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Some Early Inner Asian Terms Related to the Imperial Family and the Comitatus

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Some Early Inner Asian Terms Related to the Imperial Family and the Comitatus

By

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Introduction

Chinese histories preserve a vast number of terms, names, and titles dating from the Türk era (roughly 550–750) and before. Scholars have succeeded in identifying a number of them with Turkic-language terms, but many terms have hitherto remained insoluble. As a rule, scholars have pursued this work by matching forms attested in Old or Middle Turkic texts with the reconstructed Tang-era pronunciation of the Chinese characters. In face of a large number of terms found in Chinese transcription that remain either completely resistant to analysis or involve seeming exceptions to the transcription values usually attached to the characters in Chinese philology, a conviction appears to have settled in on the field that Chinese transcriptions are so inexact as to render much further progress in this line impossible.

In this article, I suggest philological explanations for a number of terms that have so far wholly or partly resisted analysis. These examples have been chosen to highlight the fact that one reason for the limited progress in the identification of terms has not been that Chinese transcriptions are inexact, but rather that much of the terminology is neither Turkic, nor Iranian, nor Tokharian, nor attested in Old or

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1 For most purposes in this paper, I use a simplified transcription system based on common Mongolian historical practice in which ch indicates [ʧ], gh indicates [ɢ] or [ɣ], j indicates [ʤ], ng' indicates [ŋ], sh indicates [ʃ], and y indicates [j]. Subscribed dots indicate retroflex or cacuminate consonants. Where more specific transcription is necessary, I use IPA or other forms as found in the relevant literatures and indicated by a [].


Middle Turkic inscriptions. Recent work on Kitan and other eastern Inner Asian languages have, however, attested witnesses of these terms allowing them to at last be properly read, understood, and in some cases offering clues to their origins. In two cases, the evidence points to surprisingly early Sanskrit or Prakrit loanwords used widely in Türk and pre-Türk Inner Asia. In other cases, it points to terms which simply have no cognate in any later medieval or modern language.

The terms I have selected for analysis share a semantic field of being connected with the imperial family and the comitatus of the early medieval Inner Asian states. In his recent synthesis of Eurasian history and its Central Eurasian heartland, Christopher Beckwith has emphasized the importance of both the ruling lineage, with its reputed divine ancestry, and the comitatus or war band in Central Eurasian history.\(^4\) The concentration of non-Turkic words in the terminology of the Türk imperial family and its comitatus or imperial bodyguard adds more material to the growing body of evidence that the ruling core of the Türk empire was linguistically entirely non-Turkic.\(^5\) The Turkic language adopted as the language of the Second Türk Empire was the language not of the imperial lineage or the court, but of their numerous Oghuz subjects to the north and west. It also highlights that the Türk dynasts were inheritors of a long-standing state and imperial tradition, which like all such traditions carried with it a vocabulary composed of “wanderwords” that easily jumped from language to language. Other inheritors of this vocabulary include the Kitans and other peoples to the east who preserved Tang and Türk imperial institutions and terms into a later period. The gradual decipherment of Kitan thus offers a great field for further progress in the philology of the Türk empire and early medieval Inner Asia.

**Iri**

A term *yili* appears repeatedly in the titulature of the Türk qaghans as transcribed from Chinese, viz. *yìlí kèhán* 伊利可汗 or *yìlí jùlú mòhēshībōluò kèhán* 伊利俱盧設莫何始波羅可汗, etc.\(^6\) This same element is attested elsewhere in Chinese as *yìlí* 乙利, where it is the name of a qaghan and a title coordinate with *darqan*.\(^7\) This title is probably also found listed as one of the 28 ranks of the Türk empire, but in a corrupted form as *yīn* 乙斤.\(^8\) This has been assumed to be attached to the title *kül-


\(^6\) See *Zhou shu* 周書 50.909; *Sui shu* 隋書 84.1864 and 1865, 1868–89; *Tong dian* 通典 197.5402, 5404, 5405.

\(^7\) *Yìlí* 乙利 as name of a qaghan: *Tong dian* 通典 199.5456 and *Jiu Tang shu* 舊唐書 194B.5183 (=*Xin Tang shu* 新唐書 215B.6058); *yìlí darqan* 乙利達官 as official rank: *Jiu Tang shu* 舊唐書 60.2344 = *Xin Tang shu* 新唐書 78.3534.

\(^8\) *Tong dian* 通典 199.5453.
chor 屈利啜 which immediately follows, but no other case of this combined title is attested. Rather than posit a completely unknown title, I think it much more likely that jin 斤 here was an early corruption of 利, and that the title listed is yili 乙利 and then kül-chor 屈利啜 as a separate title.

Pelliot identified this title yili as a Chinese transcription of el–il “state, realm”, which would be phonologically unproblematic (if indeed el–il was the relevant pronunciation, which as I will show it was not).9 Omeljan Pritsak agreed with the identification of the Turkic stem il–el “state, realm” but analyzed the whole term as Old Turkic illig, “having a realm”.10 As Volker Rybatzki already pointed out, however, both versions, il–el or il–ellig have problems phonologically and semantically.11 In Pulleyblank’s reconstruction, Chinese yī 伊 and li 利 have the pronunciation of [ʔi] and [li] respectively,12 while in attested Tibetan transcriptions they have the reading of [ʔi] and li.13 An identification with el(l)ig would have to assume that the Chinese transcription both did not represent the geminate -ll- and also did not represent the final -g. Merger of geminate consonants is common in Old Turkic, but the omission of the final –g is quite unlikely, since Chinese did have a common transcription character li 力 which had the requisite Early Middle Chinese pronunciation of [lik] or lig.14 Pritsak attempted to explain the absence of a final -g by yili’s context within the qaghan 乃var’s title. That is yili jùlú 伊利俱盧 represented ellig külüg and the g (>k)+k gemination was eliminated, hence eliküliig. But elimination of gemination across word boundaries is highly unusual in Chinese transcriptions, to say the least, and such an explanation would not explain other instances of yili kèhán 伊利可汗.

Moreover el and ellig are both attested elsewhere in Chinese transcription but in a different form. As Pelliot already pointed out, the Chinese transcription of the

14 See Pulleyblank, Lexicon, p. 189 and §1012 in Takata, Tonkō shiryō, p. 398; Coblin, Compendium, p. 420.
name of the last qaghan of the First Eastern Türk empire, Xiéli 頡利, represents the same word, el.\textsuperscript{15} Ellig is found attested as a name as well, as Xiánlì 贤力.\textsuperscript{16} In the first case the \textit{lì} 利 is simply a geminate transcription of the final -\textit{l}, merging with the final liquid of \textit{xié} 頡, whose Middle Chinese pronunciation ended in a consonant that varied dialectally between a liquid [r] and a dental [t].\textsuperscript{17} Only in the second case, with a \textit{li} 力 that read in Middle Chinese as \textit{lik}, does the \textit{li} character actually represent a separate syllable. In both cases the root \textit{el} has an initial consonant which Pulleyblank views as [\textit{γ}] in Early Middle Chinese and [\textit{x}̚] in Late Middle Chinese. That this initial consonant is real and corresponds to the initial \textit{h} lost in all Turkic languages except Khalach is demonstrated by the Bactrian transcription of the Turkic \textit{Eltebir} (Chinese \textit{xiélìfā} 頡利發) as \textit{hilit-ber}.\textsuperscript{18} Thus it is clear that the dialect at the base of the Chinese transcriptions had not \textit{el} (or \textit{il}) and \textit{ellig}, but \textit{hel} and \textit{hellig}.

So where does this leave the \textit{yìlì} 伊利 element in the Türk titles? Rybatzki wrote that “I have a strong feeling that yili transcribes a different word than el or elig, although I cannot give any suggestion yet”. Fortunately, however, progress in both Sogdian and Kitan studies now enables this different word to be identified. A title \textit{Iri} (Sogdian ‘\textit{y}-\textit{ry}’), found in association with \textit{mγ} (\textit{magha}, see below) has been identified in the Bugut inscription.\textsuperscript{19} Quite independently, \textit{iri} has now also been

\textsuperscript{17} See Pulleyblank, \textit{Lexicon}, p. 341. The question of the final non-nasal consonants in Middle Chinese, both dialectically and as transcription characters is complex; suffice it to say here that cases where the final coronal alone represents [t] and [r] can both be found, and that medieval Chinese transcribers preferred to make the value of such consonants clearer by adding after them another character with the desired value in the initial. A classic example is \textit{gūduōlù 骨咄禄}, which is universally recognized as transcribing \textit{qutlugh}. A simplified Tang era transcription would be \textit{kut-tut-lok} (Pulleyblank, \textit{Lexicon}, pp. 111, 201; unfortunately his lexicon does not include \textit{duō 咀}, but its \textit{fanqie} reading is initial \textit{當} and final \textit{沒}, hence \textit{tut}). The characters \textit{gū} 骨 and \textit{duō} 咀 both end in this final dental, but in the first case it is assimilated to the following -\textit{t} and in the second to the following -\textit{l}, hence producing an actual transcription value of \textit{kuttullok}. On the peculiar use of Middle Chinese \textit{rū-shēng 入聲} (i.e. non-nasal finals) in transcriptions, see the remarks of E. G. Pulleyblank, “The Chinese Name for the Turks”, \textit{Journal of the American Oriental Society} 85. 2 (1965), pp. 121–125.
identified in Kitan inscriptions with the meaning of “name” or as an official title. While the precise semantic value in the Turkic empire is still uncertain, it might indicate “famous” or “bearing the title”, etc. In any case, further effort to shoe-horn hel(lig) into yili, can cease since it is now clear that iri is a title or term of unknown origin and original language but used in titulature of both Türk and Kitan rulers.

War
The word war is not, to my knowledge, attested in Chinese and other transcriptions relating directly to the Türk empire but it is found in a number of examples from the polities before or around the Türk empire, against which the Türk empire ruled. Edwin Pulleyblank noted that the name of the Hefthalite kingdom in the records of the Liang dynasty (502–557), Huáguó 滑國, and the updated form as Huóguó 活國, given by the Buddhist pilgrim Xuanzang, who passed through the area in 630, both correspond to War, a term found in Greek transcription as Ouar, i.e. War. Thus Huáguó–Huóguó both mean the War Kingdom. The immediate source of this alternate name for the Hefthalite kingdom appears to be the name of the Hefthalite capital which was the wālīz~wālij or “city” (cf. Turkic balïq) of “War”. Early Arabic geographers attest “War” as part of the city name Warwālīz, later corrupted as Walwālij in the area. Both War and a derived form Warlu, which corresponds to the attested Chinese Huólù chéng 活路城, are now attested as the name of the Hefthalite capital in Bactrian. Warlu should be derived from War by addition of a suffix -lu that would seem to be related to the Turco-Mongolian derivational suffix -lig/-ligh and/or the Mongolia case-ending -lüge/-lugha, that forms denominal nouns

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22 *Liang shu* 梁書 54.814 ff.; *Nan shi* 南史 79.1984 ff.


(derivational suffix), or else with a comitative meaning (case-ending). The term war, transcribed with Chinese huó 活, also appears as a prefix to the title Hilit-ber as the title of an early Uyghur commander: Huó Xiélǐfá 活顓利發 or War-Hilitber. In the Greek sources, War appears twice, both times as part of a dual name Ouar-Khoun or Ouar-Khôn used for the ethnic core of the Avars. Ouar is easily matched with Arabic War and with the Middle Chinese pronunciations of huá 滑 and huó 活, i.e. [ɣweːr] and [xhuar] respectively. On this basis, Czeglédy linked the European Avars to a union of Avars (identified with War) and Huns (identified with Khoun or Khôn). Moreover, he also sees a link between these War and the War of the Hefthalites. I have elsewhere expressed my reasons for rejecting any identification of Khoun or Khôn in Greek transcriptions or Qon in Turkic transcriptions with the Huns. Here, while acknowledging the identity of the War in the War-Khôn with the War or Warlu of the Hefthalite capital, I am again not convinced that an ethnic linkage is necessary or even implied. This is because I identify war with a term that appears among the Kitans not as an ethnic term, but as an institutional one.

The vocabulary attached to the Liao shi, wălí 瓦里, which is a phonologically completely unexceptionable Early Mandarin transcription of war, defines the term’s meaning as follows: “Name of an institution: Every palace tent and every tribe set up one. Whenever any member of the imperial family, imperial consort families, or high officials committed a crime, their family and dependents were seized and assigned to it.” Each war was headed by an official with the title mŏhú 抹鶻. An example of how a war was set up can be found early in Kitan history:

26 War and Warlu appear as the Bactrian names of the Hefthalite capital in the compound forms Warlugān or Wargan “People of War/Warlu”; see Nicholas Sims-Williams, “Palaeography, Chronology, and Geography of the Bactrian Documents (4th–8th Centuries CE)”, lecture at Peking University, November 4, 2013. In both Turco-Mongolian suffix and Mongolian case-ending versions the -g/-gh- is frequently elided.

27 Tong dian 通典 200.5491; hilit-ber is the attested Bactrian suffix and Mongolian case-ending version of War.

28 Pulleyblank, Lexicon, p. 128 (EMC reading) and p. 135 (LMC reading).


32 Liao shi 遼史, 106.1544, cf. 45.718; cf. Wittfogel and Feng, History, p. 430. The word mŏhú 抹鶻 here appears to share a root with mŏlǐ 抹里, likewise a term for a probationary military unit, except for commoners, not high status criminals and their families; see Liao shi 遼史 45.178–79. The mŏlǐ was headed by a zhásāxué 閘撤禠, The pronunciation of both terms are unclear, particularly because their antiquity, and hence the Chinese dialect being used for transcription, is not clear.
Previously, because three lineages – that of Puguzhi 蒲古只 and two others – had murdered the ūyuè 于越 named Shilu 室魯, Hendejin Qaghan 痕德堇可汗 of the Yaolian 遥辇 seized their families and put them into a war 瓦里. When the Empress Dowager Yingtian 應天 became regent, she sorted them out and made them gentlemen and ladies of the ordos (zhūzhàng lángjùn niángzǐ 著帳郎君娘子), and showed mercy to each. Shizong released all of them. Thereafter members of the imperial clan, the relatives of the empress, and the hereditary officials (shīguān zhījiā 世官之家) who committed crimes were seized and placed [in a war].33

Their role was thus exactly like the ba’atud of the Mongol emperors, who were persons assigned to vanguard forces in expiation of a crime, except that in this case it was not the criminals themselves, but their families. Peng Daya describes this institution this way:

Those who commit transgressions are put to death, which is called aldashi. If he is not killed, then he is punished with service in the baatur army (similar to the suicide warriors of the Chinese people), and only after he has survived three or four times is he absolved.34

The institution is also described in very similar terms by the Persian historian Juwaynī.35 Wittfogel and Feng proposed wali to be cognate with Mongolian ayil (given wrongly as hayil) “village” and Manchu falga “clan, tribe; street”.36 In fact neither of these cognates is at all plausible on phonetic or semantic grounds. But war as an institution of the imperial entourage, in which high-ranked captives work off their punishment by reckless bravery fits well its use both for the capital city of the Hefthalites and also as the core of the Avars, famous for prowess in battle. But the presence of a war among the Avars and among the Hefthalites does not indicate that one is specially linked to the other. It is likely that all the early Inner Asian medieval polities had this institution and name and it is only coincidence that preserved it in these two cases. At the same time, it is quite common in Inner Asia for such institutional names associated with the gathering of people together in the imperial court to become the nuclei of ethnonyms.

33 Liao shi 遼史, 45.702; cf. Wittfogel and Feng, History, 226.
36 Wittfogel and Feng, History, pp. 430, 514.
Another such ethnonym likely derived from *war* is the *Yuèqín* 越勤, described as a “tribe” or division within the Tegreg–Chigreg (High Carts), that is, the early Oghuz. 37 *Yuè* 越 is reconstructed as [wuat] by Pulleyblank 38 and attested as *war*–*gwar*–*ywar* in Tang Tibetan transcriptions. 39 *Qín* 勤 is Middle Chinese [gin] (EMC) or kɦîn (LMC) and is a perfect transcription of the Mongolian gentilic suffix -qin~−kin. 40 The whole should thus be Warkin–Warqin “the War people”, that is, an ethnonym derived from *war* just as the Oirat ethnonym Baatud was derived from the plural of *ba’atur* “heroes, prisoners working out their sentence with bravery”.

Finally, this term *war* seems to be the origin of the ethnonym Avar–Awar (first attested as Wuhuan 烏桓 or Wuwan 烏丸 in southeastern Inner Mongolia in the Latter Han). 41 This can be seen from the variant forms of the name of the Hephthalite capital, War. As Kuwayama Shoshin and Yu Taishan have documented, this city was also called *Āhuàn* 阿緩 and *Èhuàn* 遏換. 42 In both cases, the prefix has the verb a- (with or without a final rûshēng) and the second syllable is hwan, in which the -n commonly represents a final -r. 43 Given that Avar here is a mere variant of War, it seems plausible that Avar as an ethnonym is also derived from War. And the early descriptions of the Avars as being peculiarly warlike and brave compared to the otherwise similar Serbi 鮮卑 indicates that this ethnonym had its origin in the institution of *war*, or a vanguard unit of noble-born transgressors working off their crimes with reckless bravery.

The origin of the alternation of *war*–*awar* is unclear. A- might be a kind of honorific or kinship prefix, of the sort found in Japanese (o- as honorific) and Chinese (a- for senior kin). More likely, however, is a phonotactic explanation: if we

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40 Pulleyblank, *Lexicon*, p. 254. Indeed it is actually used to transcribe this suffix in Yuan-era sources.
43 [ʔa-x’iuan] or [ʔat–x’iuan] in Pulleyblank’s reconstruction (*Lexicon*, pp. 131–130) and “a–hwan” in Tang-era Tibetan transcription (see §§0016 and 0639a in Coblin, *Compendium*, 125–26, 312–13, and Takata, *Tonkō shiryō*, pp. 304, 364). The final rîshēng of è 遏 and in some cases ā 阿 would presumably merge with the following consonant to give an intended transcription value of Awwar.
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assume that the Serbi language spoken by the Awar and Hefthalites did not allow an initial w-, but that the word war was of origin in a foreign language widely spoken, one could easily imagine a situation in which both war and awar would be found, the latter among the elite, bilingual in the foreign language and their own, and the latter among the less socially mobile. Very similar variants are common in modern Mongolian between Mongolized and un-Mongolized versions of Russian words. To confirm this hypothesis, one would need more information about the phonotactics of the proto-Mongolic Serbi family, as well the potential outside origin of the word war.

Shar

The name Shar (Chinese Shèlì 舍利) appears as one of the twelve divisions or “tribes” of the Eastern Türk empire. Together with the Tüli (or Duli 吐利, on which see below), they formed an indirectly administered prefecture in Inner Mongolia after the Eastern Türk empire submitted to the Tang dynasty. As such, they also had their own horse brand used for horses to be presented to court. Fortunately, the Shar-Tüli are also mentioned in the Tibetan travelogue of the Tang period, where the name appears in Tibetan transcription as Shar Du-li, thus making the reading certain. The only narrative source touching on the history of this Shar “tribe” known to me is the epitaph of Shar Shitie 舍利石鐵 found in Shanxi. In this source, the Shar are simply described as “northerners” who for two generations before the surrender to the Tang had held minor office among the Türks. But the importance of the Shar seems to be considerably greater than this single source indicates. The name reappears in a Turkic ancestor-legend reported in a Chinese miscellany. There we find the Shèmó/Zhama 射摩 as the ancestor of the Türks, living by the Shèlì/Shar 舍利 Lake and Āshîdé/Ashiteg 阿史德 cavern and ruling a subordinate tribe. Most unfortunately, there is an unresolved textual variant at this point, giving the subject people’s name as He’er 呵爾 or else A’er 阿爾. In the Taiping guangji Hē’ēr 呵爾 alternates with Ā’ēr 阿爾, but the Youyang zazu 有陽 詞中 has only Hē’ēr, which in any case would qualify as the lectio difficilior. Although the character hē also has an alternative reading as ā, it is used in the transcription of Kitan with the hê reading; see Shimunek, “Towards a Reconstruction”, p. 99. I thus prefer the reading hē. The Tang reading was [xa-ri’] (see Pulleyblank, Lexicon, s.v. hē and ēr 呵, pp. 88, 122), which presumably transcribed something like hari–halî–har–hal. (An initial q- would be transcribed with a Chinese stop, not a [x], so one should assume that the initial is the h- which was preserved only in Khalach.)

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44 Tang Huiyao 唐會要 73.1315 (prefectures), 72.1307–08 (horse brands).
47 Most unfortunately, there is an unresolved textual variant at this point, giving the subject people’s name as Hē’ēr 呵爾 or else A’ēr 阿爾. In the Taiping guangji Hē’ēr 呵爾 alternates with Ā’ēr 阿爾, but the Youyang zazu 有陽 詞中 has only Hē’ēr, which in any case would qualify as the lectio difficilior. Although the character hē also has an alternative reading as ā, it is used in the transcription of Kitan with the hê reading; see Shimunek, “Towards a Reconstruction”, p. 99. I thus prefer the reading hê. The Tang reading was [xa-ri’] (see Pulleyblank, Lexicon, s.v. hē and ēr 呵, pp. 88, 122), which presumably transcribed something like hari–halî–har–hal. (An initial q- would be transcribed with a Chinese stop, not a [x], so one should assume that the initial is the h- which was preserved only in Khalach.)
must be annually sacrificed to the imperial banner.48 More will be said below about Zhama as a name closely linked to the Türk imperial lineage Ashina, but it is notable that here the Shar appears as a name alongside the imperial lineage and the Ashiteg, the imperial consort lineage (also discussed below). Thus while the Shar may not have had a high historical profile, they were in some sense connected to the very origin of the imperial lineage.

Kitan sources enable us to identify shar as a crucial term for the comitatus of the Türk imperial lineage. The term was usually transcribed with the same characters as in the Türk era, thus demonstrating institutional continuity, but was occasionally given an updated transcription.49 The same vocabulary that defines war, also defines shar as follows:

Brave men of the Kitan who want to wrap their heads with a turban and pay ten head of camels and livestock and one hundred horses; they are given the official title as shar. Later it became an office among the ordos, and attendant gentlemen (längjūn) were attached to the title.50

There were also special Shar Troops (shèlì jūn 舍利軍) and offices. Shar Troops of a given subdivision of the Liao empire consisted of soldiers drawn from that subdivision’s ruling family. Thus for the Kitan imperial family itself, the Shar Troop was formed of men from the various divisions of the imperial family, while the Shar Troop of the Qai, the junior allied ethnic group of the Kitan, was attached to the Qai Administration. Shar Offices (Shèlì Sī 舍利司) administered the Shar Troops both at the level of the Imperial Clan and at the level of the separate tribes (units of administration for the non-Han of the Kitan empire).51 Shar Troops were one of the major components of the Kitan military forces and played an important role in the


49 This term as transcribed in the Liao shi is obviously inherited from the Turk era, as can be seen both by the older reading of 舍 as sha- and by the use of 利. Shālī 沙里 is an updated Kitan-era transcription used retrospectively in accounts of the rise of the Kitan founder (LS 1.1). In Liao shi 遼史 106.1534, the updated term it is defined as “gentleman” (längjūn 郎君), which is a derivative of its original meaning of noble-born soldiers in the comitatus of their kinsman. In Liao shi 遼史 1.1, Yelü Abaoji is given the title successively as tāmàxuē shar 指馬啟沙里, with tāmà 指馬 defined as “attendants” (rèncóng 人從) and as aju-shar 阿主沙里, literally “grandfather shar” or “senior gentleman”. The institution of shar continued into the Qara-Khitay era; see Liao shi 遼史 30.358; cf. Wittfogel and Feng, History, p. 646.


dynasty’s administration and political history. The term has been identified in Kitan-language inscriptions in singular and plural forms, and in various case endings, in which it was translated into Chinese by lǎngjūn 郎君 “court attendant”. The plural is probably shad. The title shar also survived into the Yuan era among the Uyghurs of Qocho as well. In Ouyang Xuan’s 歐陽玄 biography, the Uyghur Xie 偽 family claim a descent from the famous Ashiteg noble Toñuquq of the Second Türk empire, and as a result inherited the title shar 沙爾, which they glossed in Chinese as meaning “quarter where affines of the imperial family dwell” or more generally “the emperor’s affines”. Thus the title preserved its close association with the intimate entourage of the ruler.

The Kitan and Uyghur data thus adds to our understanding of the role of the Shar in Türk ancestor legend. In the legend, the Zhama was the imperial lineage, the Shar were the noble-born braves of the comitatus, and the Ashiteg were the consort lineage of the Zhama. Read in the light of attested social units, the ancestor legend thus shows the Zhama along with the Shar and the Ashiteg as three component parts of the ruling class, sharing rule over a mass of subjects (the Harï~n), members of whom were chosen for human sacrifice at Zhama rituals. Just as keshigten or “shift

53 For citations in context, see Kane, §6.3.1 (p. 186), §6.6.2 (plural, p. 191), 6.6.10 (plural and singular, p. 196), 6.6.28 (plural, p. 205), 6.6.30 (in genitive, p. 206), 6.6.31 (in locative, p. 207), 6.6.35 (in locative, p. 209). The word is written with the Kitan characters, nos. 028, 189, and 069. For comments on the pronunciation, see §2.028 and 2.069 (pp. 38, 42–43). For comments on the pronunciation, see §2.028 and 2.069 (38, 42–43). Kane suggests the third character is read -rí, but on the evidence presented the reading could easily be just -r.
54 The plural is formed by adding to the word the Kitan character no. 254 (Kane, §2.254, p. 65), pronounced as d~t. Literally, this would imply a plural as shard. On analogy with Chinese transcription practices, however, and Altaic plurals, I suggest that the plural is much more likely to be shad. In other words, while the full word is written to enable it to be recognized, the plural marker is not added to, but actually replaces, the closing consonant of the syllable. It would thus function like the diacritical characters used in Yuan-era transcriptions, such as tì 惧, dīng 丁, or lè 勒, which could sometimes be used with characters ending in -n to replace that final consonant with -t, -l, or -l, respectively. Thus what is written as qatund is actually meant to be read qatud, i.e. “empresses”, the plural of qatun “empress”.
55 See Ouyang Xuan, “Gaochang Xieshi jiazhuan 高昌偰氏家傳”. In Guizhai ji 圭齋集 11.5b (Chenghua era [1470–1473] blockprint); Yuan wenlei 元文類 70.1016 (this text is not found in all editions of Yuan wenlei 元文類). The Chinese gloss is qīwān 戚畹, which is a late imperial synonym of ancient Chinese qĭlì 戚里. This appears for example in Shi ji 史記 103.2763, where it designates “the quarter [in the capital Chang’an] set aside for the palace ladies”. See Sima Qian. Burton Watson, trans., Records of the Grand Historian. Rev. ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), Han II, p. 477). But the palace ladies’ relatives also lived in these quarters. Ouyang Xiu goes on to identify this title with the well-known Turkic title shad 設. As is evident from the transcriptions, 沙爾 was the living Yuan-era transcription of the title, and shad 設 was a transcription which Ouyang Xiu derived from his research into Tang history.
men” went from being a term of the Mongol imperial comitatus to being that of a banner (a Qing-era local appanage-community) of the Mongols, so Shar also came in some cases to be the name of a division of the Türks, while still retaining its occupational meaning in other contexts.

**Tüli-Duli**

Associated with Shar as an ethnonym was the name given in Tibetan transcription as Du-li 吐利 which may also be a title. The Tibetan version corresponds fairly closely to a transcription of the Chinese. The character 吐 tǔ appears from its homonym 土 tǔ to have two different readings in Tang-era Chinese, tho or do-du⁵⁶ and the second would give the reading given in P.T. 1283. This term is not attested elsewhere, but there is a somewhat similar one attested for the Qai king in Liao-era transcription as tūlĭ 吐里~ tūlĭ 秃里.⁵⁷ These two terms are treated as synonymous in both the Liao shi and the Jin shi. In the Liao shi the title appears as one of the “northern officials” specifically designating the tūlĭ tàiwèi 吐利太尉 of the “six tribes” of the Qai.⁵⁸ All the known examples of the holders of this position were members of the Yelü family.⁵⁹ This title continued in use into the Jin as 秃里 where it is defined as “Tuli 秃里: official, rank 7b, handles law cases among the tribes; investigates violators and other issues”.⁶⁰

But the pronunciation of this title is rather less certain than for shar. The problem is that while the Liao and Jin versions necessitate a reading as tu-, the Tang-era Tibetan transcription gives one in du-. While not enough is known of the principles of Tibetan transcription of Türk words to be sure, it may be significant that in cases like Dur-gyis for Türkisch and Dru-gu for Türk(ü), Tibetan uses voiced consonants to render syllables with front vowels. If we apply the same principle, we could posit tūlĭ as the form intended, which would fit the Kitan and Jurchen-based transcriptions as well.

**Early Indic loan words**

Although scholars have been very willing to find loanwords from non-Turkic languages even in the Old Turkic language, they have generally sought them in Iranian and Tokharian languages. The context suggested by these loans is one of the close interaction of Iranian- and Tokharian-speaking Central Asian nomads and oasis-dwellers with the early Turkic peoples. But I believe that one can find important terms in Old Turkic derived not from nomadic or farming vernaculars of

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⁵⁷ Liao shi 遼史 116.1549; Wittfogel and Feng, *History*, pp. 432, 439

⁵⁸ Liao shi 遼史 46.726.

⁵⁹ See Liao shi 遼史 69.1113, 74.1229, 95.1392, 106.1549.

⁶⁰ See Jin shi 金史 57.1330 and Jin vocabulary, Jin shi 金史 2892.
Central Asia, but from Indic literary languages, specifically Prakrit and Sanskrit. That scholars have been less willing to posit early Sanskrit loan words may be from a sense that such loanwords must be related to Buddhism, for whose early influence on the Turkic peoples evidence is lacking. But Sanskrit (or more broadly Indic, including Prakrits in the Kharosthi script) influence on early Inner Asia is by no means limited to Buddhism. As I have argued in a recent paper, Greek Ounnoi “Huns” and Bactrian Greek ‘Onna-Shah “King of the Huns” are best explained as deriving from Sanskrit Huṇa. This shows that already in the mid- to late-fourth century, there was significant Indian influence on Central Asia, influence that was likely secular and mercantile-mediated, not religious. Likewise, I will show that Sanskrit words appear in imperial vocabulary of Inner Asian peoples already beginning in the second half of the fourth century.

Magha

Chinese transcriptions preserve many cases of the transcribed mòhè 莫賀~ mòhé 莫何, usually in combination with other titles. These characters would be pronounced as mak-gha in Early Middle Chinese (i.e. fourth and fifth centuries) and are transcribed into Tibetan as bag-ha in Late Middle Chinese (i.e. Tang-era). This Tang-era shift from initial m- to initial b- will be significant in this discussion, although it is obscured in Pulleyblank’s reconstructions.

The earliest appearance of the term is in a story told of the Tuyuhun kingdom in the Kökenuur area. In it, a ruling crown prince receives the title mòhè-láng 莫賀郎, which is glossed as “father”. The story is found originally in the Song shu (compiled 492–93) and is told with reference to the Tuyuhun around year 375. Pelliot discussed this term in 1921, and the question has been recently reexamined and clarified by Sanping Chen. Chen points out that láng at this time served as a

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61 An important exception to this pattern is Beckwith’s recent article on the Chinese transcriptions of “Tibet”, “Tabghach”, and “Turk”, in all of which he finds the Sanskrit pati “lord”.
62 Atwood, “Huns and Xiongnu”.
63 See Pulleyblank, Lexicon, pp. 218, 122–3. For Tibetan transcriptions, see §§0890, sub 0020 and 0018 in Coblin, Compendium, and Takata, Tonkō shiryō.
65 Song shu 宋書 96.2371. Later the story also appears in Bei shi 北史 96.3179, compiled around 630–50. It is assumed that the Bei shi version was cited from one of the lost chapters of the Wei shu 魏書, compiled from 551–54. The passage is translated in the Bei shi version in Gabriella Molè, The T’u-yü-hun from the Northern Wei to the Time of the Five Dynasties (Rome: Insituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1970), p. 4, and summarized from the Song shu version, p. 23, with discussion on pp. 77–78, n. 38.
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common Chinese title for “noble-born son; prince”. Moreover he points out the likelihood that “father” (fǔ 父), given as the meaning of the title, is actually a corruption of jūnfǔ 君父 “lord”. Together then the compound is “mòhè (or mak-gha) prince”, to be glossed as “lord”.

Not too long after, mòhè 莫贺 also begins to appear together with other titles meaning “son” or “prince”. Chen has assembled a large number of examples in which petty rulers in Mongolia and Manchuria are given the titles mòfú 莫弗 ~ mòhèfú 莫賀弗 ~ mòhéfú 莫何弗, and derived terms.67 This term was first attested around A.D. 403 as a title for the leader of the Yueqin 越勤 tribe (a name to be read, as I suggested above, as Warkin) found among the proto-Turkic Chigreg68 peoples both in Mongolia and those resettled in North China.69 Like many other titles of the later Türk empire it also appears among the Rou-Ran, but it is explicitly called a “High Cart [=Chigreg] official title”, and appears as a hereditary family title for a Chigreg chief in the Rou-Ran empire.70 Later it was applied to Manchurian peoples: Kitans, Qai, Shirvi 室韋, and Mukri (~ Murki 勿吉).71 Among them, it is said the term is defined as being “like a chieftain” (qiúzhǎng 首長) and those who consult about war among the Kitans are called “chiefs” qiúshuài 首帥.72 Twice (à propos the Wūluòhóu/*Olakkô 烏洛侯,73 a branch of the Shirvi, and concerning the Shirvi in general), this title is said to be hereditary, and this is likely to be true for all of

67 Chen, “Son of Heaven and Son of God”, 295–98. That maghapur/mòhèfú 莫賀弗 is a fuller Sui-Tang era transcription of the Wei-era magh(a)pur/mòfú 莫弗 can be seen from comparing Wei shu 魏書 100.2223 with Bei shi 北史 94.3127.
68 As was mentioned above, I follow Pulleyblank in seeing the Chigreg~Teqreg or “High Carts” as being the earliest known proto-Turkic speakers; see Pulleyblank, “The ‘High Carts.’”
70 See Bei shi 北史 98.3255, 28.1007, and 49.1785.
72 Wei shu 魏書 100.2224; cf. Liao shi 遼史 106.1547, where the later editors have mistakenly switched the order of the characters to mòfu 莫弗, but likewise define it as “chieftain”.
Some Early Inner Asian Terms Related to the Imperial Family and the Comitatus

Among the Kitans and Qai the title survives up through the Tang into the beginning of the Liao dynasty. As Sanping Chen first noticed, the second part of the compound, 弗, is Sogdian p’wr (to be read as pūr) for “son”, found in compounds in Sogdian and related Iranian languages, such as shābuhr “son of the shah”, bagapūr (later faghfūr) “son of a god”, or “son of Heaven”, etc. Thus Mōhē-Lāng 苫賀郎 and Mōhē-Fū 苫賀弗 both have the same meaning, one having the word for “noble son” in Chinese and one in Sogdian (or perhaps some other allied Iranian language; the word is pronounced similarly in many branches of the family). That pūr here means “son” is confirmed by the calque-translated Rou-Ran version Mōhē-Qūfén/*Makgha-k’obun 苫賀去汾 in which the pur element has been translated as k’obun, an obvious cognate of Middle Mongolian kö’ün “son, prince”. Thus we have three different cases where mōhē 苫賀 is used with the word “son” or “prince”, showing a single title being used from the c. 375 on in a wide variety of linguistic contexts.

How was mōhē 苫賀~ mōhé 莫何 pronounced and what was its origin? On this question, scholars have hitherto turned to the Old Turkic inscriptions in which the title bagha is found, in contexts which correspond exactly to Chinese mōhē 苫賀. Thus it has been assumed that the initial consonant for this word must be b-. As a result, Chen

75 In the Liao shi, the term appears with the order of the characters reversed to mōfūhé 苻弗賀. On this Liao shi reading, see Chen, “Son of Heaven and Son of God”, 297–98. Following the Liao shi and Wittfogel and Feng, History, 428, 471, Jennifer Holmgren, “Yeh-lü, Yao-lien and Ta-ho: Views of the Hereditary Prerogative in Early Khitan Leadership”, Papers on Far Eastern History 34 (1986) uses the erroneous mōfūhé throughout. (Wittfogel and Feng, History, p. 430, treat the two terms as different, when they are obviously the same.) I wonder if the so-called Dahe 大賀 family of early Khitan history, which as Holmgren, “Yeh-lü, Yao-lien and Ta-ho”, pp. 46–47, points out is found only in the retrospective Liao shi account of the Kitan rise and not in contemporary sources, is not an abbreviation of dà mōhē 大莫賀 “great mōhē 莫賀”, combining translation and transcription of the term.
77 On the Early Middle Chinese reading of qù 去 and fén 汾 see Pulleyblank, Lexicon, pp. 261, 94. Coblin and Takata have only qù 去 (see §0132).
78 See Bei shi 北史 98.3256, 3258, 3261, 3265, etc. Classical Mongolian orthography has kōbegūn, but this is likely one of those areas where the Mongolian intervocalic silent consonant has been mis-analyzed by the medieval orthographers. See for example qughur “fiddle” and its Turkic cognate qobuz; the oldest attested Mongolian form is qu’ur, a rhotacist version of qobuz, in which the intervocalic -b- has already been replaced by some form of glide. The creators of the Mongolian script used -gh- or -g- conventionally to represent all such intervocalic glides, even where originally they were created by the disappearance of a -b-

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connects this term to Sogdian baga “divinity, god”.80 I believe, however, that the original pronunciation of this word was not bagha but magha. First of all, as I noted at the beginning of this section, the character mò 莫 was pronounced mak in Early Middle Chinese (i.e. fourth and fifth centuries). Only around the time of the Tang dynasty, over two hundred years after the term was first transcribed into Chinese, did the character mò 莫 begin to acquire the de-nasalized pronunciation as "bak that would be reflected in Tibetan transcriptions of Chinese.81 This was part of a wider process of “Tang de-nasalization” in Northwest Chinese, which W. South Coblin dates to 600–700.82 Thus there is really no way to explain why bagha in 375 would not be transcribed with a character such as pò 泊 with an Early Middle Chinese pronunciation as bak, or fú 縛, with an Early Middle Chinese pronunciation as buak.83

Moreover, maga–magha also appears in alphabetic scripts as part of titulature. In Tibetan, the Tuyuhun ruler bears the title ma-ga Tho-gon kha-gan.84 In Sogdian as well, the title magha appears as a regular part of the titulature of the early Türk qaghans.85 Finally, Bactrian documents give us, albeit in a slightly indirect form, an undeniable reading of the Chinese mòhè 莫賀 as not bagha, but magha. The term magha does not appear in those documents, but the term baghatur does appear, but as magator. This term is attested in Old Turkic as baghatur, and is found in Chinese transcription as mòhèduò/*makghatur 莫賀咄. The initial element mòhè 莫賀 is thus identical to the title we are discussing, and indeed the two have often been linked by philologists. But as Sims-Williams notes, this term is found in Bactrian, not as bagatur, but as magator.86 This is decisive confirmation that the intended reading of mòhè 莫賀 is not the Late Middle Chinese baga but the Early Middle Chinese maga. But reading mòhè 莫賀 as maga does not mean it is not the same as the title bagha. Insufficiently appreciated in this context is that the dialect of Old Turkic used in the Orkhon inscriptions had a systematic initial denasalization just like that of Tang Chinese, one that applied to all loan words. Since both Old Turkic and the

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83 Pulleyblank, Lexicon, pp. 98, 241; fú 縛 is §0952 in Coblin and in Takata.
Northwest Chinese had a consistent \( m- \rightarrow b- \) sound change, one could predict that an earlier or non-Turkic \textit{magha} would become \textit{bagha} in the language of the Old Turkic inscriptions. And indeed the Bactrian \textit{magator} is confirmation that the attested Old Turkic \textit{baghatur} is actually a denasalized version of an older \textit{magator}. Thus \textit{bagha} and \textit{baghatur} are not the original forms of these words, but relatively late (i.e. Tang-era) denasalized versions.

Once \textit{magha} is seen as the original form, its connection to \textit{baga} becomes quite questionable. Operating on the idea that the Inner Asian form is always \textit{bagha}, Sanping Chen confidently related this to Iranian (specifically Sogdian) \textit{baga} “god, heaven, divine”. Thus the complex of \textit{magha-lang}, \textit{magha-pur} (and presumably \textit{magha-kobun}, although Chen was not aware of this title), he interpreted as “Son of God”. \textit{Magha~bagha} when found in Turkic titles according to this etymology had the meaning of “divine”.\(^{87}\) But once \textit{magha} is determined to be the original form, as said above, this interpretation becomes more than questionable. By contrast, I do not see any reason to resist the idea, suggested by Rybatzki only to dismiss it,\(^ {88}\) that \textit{magha} is a version Sanskrit \textit{mahā “great”}. As such, \textit{magha} is already found as a compound element in Turkic Buddhist texts as the transcription of Sanskrit \textit{mahā “great”}. \textit{Magha-} alternating with \textit{makha}; \textit{magha} seems to be the older, Sogdianized, transcription.\(^ {89}\) But entirely outside such Buddhist contexts, I believe there are many reasons why an etymology of \textit{mahā} is preferable to that of \textit{baga} for the secular title \textit{magha~bagha}. The first and most conclusive is that \textit{magha} actually appears in Turkic titles alongside \textit{bagi} (βγ’y) “god-like” as a title, thus in the Bugut inscription, we read: “You God(-like) [or Lord] \textit{Magha} Tatpar Qaghan” (βγ’y \textit{m’} t’t’p’r \textit{x’γ’n}).\(^ {90}\) Thus it is hardly likely for it to be also the source of \textit{magha}. If as many Turcologists believe,\(^ {92}\) the title \textit{beg} “commander, nobleman” is derived from Iranian

\begin{itemize}
  \item \(^{87}\) Chen, “Son of Heaven and Son of God”, \textit{passim} and esp. p. 295ff.
  \item \(^{88}\) Rybatzki, “Titles”, p. 220.
  \item \(^{89}\) Nadelaev, \textit{Drevnetiurkskii slovar’}; pp. 335a and 338a-b; Rybatzki, “Titles”, p. 220.
  \item \(^{90}\) The Sogdian word \(βγ’y\) is translated by Kljaštornyj and Livšic, pp. 79–80, as “lord”, but by Yoshida and Moriyasu as “God-like”, pp. 123–24. See Gharib, \(βγ’y\) (§2543, 100), \(βγ’y\) read as \textit{baga} “God, lord, king, sir, excellency”; \(βγ’n’yk’\) (§2552, 101), read as \textit{βγάνικ} (cf. Parthian \textit{bagānīgī}) “divine”; \(βγ’y \ ‘γywny\) (§2611, 103), read as \textit{βγε/ī axšēwan} “His Majesty”.
  \item \(^{92}\) Kljaštornyj and Livšic, “The Sogdian”, p. 80; cf. Chen, “Son of Heaven and Son of God”, pp. 300, 303, for citations and discussion.
\end{itemize}
baga, “divinity, god”, then front -g- of the Iranian word must have determined the vowel harmony as front, which would hardly allow therefore a concurrent derivation of a back magha–bagha from the same word. A transcription like beg shows that baga when loaned into Turkic is treated as a word of front vowel harmony, while magha–bagha is always of back vowel harmony. Absent an explanation, this would disallow any connection between the two.

Magha 莫何~莫賀 is found in contexts, such as ordinary place names, where mahā “great”, not baga “god”, is the only possible meaning. One such toponym is 莫何川 “Magha River” in the Tuyuhun realm of modern Kókenuur.93 Another is the name of a desert area, called Mòhè-yàn-qìw/*Magha-yin-tsiaikmui 莫賀延磧尾94 – whatever the exact meaning of yàn-qìw/*yin-tsiaikmui, “great” seems to fit an ordinary place name better than “divine”. Magha 莫何~莫賀 is used specifically in clearly Sanskrit-based titles, where it is undoubtedly transcribing mahā. In the frequently analyzed title of the Türk qaghan Shapto 攝圖, a.k.a. Shabara 沙鉢略 < Īśvara, one of his titles is 莫何始波羅 which is evidently maheśvara “great lord”, which is an epithet of the god Brahma.96 This can also be seen in the compound titles of a king from Shugnān (Ch. Shínní/*Sheknik 識匿) in the high Pамиrs: 羅旅伊陀骨咄祿莫賀達摩薩*Lal idā qutlugh mahā dharmasattva. 97 Whatever Luólū 羅旅 (likely LNC transcription value: *Lal) means, what follows is Turkic idā “lord” and qutlugh “fortunate” and following it “Great Dharma Being” in Sanskrit,98 with mahā “great” being transcribed by 莫賀.

94 Xin Tang shu 新唐書 216B.6104
95 In the Tuyuhun materials, one also finds terms for armies such as Da Momen 大莫門 and 墨離 for the capital. Again such geographical terms make better sense with “great” than “divine”. I would like to thank Bo Huang for bringing these names to my attention (personal communication, Dec. 6, 2012).
98 On this unusual title, Richard Nance remarked (email message dated 29 June 2011): “Regarding the form dharmasattva, there are actually two issues to address. The first is: does the compound make grammatical sense? The second is: is this the sort of compound that one could imagine being used by Buddhists? Oddly enough, the answer to the first question is ‘no’, while the answer to the second is ‘yes’. Consider the arguably parallel case of the term bodhisattva. In his Pali Grammar for Students, Steven Collins has nicely summarized the difficulties that attend this term: ‘This word has traditionally been analysed as bodhi + sattva, “enlightenment-being”, which makes no grammatical sense. What seems to have happened is that the Pali (or related MIA) word satta has been re-Sanskritized as sattva. This is a possible
Finally, with regard specifically to the magha-lang~magha-pur~magha-kobun complex, Chen is indeed correct when he notes that title frequently inflate. Over time, “sons of God” can indeed become mere petty chieftains. But it should be noticed that this alleged “Son of God” title is never attributed in early Inner Asia to any supreme ruler, but from its very first appearance refers only to rulers specifically stated to be below kingly or imperial dignity.

Magha appears to be quite productive of new forms which would seem to indicate that it was still understood as having a specific meaning, one that would much more plausibly be seen as “great” than as “divine”. The same living usage seems indicated by the attestation of 莫賀~莫何 in combination with titles at virtually every level in the Türk empire: 莫賀可汗 “magha qaghan”\(^\text{99}\); 莫何單于 “magha chanyu”\(^\text{100}\); 莫賀達干 “magha darqan”\(^\text{101}\); 莫賀设 “magha shad”\(^\text{102}\) and 莫賀俟利發 “magha hilit-ber”\(^\text{103}\). Thus magha appears as a productive intensifier added to a wide variety of other titles, in ways that fit the meaning of “great” perfectly. Given that magha is such a common modifier of titles, it raises that possibility that, as Chen already suggested,\(^\text{104}\) the title maghator (baghatur > ba‘atur > baatar) may be analyzed as magha+tor, with tor being another title, perhaps again related to the comitatus. But positing a title of tor solely on that basis would be very speculative.

correspondence, but satta in Pali can be equivalent to two other words in Sanskrit, both of which make better sense than sattva. From √sañj, “to adhere to”, “to be intent on”, the past participle is sakta, satta in Pali. From √śak, “to be able to”, “to be capable of”, the past participle is śakta, which also satta in Pali. “Intent on enlightenment” or “capable of enlightenment” are both more à propos than “enlightenment-being”, so it is likely one of these two senses of bodhisatta was the original. It would be nice if one could find an instance of the Pali compound dhammasatta being used as a name – but a quick check of Malalasekara’s Dictionary of Pali Proper Names turns up nothing. I’ve done an e-check of the Pali canon, and discovered that dhammasatta does not occur at all. Nor is the term dharmasattva listed in Edgerton’s Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Dictionary, and a check of the Heidelberg DCS [Digital Corpus of Sanskrit, editor] database likewise turns up nothing. These facts, taken together, suggest that the compound wasn’t bandied around much if at all by Indian Buddhists. But the case of bodhisattva argues in favor of hesitation before one rules things out on the basis of grammatical illegitimacy in Sanskrit.”

\(^\text{99}\) Jiu Tang shu 唐書 199.5343.
\(^\text{100}\) Xin Tang shu 新唐書, 71B.2403.
\(^\text{101}\) Jiu Tang shu 唐書 9.213, etc. This common combination is also attested in the Old Turkic inscriptions; see Nadeliaev, et. al. Drevnetiurkskii slovar’, p. 77.
\(^\text{102}\) Jiu Tang shu 唐書 198.5301.
\(^\text{103}\) Jiu Tang shu 唐書 198.5303; hilit-ber is the attested Bactrian form; it is usually Turkicized as el-teber.
\(^\text{104}\) See Chen, “Son of Heaven and Son of God”, pp. 320–23. As might be expected, given my rejection of his magha~bagha = baga “god” equivalence, my semantic evaluation of this possibility would be very different.
I would like to suggest one final link in the Inner Asian career of magha “great”, likewise highly speculative. One of the result of the partial Kitan decipherment is the discovery of a word with no known Altaic cognates, mo “big, great”. The word is also attested as part of a pre-Chinggisid-era place name in Mongolia, the Mo-Undür or “Great Heights”. The meaning of mo is identical to the much earlier magha; could mo be derived from the Sanskrit loanword? Two steps would be needed and both are common in the Inner Asian area. The first is the disappearance of the intervocalic -gh- and the merger of the two vowels. Such a sound change is well-known in the Mongolic languages and is documented in a fairly advanced stage already for some Kitan words, such as pulu (from Old Mongolic *pülegü) and shawa (from Old Mongolic sibaghu). The second sound change necessary to make this connection is a rounding of the vowel from a > o. This is common in Chinese dialects and is one of the sound changes marking the shift from Middle Chinese to Early Mandarin. It may even be attested in an early stage with the Tuyuhun name for the 莫何川 or Magha “Big” River. As Molé has noted, this river name is also found under the form of Mūhè River 慕賀川. But Mūhè 慕賀 is not Magha, but Mogha in Early Middle Chinese. The date of this transcription appears to be from the time of the Liu Song dynasty itself, or 420–479. This might indicate that already in the fifth century, the sound change from magha to mogha was occurring in the colloquial Tuyuhun pronunciation of this Inner Asian wanderword. If indeed that was the case, then that might strengthen a connection with later Kitan mo.

Ashina and related names

One of the most important, yet still obscure, terms in the history of the Türk empires is that of the imperial lineage, known in Chinese transcription as Āshînà 阿史那. The characters here seem to be quite clear in their Middle Chinese pronunciation: [ʔa-ʂɨ-nə] in Pulleyblank’s reconstructed Early Middle Chinese, ʔa-ʃə-n in Coblin’s reconstructed Old Northwest Chinese (dated to c. 400), and “a-shi’da in

105 Kane, Kitan Language and Script, 3.008, 2.133; Shimunek, “Towards a Reconstruction”, p. 82.
106 Shengwu qinzheng lu 聖武親征錄; see Wang, Menggu shiliao sizhong, 96; Jia ed., II, 81 In the SHM §170, this is Mau Heights. But as I argue in my forthcoming critical edition of the SWQZL, the mo found in both the Chinese and in Rashid al-Dīn is much more likely to be the original, since it is not a common Mongolian word and mau “bad” is very common. Misreadings move toward common words, not away from them.
108 Song shu 宋書 96.2373; Nan Qi shu 南齊書 59.1026; Molé, T’u-yü-hun, pp. 77–78. The actual form in the texts is 慕駕州, but this is universally recognized as a corruption and corrected in the modern editions of the histories.
Late Tang Tibetan transcriptions. The only significant variation in reading is that 阿 is attested in Tang-era Tibetan or Khotanese transcriptions as "a (24 occurrences), "an̄-aṃ (20 occurrences), or as ar (once). Given that this name definitely was transcribed into Chinese before the Tang denasalization, the expected transcription value would be Ashina (fortuitously just like the modern Pinyin) or perhaps Anshina or even less likely Arshina.

There are few variant transcriptions of this name in Chinese. The epitaph of Princess Hellig Bilge 賢力毗伽 有 Ānuó 阿郍, which is presumably an error for Āshīnā 阿史那. Here, the final -sh, represented by Chinese shī 施, is a denominal noun suffix; examples of its use include aghīsh “wealth” from aghī ‘wealth’ and ödūsh ‘time, unit of time’ from öd ‘time.’ Phonetically, there is a variation between -s (the dialectal form characteristic of spoken language used in the Orkhon inscription) and -sh (the more literary form).

Finally, one other variant is Āsēnā 阿瑟那, which Beckwith rightly identifies with Āshīnā 阿史那. Here in place of shī 史 is the final consonant in sè 瑟, reconstructed by Pulleyblank as [ṣ] in Early Middle Chinese or [ʂ] in Late Middle Chinese and by Coblin as sir in Sui-Tang Chang’an dialect. Given that Ashina is the usual transcription, one would assume that this character has been chosen to

112 See *Xin Tang shu* 新唐書 217B.6143.
113 Talât Tekin, *Grammar of Orkhon Turkish* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1968), p. 107. This suffix seems particularly common in Old Turkish as a gentilic ending, forming demonyms (names of lineages, military-political divisions, or ethnic groups) from personal names, place names, or titles. Thus we find the pair Türki (a lake name) (see Tekin, *Grammar of Orkhon Turkish*, pp. 269, 387) > Turkish 突騎施 (demonym), Yūshë/Ukzha 郁射 (title used with shad 設) > Yūshëshī/Ukzhash 郁射施 (demonym), süng’i 蘇尼 (military title) > shüng’ish 鼠泥施/šüng’ish 蘇泥施 (demonym), Chabï (title and name) 車鼻 > Chabïsh 車鼻施 (demonym), etc. It is used for other derivations as well; in the Zhou shu’s Türk ancestor legend (ZS 50.908), we find the river name Chūshë/*Chodziat 蹴斯處折山 linked to the mountain name [Jiansi-] Chūshëshī/*Dziansi-Chodziatiš 賢池鹿折施山.
114 See *Xin Tang shu* 新唐書 221B.6250, where the name appears in material of the Zhenguan 貞觀 era (626–49). In the reference Asena/Ashilna 阿瑟那 appears as the surname of a Türk king who conquered Ferghana. His personal name Shānī/*Shünnî 鼠匿 may be linked to Shüng’ish 鼠泥施 and Süng’i (*Soni 蘇尼), all derivatives from süng ‘soldier, war’ presumably with a variant of the root as shüng’i.
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mark some different dialectal pronunciation or else to render the original better. The main difference is the final consonant, which was a liquid at this time. Since final consonants are commonly merged with the following initial consonant in transcriptions, this would most likely be used to indicate that ṇa 那 is to be read -la. In other words, this transcription might be indicating that Ashina was sometimes, or correctly, pronounced Ashila. On the other hand, the transcriptions assembled by Coblin indicate that sè 瑟 was used particularly to render sequences of retroflex consonants in Sanskrit: i.e., śṇ-ṣṭ-ṣṭh. In this case sè 瑟 would be being used to indicate more exactly a cluster of retroflex consonants in this name. As Arsila (see below) has two adjacent consonants, it is this feature which could be being represented here.

Although the name Ashina is extremely common in Chinese sources on the Türk period, no identification of this name in alphabetic scripts has yet won general recognition. Three different proposals have been made, however, to which I can add a partial identification as a fourth. The most recent and most direct identification is that of Yoshida and Moriyasu whose reading of the Sogdian-language Bugut Inscription finds the word Ashinas mentioned in Sogdian transcription, in the form '()'šy-n's.117 This form has the final -s~-sh also attested in the Chinese name Ashinash 阿史那施. This reading of the highly degraded Sogdian text is different from that of Kljaštornyj and Livšić, and has subsequently been challenged by Christopher Beckwith.118 Ashinash~Ashinas can also be connected to two names found in later Arabic and Persian sources. The first is the name Ashinās~Ashnās, held by a Turkic ghulam in the service of the Abbassid caliph, who eventually became the governor of Egypt. His name is given a Persian explanation, that once in the forefront of battle he cried “Recognize me!” (ashinās mā-rā).119 To me such an explanation has the patent feel of a folk etymology, explaining a non-Persian, non-Arabic name in a way that persons in his new environment would understand. Similarly, along the Syr Darya River there was also a city named Ashnās, whose current pronunciation is Asanas,120 another name which is phonologically exactly like that of Yutaka and Takao’s reconstruction of the Ashina name, except with -s instead of -sh. Such names could be directly related to the Türk imperial surname, or to whatever the original term from which that name was derived. Just as the War of

118 Kljaštornyj and Livšić, “The Sogdian”, p. 85, read it as c(y)n)st’n or Chinastan “China”; Beckwith “The Chinese”, pp. 14-15, did not find the new reading convincing, but offered no alternative reading, concentrating rather on the overall context in which it was found.
120 W. Barthold, Turkestan down to the Mongol Invasion, pp. 179, 414; Juvaini, John Andrew Boyle, trans., History of the World Conqueror, pp. 87–88.
the Hefthalites gave its name to the city War, or Warwālīz, so the name of the royal Türk lineage presumably gave its name to a city along the Syr Darya where they presumably dwelt.\textsuperscript{121}

Kljaštornyj originally proposed to identify Ashina with either āšāna “worthy, noble” in Khotanese Saka.\textsuperscript{122} Later on, however, he changed his opinion and identified the name with Khotanese Saka āššēina~āššēna “blue” (also found in Tokharian A as āśna).\textsuperscript{123} This identification enabled him to identify the Kök “Blue” in the phrase Kök Tūrūk “Blue Türks” commonly found in the Turkic inscriptions with the name Ashina. This would give an explanation of why Ashina never appears in the Turkic inscriptions: in fact it is there, but in translation, not transcription.\textsuperscript{124} If however Ashinas is found transcribed in the Sogdian Bugut inscription, this explanation becomes less compelling.

Later Chris Beckwith proposed to link the name Āshīnā 阿史那 to an East Roman report of Menander the Guardsman that Arsilas was the name of the ancestor (actually “senior”, previously taken to mean the contemporary top leader) of the Türk dynasty.\textsuperscript{125} The passage in question reads: “The ruler of the Turkish people had divided up all the land there into eight parts. The senior ruler of the Turks was named Arsilas.”\textsuperscript{126} The great strength of this identification is that it is based on identification of Ashina with a specific name found in a source on the Türk empire.\textsuperscript{127} Since Arsilas appears to be important, but never appears elsewhere, it is quite plausible to see it not as a name of an otherwise unknown historical person, but as the eponymous ancestor of the dynasty. As with Yoshida and Moriyasu’s reading, this would involve a reading with a final -sh or -s as seen in the Chinese Ashinash 阿史那施.

These four identifications all involve different readings of the Chinese characters in Āshīnā 阿史那.\textsuperscript{128} Beckwith’s identification of Arsilas with Āshīnā 阿史那

\textsuperscript{121} See Czeglédy, “From East to West”, p. 93.
\textsuperscript{122} This is evidently cognate to Tokharian asam “worthy”; see Douglas Q. Adams, Dictionary of Tocharian B (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999), pp. 32–33; Gerd Carling, with Georges-Jean Pinault and Werner Winter, Dictionary and Thesaurus of Tocharian A (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2009 on), p. 55.
\textsuperscript{124} Kljaštornyj, “Royal Clan”, p. 447.
\textsuperscript{127} Kljaštornyj is typical in finding this position “strong from the historiographical point of view” but vulnerable phonetically. See Kljaštornyj, “Royal Clan”, p. 446.
\textsuperscript{128} This difficulty was already noted by Peter Golden in “Turks and Iranians: An Historical Sketch” in Turkic-Iranian Contact Areas: Historical and Linguistic Aspects, ed. Lars Johanson and Christiane Bulut (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2006), p. 20.
involves certain readings of the Chinese characters that, while not impossible, would be somewhat unusual. Kljaštornyj’s Khotanese āśāna “worthy, noble” and Khotanese āṣeina-āšena “blue” require inexact values for shī 史. By contrast, Yoshida and Moriyasu’s Sogdian reading has the benefit of matching the most common transcription values of the Chinese. Beckwith’s first required reading is to read ā 阿 with a final consonant, such as an. The second would be reading nā 那 as -la. Readings of ā 阿 with a transcription value as an are fairly common in the Tibetan transliterations of the Diamond Sutra and the Heart Sutra and in Khotanese Brahmi script transcriptions as well.129 With regard to 那, while the transcription value was certainly na,130 there is an attested confusion of dental nasals and dental liquids in Tang transcriptions, particularly of names from the Tibetan plateau. Thus Sünòng/*Sonong 蘇農~ Sīnòng/*Sznong 思農 transcribes Tibetan Srong, while Nūlā 奴剌 transcribes Lolad, as is demonstrated by the P.T. 1283 manuscript.131 Thus it is plausible to suggest that what was -la in the original language would be transcribed into Chinese by na. Although I have no not clear evidence for such a

129 Takata, Tonkō shiryō, pp. 304–05, s.v. §0016. A 阿 as an occurs mostly in the transcription of anuttara samyak-sam-bodhi 阿耨多羅三藐三菩提, immediately followed by nōu 楠. Beckwith makes a claim here in defense of his reading which I find hard to follow: “the normal T’ang reading of the first character as ar (at least in foreign names) is clear from many examples, including the name Arslan/Arslan” (p. 207, n. 5). In fact reference to standard studies, such as Takata and Coblin show nothing of the sort; a- and an- are by far the most common readings attested for 阿, and ar is found only once. See §0016 in Coblin, Compendium, pp. 124–25, and Takata, Tonkō shiryō, pp. 304–05, 256, l. B2, for the sole instance of ar as part of the transcription of Āchūbi Fō 阿闍佛, i.e. Akṣobhya Buddha. Cf. William Edward Soothill and Lewis Hodous, A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, and Tubner, 1937), p. 293, s.v. 阿闍. The only specific example of a transcription value of ar for 阿 that Beckwith cites is Arslan which is transcribed in Chinese as Ash(i)na, just as Arslan is transcribed as As(i)lan. This would clearly seem to give a value of ar for 阿. But Arslan is a special case in Chinese transcriptions of foreign words. The sequence of three consonants seems to have been unusually difficult, and led to frequent omission of the -r. Thus in Yuan times, where the transcription value of 阿 is indisputably a (or occasionally o-), the name arslan was frequently transcribed with nothing corresponding to the -r-, thus as 阿素蘭, 阿思蘭, 阿思蘭; see Yao Jing’an 姚景安, comp. Yuanshi renming suoyin 元史人名索引 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1982), pp. 415, 422. In any case, the rarity of a reading as ar is not necessarily fatal to Beckwith’s case, since if Ashina had the same sequence of three consonants such as Arshla–Arshna, or some such, it still might be transcribed in Chinese as Ash(i)na, just as Arslan is transcribed as As(i)lan. The other possibility for a reading as Arshila, rather more likely in my opinion, is that a 阿 is to be read an and the -r, as it commonly does, represents final -r. In short although Beckwith’s specific arguments are not entirely cogent, he is correct that Arshi- is a permissible reading for Ashina 阿史那. But it is certainly not the only permissible reading.

130 See §0005 in Coblin, Compendium, p. 121, and Takata, Tonkō shiryō, pp. 304–05.

value in an Old Turkic transcription, since Ashina is certainly not Turkic, that objection is not dispositive. A possible confirmation is suggested by the alternative transcription of the name as Āsênā/*Ashilna 阿瑟那. As I mentioned, one might think this variant was adopted to indicate that Ashina was to be read Ashila (whether generally or in a particular dialect). But as I pointed earlier, another interpretation of the reason for sē 瑟 is possible in which it relates to a sequence of retroflex consonants. In conclusion one can say that while it is possible to see Āshīnā 阿史那 as a transcription of Arsilas, it does not in fact appear to be the actual reading. Thus, as it stands now, we have a reading Ashinas(h) in Sogdian and a plausible Greek version Arsilas. Chinese transcriptions go better with the first but might be stretched to cover the second. Can these two terms be connected in some way? I believe they can in fact be linked as two versions of the same word, but making that connection demands further analysis of the name’s meaning and origin.

A first step in solution to this puzzle is to reject any link to Turkic arslan “lion”, such as was suggested in Beckwith’s exposition of his Arsilas proposal. The most obvious reason to do so is that if the name really was connected to arslan “lion”, it is hard to see why it too would not be transcribed as阿悉爛, or something similar, like the other undoubted arslans found in Tang sources. Moreover, arslan always has a final -n. The replacement of final -an by either -a or -as--ash is inexplicable on that hypothesis. In addition, a link to arslan, while possibly compatible with the Chinese Āshīnā 阿史那 makes no sense either of the ashi reading which is indicated both by Yoshida and Moriyasu’s reading of the Bugut inscription and by the P.T. 1283 ms. Finally, as I shall show, Ashina is only one of a several related forms, each with the āshi 阿史 root and a different ending or attached name. Such an internal structure of the name Ashina as Ashi+na is clearly incompatible with any derivation from the word arslan.

As I have mentioned, it is necessary to do further internal analysis of the term itself. Fortunately, the characters āshi 阿史 appear in the transcription of not just one term, but in several which can plausibly be seen as related titles. The most important of these terms is Āshī-dé 阿史德, the consort lineage that supplied empresses to the imperial Āshī-nā 阿史那 lineage. Given their link as intermarrying families, the similarity in their names rather obviously suggests that Āshī 阿史 is the root and na 那 and de 德 represent two different suffixes added to arshi-. Another such combination, albeit with a different middle character, is Āshībī/Ashipit 阿失畢

132 There is another case of ā 阿 and nā 那 being used in Inner Asian transcriptions, and that is Ānāgū 阿那鬼, which Beckwith, like most other scholars, identifies with the personal name attested in Greek as Anagai (see Beckwith, Empires of the Silk Road, pp. 9, 114).

133 There is also an Āshībūlái 阿史不來 city, around modern Kainda, west of Bishkek. See E. Chavannes, Documents sur les T’ou-kiue (Turcs) occidentaux (Paris: Adrien-maisonneuve, 1900), pp. 10, 304. Chavannes identifies this with the Ashpara~Asbara of Ibn Khurdadhbih; see, Minorsky, Ḥudūd al-ʿĀlam, p. 289. Apart from confirming that the likely reading of ashi 阿史 by itself is ashi(t) this case offers little further illumination.
in which āshī 阿失 is combined with bi 毕 (Middle Chinese pɨt), to form the name of the king of Tashkent. The term occurs elsewhere with a known meaning. It is generally acknowledged to represent pɨt in the Chinese transcription shišt/šipit 失畢 for Turkic shadapɨt, probably via a Tokharian reflex of the Prakrit form šadavīda. The term pɨt stems from Indo-Iranian pati > vida “lord”. The shī 失 is different from shi 史 in having a coda with rūshēng, i.e. [ʂɨt] in Pulleyblank’s reconstruction (Lexicon, p. 282) and shir in Tang-era Tibetan transcription (Coblin, Compendium §0826a, p. 367). In other words, here we have the root in a form that matches the first two characters of Āsēnā/Asilna 阿瑟那, but with pɨt or vida “lord” in place of the -na. This example is significant because here the final -t~r cannot be intended to govern the pronunciation of the following consonant, since here it is certainly not -l or -r. This indicates that in Āshībī 阿失毕 and Āsēnā 阿瑟那 the middle character was chosen for a different reason, that is, to render a cluster of retroflex consonants. Thus if Asena might be rendering something like Arsila with retroflex ṛṣ in sequence, Ashibi might be representing something like Arsipɨt with the same cluster.

Analysis of the range of uses, then, suggests that ashi should be a common noun or adjective that could be combined with a number of different terms, including pati~vida~pɨt “lord”. This analysis may be confirmed by the fact that Yoshida and Moriyasu record a space break between ’(’)šy, i.e. Āshī and n’s, i.e. nās in the reference in the Bugut inscription. Thus Āshi-na by itself may be confidently analyzed not as a single word, but a stem Āshi~Arshi, used productively to form a variety of names and titles, with an ending -na. Fortunately there exists an alphabetic transcription of one of these other titles, that is, the lineage name Āshīdē 阿史德. This name’s Early Middle Chinese reading would be [ʔa-ʃɨ′tək] in Pulleyblank’s reconstructed Early Middle Chinese, ’a-ʂə-tək in Coblin’s reconstructed Old Northwest Chinese (dated to c. 400), and “a-ši-tig in Late Tang Tibetan transcriptions. A Tibetan transcription of Āshīdē 阿史德 is found in the manuscript P.T. 1283, which records the names of various polities and their constituent divisions around c. 750. This manuscript has already been encountered as the source of the reading of Shēlì 舍利 as Shar. Among the names listed are the twelve “tribes” of the Eastern Türks, a list which can be mapped against similar lists

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134 Tong dian 通典 198.5438.
136 See Yoshida and Moriyasu, “Buguto himon”, p. 123. However, the spacing is quite inconsistent so I would not feel placing much emphasis on this point.
137 On the readings ā 阿 and shi 史, see above. For dē 德, see Pulleyblank, Lexicon, p. 74 and §0979 in Coblin, Compendium, pp. 411–12, and Takata, Tonkō shiryō, pp. 396–97.
in Chinese sources.138 In it, there is one item: *a-sha-sde*i sde-chig “One tribe of the A-sha-sde*. As Gerard Clauson already recognized, this A-sha-sde or A-sha-sde*i* (in the genitive case) is identifiable with the Ashide 阿史德 of the Chinese lists.139

As it stands, this reading must be somewhat corrupt, but the direction of corruption is fortunately fairly clear, and involves primarily the third syllable. First of all, *sde* is an actual Tibetan word, meaning “part, division”, etc.; applied to groups of people it is usually translated as “tribe” and in fact it appears immediately after every name found in this list. Since *sde*~*sde*i* is not a plausible reconstruction of any Middle Chinese pronunciation of *dé* 德, evidently the original form, which one would expect to be *teg* or *tig*, was corrupted by influence of the immediately following *sde*, into the genitive form of *sde*, i.e. *sde*i*. Since most items in the list do not have the genitive ending, but simply place the name in apposition with the word *sde* chig “one tribe”, I would guess that all the instances of genitives in this list are later corruptions, either of some part of the original name (as with *teg* to *sde*i*), or else by paradigmization. The two earlier syllables, though, preserve a transcription of Ashi 阿史 as *a-sha*. But it should be noted that corruption in the second syllable vowel is possible. In Indic scripts like Tibetan, the *a* in *sha* is marked simply by the absence of a vowel mark, and there are two vowel marks on the third syllable where one would expect only one (assuming, as I have suggested, that the genitive is corrupt). Moving the vowel marks over, one could reconstruct the original as *A-shetig*, or perhaps with a metathesis (again generated by the scribal instinct to conform the third syllable to *sde*) as *A-shi-teg*. To sum up, the first syllable is reliable, the second syllable is reliable except for the vowel, which is likely *e* or *i*, and the third syllable can only be restored by reference to external data.

The *teg* or *tig* reading for the third syllable in 阿史德阿史德 links *Ashi-na* and *Ashi-dè* with a pair of honorific terms common in the titulature of Türk and Uyghur rulers. One finds in this titulature paired terms *teng’ride* “from Heaven” and *teng’riteg* “Heaven-like”. These terms appear to be roughly synonymous, but with *teng’ride* being slightly more elevated.140 What is striking and hitherto unexplained is that the Türk ablative -*de* in the phrase *teng’ride* is never transcribed in the Uyghur era by a syllable with the sound of -*de*, but rather always by one with the Tang pronunciation of *la*: *luò* 喏, *luò* 遑, or *luó* 羅. Taking this transcription as *teng’ri-la* and *teng’ri-teg*, the pair is strikingly reminiscent of the Ashi-na~Ashi-teg particularly if we give -*na* the possible -*la* reading.141

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141 See the examples assembled in Rybatzki, “Titles”, pp. 234–43, the table on pp. 249–51, and the examples in nos. 43–112 in the Chinese glossary.
So what is the root *Ashi–Arshi*? As it turns out, there is a widely attested and semantically appropriate word found in Turkic that fits the bill for such a stem: *arshi* “sacred, wise”, a word of Sanskrit origin (*ṛṣi* “Vedic poet, sage”), but which was early borrowed into Turkic as *arshi*, *irshi*, *rshi*, *rshti*. Arshi is certainly the most common form in Uyghur-era manuscripts and in that form it was also borrowed into Mongolian as *arshi*. I argue, however, that in addition to these later forms, more strongly influenced by Sanskrit, there ought to have been an older form *ashi*, which would be the root from which terms like *Ashi-la/Ashi-na, Ashi-teg*, and *Ashi-pit* developed.

If Uyghur *arshi* derives from Sanskrit *ṛṣi*, where did the *a*- come from? While Uyghur has forms with *a*-,*i*-,*Ø*- as initial vowels, only forms without *a*- are attested in extant non-Sanskrit, non-Uyghur versions of this word. Thus Gandhari Prakrit has *iśi*, while Pali has *isi*.143 In the Tokharian languages, the word is found in various forms derived from Sanskrit: *ṛṣāke* “seer” and *ṛṣākaṇca* “female sage; seeress” in Tokharian B and *ṛiṣak* (plural *ṛiṣaki*) “sage” in Tokharian A.144 Chinese forms are not helpful, since the term in that language is always translated, and not transcribed.145

Evidently, the “correct” learned derivation from the Sanskrit, as paralleled in the Tokharian forms, into Uyghur produced the forms *irshi*, *rsi*, and *rshi*. This fact indicates that the *arshi* form in Uyghur must be in some sense a more vulgar non-Sanskrit forms. But by the same token, the earlier Prakrit forms lack any reflex of the *ṛ*. If we combine these two vulgar features, one could posit an earlier, irregularly Prakrit-based form *ashi*, which would later be Sanskritized by Uyghur Buddhists as *arshi*, or more completely as *Irshi*, *rshi*, and *rshi*. A similar alternation of *a*- ~ *i*- in a Turkic title of Indian origin is attested in the name of the Bulghar king whose name is written in Greek as Asparoukh, Armenian as Asparhruk, and in Bulgarian as Isperikh.146 Like Sinor, I see this word as being certainly cognate to the İşbara of the Old Turkic inscriptions and the *Shābolüè 沙鉢略* of the Chinese transcriptions, both being derived from Sanskrit *Īśvara* “lord”.147 The alternation between the initial *a*-, which seems to represent the more usual pronunciation and perhaps more “correct” *i*- (attested in written form from the Bulgar list of kings) would exactly

142 Nadeliaev, Drevnetiurkskii slovar’, pp. 55, 212, 477.
145 See Soothill and Hodous, Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms, pp. 166, 334, s.v. 仙和神仙.
parallel the relation between the ashi- root of Ashina(sh) and the attested isi of Gandhari Prakrit.

It is this contrast between the earlier Prakrit-influenced version and later Sanskritized versions which would account for the variation between Ashina and Arshila(s). Arshila would the more etymologically correct Sanskritized form, used in the west among the Central Asian oasis dwellers, while Ashina would be the vulgar form, preserved particularly in the east in Mongolia and China. The name Arsîlas, as found in Greek sources, is obviously derived from the Türk empire’s Sogdian interpreters. The versions Āṣēnā  阿瑟那, used for the name of a king in the Ferghana valley, and Ashibi 阿失畢, used for a king in Tashkent, would thus both make sense as a Chinese effort to render this more Sanskritized version, particularly with the retroflex consonants, i.e. Arşila and Arşipït. As I have already noted, replacing shi 史 with sé 瑟 or shi 失, was probably intended to represent a cluster of retroflexes, in this case rṣ. This would bring the roots very close to arshi. Ashibi 阿失畢, the name or title of the Tashkent king, would then be transcribing Arshi-Pït or Sanskrit Ṛṣipati “Holy Lord”.149

If Ashi∼Arshi- are the two forms of the root, what are the suffixes? As I have already noted, -la and -teg both appear in Chinese transcriptions of Uyghur titles in conjunction with the root teng’ri “heaven”, and something similar appears here. Teg is common in Old Turkic as “like”, and at least some analysts see an adverbial suffix in -la.150 But others do not speak of such an adverb and as noted, the -la suffix actually corresponds in Uyghur titles to a Turkic locative-ablative -de. It seems most likely then that -la and -teg are a non-Turkic pair of suffixes. -La in Sanskrit might be a secondary adjectival ending, in which case Arshila would be an unattested Sanskrit word Ṛṣila with the whole meaning simply “holy, sacred”.152 But that might

148 One might wonder then, why was eastern form used in the actual Sogdian inscription of Bugut? The situation is, I believe similar to that found with the title shadapït. As Bombaci notes, this title is of Indo-Iranian origin, but is found in the Bugut inscription in a purely Turkic form, uninfluenced by the Iranian orthography; see Bombaci, “On the Ancient Turkish Title Šadapït”, p. 37. Here again, an Indo-Iranian form is found in this Mongolian inscription in the form derived from the Turkic rulers, not the Sogdian interpreters.

149 Note how pït here still preserves its vulgar Inner Asianized form based on a Prakrit original vida.


151 Tekin, Grammar of Orkhon Turkish, p. 163, does not list it and interprets the birle given as an example by Erdal very differently. Indeed I wonder if -LA here is not the -RA directive/adverb, of which many examples are given by Tekin, Grammar of Orkhon Turkish, pp. 154–55, but with a dissimulated liquid following the -r of bir.

152 I am grateful to Richard Nance who in an email of August 13, 2011, noted that “… The ‘-la’ in ‘ṛṣila’ could be a simple secondary suffix. … So, for example, whereas the word a.msa means shoulder; a.msla means strong or powerful, i.e., “well-shouldered”; whereas the word kapî means monkey, kapîla means tawny or brown, i.e., “monkey-colored”. If that's what's afoot here, ṛṣila could very well carry the meaning of something like “holy”.
not be the only possibility; the Turkic equivalent would rather suggest a comparative sense of the ablative-locative as denoting origin: “of Heavenly/Holy origin”.153

Either way, the change from -la to -na is one that is quite plausibly associated with west to east movement of a vocabulary item. It is well-known that in a variety of cases, Turkic forms in l- alternate with Mongolian forms in n-; the best known of which is the Turkic plural lar and the Mongolian plural nar.154 The ending teg in Ashiteg appears to be a native Inner Asian form, which was adopted into Old Turkic as a postposition not following vowel harmony. Ashi-teg would thus be the older Prakritized form ashi plus the Turkic ending -teg “like”.155 Ashina–Arshila would thus be “the holy ones” or “of holy origin” while Ashiteg would be “saint-like”.

My conclusion is then, that Ashina(sh) is indeed the same as the Greek Arsilas. Neither is related to Turkic arslan, instead both are cognate to Sanskrit rṣi meaning “holy man”. In western Central Asia, the root was often pronounced as Arshi-, while the usual Chinese version is based on an older, eastern version, pronounced as Ashi-. This root arshi-ashi was also understood as an adjective “holy” and was used to create new terms. It was probably also in this eastern Inner Asian context where the suffix -teg “like” was added to the term to make a companion lineage name, Ashiteg. The pair of suffixes –la~na and -teg were used in a similar way to derive titles from teng’ri as well. In the west, Sanskrit influence generated the form Arshila (with or without the Turkic -sh gentilic suffix) and it was this form under which the Ashina family was known to the Sogdian interpreters. Other terms like Arshi-Pīt “Holy Lord” were also used as titles.

Zhama

That Ashina is not a native Inner Asian clan-name, but an Indic epithet should not be too surprising, especially as this ruling lineage has a completely different name, also of non-Turkic origin, as Zhama. This form is much less common than Ashina, but appears in several important cases. The name appears three times in the Tibetan geographical text in the P.T. 1283. The name is attached throughout to the transcription of the word Qaghan, thus being Zha-ma Kha-gan.156 Read literally the name in Tibetan would seem to be a sort of personal epithet or title.

However, the status of the name as that of the ruling lineage is established by its use in the ancestor-legend of the Türk empire already discussed. In it, to recall, the ancestor of the Türk peoples is called Shèmó 射摩, which in its Early Middle

153  This is one of the senses -de as ablative given in Tekin, Grammar of Orkhon Turkish, p. 134, and Erdal, “Old Turkic”, p. 150.
154  Others include lachin–nachin, etc. See Doerfer, TMEN, §1728 (Vol. IV, pp. 11–14).
155  Tekin, Grammar of Orkhon Turkish, pp. 377–78.
Chinese form is a perfect match for Tibetan Zhama.\textsuperscript{157} It is striking that Zhama, the name of the Türk imperial lineage, here appears as that of a man, the ancestor of the lineage. This is exactly the identification of lineage name with eponymous ancestor name which Beckwith noted in the case of Ashina–Arshilas. Confirmation that Zhama was the name of the ruling lineage and identical to Ashina is found in the regulations for imperial receptions under the Tang. According to them, the Türk princes in attendance were separated into two ranks: 1) the Ten-Surname “mó/ma” Āshīnā 摩阿史那, which included the Qaghan; and 2) the Thirty Surnames.\textsuperscript{158} In the word mó/ma attached to Ashina, one must see the second character of Zhama 射摩, the preceding shè 射 having been accidentally omitted in transmission. One may also presume that these distinctions of standing within the imperial lineage were also acted out during the yearly sacrifices, restricted to the aristocracy, in the fifth moon toward the cave whence the Ashina and its fraternal lineages were said to have originated.\textsuperscript{159} Osawa Takashi has identified Zhama with Yama, as he reads on the Ongi Inscription in place of what previous scholars have read as Yamī. This inscription begins: “Our ancestor Yama (for Yamī) Qaghan suppressed, frightened, routed, and subdued the four quarters of the world.”\textsuperscript{160} This he further links with the Indo-Iranian first man Yima~Yama.\textsuperscript{161} Osawa’s argument seems to be correct, and the fact that the early Chinese and Tibetan version of this name had initial zh- indicates that this ruling lineage’s language, which was not Turkic, had this form. This is another illustration of the \textit{y\textasciitilde}j\textasciitildezh (i.e. [j]\textasciitilde[dʒ]\textasciitilde[ʒ]) alternation we find in other Türk-era titles, notably yabghu for which there is an excellent two-part summary of the evidence in the \textit{Encyclopaedia Iranica}.\textsuperscript{162} Chinese evidence

\textsuperscript{157} 射 has many readings, but the relevant one is as shè, for which Pulleyblank, \textit{Lexicon}, p. 279, has the Early Middle Chinese pronunciation as [zaɪ]. The Tang era pronunciation would become devoiced, for which Pulleyblank gives [ʃiaɪ], and which would be read sha in Tibetan. Cf. Coblin, \textit{Compendium}, §0072, which has [*fra\textasciitilde] corresponds to modern ye which is not in question here (cf. Pulleyblank, \textit{Lexicon}, p. 364). Mô 摩 is given in Early Middle Chinese as ma (Pulleyblank, \textit{Lexicon}, p. 217) and in Coblin’s Old Northwest Chinese as *ma, and Tang Chinese as *ba, with Tibetan transcription as 'ba or ma (§0031, \textit{Compendium}, pp. 130–31 and Takata, \textit{Tonkō shiryō}, pp. 306–07). Tibetan Zha-ma thus corresponds perfectly to the Early Middle Chinese (Wei-era) pronunciation of 射摩, but not to the Tang pronunciation, which in Tibetan would have been sha’-ba.

\textsuperscript{158} \textit{Jiu Tang shu} 舊唐書 23.900.

\textsuperscript{159} \textit{Zhou shu} 周書 50.910; \textit{Tong dian} 通典 199.5453.

\textsuperscript{160} Tekin, \textit{Grammar of Orkhon Turkish}, p. 291.


Christopher P. Atwood demonstrates that the oldest attestation of the title as xīhóu 翕侯 or *hip-go.163 Thus for this title, the initial y- should be primary. But although the usual spelling in Turkic sources is yabghu, the usual Arabic form is jabghūyā.164 One also finds Sogdian versions as cpγw (to be read jabghu) and Manichaean Uyghur as jβγw (to be read zhavghu).165 C. Edmund Bosworth made the plausible assumption that this is an example already in the early Middle Ages of the Turkic dialectal difference between Oghuz-type vs. Qipchaq-type contrast of initial y- with initial j- or zh- (this sound change can be seen today in the correspondence of Turkish yîl and Uyghur yîl “year” with Tatar jîl and Kazakh, zhîl). I also believe, on the basis of Chinese transcriptions, that a particular demonym might be a version of Turkic yüź “hundred”, except in its affricate form jüź.166 But the evidence adduced by Nicholas Sims-Williams and Étienne de la Vaissière in their article on the term yabghu show that the alternation of forms in y- and j- is ancient and occurs in contexts where Turkic dialects are completely out of the question. Indeed comparative linguistic evidence documents that y- > j- is quite common.167 Thus, for example, the Greek coins of the first century Kushan monarch Kujula Kadphises have Prakrit yavuga- or yaųa- but Greek zaoou (genitive for *zaoos or *zaoēs, to be read zawo-). Comparative linguistic evidence would suggest that this z- is already derived from j- or zh-.168 Thus alterations of Zhama for Yama or zhabghu for yabghu might not have not have their roots in Turkic language dialectal change, but in some other language or languages entirely.

One might also note that the same alteration of y- and j- (or various other derivatives) is found in a major class of Chinese characters, in which y- and (in the archaic pronunciations) j- initials alternate, such as yè~shè 射, yè~shè 葉, yè~xié 邪, yè~xìe 邪.

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166 The basis of this is the name of the Zhīsī 朱斯 of Xin Tang shu 新唐書 215A.6048 and Chīsì 熾 of ibid. 217B.6143, etc. which are certainly the same, and which I also link to the Zhīxīé 朱邪 of the Shatuo ancestor legend. See Christopher P. Atwood, “The Notion of Tribe in Medieval China: Ouyang Xiu and the Shatuo Dynastic Myth”, in Miscellanea Asiatica: Festschrift in Honour of Françoise Aubin, ed. Denise Aigle, Isabelle Charleux, Vincent Gossaert, and Roberte Hamayon (Sankt Augustin: Institute Monumenta Serica, 2010), p. 600, n. 21.

167 Examples of this y > j sound change include the Romance languages, as well as the Iranian languages themselves where Avestan Yima (Khshaēta) becomes Jam(shed); see Mary Boyce, Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices (London ; Boston : Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), p. 88.

168 Another example occurs with the proposed linkage of Old Iranian ӯātu “magic; magician” with Old Turkic ӯād and Mongolian ţada, both meaning “weather stone”. See Ádám Molnár, Weather Magic in Inner Asia (Bloomington: Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies, 1994), pp. 113–16.
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yi~shé 蛇, and yè~zhu 拽. In these pairs the second member of the pair derives from what in Middle or Old Chinese was ʒi-, ʃi-, zi-, and the like, all of which may be plausibly derived from j- (i.e. dʒ̥-).\(^{169}\) While this alternation in Middle Chinese is the result of very different developments in Old Chinese, it is perhaps not accidental that both Shèmó 射摩 (the Chinese for Zhama) and Yèhú 葉護 (the Chinese for Yabghu) have alternative readings, that is, as Yèmó 射摩 indicating Yama and Shèhú 葉護 indicating zhabghu. Indeed Bichurin and Chavannes chose to read shèhú not yèhú 葉護.\(^{170}\) The Chinese characters thus show the same kind of variation found in the Türk-era pronunciations. Probably the Chinese transcribers were aware of the variant pronunciations of the Türkic languages, whether Oghuz-type Turkic dialect found in the Old Turkic inscription, or the non-Turkic language spoken by the Ashinash royal family, and fastened upon precisely those characters in Chinese which had something like that same ambiguity.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the examples presented here demonstrate, I believe, that considerable further progress is possible in identifying previously unknown Inner Asian vocabulary from Chinese and other sources of the Türk and Uyghur eras. As Denis Sinor recognized, this further light, however, is likely to come from non-Turkic sources, especially Kitan and Tuyuhun vocabulary, Tibetan transcriptions, and Indic etymologies. Holding these together is a renewed appreciation for the general consistency and accuracy of Chinese transcriptions, which when properly read can provide considerable information about a now completely defunct Inner Asian political vocabulary.

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\(^{169}\) See Pulleyblank, *Lexicon*, under those words. Coblin’s discussion (*Compendium*, 46–47, cf. 142–43 [§0064], and Takata, *Tonkō shiryō*, pp. 308–09) of the divergent readings of shé 蛇 “snake” would apply to shè 射 as well, and indeed all these pairs.

\(^{170}\) I do not know the basis on which Bichurin and Chavannes adopted this reading. But generally y- seems more common (see for example, the Tibetan transcription as yabgo in Beckwith, *Tibetan Empire in Central Asia*, p. 68, n. 80), so I guess that yèhú 葉護, EMC [jiap-y̌o\(^3\)] in Pulleyblank or [jiap-yo] in Coblin’s reconstructed Old Northwest Chinese (§0566, §0107), would be the more usual reading. But since the pronunciation as zhabghu existed, a reading as shèhú could also be correct.
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