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Helitbär and some other early Turkic names and titles

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The paper discusses the form and origin of a few early Turkic names and titles in connection with their reflection in Chinese sources of their time and in view of the most recent documentation in Turkic and other languages.

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As is well known, proper names and titles are often inherited from earlier cultures of historical significance. Russian *царь* comes from the *cognomen* of Julius Caesar, the English name *John* from Hebrew, English *Peter* from New Testament Greek, and Hebrew *Ashkenaz*, referring to the domain of East European Jewry, from the name of the Scythians. It should be no surprise that similar Early Turkic elements show the same phenomenon, with the difference that their source cultures are mostly unknown to us.

In a recent paper, Yukiyo Kasai treats the Chinese phonetic representation of Turkic lexemes and proper names in the earliest centuries of documentation (6th–9th centuries).[1] She has reviewed the material in 12 historical and literary sources, 11 inscriptions (one of them in the Turfan area) and 27 manuscript fragments from different periods found in the Turfan and Dunhuang areas, gathering 174 phonetic transcriptions for 83 Old Turkic words, including variants. She analyzes the syllable correspondences in terms of the consonants and vowels in initials (*shengmu* 聲母) and finals (*yunmu* 韻母); the latter are classified by all relevant rhyme groups. The Chinese were clearly struggling with the adaptation of the foreign sounds to the set of characters available to them, and each of the few names and titles to be discussed in the present paper also appears in several forms. I will only use Kasai's highly erudite and hugely important work to correct a few misconceptions among Turcologists (which Kasai took at face value) that need to be revised in view of the data brought together here. I will discuss the phonological shape of only a few terms; when their Turcological input is corrected, their Chinese representations also turn

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1   I would like to thank Kasai for discussing the paper with me and helping me to access the information contained in it. Thanks also to Peter Zieme for useful comments and to Chen Hao for supplying the Chinese characters.

out to be more regular than they appear at first sight. Other terms presented in Kasai's paper would also deserve a closer look in view of the material brought together in it, e.g. the ruler name *Istämi*.[2]

Turkic analysis supported by Chinese data

A proper name, transcribed into Chinese with two characters that at present are pronounced as *yinan* 伊難, will serve as a simple illustration of what I mean. The characters were pronounced as *i nâm* (according to Karlgren) or *yi nəm* / *yi nam* (according to Pulleyblank) in Middle Chinese. Kasai (2014: 98) takes the name to be *Ïnan* as was apparently proposed by previous scholars, perhaps because they were only considering the present pronunciation of the Chinese evidence; but she also states that this is the only case where an /n/ coda is written as /m/. This exception can easily be done away with if we take the name to have been *Inam* and not *Inan*. It must in any case be a derivate from the unattested verb **ına-*, which serves as base to the verb *ınan-* and to the nouns *ınag* (Erdal 1991: 188) and *ınal* (Erdal 1991: 331); there are numerous *-(X)m* derivates in Old Turkic (Erdal 1991: 290–300) and a noun *'ïnan'* is not attested either.

For the tribe name *Qarluq*, which Kasai discusses on pages 109–110, the various Tang transcriptions show the five three-syllable forms *geluolu* 歌邏祿, *geluolu* 歌羅祿, *geluolu* 葛邏祿, *geluolu* 葛羅祿 and *geluolu* 哥邏祿, all to be read as *Qaraluq*, while the later sources write *gelu* 葛祿, which corresponds to *Qarluq*. Kasai quotes two papers by Yoshida for a Soghdian account of this discrepancy. Yoshida points out that a Soghdian ms. fragment of the Tang period writes the name in three syllables, with an *alif* in the middle one, whereas the Soghdian Qara Balghasun inscription from the late Uyghur Qaghanate, just writes *xrlwy*; this shows, according to him, that the Chinese received their information about the Turks from the Soghdians. This may or may not be correct, but it does not explain the difference between the older and the newer forms. I think the name is likely to be an exonym, formed as an *-(O)k* derivate from the verb *kar-ıl-* 'to mingle (intr.)' discussed in Erdal (1991: 662); it would thus have signified 'the mingled ones', presumably because the tribe evolved from the mingling of discrete groups. This etymology is already proposed in Doerfer (1967: 385), who gives **qarăluq* 'vermischt' as source form. Doerfer also mentions versions of the Oghuz Kaghan epic, which "explain" the name through *kar* 'snow', with a fanciful story as background. This popular etymology is adopted by Gyula Németh in a book first published in 1930, with the translation *hótömeg*, which an anonymous reviewer translates as "mass of snow, i.e. massive snow storm".[3] In Old Turkic the suffix *+lXk*, which is implied in this ac-

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2 As in Στεμβισχαγαν of the Greek source (Moravcsik 1983: 291), the onset vowel is absent in the Chinese evidence.

3 I am very thankful to this anonymous reviewer for his valuable remarks; s/he here finds "Németh's old explanation of the name as denoting natural phenomena, i.e. powerful

count, had fourfold vowel harmony, and the +*lXk* derivate from *kar* would in Old Turkic be *karlık and not *karluk*. This tribe name must, however, have been coined prior to the oldest Old Turkic texts in which it is mentioned. My venerated teacher Kåre Thomsen Hansen, in a brilliant paper (Thomsen Hansen 1963), has shown that Old Turkic /X/ must have been */U/ in Proto-Turkic while /U/ must have been two-fold */O/, since the former corresponds to /U/ in Mongolic while the latter was united with Mongolic /A/. While 'Qar+luq' could thus have lent valuable support to Proto-Turkic second-syllable */U/ > /X/, both the semantics and the Soghdian and extensive Chinese documentation favor the deverbal explanation: +*lXk* derives, among other things, designations for places where there is a continuous or habitual abundance of entities denoted by the base noun,[4] but this would be a less likely source for nomadic names. I further take the Turkic tribe name *Bulgar* to be an aorist form of the verb *bulga-*, which signifies 'to confuse, mix'—no doubt also an exonym. More significant is the three-syllable form that appears consistently in earlier Tang period Chinese and Soghdian sources, and subsequently turns to two syllables. My anonymous reviewer doubts "that the ethnonym Qarluq is *Qarïluq or Qarïloq", mentioning that "the Arab geographers regularly render it خَلُّخ ($x^a l l^u x$), but even more importantly, Maḥmûd al-Kâšġarî (ms. 238) has quite unambiguously قَرْلُق ($q^a r l^u q$)". In fact, we also twice find the bisyllabic spelling *Gar-log* in the manuscript Pelliot tibétain 1283, the Tibetan summary of a report by five emissaries sent by an Uyghur ruler to survey the peoples of the north; the report may belong to the late 8th or the early 9th century.[5] The original form must have been *Karıluk* or, better, *Karılok*, with the intermediate vowel syncopated at a later stage. The *o* in the second syllable of the Tibetan form also speaks for the deverbal derivation; at no stage did the +*lXk* suffix have an /O/ in any dialect, hence the historical evolution from the longer to the shorter variants.

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natural events, ... still convincing" because it "falls into a pattern of Pre-Činggisid Turkic systems of name-taking".

4 Németh's "massive snow storms" are certainly not fixed entities. See Erdal (1991: 127–128) for Old Turkic documentation; this function of +*lXk* is common everywhere in the Turkic world. There are, in fact, villages called *Karlık* in Amasya, Afyonkarahisar and Adana provinces, in Cappadocia and elsewhere, but their names could possibly also come from Qarluq groups who came from Central Asia to Anatolia during the early waves of immigration; Adana province in particular is not likely to see much snow.

5 See Tezcan (1975: 306–307) and the work quoted there. The mid-syllable *a* of the Chinese and Soghdian sources seems to lend support to Doerfer's theory that fourfold vowel harmony (found in the passive suffix) comes from Proto-Turkic *ă* and *ĕ*, but I think the Chinese and Soghdians did not have any precise way to write the unrounded back high vowel /ı/. As shown in Erdal (1991: 224), the vowel of the -*(O)k* suffix is /o ö/ except after /u ü/.

No support for Turkic analysis from Chinese data

According to Kasai 2014: 129, the term now read as *guluofusi* 骨邏拂斯 in a Chinese fragment from Dunhuang dated to the year 734, and interpreted as *qulavuz,* refers to a 'leader'. This instance is important as it is earlier than all attestations mentioned hitherto: Doerfer (1967: 490–493, §1504), who discusses the term and translates it as 'Wegführer', thought that it may first have entered Turkic in the 11th century. It does not appear to be attested in Old Turkic proper, but the Qutaḏġu Bilig has four instances (in couplets 128, 129, 3730 and 6519). Kāšġarī (fol. 244) has the entry *qulābuz* translated 'guide',[6] but in his example sentence the ms. writes the word as *qulāvuzsuz*. There appears to be a rhotacistic attestation in 9th century Danube Bolgarian inscriptions; the title κολόβρος ~ κουλούβρος (with Greek nominative singular masculine suffix added by the Greek referring sources)[7] is probably related in spite of Doerfer's doubts (1967: 492–3), in view of the Chinese instance and the semantic connection between 'guide' and 'leader'. Another instance is supplied by the Arab Ibn Faḍlān, who traveled to the Volga Bolgarians in the year 923, passing through Khwarezm. On the way, he is said to have engaged a guide from the population of Jurjān (today Urgenč in the north of Uzbekistan) whose "name" is spelled as *qlws* in the manuscript. Togan, the editor, is sure that this represents the word *qulawus*[8] and that it is not his name but his profession. Doerfer agrees with him and thinks that the word must be a loan from Khwarezmian, an Iranian language close to Soghdian, which was spoken in that area at that time. Khwarezmian *xl'wr*, with the same meaning, is quoted by Benzing (1983: 671) from Zamaxšarī 209 (together with the abstract noun *xl'wr'wyk*). Although there are many errors in Zamaxšarī's Khwarezmian, and *r* and *z* are distinguished only by a dot in Arabic script, this coda *r* is not necessarily an error, as the form with *r* was also in use as a variant in Persian and Tajik. Doerfer is sure that the term is a loan from Iranian because it is long but betrays no analysis into base and suffixes. Clauson (1972: 617–618) and Róna-Tas & Berta (2011: 481–482)[9] also take it to be an Iranian loan. Benzing, however, considers it to be a borrowing from Turkic; this seems likely in view of the late Iranian attestation. Nicholas Sims-Williams (mail on July 16, 2016) also cannot, after careful consideration, think of any Iranian etymology. Clearly, long and opaque words should by no means automatically be considered as loans. 734, the date of the manuscript, was the year Bilgä Kagan died; this is certainly an early

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6   Altered to *qulāwuz* by a later hand; see Dankoff & Kelly (1982: 361). Kāšġarī says that the *b* is an alternant of *v*. According to Doerfer, such alternation is further proof that the word is a loan.
7   Four instances, three with /o/ in both syllables, one with /u/, are quoted in context in Moravcsik (1983: 162).
8   Vowels are optional in Arabic script.
9   The word is attested in Hungarian from the 14th century on.

documentation for Turkic. The term was replaced by the transparent *yer+či* in the runiform inscriptions, by *yer+či* and *yol+čı* in Old Uyghur.[10]

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The Soghdian inscription of Bugut was erected in the late 6th century by the elite of the first Türk qaghanate. Most of the titles found here also appear in the runiform inscriptions of the second Türk qaghanate. However, the title spelled as *γwrγ'p'yn* by Kljaštornyj and Livšic (1972) in lines B2 and B12 (in both cases with the Soghdian plural suffix *-t*, which is also added to three other titles of l. B2) has not come up in any second qaghanate inscriptions. Kljaštornyj and Livšic, who edited and commented this inscription, on pages 89–90 translate the title as "holding girdle" (connecting it with Turkic *qur*) or "holding quiver" (connecting it with Mongolic *qor*), in both cases with the Turkic verbal stem *qap-*, which is said to have the original meaning 'to catch, to hold (tight)'.[11] Omeljan Pritsak, whose article on this title is quoted by an anonymous reviewer of the present paper, thinks it is the Soghdian equivalent of the Türk office of *buyruq* and renders it as **qorqa (qoreg-qa) bâyan* "the distinguished one (commanded) for prevention (of violence)". Luckily there is no need to discuss this even weaker proposal, as in both cases the stone has a *ṣade* and not an *alif* after the labial. Yoshida and Moriyasu (1999: 123–124), who are absolutely trustworthy, in fact read the Bugut word as *Xurxapčin*. Unlike the other early titles, this one seemed to be of Turkic (or in any case Altaic) origin before the Japanese expeditions of 1996–1998; now we see that this view is not supported by the Chinese evidence either. Different sources of the *Qushi Gaochangguo* 麴氏高昌國 period (498–640) give the title as 窟合真 or 庫合真, *kuhezhen* today. The Middle Chinese pronunciations of 真 are given as *tśiĕn*, *tṣin* or *tɕin*; these are

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10 Doerfer considers the absence of *qulavuz* in these corpuses to be a further reason for taking it to be borrowed. Old Turkic should not, however, be equated with Proto-Turkic: It also replaced such common Proto-Turkic lexemes as *buyur-* 'to command' by the euphemism *yarlıgka-*, e.g., and *yaz-* 'to write' by *biti-*, ultimately of Chinese origin. The most recent detailed discussion of the origin of *biti-* is in Róna-Tas & Berta (2011: 122–125). They quote a Ligeti paper for the Toba-Wei—AD 386–534—title **bitegčin* signifying 'secretary'. This title, together with the very wide diffusion of **biti-* and its derivates not only in Eastern Turkic but also in the Mongolic and Tungus languages, suggests that the verb became a loan at a very early stage and was transmitted to Turkic secondarily; its shape shows that it is not a direct Turkic loan from Middle Chinese.

11 Concerning the last syllable, the authors mention the reflexive form *qapın-* which they quote from Kāšγarī's encyclopedia, but it would be better to think of the deverbal nominal suffix *-(X)n* (Erdal 1991: 300–308) found in lexemes such as *käl-in* 'bride' or *ter-in* 'assembly'. They further explain the cultural importance of the girdle and the quiver with reference to published research and mention that Mongolic *qor* was borrowed into New Persian in various Middle Turkic compounds and derivates; but of course that is not relevant for the 6th century.

compatible with the Bugut evidence but speak against a Turkic interpretation of the word.

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We now come to the title *helitbär*, widely spread across Eurasia and hitherto generally known as *eltäbär*. According to a Chinese source quoted by Inaba (2006: 7), it was given not only to Turkish chiefs but also to rulers of city-states in Transoxiana and Bactria.

Clauson (1972: 134) quotes the word only from inscriptions of the Türk empire and the Uyghur Steppe Empire, but an Uyghur instance was already published by Le Coq in 1912 (referred to by Doerfer 1965: 202). Six runiform instances are spelled as $l_2t_2b_2r_2$; in a seventh instance the word onset is damaged. In an eighth instance, some scholars saw the vowel letter I before the l_2, but there is a lacuna before the vowel sign; the vowel letter may therefore belong to the previous word. The way the word was read may have been influenced by the names *Elteriš* and *El Bilgä* appearing in the Orkhon inscriptions, which are based on *el* 'polity'; *täbär* looks like the aorist of a verb *'täb-'* or *'täv-'* but, as Doerfer points out, there is no such verb. Some scholars spell the first vowel as *i* or *ä*, and the third vowel sometimes as *i*; some write the *b* as *v*. There appears to be general agreement that the second syllable was *tä*. This is surprising, as such a vowel is not found even in a single runiform example, and Le Coq's instance in Uyghur writing[12] is spelled as *iltbär*. There is therefore no reason to assume that there was a vowel after the *t*.

What do non-Turkic sources say? The Bactrian documents of the late 7th century have two instances of υιλιτοβηρο in document N, and one each in documents P and Q. All instances are preceded by a word written ταποαγλιγο or ταπαγλιυο, to be read as *tapaɣlïɣ* or *tapaɣlïh* and signifying 'worthy of service'. In the Bactrian use of the Greek alphabet, o (at this stage of the language) has no phonetic value and sometimes appears to indicate morphological juncture, while η represents the sound *ē* and υ the sound *h*; Sims-Williams (2002: 235) transcribes the word as *hilitbēr*. Other non-Turkic renderings which Sims-Williams (2002: 235) gives are *lytβyr* in the Manichaean Soghdian Mahrnamag,[13] Soghdian *ryttpyr* / *δyttpyr,* Arabic *rutbīl* (with metathesis of *l* and *r*) and quasi-Sanskrit *hitivira*. Except for the last-mentioned,[14]

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12 The manuscript, now called U 1a,b, is easily readable on the facsimile at the internet site Turfanforschung of the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences.

13 Note that none of the runiform instances have anything certain written before the *l* (only in one case among eight is there a *possible i* sign which could also be read as /e/); in principle, the Orkhon Turkic variant of the title could also be *letbär* / *letbir* / *lätvär* etc.

14 This is part of the Brāhmī legend on a group of coins of the Khalač ruler Nezak Šāh found chiefly to the south of the Hindukush and edited by Göbl in 1967 (quoted e.g. by Inaba 2006: 6); according to Inaba, Humbach as early as 1966 considered *hitivira* to be the Middle-Indic form of the title under discussion here.

which strives for a Sanskrit word shape (in the meantime dropping the *l*), none of the quoted instances has a vowel after the *t*. The only languages with onset *h* for this word are Bactrian and quasi-Sanskrit. Another onset *h* in quasi-Sanskrit is *Huihūra*, as the name *Uyghur* has been spelled in Brāhmī writing. I would not take *hitivira* very seriously, but the consistent Bactrian evidence is important. Proto-Turkic had onset *h* in some words, as shown in Khalaj and, as an alternation of *y* with zero, in Old Uyghur; Erdal (2004: 81–82) tries to elucidate the Old Turkic evidence for this consonant, also referring to other scholars' views on the matter.[15] Such *h* is likely to have existed in this word. The word is discussed in detail in Erdal (2007: 81–82), quoting also *Alp-ʿiḷutʿuēr* and *Xatʿir-litʿbēr* from Armenian sources and *ylṭwʾr* from Ibn Faḍlān's (Arabic) account. The onset *y* of this last instance reminds us of the Uyghur /h/ fluctuation. It seems quite clear that the labial consonant alternates between a stop and a fricative realization (no surprise for specialists of Old Turkic phonology), that the last vowel is long, and that there is no vowel after the *t* also in the foreign sources.

The Old Turkic runiform evidence can also—in fact should be—read as *(h)elitbär ~ (h)elitβär*; quoting just a few recent publications which mention the "Turkic" title, Sims-Williams (2002: 235) was misled into mentioning it as *"iltäbir"*, Inaba (2006: 6) as *"iltäbär"*, Kasai (2014) as *"eltäbär"*.[16] Kasai (2014) discusses the shape of this term in great detail, quoting the spellings *yilifa* 意利發, *silifa* 俟利發, *xielifa* 頡利發, *xielitufa* 頡利吐發 and *xielidiaofa* 頡利調發 (only two of which have a dental in the middle). What is most interesting about the Chinese evidence for specialists in Turkic language history are the alternating onsets, which in Middle Chinese (both according to Karlgren and Pulleyblank) were pronounced as *ʔɨʰ*, *ʔiʰ*, *ʔiʾ*, *ẓɨʾ*, *ẓi*, *ṣhṛʾ*, *dẓʾi*, *γiet*, *γɛt*. *ʔ* and *γ* reflect well the alternation of onset *h* and its absence in the Turkic languages, and the vowels do not much

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15 It is there stated that relevant words in texts in Brāhmī script are spelled without H, with the exception of the word *hükün* 'heap'. We know since Maue (1983: 59 footn. 40) that this word is in fact to be read as *bügü+n* 'by magic'. The word *yüz* 'deaf', which appears in TT VIII I 5, is not a counter-example either, as all the Uyghur instances (l. 17 in the legend of St. George, Heilkunde II 1,108 and 5,25) have *yüz* with this meaning. Kāšγarī (fol. 34) writes the word as *üz* but his dialect may differ in this case.

16 In fact she writes (p. 87; 頡利吐發): "In this transcription the Old Turkish syllable *-tä-* was expressed by the character *tu*, which belongs to the rhyme group *muyun (-uo/-ɔ* (LMC: *-uə̌*) which otherwise stands for Old Turkish *u/ü* or *o/ö*. It is not clear why this character was used for the transcription *ä*. In most other transcriptions for *eltäbär* the element *-tä-* is not reflected. The only adequate transcription for it is 頡利調發 K. *γiet lji dʾieu pịwɐt*, EMC: *γɛt lih dɛw puat*, LMC *xhjiat liʾ tɦiaw fɦɦat / faːt*), but in this case, the sound *u/w* which normally does not reflect the Old Turkish vowels *a* and *ä* is present in the coda position. Thus there is the possibility that the element *-tä-* was very weakly pronounced in Old Turkish so that it was either completely ignored or only imprecisely reflected in the transcriptions". In fact is that the vowel *ä* did not exist at all; it was just an error.

surprise us either; but what about the retroflex sibilant or fricative represented as $ẓ$ or *ṣh*, which is found—again alternating with $γ$—also in the onset of the title *erkin*? This, apparently, was the sound which caused the onset /h/ to be spelled as *y* in some of the instances of that title. It may have been a palatal fricative, which would also explain why it is not explicit in any Brāhmī source. Brāhmī *h* represented a velar, not a palatal fricative. *Erkin* is twice spelled as *hirkin* in a ms. in Tibetan writing in which a number of other Turkic terms also show this consonant in their onset; see Tezcan (1975: 302, 306). This onset consonant seems difficult to pin down and may have changed over time during the early Turkic period, but there should be no doubt about its reality, despite its absence in Brāhmī and runiform sources.[17]

<p style="text-align:center">****</p>

Future editors of the Orkhon inscriptions (for some mysterious reason we get re-editions all the time) should—primarily in view of the Chinese documentation—write the title as *elitbär*, not as *"eltäbär"* or *"ältäbir"*; the ethnic name should in the Orkhon inscriptions be read as *Karılok* (or at least *Karıluk*), while the (also numerous) instances in the Uyghur Steppe Empire inscriptions can remain bisyllabic. Nothing Turkic has emerged in the language of the elite of the first Türk Empire: no Turkic names, no Turkic titles and two Soghdian inscriptions.

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17 Doerfer (1981–1982) thought that the Orkhon inscriptions do show the difference between the absence and presence of onset /h/ but I am not sure he has convinced the scholarly community.

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