

BOOK REVIEW

Vér, Márton 2019. *Old Uyghur Documents Concerning the Postal System of the Mongol Empire* [Berliner Turfantexte XLIII]. Turnhout: Brepols. 263 pp.

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The volume under review here is based on the author's doctoral dissertation submitted to the University of Szeged in 2016, which aimed to present a critical edition of the Old Uyghur documents related to the postal relay system of the Mongol Empire. The author has published several articles on the topic from the viewpoint of the history of the Mongol Empire,¹ and he intended this volume to provide the basis of further historical investigation.

The first part of the volume is allotted to the introduction (pp. 9–55), which consists of four sections (1.1–1.4.). The general introduction (1.1.) explains trends in historical research on the Mongol Empire during the past quarter century, which reveal that the Mongols accelerated economic, cultural and religious exchanges across Eurasia during the 13th–14th centuries. Clearly, such exchanges in the premodern ages would have required physical and material facilities for human transportation. This viewpoint has led the author as well as many Mongolists to the study of the postal relay system (Mong. *jam* ~ Tü. *yam* > Pers. *yām*) of the Mongol Empire. Previous studies have mainly been based on the Chinese and Persian narrative sources; however, the author raises the significance of the Old Uyghur secular documents as primary sources from Central Asia, the least studied region of the Mongol dominion.

Following the research history of the Old Uyghur secular texts (1.2.), the author offers descriptions of the Old Uyghur text materials edited in the volume, amounting to 67 in total (1.3.). They are briefly divided into two categories: official documents (1.3.1.1) and private documents (1.3.1.2.). The 45 official documents are classified into provision orders (PO01–PO24), *käzig*-orders (Käz01–Käz11), miscellaneous orders (OMis01–OMis03), official accounts (OAcc01–OAcc05), and official registers (OReg01–OReg02). Of the 17 private documents, 15 are designat-

¹ See his works in the bibliography of the volume: among them, 'Vér 2019' has already appeared as Vér 2019a. Moreover, now we have Vér 2019b.

ed as lists and registers concerning the *ulag*-system (UIReg01–UIReg15), while the remaining two are designated as other private lists (PList01–PList02).

Besides the Old Uyghur documents, the author pays attention to three Middle Mongolian decrees of safe conduct (MongHT 73, MongHT 74, and MongHT 75). After the description of the documentary format of the decrees (1.3.2.), the author offers a comparative analysis of the Old Uyghur orders and the Mongolian decrees, to conjecture three levels of administration for the postal system in the Turfan region (1.3.3.). We may note that the author furthered such comparative research in the paper published after the volume (Vér 2019b).

In section 1.4., the author explains keywords associated with the postal system, i.e., *ulag* ‘post horse, relay horse’, *elči* ‘envoy’, *kupčir* ‘a kind of poll tax’, and *böz* ‘cotton cloth (as currency)’ (1.4.1.). These are the main criteria for the author’s choice of documents related to the postal system. The following subsections are devoted to technical instructions on the order of the text materials (1.4.2.–1.4.4.).

The edition of the 67 documents in the second part (pp. 57–197) should be regarded as the core of the book. The author’s reading is generally reliable and makes reasonable corrections of mistakes in previous editions. It is especially noteworthy that 15 texts are fully edited and published here for the first time.² This part is followed by the appendices (pp. 199–263), which consists of the indexes of words, personal names, geographical names, and concordances, to assist the readers’ understanding.

As declared by the author, the present volume is devoted mainly to the philological edition, which offers solid sources for historical study. In this respect the author undoubtedly achieved great success. He refrains from reconstructing the historical background, for which we can consult his previous and forthcoming papers.

Independently from the author, this reviewer has been preparing an edition of the Old Uyghur administrative orders.³ Accordingly, the author’s study is highly stimulating, as it has inspired many new ideas concerning the textual readings and interpretation of the document’s functions, while his opinion does not always tally with mine. Here I reserve detailed arguments, delivering comments mainly from the viewpoint of the functional analysis of the Old Uyghur secular documents.

The author’s distinction between provision orders (PO01–PO24) and *käzig* orders (Käz01–Käz11), which seems based on L. V. Clark (1975: 388–390), may not be very practical. As has been proven by the reviewer, administrative orders in both these categories had the primary purpose of making extraordinary requisitions on local Uyghur inhabitants for various materials, which were converted to (a part of) the ordinary taxes or the burden of the *corvée*.⁴ For example, PO05, PO09, Käz01, Käz03, Käz04, and Käz09 belong to the so-called ‘*Kutulug*-seal orders’,⁵ issued by a single group of the local Uyghur officials in the mid-14th century, alongside other orders for requisitions not directly related to the postal system. These requisition orders may well deserve further investigations in the larger frame of the overall taxation and tributary systems of the Mongol Empire.

² PO02 (MIK III 6972a), Käz11 (SI 3131b), OMis02 (U 5947), OMis03 (U 6256 + U 6119 + *U9249 + U 5425), OReg01 (Ch/U 8175 + Ch/U 6512), UIReg01 (Ch/U 6107), UIReg02 (Ch/U 6510), UIReg03 (Ch/U 7012), UIReg04 (Ch/U 7145), UIReg06 (Ch/U 8136 + Ch/U 6039), UIReg07 (Mainz 765), UIReg11 (Ch/U 7345), UIReg12 (Ch/U 7344), UIReg13 (Ch/U 8012), UIReg14 (U 6006).

³ Matsui 2014: 629–633.

⁴ Matsui 1998a; Matsui 2002: 94–97; Matsui 2008a; Matsui 2014: 613–614.

⁵ Matsui 1998b: 2–11; Matsui 2014a: 622–623.



In addition, the multilingual and chronological comparison with Chinese legal documents retrieved from Turfan, Kucha, Khotan, and other oases of Central Asia could benefit the author. They reflect the administrative systems in the Tarim Basin under the Tang rule from the 7th to the end of the 8th century, which later became the prototype of the West Uyghur administration in Turfan.⁶ In view of such historical developments, the author's interpretation of OAcc01–OAcc05, that they were official accounts submitted to the controllers of the postal stations, seems unlikely. Refuting my interpretation that the five documents had the hybrid nature of official receipts and administrative requisition orders, the author claims that official receipt documents did not require the issuing official's name and the destinations of the paid money. Chinese tax receipt documents of the Tang period,⁷ however, usually include such information and even offer examples of the administrative requisition order and its receipt pasted together, which are comparable to PO10+OAcc01+PO11 (cf. Matsui 2018: 124–131). They may well suggest the continuity in practices at the terminal administrative organization in the Turfan region.

In this volume the author quite sensibly produces 19 texts of Old Uyghur lists and registers (OReg, UIReg, PList), offering a beachhead for further research. Most of the lists and registers comprise only brief contents, that is, names and numbers of materials, and their deliverers or recipients, sporadically, with dates. Such simple contents have therefore heretofore not attracted much attention in the Old Uyghur linguistic and philological studies, although they deserve a minute analysis from the viewpoint of socio-economic history.⁸ Other than the lists and registers in this volume mainly derived from the Berlin collection, similar texts remain unpublished in other collections of St. Petersburg, London, and China. We may expect the author to further exploit such lists and registers to encourage historical studies on the postal system and surrounding social circumstances.

The following are minor memorandums and proposals of other possible readings of the Old Uyghur texts.⁹ The text materials in the volume are generally fragmentary and written by clumsy hands in the Uyghur cursive script; therefore, my proposals below are not solid but rather tentative.

Pp. 36–37: In the description of OReg02 (= USp, No. 54), the author rejects my current reading *om* ('the decury') as 'of suppositional nature,' and adopts Radloff's reading *atı* (< *at*) 'the horse' (cf. pp. 154–155). Unfortunately, the author overlooked my declaration that I had access to a facsimile of the text (Matsui 2002: 98). The original photocopy is still preserved at the St. Petersburg Institute of Oriental Manuscripts under the shelf number ФB277-7-(USp)54.

Pp. 40–43: As for the Mongol safe conduct, the one issued by the Ilkhan Abaya in 1279 CE¹⁰ and another by Kedmen-Bayatur, the governor of Turfan under the Chaghatai Khanate in the mid-14th century,¹¹ might well be mentioned. Their formats are slightly different from the three decrees of the Chaghatai Khanate investigated in the volume, and the reason such differences exist among decrees with a similar purpose also deserves some attention.

⁶ Matsui 1998a; Matsui 2008a: 235–237; Matsui 2018: 124–131.

⁷ E.g., Ikeda 1979: Nos. 196–198, 200–202, 205.

⁸ E.g., Moriyasu 2004: 102–109; Matsui 2002: 103–106; Matsui 2015a: 70–71; Matsui 2015b: 99.

⁹ Modifications for the administrative orders will be presented in my forthcoming edition.

¹⁰ Mostaert and Cleaves 1952, Document A; for its correct date, see de Rachewiltz 2008.

¹¹ Matsui 2008b (B163:42 of the Dunhuang Academy, China).



P. 42: In the mention of the ‘200 leather bags of wine-grapes’ of MongHT 72, the author simply follows previous studies to interpret Mong. *üjüb* as a variant of *üjüm* ‘grape’; however, it should be read as *ujub* (< Pers. *wuğūb*) ‘tax, duty, tribute’.¹²

P. 43, fn. 69: Mong. *araki* should be a loanword from Uyg. *araki*: the Uyghurs could accept Ar. *‘araq* ‘sweat; distilled alcoholic beverage, liquor, spirits’ and add the possessive suffix +*i* to create an idiom *bor araki* (> Mong. *bor araki*) ‘distilled wine, grape brandy’.¹³

P. 112: The author misunderstands the reviewer’s opinion on *kılık*. Though not explicitly, I proposed to modify not *kılık* but *köp iŝ* ‘duties multiplied’ to *[sı]kiŝ* ‘heavy burden’ (Matsui 2005b: 72–74).

P. 152, OReg01 (Ch/U 8175v + Ch/U 6512v): Personal names might be modified: *WR* → *kıtay* ‘Khitan; (North-) Chinese’, identical with one in line 5?; *oron* → *oroŝ* ‘Russian?’; *tančuk* → *takičuk* or *tagayčuk*? This personal name is attested in U 5331.¹⁴

Pp. 157–158, UlReg01 (Ch/U 6107v): *yemŝi-kä* → *yıgıŝ-(k)a* ‘in/for assembling (cotton cloth)’?; *yana baŝlap* → *yag baŝlap* ‘conducting (transportation of) oil (*yag*)’?; *tökrü* → *tükä[l]* ‘complete(ly)’?

P. 159, UlReg02 (Ch/U 6510v): *S’K* → *SNK = s(a)ŋ ~ san?* For attestation of *san* as ‘grain (as provision to be stored at the granary)’ in Ch/U 7327, see Matsui 1997: 30; Matsui 2010: 58.

Pp. 165–166, UlReg06 (Ch/U 8136v + Ch/U 6039v): *berirm(e)n* → *bägi* (lit. *P’KY*)? The scribe of this text tends to put the middle *aleph* redundantly, e.g., *P’K* for *bäg*; *ičip berirm(ä)n* → *ičip ünt(i)m(i)z* ‘we drank and departed’?; *sanrıŝ* → *ŝagird* (< Pers. *šāgird*) ‘scholar, student, apprentice’.

P. 170, UlReg07 (Mainz 765v): *künküy* → *kökägür* (< Mong. *kökegür ~ kökügür*) ‘skin bag for wine or other liquids’ (Lessing 1973: 483).

Pp. 174–175, UlReg08 (U 5299): In *ay-~~a~~-nuŋ-tın berü*, the genitive suffix +*nuŋ* is also crossed out, and may be displayed as *nuŋ*; *mählig kuča* → *miŋlig hoč-a*? Perhaps *miŋlig* ‘who/what have one thousand’ could be a synonym of *miŋ bägi* ‘chiliarch’, while *hoč-a ~ hoča* must be a loanword from Pers. *hivāğā* ‘master, lord, teacher’, used as a component of a personal name.

Pp. 177–178, UlReg09 (U 5307): *tälip* → *tilik* (a personal name)?; *yarım böz* might be interpreted as ‘half cotton cloth’ or ‘cotton cloth of the half-length of the standard’¹⁵; *kısık satığçı-ka* → *kısrak satıgın-ga* ‘for the price of a mare’?

Pp. 180–181, UlReg10 (U 5311): *ögdiŝ* is a mistake for *WYDWŝ = ödüŝ*. In the cursive Uyghur script, -*Y*- before -*D*- is quite frequently written in the final form like -*K*-; *Č’KYR = čakir* is a correction for my *Č’QYR = čakır*, though -*Q*- before -*Y*-/-*W*- often has a second stroke, which is bent like -*K*- but considerably distinguishable.¹⁶ We can compare -*Q*- here with -*K*- in *YKY = iki*, *LWYKČWKN = lükčüŋ*, and *PYTK ČY = bitkäči*.

Pp. 185–186, UlReg11 (Ch/U 7345v): *ŝazın ~ ŝazın* ‘discipline, regulation’ does not appear to be a component of a personal name but a Buddhist title for a named *ŝıŋın* (or *ŝıŋka*?). Similar examples are found in *U 9286, *Čärkäŝ ŝazın* and *Tuglug ky-a ŝazın*¹⁷; *terip// TYRLD [t]o[l]äk* is a typo for *terip [t]ö[l]äk*.

¹² Šayḥ al-Ḥukamā’i, Watabe and Matsui 2017: 73–74.

¹³ Cf. Zieme 1997: 442–444; Matsui 1998b: 28–30.

¹⁴ The author edited only the first three lines of U 5331 as OMis01 in this volume.

¹⁵ Cf. Matsui 2015b: 101; Matsui 2017: 413.

¹⁶ Matsui 2005a: 39–43.

¹⁷ For the facsimile, see Raschmann and Sertkaya 2016: 99.



Pp. 187–188, UIReg12 (Ch/U 7344v): ${}_2P//\text{-k}\ddot{a} \rightarrow \text{b}\ddot{a}g(i)\eta\ddot{a}$ ‘to the official’?; ${}_{10}\text{ulag-}\dot{\text{c}}i\text{-ka tu}\dot{\text{t}}\text{ul-dai} \rightarrow \text{ulag-}\dot{\text{c}}i\text{-ka tu}\dot{\text{t}}\text{uldi}$ ‘(the delivery?) was converted to (the labour service as) the stableman.’ Consequently, ${}_6\text{uzu}[n u]\text{lag-ka tu}\dot{\text{t}}[zun]$ may be slightly modified to $\text{uzu}[n u]\text{lag-ka tu}\dot{\text{t}}[uldi]$ ‘(the delivered horses) were converted to the long-range horse.’

P. 190, UIReg14 (U 6006): $[_{1..}L'N\text{-ni}[\eta \dots]/ P/]L/$ might be modified to $[_{o}]\text{glan-nu}[\eta \text{ni}\dot{s}]an b[i]l[\ddot{a}]$ ‘at the mandate of the Prince,’ in comparison with ${}_3\text{b}\ddot{a}b\ddot{a}g\ddot{a}n \text{b}\ddot{a}g\text{-ni}\eta \text{ni}\dot{s}an {}_6b[i]l\ddot{a}$ ‘at the mandate of Bábägän-bäg’ in a list fragment Or. 12452B(12) of the Stein collection.¹⁸

P. 192, UIReg15 (*U 9004 = USp, No. 38): ${}_8\text{tok-ka köykü-k}\ddot{a} \rightarrow \text{ton-qa kükü-k}\ddot{a}$ ‘for the garment and the kükü-headress.’ Recently we proposed to interpret Uyğ. *kükü* as a transcription of Chin. *gu-gu* 罽罽/故故/顧姑, a term for the notorious female Mongol headress (Mong. *boytay*)¹⁹; ${}_{9-10}k(a)y\text{-a bah}\dot{s}i \rightarrow k(a)r\text{-a bah}\dot{s}i$. He can be identified with the same named one as seen in the ‘Kayımdü-texts.’²⁰

These comments never reduce the reliability and merits of this book. It provides great convenience not only for the Old Uyghur philologists, but also for scholars of the history of the Mongol Empire who cannot directly access the contents of Old Uyghur documents. We may expect more results from these scholars and, of course, from the author himself, based on holistic investigations of the Old Uyghur texts and contemporary multilingual source materials.

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¹⁸ For the facsimile, see Huang 1981: 446, No. 187.

¹⁹ Matsui 2019: 71; Nugteren and Wilkens 2019: 159–160. Although Nugteren and Wilkens (2020: 164) left the etymon of *gu-gu* as an open question, we may follow a reasonable elucidation by Cai Meibiao (2012: 536–540) that *gu-gu* was a Chinese onomatopoeia of pheasants chirping, and adopted as the term for Mong. *boytay*, for which feathers of pheasants were used characteristically; as an onomatopoeia, *gu-gu* was variously rendered in Chinese characters.

²⁰ Yamada 1976: 38, 42–43.



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