄 EMC xjwɐŋ	哥 EMC kâ
mother	母 EMC məu^{B}	娘, 孃 EMC ȵjaŋ
father	父 EMC bju^{B}	爹 EMC ʈjæ
grandfather, father	−−	爺 EMC yæ
elder sister	姊 EMC tsi^{B}	姐 EMC tsjæ^{B}

Besides being attested in Old Chinese (except one), the old terms are also believed to have Sino-Tibetan provenance, or to be old loans from Austro-Asiatic:

兄 'elder brother' EMC *xjwɐŋ* < OC *hwaŋ, cf. possibly PLB *ʔwyik 'elder sibling/cousin' (Schuessler 2007: 541).

母 'mother' EMC *məu^{B}* < OC *məʔ, cf. PTB *ma 'mother' > WT *ʔa-ma*, Chepang *ma* (Schuessler 2007" 392).

父 'father' EMC *bju^{B}* < OC *baʔ, cf. PTB *pa 'father' > WT *pha*, WB *ə-bha^{C}*, Lushai *pa^{F}* (Schuessler 2007: 243).

姊 'elder sister' EMC *tsi^{B}* < OC *tsiʔ < Proto-Monic *kmciiʔ (Schuessler 2007: 633).

But the picture changes drastically with new terms. Such a seminal work as Schuessler's Etymological Dictionary of Old Chinese (2007) simply does not include them. It seems that these terms just appeared out of nowhere in the early Tang texts. It's hard to prove any pre-Tang source uses them. The 'Ballad of Mulan' (木蘭辭) does, but whether it predates the seventh century remains unclear. According to Guo Mao-qing (郭茂倩), *Yuefu shi ji* (樂府詩集) 35.373, Chen (陳) dynasty monk Zhi-jiang (智匠), and *Gujin yue lu* (古今樂錄) mentioned this song. If so, it dates from no later than the mid-6th century. None of these terms find mention in *Yan zhi jia xun* (顏氏家訓 ~589 AD) by Yan Zhi-tui (顏之推) or in *Luoyang qielan ji* (洛陽伽藍記 ~547AD) by Yang Xuan-zhi (楊衒之).

Let us first survey some examples in Chinese texts:

哥 **(EMC *kâ*) 'elder brother'**

醉後愛稱嬌姐姐, 夜來留得好**哥哥**

Once she is drunk, she loves to call out: sweet elder sister. During the night, she keeps her sweet **elder brother** (Huan xi sha)

玄宗命之同榻而坐. 玄宗泣曰**四哥**仁孝

Calling [Wang Ju (王琚)] over to his couch, Xuanzong wept: "**Fourth Elder brother** was kind and filial…" (Jiu Tang shu 106.3249)

四哥 'Fourth Elder brother is Xuanzong's father, Tang emperor Ruizong (睿宗), or Li Dan (李旦). Xuanzong adopts a tone clearly familiar and informal, speaking of family matters. But no 'Han Chinese' concerned with filial piety would refer to his deceased father as 'Elder brother'; one wants to see in this reference an Inner Asian type of family dynamic, in which the distinction among fathers, uncles, and other male elders in the lineage has less weight. See Barfield (1989: 25, 113, 133) on lateral succession and fraternal cohorts.

再拜跪奠大**哥**于座前

[I] again kow-tow to my Big **Elder Brother** before his seat (Bo Ju-yi's Ji fu Liang da xiong wen)

娘**,** 孃 **(EMC *ŋjaŋ*) 'mother'**

王曰阿**孃**不與我一好婦女, 亦是可恨

The prince said: **Mother** wouldn't get me a spiffy wife; what a drag! (Bei shi 71.2461), (Sui shu 45.1233)

Yang Yong (d. 604 AD), originally the Heir-Apparent to the first Sui emperor, got himself in trouble for outlandish behavior, in particular involving a doted concubine and mistreated wife. Aided by a considerable amount of rumor spread by powerful enemies, Yong's crimes led to his demotion in 600 AD (see Wright 1978: 73-4, 122, 161-2).

阿爺惡見伊, 阿孃嫌不悅

Father hates to see him; **mother**'s glum and down (poem #241 from 303 poems by Hanshan)

木蘭辭: 旦辭爺**娘**去, 暮宿黃河邊.

At dawn I said goodbye to father and **mother**; At dusk I slept by the Yellow River's shore (Mulan ci)

爹 **(EMC *tjae*) 'father'**

詔徵以本號還朝.民為之歌曰始興王,民之爹,徒可反赴人急,如水火

He was summoned with his original rank back to court. The people sang of him:

Prince Shixing; **father** to his folk.

A fellow who'd run to his folks' distress—Like to fire or flood (Liang shu 22.354)

Prince Shixing was 11th son of Liang Taizu, and was known as a great benefactor to his people.

爺 **(EMC *yae*) 'father, grandfather'**

阿爺惡見伊, 阿孃嫌不悅

Father hates to see him; mother's glum and down (poem #241 from 303 poems by Hanshan)

旦辭爺娘去, 暮宿黃河邊.

At dawn I said goodbye to **father** and mother; At dusk I slept by the Yellow River's shore (Mulan ci)

肅宗在春宮,呼為二兄,諸王公主皆阿翁,駙馬輩呼為爺

Suzong in his Spring Palace called [Gao] "Second Elder Brother"; the princes and dukes all called him "Father"; Suzong's heirs called him "**Grandfather**" (Jiu Tang shu 184.4758)

Gao is Gao Lishi (高力士, 684–762 AD).

前世吾不復憶, 唯阿爺名摽, 且在朔州, 伊那得來噉是

I don't recall my ancestors, but **Grandfather**'s name was Biao. Back in Shuozhou, how could he get to chomp on *this*? (Nan shi 80.2012).

For Hou Jing (侯景), a northern mercenary of at least partly Xianbei ancestry, to speak like this fits the preconceptions of Tang historians.

姐 **(EMC tsjæ^{B}) 'elder sister'**

李白詩, 寄東魯二稚子: 小兒名伯禽與姐亦齊肩

My (lit.: little child's) name is Bo-qin. [My height] is still equal to [my] **elder sister**'s shoulders (Li Bo's poem Ji Dong Lu er zhi zi)

But it is highly unlikely that such frequently used terms would be just coined by a strange of whim of EMC speakers. Where then all these new terms came from?

We believe that these new terms all have counterparts in Old Turkic, raising the likelihood that either Tang people borrowed them from the Turks, or that the words have their source in some earlier language. A comparison of new terms with their Old Turkic counterparts is provided in the chart 2 below:

Chart 2: Comparison of new Chinese and Old Turkic kinship terms

EMC gloss	Character	EMC phonetics	OT gloss	OT word	OT phon/ morph
elder brother	哥	kâ	elder brother	aqa	aka
mother	娘	ȵjaŋ	your mother	anaŋ	a n a - ŋ ‘mother-2psp’
father	爹	ʈjæ	father	ata	ata
grandfather, father	爺	yæ	relative	uya	uya
elder sister	姐	tsjæ^{B}	elder sister	ečä	ečä

Note that OT dental stop /t/ and dental nasal /n/ are reflected in EMC as retroflexes /ʈ/ and /ȵ/. Provided the likelihood that OT dentals were apicals, while EMC non-retroflex dentals were dorsals, it is no wonder that they were perceived as retroflexes: one should remember that speakers of Indo-Aryan languages normally render English apicals as retroflexes in their English speech. The syllable *ʈja does not exist in EMC, therefore it is expected that OT /ta/ would be rendered as EMC / ʈjæ/. The substitution of EMC /yæ/ for OT /ya/ in EMC *yae* ‘grandfather, father’ < OT *uya* ‘relative’ is more difficult to explain: given the discrepancy in semantics, this etymology may be eventually abandoned. All etymologies imply the loss of an initial syllable in process of borrowing from OT to EMC: this is to be expected in a monosyllabic language that borrows orally from a polysyllabic language.

Let us survey the attestations of OT words and try to solve some potential problems.

OT *aqa* ‘elder brother’

There are two problems with deriving EMC *kâ* (哥) ‘elder brother’ directly from OT *aqa* ‘id.’ First, it seems that all attestations of this word in OT do not predate 13th c.:[1]

1 Consequently this word did not found its way into Clauson (1972).

mẹn Tïtsu **aqam** arčuq bilä aytïšïp

I, Tïtsu, having agreed with **my elder brother** Arčuq (MO 3.2)

aqalarnï inilärni čarlap kẹlṭürdi

[Oγuz-qaγan called up **his** [sons], **elder brothers**, [and] younger brothers (ON 37.7)

aqa ini tegiṭlär

princes -- **elder brothers** and younger brothers (FT 3.15)

Therefore, it is quite possible that the late provenance of OT *aqa* 'elder brother' indicates that it was borrowed itself from Mongolian: MM *aqa* (阿中合) 'id.' (MNT 18.3 etc.), Preclassical WM *aqa* (Aruγ 18, etc.) (Tumurtogoo 2006: 301). However, it is clear that EMC *kâ* (哥) 'elder brother' could not be borrowed from 13th c. Mongolian. Second, as Fang Zhuangyou (1930) long ago noted, Chinese sources transliterate Xianbei 'elder brother' as 啊干 (EMC *ʔa-kan*) as early as the fifth century. See especially *Song shu* 96 (a chapter on Xianbei and Tuyuhun [鮮卑吐谷浑]). Xianbei is a para-Mongolic language, as was amply demonstrated by various researchers (Shiratori 1912, 1913), (Ligeti 1970), (Doerfer 1992, 1993), (Janhunen 2003), (Vovin 2007), in spite of some unsuccessful attempts to prove its affiliation with Turkic (Pelliot 1925: 255), (Boodberg 1936), (Bazin 1950), (Chen 2005). Nevertheless, EMC *kâ* (哥) 'elder brother' cannot be a direct loan from Xianbei 啊干 (EMC *ʔa-kan*) 'id.', because the latter includes final *-n*. It is not a 'fleeting' *-n* of Mongolic, because it does not reveal itself in any other Mongolic languages (Sun 1990: 126). In addition, since the syllable /kan/ does exist in EMC, we would expect that Xianbei 啊干 (EMC *ʔa-kan*) would be borrowed into EMC as *kan*, and not *kâ*. The scenario that we would like to suggest is the following: while Mongolian *aqa* 'elder brother' and Xianbei 啊干 (EMC *ʔa-kan*) 'id.' are in all likelihood cognates, Old Turkic *aqa* 'elder brother' was borrowed from Xianbei啊干 (EMC *ʔa-kan*) 'id.' Consequently, EMC *kâ* 'elder brother', was borrowed from Turkic *aqa* 'id.' Although it still leaves the late attestation in Turkic unexplained, it allows us to account for phonology much better. This explanation has also further advantage that puts EMC *kâ* 'elder brother' in line with other kinship term loanwords from Turkic, without making it a stranded para-Mongolic loan.

OT *ana* 'mother'

Clauson remarked that Old Turkic *ata* 'father' and *ana* 'mother' "first appear instead of *qaŋ* ['father'] and *ö:g* ['mother'] in Uyğ. Bud. [texts],

but are still rare in that language" (1972: 40), and that *ö:g* "[is] the oldest Turkish word with this sense. … replaced by *ana*" (1972: 99). More on OT *ata* 'father' below, but from the point of view of comparative linguistics, *ana* 'mother' must be at least as old as *ö:g*, because it is attested in almost all Turkic languages (Sevortian 1974: 278-79), while *ö:g* is confined to OT and to southwestern Anatolian dialects (Clauson 1972: 99). In any case, EMC *ŋjaŋ* represents a very interesting case: it is a loanword that incorporates apparent Old Turkic morphology: second person singular possessive suffix *-ŋ*, which makes its Turkic origin practically undeniable.

Let us look at the attestations of OT *ana* 'mother':

yarlïqančučï kөŋüllüg **ana** ata

parents (lit.: **mother** [and] father) with compassionate hearts (SUV 551.23)

kęnč **anasïn** ęmdi

child sucked [the breast of] **his mother** (MK 1.69)

ata bir **ana** bir uyalar bu xalq

these people [are] relatives, [they have] the same (lit.: one) father [and] **mother** (AHIU 291)

OT *ata* 'father'

Contrary to Clauson (1972: 40) (see above), OT *ata* 'father' does appear in pretty early Ongin inscription (732 AD). However, it must be noted that it largely depends on interpretation. We follow here Tekin (1968: 254-55, 291-92) and Tekin (2003: 224), cf., e.g. Orkun (1936: 128) and Malov (1959: 8-10) who offer completely different interpretations.

[El]-etmiş **atam**

my father El-etmiš (O 4)

bilgä **atačïm**

My beloved wise **father**! (O 12)

atačïm bilgä **atačïm**

My beloved father! My beloved wise father! (Os 3-4)

In spite of appearing only in one Runic inscription, OT *ata* (or its diminutive form *atač*) is clearly not a *hapax legomenon*. User provides in her excellent concordance of Orkhon and Uighur Runic inscriptions three other examples of *atač* 'beloved father' in the same Ongin inscription (main and supplementary) (2009: 248). One of them (Os 1-2) probably should not be taken into consideration, as it represents a reconstruction of the text, and not the actual attestation. Another example: *ülg(ä)n (a)t(a)-ka* 'to the great father' (O 11), is interpreted by Tekin as *ülg(ä)n (a)t-ka* 'to the great name' (Tekin 1968: 256, 292; 2003: 224), so it is open to interpretation, but it seems to us that User's interpretation better fits the text. The last User's example: *(a)t(a) čïm öldi* 'my beloved father died' is found in the line seven that is indicated as a lacunae in Tekin's reading (1968: 256), and is absent in Tekin (2003: 225), but is clearly present in Malov's facsimile: 𐰋𐰇𐰾 : 𐰀𐰃𐰢 (1959: insert between pp. 8 and 9), so User is undeniably right.

OT *uya* 'relative'

Clauson defines this word as "a term of relationship of uncertain significance, in some context apparently 'blood brother'" (1972: 267). This discrepancy in meaning as well the phonetic problem mentioned above make a comparison with EMC *yae* 'grandfather, father' less reliable than in other cases. Note also that there is no EMC new term meaning 'grandmother' that can be traced to Old Turkic, while in four other cases we have clear parallelism: 'father' : 'mother' and 'elder brother' : 'elder sister'. The OT attestations:

ẹlig **uyamɣa** adïrïltïm

I become separated **from my** fifty **relatives** (YE 15.3)

tavar üčün täŋri ed̲lämäd̲ip **uya qadaš** oɣlïnï čïnla boɣar

without thinking about God, [he] will really strangle sons of his **relatives** (MK 1.85)

ata bir ana bir **uyalar** bu xalq

these people [are] **relatives**, [they have] the same (lit.: one) father [and] mother (AHIU 291)

OT *ečä* 'elder sister'

The only OT attestation is *ečä* 'elder sister' (MK 1.86), but also survives as independent word *ece* 'elder sister' in Anatolian dialects (Clauson 1972: 20).

The large influence of "Turks" and other central Asian cultures on the Tang has found frequent documentation in standard sources, so we might be tempted to let the matter rest, as another kind of "Turkophilia." But a second glance makes us wonder. The first *Turkic* Empire did not appear on "Chinese" borders till 550. Until the early Tang, "Chinese" rulers continued to see them as uncouth barbarians. Only with Taizong do we to see Turkish influence on fighting style[2] and sworn bonds of brotherhood with Turkish khans. The "Turkophilia" hypothesis has a hard time explaining how these kin-terms became so popular and prevalent.

Therefore, in a cultural and historical context, we have a problem on our hands: the Turks were enemies, and relatively new enemies for the Chinese. It is much easier to imagine these terms coming from the Xianbei; they had made their presence known on Chinese borders since the late Han and had ruled (all or most of) northern China since 386. The Tang founding family — like most elite military lineages in northern China — had intermarried with Xianbei aristocracy, particularly with the Yuwen clan. It seems quite plausible that bilingual young members of these mestizo clans might refer to elder relatives by more "native" words. This often happens — consider that "bubbe" and "zayde" (Yiddish for 'grandma' and 'grandpa') remain popular in English-speaking New York households, when the words for grandson and granddaughter have long passed out of common parlance.

But the Xianbei language is not Turkic, and with the exception of the word for 'elder brother' discussed above, we have no evidence from the meager sources on the Xianbei language that these were indeed the Xianbei kinship. Nor these kinship terms have cognates in any other Mongolic languages, including para-Mongolic Khitan:

Chart 3: Comparison of Khitan and Old Turkic kinship terms

gloss	**Khitan word[3]**	**OT word**
elder brother	--	aqa
mother	mó	ana
father	ai	ata
relative	c.i.is	uya
elder sister	au	ečä

For all practical purposes, these terms are Turkic. Is it possible that both EMC and OT borrowed Xianbei kinship terms? Theoretically, yes, but we may never know. We should assume for the moment that the words we have

2 See Lewis (2009: 150), citing Graff (2002: 175-6).

3 Khitan forms are cited according to Kane (2009).

discussed here are OT loans in EMC, although it might go against what we know about the cultural socio-political history.

Abbreviations of languages

EMC	Early Middle Chinese
MM	Middle Mongolian
OC	Old Chinese
OT	Old Turkic
PLB	Proto-Lolo-Burmese
PTB	Proto-Tibeto-Burman
WB	Written Burmese
WM	Written Mongolian
WT	Written Tibetan

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Jiu Tang shu 舊唐書, 945 AD

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Li Bo's poem Ji Dong Lu er zhi zi 李白詩, 寄東魯二稚子, 8th c.

Liang shu 梁書, 636 AD

Mulan ci 木蘭辭, mid-6th -- 7th c.?

Nan shi 南史, 643-659 AD

Song shu 宋書, first redaction before 557 AD

Sui shu 隋書, 636 AD

Mongolian

Aruγ: Mongolian Inscription of Prince Aruγ, 1340 AD

MNT: Mongol Niuča Tobča'an, 1264 (?) AD

Turkic

AHIU: ’Atäbätu ’l-ḥaqājïq, Istanbul manuscript in Uighur script (1480 AD), 13th c.

FTU: ighur law documents from Turfan

MK: *Divānu luγāt-it-turk* by Maḥmūd al-Kāšγarī, 1072-74 AD

MO: Uighur law documents from S. F. Oldenburg’s expedition in LO IVAN, 13th c.

O: Ongin inscription, 732 AD

ON: Oγuz-nāme, 13th c.

Os: Ongin supplementary inscription, 732 AD

SUV: Suvarṇaprabhāsa (Altun jaruq), 10th (?) c.

YE: Yeniseian inscriptions, 9th-10th c.

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