East-West Borrowings via the Silk Road of Textile Terms

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The Silk Road, which began operating more than two thousand years ago, constituted certainly for many centuries the main cultural and linguistic highway between peoples of the East and peoples of the West, and to an even greater extent between the peoples of the East or West and those living along the Silk Road in Central Asia. This is reflected by the many loan words transmitted along the Silk Road from one end to the other, especially those connected with the textile trade.

One such term, occurring several times in an Uighur manuscript from eastern Turkestan of approximately the 12th century, is *küküllüg torqu*, meaning "cocoon silk, raw silk". The word *kükül* or *kügül* in Uighur script must correspond to *gügül*, "cocoon of the silk worm", a form attested in Ottoman Turkish texts from the 15th century on, which is still used in some dialects of modern Turkey. The Ottoman *gügül* was no doubt borrowed from the Byzantine Greek κουκουλλιον, which was in turn a borrowing from the Latin *cucullus*, meaning "hood" or "cone", from which also came the French word of similar meaning *cagoule*.[1] Thus it would seem that the Latin word *cucullus* ("hood", "cone") had travelled from Europe across much of Asia, when it reached in about the 12th century the eastern end of the Silk Road, where it was known as *kükül*, "cocoon" in Central Asian Uighur.

Even more remarkable, however, is the fact that in Chinese texts of the 2nd or 3rd centuries what appears to be the same word is attested in the form ju-jue 句決 , Early Middle Chinese **kuă-kwɛt*,[2] which must transcribe Mongolian *kökül*, as the name used by the Wu-huan, 烏桓 (Early Chinese: **ʔa-ɣwan*) or Avars then living in the region of Mongolia to designate a head-dress

decorated with gold and precious stones worn by married women. This was no doubt a tall horned cap, the characteristic Mongolian woman's head-dress, which is also described in a Chinese account of the Hephthalites. Later it became fashionable throughout Eurasia following the conquests of Chinggis Khan: in Europe, where it was known as the *hennin*, and in China, where it was known as *gu-gu* 姑姑 (Early Mandarin: **ku-ku*), transcribing the original Mongol word.[3] Thus it seems that already in the 2nd century A.D., what is apparently the same term, represented by Latin *cucullus* and Proto-Mongolian *kükül*, was used to designate a hood or tall cone-like cap in regions as far removed as Mongolia and Italy, well beyond the eastern and western ends of the Silk Road.

Returning now to the expression *kükülläg torqu*, "cocoon" or "raw silk", *torqu* is, of course, the Old Turkish word for "silk". As silk was a purely Chinese product, one might expect the Turkish word for silk to be a loan word from Chinese, but there seems to be not the slightest resemblance between *torqu* and any Chinese word for silk. One should perhaps consider the possibility, therefore, that the early Turks, when they first came into contact with this foreign product, called it by a name that they made up from existing Turkish elements. One might suppose, for instance, that the Turkish term *torqu*, "silk", originally represented an augmented or amplified form of the word *tor*, "net" or "silk net", to which was added the augmentative or intensive nominal suffix *-qu/-γu*.

Be that as it may, it seems to me, at any rate, quite likely, as has been put forward by several eminent linguists,[4] that the Old Turkish word *torqu*, "silk", was borrowed, during the Middle Ages, into several European languages. First of all, the term represented by Finnish *turku*, Swedish *torg*, Danish and Norwegian *torv*, all meaning "market place", is probably none other than the Turkish word for silk, *torqu*, brought back from the Central Asian Silk Road by the Vikings, who, during the period between the years 600 to 1,100, travelled through Russia as far as Khnrezmia on the Amu Darya. The meaning of *torqu* must have evolved from that of merely "silk" to that of "dry goods" in general, and then to "merchandise" and "market place".

A similar semantic evolution seems to be reflected in another instance of the borrowing of Turkish *torqu* into European lan-

guages, that of the words *drug* and *drugget* in English, *drogue* and *droguet* in French, as well as Italian and Spanish *droga, droghetto, droguete,* etc., attested from the 14th century on. The Russian word *dorogi* meaning "striped silken fabrics", generally from Persia, may have served as intermediary between Turkish *torqu, toryu, torya,* etc. and the European forms *drug, drogue, droga,* etc. English *drug* or French *drogue,* of which the older attested meanings are "a commodity of little value, for which there is no demand (cf. "a drug on the market")", and "all ingredients used in chemistry, pharmacy, dyeing and the arts generally", no doubt originally designated certain textiles, as do their derivatives, *drugget* or *droguet,* designating in England formerly a kind of cloth made with mixed wool and silk used for wearing apparel, but now a coarse woollen stuff used for floor-coverings, table-clothes, etc., and in France also a kind of silk stuff with a design.

Another word originally meaning "silk", but which later came to designate fabrics of lesser value, is *serge,* which passed from French to English and other languages. The word *sarge* or *serge* is attested from about the 12th century on, first of all no doubt as the name of a kind of silk, then as a kind woollen fabric used before the 16th century chiefly as a material for hangings, bed-covers, and the like, and now as a very durable twilled cloth of worsted used for clothing. *Sarge* or *serge* derives from popular Latin **sārica* = classical Latin *sērica,* meaning "silk".[5] As for Latin *sērica,* "silk", it was borrowed from the Greek *σηρικον* of the same meaning, just as Latin *Seres,* "China", was borrowed from Greek *Σηρες*. Now the Greek name *Σηρες* for China, which probably goes back to at least the 2nd century B.C., must have come from the name of the great Qin 秦 dynasty that founded the first Chinese Empire towards the end of the 3rd century B.C.[6] Indeed, at the time when the Chinese name Qin 秦 (Early Middle Chinese: **dzin* < **dzēn*), was borrowed into Greek as *Σηρες*, the final *-n* of Chinese must have sounded very much like the final *-r* of other languages, for it was then used regularly in Chinese to transcribe a foreign *-r*. The word *σηρικον* may, however, not have been a derivative of Greek *Σηρες*, but taken over directly from a word meaning "silk", based of course on the same word for China, in a Central Asian language such as Tokharian.[7] The English word *"silk"* seems also to derive

ultimately from a word such as *sērica* or *σηρικον*, likewise based on the name for China from Qin 秦. The Old English forms *sioluc, seoluc,* for earlier **siluc,* corresponding to Old Norse and Icelandic *silki* and Scandinavian *silke,* are also represented by Old Slavic *shelku,* so that one may suppose that the change from -r to -l took place in some language through which a word such as *serica* or *σηρικον* passed into Slavic and thence into the early Baltic trade.[8]

Another example of a textile loan word travelling the Silk Road from East to West is that of the Chinese term *he-zi* 褐子, a cloth made of hair or wool, which crossed the whole of Eurasia to become, notably, *kersey* in English, attested for the first time in 1390.[9] Thus I disagree with the too insular etymology proposed by various English dictionaries, according to which the name of the textile *kersey* is supposed to have come, for no reason in particular, from the name of the village of *Kersey* in Suffolk. The name of this textile is attested from the 14th century in Italian in the form *cariséa,* in Spanish from the 15th century also in the form *carisea,* and in French from the 15th century in the forms *carisé, créseau,* etc. Oddly enough, the various names of this textile attested in the different Romance languages are all explained, in the dictionaries of the respective languages, as having been borrowed from the English word *kersey,* which is, of course, in turn supposed to have gained its name, for some unknown reason, from the small village of Kersey in Suffolk.

As a matter of fact, all of these European names of the woollen textile in question obviously come from the Arabic form *qarziyā* designating a woollen cloth, attested from the 15th century on. In turn, the Arabic *qarziyā* must have derived, perhaps via Persian, from the Old Turkish and Uighur word *qars,* designating a cloth made of hair or wool. The word *qars* is abundantly attested in Central Asian Uighur manuscripts from approximately the 9th century on until about the 15th century. It was borrowed before the 9th century from the Chinese compound term *he-zi* 褐子 (Early Middle Chinese: **γat-tsɨ,* pronounced rather **fiar-tsi̯ə* in Northwestern China during the Middle Ages), also meaning "haircloth or woollen stuff". The Sogdians, who travelled the Silk Road from the earliest times, no doubt borrowed the same Chinese term several centuries before the Uighurs, since the form first

attested in 8th century manuscripts from Mount Mug had already undergone a metathesis, **razye (rzyy)* from what must have been initially **yarze,* followed in the 9th or 10th centuries by another metathetic form **rayze (ryzy).*[10] In the 3rd or 4th century, moreover, it would seem that the Chinese term *he-zi* 褐子, that is **yat-tsɨ,* had already been borrowed into the Gāndhārī of Serindia, where we find in a kharosthī manuscript the word *karci* used as the name of a cloth for trousers.[11]

Whereas the textile name *he* 褐 is well attested in Chinese texts from the earliest times, the compound Chinese term *he-zi* 褐子, a form with the suffix *-zi* 子 used originally only in the spoken language, is not actually found in written documents before about the Mongol period, even though it was no doubt spoken from at least the beginning of our era. Thus I believe that one can safely say, strange as that may seem, that Chinese *he* 褐 or **yat* is the original form of the name of the English woollen cloth *kersey,* even though it may not be that of the name of the aforesaid village of *Kersey* in Suffolk.

A better known example of a textile name borrowed from China, though not via the Silk Road, is that of the silk fabric *"satin".* This name comes from *Zaiton, Zaitun, Zayton, Çaiton,* etc. which was the name attributed to the southeastern Chinese port of Quan-zhou 泉州 during the period of the Mongol occupation of China of the 13th-14th centuries, when this important port for international trade between China and the West by the southern sea route was frequented by many foreign merchants, in particular Arabs and Persians. As to the name *Zaiton* or *Zaitun,* it no doubt represents a rendering by the foreign merchants in Quan-zhou of *Ci-tong* 刺桐 (Early Mandarin: **tsʿz-ʿuŋ*), an older and perhaps more popular name of the city, originally designating a kind of thorn-bearing tree planted around the city walls.[12]

The most common Chinese textile name was undoubtedly *bu* 布 (Early Middle Chinese: **pɔh,* Late Middle Chinese: **puə̆*), designating any woven cloth of hemp, linen, cotton, or other fibers . For such cloth, the Uighurs used the word *böz,* borrowed from Greek *bussoş* ("linen"). However, the Chinese compound *guan-bu* 官布, that is *bu,* "cloth", qualified by *guan,* "official, governmental", meaning "official" or "reglementary cloth", frequently met

with in the Medieval period, particularly near the eastern end of the Silk Road, appears, for example, in a number of Uighur manuscripts dating approximately between the 10th and 13th centuries, under the spellings *quanpu, qunpu,* or *qanpu.*[13] These forms were often misread as *qoqpu, quaapu, quabu* or *qaabu,* and consequently misinterpreted by such eminent European scholars as Paul Pelliot, who, by misreading the *-an-* of *quan-* as *-q-*, imagined an otherwise non-existent word *qoqbo.* The term of Chinese origin, *guan-bu,* actually figures in *Kāšγarī's* 11th century Turkish dictionary, but in the form *qamdu,* for it was no doubt the Uighur variant *qanpu* which was first used in the Turkish *Kāšγar* dialect, and which was then altered by metathesis to *qamdu* (that is *qapnu, qabdu, qamdu*). The definition of *qamdu* given in *Kāšγarī's* Dictionary, which is as follows, obviously refers to the Chinese administrative expression *guan-bu (quanpu)* : "A piece of (linen) cloth, four cubits long and a span in breadth, sealed with the seal of the Uighur Khān, and used in commercial transactions. When it becomes worn, it is patched, then washed and re-sealed; this occurs once every seven years."[14]

Quite a number of other Turkish words, some still in use in modern Turkey, can be shown to have been borrowed at an early date from Chinese. Such is the modern Turkish word *yün,* "wool", representing the older common Turkish form *yuŋ,* which was used to designate not only "wool" or "hair", but also "cotton" or even "feathers". The Mongol forms meaning "hair" or "wool" are *nuŋγasu* and *uŋγasu,* whereas in Sino-Korean *yuŋ* designated "flannel" or "woolen cloth"[15] All of these forms must have been borrowed from the Chinese term *rong* 絨, of which there are variants (茸 , 氄), with the various meanings wool, hair, fine hair, down, floss, felt, flannel, velvet, etc., pronounced either **ŋuwŋ* or **ŋuawŋ* in Early Middle Chinese of about the 6th century.

Certain modern Turkish names of different kinds of scissors, moreover, were also borrowed during the Middles Ages at the latest from Chinese compounds, which are still in use today. One such name in modern Turkish of Turkey is *sındı,* which, according to my modern Turkish-English Dictionary, means "large cutting-out scissors". In the Dictionary of *Kāšγarī,* dating from the 11th century, the same word occurs in the form *sîndu,* also defined as "large scissors". The name obviously corresponds to the Chinese

term *jian-dao* 剪 / 翦刀, pronounced **tsian-taw* in Early Middle Chinese, meaning "scissors" or "shears", which is composed of the word *jian*, "cut off, clip, scissors", and the word *dao*, "knife". The Middle Chinese form **tsian*, of which both the initial *ts-* and the following diphtongue *-ia-* were abnormal in Old Turkish, was consequently adapted into Turkish as *sïn-*, whereas **taw*, another "un-Turkish" diphtongue, became *-du*, thus giving *sïndu* in the Turkish of that period. Another Turkish name for "scissors" is *qïßtu or qïftu* in Old Turkish of the 10th century, and *kıptı* in several modern Turkish dialects.[16] This term, no doubt designating a pair of scissors of smaller size than *sïndu*, was clearly borrowed, at some date earlier than the 10th century, from another Chinese name for scissors, *jiao-dao* 鉸刀, which, like *jian-dao*, is still even today in China a common word for scissors. The first character jiao (consisting of a character with the key "metal" meaning "to cross or intersect") of the Chinese compound *jiao-dao* had the pronunciations **kaɨw* or **kɛɛw* in Early Middle Chinese, which was taken over into Turkish as *qïß, qïf*, or *qïp*, in the same way as the final *-w* of **tśuw*, the 7th century pronunciation of *zhou* 州, "prefecture", became *-ß* in *čuß*, occurring in the expression *altï čuß soγdaq*, "the Sogdians of the Six Prefectures", in the 8th century Old Turkish runic inscription of Köl Tegin.

In the West there is a well-known saying, attributed to Rudyard Kipling, that "East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet." Here I have tried to demonstrate that there are many exceptions to this rule, so that this old saying is one of which scholars in the West should ever be wary, never neglecting to look beyond their own horizons for the answers to their questions. As a maxim for future research, I would suggest rather "East is East, and West is West, and *ever* the twain shall meet."

Notes

1. On *küküllüg*, cf. Nicholas Sims-Williams and James Hamilton, *Documents turco-sogdiens du IXe-Xe siècle de Touen-houang*, Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum, Part II, Volume III Sogdian, London, 1990, p. 35.
2. The reconstructions given here of the pronunciation of Chinese words in earlier periods are based, though with a few simplications, on the indications found in

the volume by Edwin G. Pulleyblank, *Lexicon of Reconstructed Pronunciaton in Early Middle Chinese, Late Middle Chinese, and Mandarin*, Vancouver, 1990.

3. Cf. E. G. Pulleyblank, "The Chinese and Their Neighbors in Prehistoric and Early Historic Times", in D. Kneightley (ed.), *The Origins of Chinese Civilization*, Berkeley, 1983, pp. 453-454. As indicated by Professor Pulleyblank, the Wuhuan were the more southerly branch of the Eastern Hu, who lived in the 2nd century A.D. on the eastern frontiers of Mongolia, and whose name, in the Chinese pronunciation of the period, transcribes *Awar or Avar, tribes of the Hephthalite kingdom in Afghanistan in the 4th and 5th centuries, who fled to Europe in the 6th century when the Hephthalite kingdom was overthrown by the Turks. In 520, in his description of the principal wife of the Khan of the Hephthalites, then residing north of the Hindu-Kush, the Chinese pilgrim Song Yun noted (cf. René Grousset, *L'Empire des Steppes*, Paris, 1939, pp. 113-114) : "Sur la tête, elle porte une corne longue de huit pieds, avec des ornements de pierres précieuses de cinq couleurs."
4. Cf. G.J. Ramstedt, "Finnish *Turku*, Swedish *Torg*, Danish and Norwegian *Torv*, a Word from Central Asia", *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen L*, Helsinki 1949, pp. 99-103; *idem.*, *Einführung in die altaische Sprachwissenschaft, I, Mémoires de la Société Finno-Ougrienne* 104 (1957), p. 49; Aulis J. Joki, *Die Lehnwörter des Sajansamojedischen, Mémoires de la Société Finno-Ougrienne* 103, pp. 334-335; Berthold Laufer, *Sino-Iranica*, Chicago 1919, pp. 501-502; Gerhard Doerfer, *Türkische und mongolische Elemente im Neupersischen*, vol.. II, no. 884.
5. On *serge* and its origin, cf. notably the *Oxford English Dictionary* (Compact edition, 1977), Oxford, 1971, under *serge*, p. 2736 (494).
6. The other name used for China and the Chinese in classical antiquity was *Θινα* or *Sinai*, attested somewhat later, from the end of the 1st century A.D. on, which was probably first borrowed through contacts with India from Sanskrit *Cīna* and perhaps also from Middle Persian *Čīnstān* (cf. Paul Pelliot, *Notes on Marco Polo*, I, Paris, 1959, under 155 *Cin*, pp. 264-278).
7. On the origin of *Σηρες* and *σηρικον*, cf. E. G. Pulleyblank, "The Consonantal System of Old Chinese", Part II, *Asia Major*, IX-2 (1963), pp. 229-230.
8. Cf. the *Oxford English Dictionary* (see note 7 above), under *silk*, p. 2824 (46).
9. Cf. James Hamilton and Nicoara Beldiceanu, "Recherches autour de *qars*, nom d'une étoffe de poil", *BSOAS, XXXI* (1968), pp. 330-346.
10. With regard to these Sogdian forms, cf. also N. Sims-Williams and J. Hamilton, *Documents Turco-sogdiens du IXe-Xe siècle de Touen-houang*, pp. 25-26, n. A1, where an Indo-European etymology is also envisaged.
11. The expression *karci kamuta*, "woollen trousers", occurs in one of the documents in kharosthī script found by Aurel Stein near Niya on the southern edge of the Tarim Basin, which were written in a Middle Indian dialect of the Gāndhārī type, similar to the ancient Prâkrit of Gāndhāra in northwestern India, introduced into Serindia, that is to say Chinese Turkestan, in the 2nd century A.D. (cf. Hamilton and Beldiceanu, op. cit., pp. 335-337).
12. On the derivation of "satin" from Zaiton, cf. Paul Pelliot, *Notes on Marco Polo*, I, Paris, 1959, p. 595, and the discussion of Çaiton, pp. 583-597.
13. Cf. James Hamilton, "Un acte ouïgour de vente de terrain provenant de Yarkhoto", *Turcica*, vol. I (1969), pp. 43-44.
14. See this translation of *Kāšyarī's* definition of the term *qamdu*, occurring on p. 211, l.1, of the facsimile, in the edition by Robert Dankoff and James Kelly of

Mahmūd Kāšγarī, Compendium of the Turkic Dialects (Dīwān Luγāt at-Turk), Part I, (Cambridge, Mass., 1982), p. 317. Mahmūd ibn al-Husayn ibn Muhammad al-*Kāšγarī*, author of the *Dīwān*, was born in Barsγān near the Issig-köl in the Qarakhanid kingdom in the first half of the 11th century, and completed his dictionary in Baghdad in about 1077 (cf. op. cit., Part I, pp. 4-7).

15. The correspondence of Turkish *yuŋ* with the Mongol and Sino-Korean forms was noted by G. J. Ramstedt, *Kalmückisches Wörterbuch*, Helsinki 1935, pp. 279-280.

16 The form *qïßtu* occurred notably in line 11 of the Uighur manuscript *Pelliot Chinois 3046 verso* from the Dunhuang manuscript grotto, edited by me as Ms. 34 in *Manuscrits ouïgours du IXe-Xe siècle de Touen-houang* (Paris 1986), pp. 165-169, but my attempt there (n. 34.11) to explain the origin of the form *qißtu* may now be disregarded. On the various occurrences of the word in question and the various etymologies hitherto proposed, cf. Gerhard Doerfer, *Türkische und mongolische Elemente im Neupersischen*, I, Wiesbaden, 1963, pp. 450-451, and Sir Gerard Clauson, *An Etymological Dictionary of Pre-Thirteenth-Century Turkish*, p. 582.