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An Analysis of the Simple Kitai Characters

by Gorô TOYODA

In the autumn of 1939, a Mukden curio shop displayed what appeared to be a set of tombstones with inscription, consisting of a square top part bearing a legend in Chinese, ‘Ku t'ai shih ming shih chi’ (Epitaph of the Late Grand Preceptor), and the main body on which the inscription was written in strange characters somewhat resembling Chinese, interspersed with ordinary Chinese characters. Dr. Iwakichi INABA identified the new script as Kitai characters and emphasized its importance. Mr. Li Wenhsin, then at the National Central Museum of Manchoukuo, however, denied the stone's authenticity, and the script was to be left unheed for more than a decade.

In the summer of 1951, the epitaph of a Hsiao Hsiao-chung was unearthed from an old tomb at Hsu-ku-shan, Chin-hsi County, Liao-ning Province, and it was the second time that an inscription in that strange script was known to the world. Mr. Yen Wan-chang, a Chinese scholar, studied this epitaph and published in 1957 his Chinese translation of the date borne by the inscription. An accompanying inscription in Chinese confirmed the date as the fifth year of Ta-an era of the Liao Dynasty, i. e. 1068; thus corroborating INABA's theory.

It is stated in the Liao-shih that a kind of Kitai characters called ta-tzu (major letters) were created by A-pao-chi, the first Emperor of Liao, in 920 by modifying half of the Chinese li-shu (plain square characters). This seems to mean that the new characters were somewhat similar to the Chinese in nature. Later another kind of script was introduced, prior to the death of A-pao-chi in 926, by Prince Tieh-la who had acquainted himself with an Uigur ambassador and thence obtained a hint. His invention was called hsiao-tzu (minor letters), and is commonly believed to have been phonetic characters as it is said in the Liao-shih that they were 'small in number but complete and consistent.'

In 1922, Father L. Kervyn found several inscribed tombstones at the Liao Imperial Mausolea at War-in Mangkha, Northern Jehol, and published a handmade copy of two Kitai texts. Again in 1932 several similar Kitai tombstones, which had been carried away by T'ang Tao-jung, son of General T'ang Yi-lin, in 1930, were rediscovered by Japanese scholars. Those tombstones had inscriptions in characters totally different from those on
the Chin-hsi epitaph. Thus it was clear that there were two kinds of Kitai characters and they were easily so identifiable. This fact has inevitably led the students of Kitai characters to conflicting views as to which kind of script is the major or the minor letters. To avoid confusions, the present author prefers to call the characters on the imperial tombstones ‘the compound characters’ and those on the Chin-hsi epitaph ‘the simple characters,’ for the latter are nothing but simplifications of Chinese characters.

The Chin-hsi dates in the simple characters published by Mr. Yen are nine in number. In them the characters denoting the concepts of ‘month’ and ‘day’ are Chinese yueh and jih, while ‘year’ is expressed by Jurchen character a-nieh (year; Manchu aniya) with one stroke less. Using them as clues, the author has been able chronologically to establish the meanings of the characters denoting eras, numbers, and the sixty cycles.

Despite the clear statement in the Chin-shih that the Jurchen characters were adaptations of the Kitai characters, the great difference between the former and the compound Kitai characters in which the Liao imperial tombstone inscriptions were written has long hindered us from accepting this legend. The discovery of the Chin-hsi epitaph, however, has brought out several simple Kitai characters that look to have been prototypes of the Jurchen characters, and this is a strong testimony to the factualness of the Chin-shih.

In the conclusion, the author expresses hope for more new materials that would supply us with more clues to further decipherment of this relatively little known script.

Reconstruction of the Original Text of Chang-tzu Hsiao-yao-yu-pien 在子逍遥遊篇

by Shizuo Amano

The author makes a study into the four fables which are told in the present text of Hsiao-yao-yu-pien 選官遊篇 of Chang-tzu 在子. In examining the phraseology, such as the continuation of words, the sequence of themes and the sentence structure, the author notices first of all that in the first fable so many insertions were added to the text by later writers that the original meaning is likely to be misunderstood. Secondly, some parts of the original text of the second and third fables may have been left out in the course of time. Finally, there are considerable number of misplaced sentence in the fourth fable. Consequently, the author believes that the first three fables represent the philosophy of Chuang Chou 在周 himself, but that the fourth one does not.

Lu Té-ming 陸德明 wrote in his Chang-tien-shih-wén-hsi-lu 道德經文序錄 that the principal philosophy of Chuang Chou can be explained in four concepts—hsiao-yao 選官, tsü-jen 自然, wu-wei 無為 and chi-wu 奇物. Among 33 extant chapters of Chang-tzu, there are two entitled Hsiao-yao and

Chi-wn respectively. Bearing these facts in mind, one can assume that the original text of Chang-tzu consisting of 52 chapters would have contained two chapters which were entitled Tsü-jen and Wu-wei respectively.

In conclusion, the author further assumes that in the original Chang-tzu, the first fable of the present Hsiao-yao-yu 属官属于 the chapter Hsiao-yao and the second and third fables to the Wu-wei.

Chu-hu 主戶, K'o-hu 客戶 and Tien-hu 倚戶 in Sung China

by Yasushi Kusano

This article deals with the census regulation in China under the Sung dynasty, and its relationship with the taxation and labor conscription system.

There were three different grades of families under the registration, namely, chu-hu 主戶, k'o-hu 客戶 and tien-hu 倚戶. Chu-hu and k'o-hu were the people who registered their family names under the Government. At that time, people registered their family name if they possessed land or property. Chu-hu and k'o-hu, therefore, were owners of land or property and all of them were liable for liang-shui 量稅.

Now, the labor conscription system was enforced in two ways, namely, shai-i 勝役 and fu-i 策役. The chu-hu were liable for both conscription duties, but the k'o-hu were exempted from shai-i. The difference between the chu-hu and k'o-hu was that the chu-hu were native people and the k'o-hu, people who emigrated from other districts. The reason the Sung Government was more lenient towards the k'o-hu was that people who were making their living in a country far from home might suffer greatly from various hardships. Therefore, the Government employed the policy to protect them.

The tien-hu were people who did not possess any private property. They were mostly tenants of the land owners. Their family names were not registered, and only their personal names were recorded in addition to their chu-jén's 主人 name. They were naturally exempted from liang-shui 量稅 and yao-i 征役. We must note that the chu-hu and k'o-hu were very different in social status from the tien-hu.