

On the Term, *Bay*, Found in Old Uighur Documents:
An Examination of the Standard Measure for Cotton Cloth in the
Turfan Region

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This article focuses on an Old Uighur word, *bay*, an important term that is said to be closely connected to measuring cotton cloth in the pre-modern Turfan region. According to the available documents, cotton cloth functioned as currency in addition to other kinds of cloth between approximately the 9th and 14th centuries. Therefore, clarifying how cotton cloth was standardized as currency will hopefully help to understand Turfan society and economy better.

It is a well established explanation that *bay* (lit., bundle), which often appears accompanied by the numeral, *iki* (two), corresponds to the Chinese 端 (*duan*) and/or 匹 (*pi*), the traditional Chinese units for measuring cloth length; and while such an argument may have a large measure of validity, the author discusses the subject from another point of view; that is, the actual state of the cloth in question.

On the basis of archaeological materials and the historical record, it can be concluded that one standardized piece of cloth in China was traditionally rolled from both edges toward the center, taking the form of a bundle (*pi*) consisting of two rolls (两端 *liangduan*). Judging from the historical situation, Uighur cotton cloth may have been bundled in the same manner, as indicated by the term *iki bay* (two bundles). Therefore, rather than considering *bay* as a fixed length of cloth, as has long been assumed, the author considers the form of the cloth instead. This notion leads to an interesting aspect concerning the function of the term, *bay*. A reexamination of the related documentation reveals that *bay* appears in only a few contracts, where it functions as a modifier to guarantee standardized size by specifying that the cloth keeps its original form of *iki bay*.

Although more research is needed on this subject, the above interpretation of *bay* may offer a new glimpse into the social and economic aspects of cotton cloth in pre-modern Turfan.