OUTLINE: A comparative study of phonetic complements in Near Eastern cuneiform and Jurchen siniform

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Category and Characteristics of phonetic complement in cuneiform paleography

1. Definition: Phonetic indicators which are attached to a basic sign to facilitate its reading
   III. Akk. *dUTU-ši (= Šamši) “Shamash, sun god” – specific complementation
   IV. Sum. *lugal “king” > Akk. *šàr (< šarru “king” truncated) – truncated syllabication
2. Paleographic features
   I. To determine nearly one exact reading for which the entire graphic sign series can stand
   II. Attached to the basic logograms, usually immediately after them
   III. Quiescent in the entire graphic series when pronounced
   IV. To reduce the basic signs to shorter values during the diachronic development and thereafter to become affixal signs
3. Practical features
   I. To determine the reading in the cases of polyphonous signs
   II. To note the value of the medial vowel(s) in some phonetic frames expressed as simply as possible
   III. To evade the confusion between two graphically similar signs

Historical background of Jurchen writing system

1. Internal development: Chinese transcription parallel in Ming glossary is the only direct phonetic reflection of Jurchen language, besides some few transcribed items sporadic in Chinese historiography
   I. Sino-Jurchen Glossary in early Jin (12th century): mainly logography (< Khitan macroscript < vulgar Chinese characters)
   II. Jin Jurchen epigraphy (12th – 13th century): logosyllabography (influenced by Mongolic languages)
   III. Ming Jurchen inscription and documents (14th – 16th century): mainly syllabography (developed into Manchu language)
2. Internal features of siniform: Origins of Chinese and Khitan scripts (siniform character as homophonous as possible)
   I. Syllabic expression: consonants without vowels combined unavailable to graphic expression; actual syllables in Jurchen lexemes, rather than in Jurchenograms, transcribed by Chinese characters
      A. *we-lu “jujube” with Chi. ú-lù
      B. *pe-re-ğe “to gather” with Chi. fên-è; *sa-ŋan “white, smoke” with Chi. shàng-jiàng (cf. Jur. *sa-hi “to know”)
Classifications of Jurchen phonetic complements

1. Compatibility with Chinese transcription

   I. Incompatible: 中*WIXAN-an “ox, cow” – Chi. wēi-hàn, 围*GURUN-un “country, dynasty, state” – Chi. guò-lùn, 促列*MORIN-in “horse” – Chi. mù-lín, 攻父*po-on=do “time (loc.)” – Chi. fū-wān-dō; 围*XADU-we “clothes” – Chi. hā-dā; 围圣*UIE-e “heavy” – Chi. ū-zhē

   II. Segmental: 赤士*ALČUN-an “gold” – Chi. ān-chūn-wēn; 噫列*ČIN-in “armor” – Chi. wù-chēn-yīn; 风元*XAĞAN-nan “king” – Chi. hàn-ān; 嗨*JUL-i “son” – Chi. zhū-yī; 介*ŠA-a “ears” – Chi. shā-ā!

   III. Compatible (in majority): 单士*EDU-un “wind” – Chi. è-dū-wēn; 兑列*ALL-in “mountain” – Chi. ā-li-yīn; 后*MUđU-ur “dragon” – Chi. mù-dū-ér; 侧*MODGO-ul “Mongol” – Chi. mēng-gū-lū; 左*ŠOĐQO-an “peregrine falcon” – Chi. shēn-kē-ān

2. Morphological orientation

   I. Prefixal: 亐*a-BUQA “leaf” (cf. Ma. abduka), 学*J-ŁQA “flower” (cf. Ma. ilha)

   II. Suffixal (in majority): 夏*PULE-ji “ashes” (cf. Ma. fulenggi); 夏*MAHI-la “Jurchen hat” (cf. Ma. mahala); 夏*XALA-ku “trousers” (cf. 夏*XALA-bi “to change”);
Phonological description of Jurchen phonetic complements

1. Theoretical features

I. Primary implication: quiescence equivalent to the canonical phonetic complements in cuneiform paleography – *šiši* WIXAN-an “ox, cow”, *gūrūn* GURUN-un “country, dynasty, state”, *pë* MORIN-in “horse”, *a-fi*a [a] (in Ming vocabulary, with Chi. ā)

II. Secondary implication: pronounced used as phonetic complementation and pioneering for syllabic truncation – *ša*-ALCŪN-un “gold”, *ša*-UČIN-in “armor”, *ša*-XAGAN-ŋan “king”, *ša*-JUI-i “son”, *ša*-ŠA-a “ears”

III. Derivative implication:

A. Graphic affixation –

1. *ša*- SARDAN (in Jin glossary, with Chi. sâ-nâ-hân) > *ša*-SARDAN-ŋan (in Ming glossary, with Chi. sâ-li-ân) – “wife”

2. *ša*-API’A (in Jin glossary) > 东末*a-f[i][a] (in Ming vocabulary, with Chi. ā-fê[i]-a) – “lion”

3. 吴* PENIR > 吴毛* PENIR-ir > 吴毛* PENIR-ir-he “hair”

4. 奎* BĚI-le-we (in Jin epigraphy, with Chi. bô-jî-liê) > 奎* BĚI-le (in Ming glossary, with Chi. bêi-lê) – “official”

5. 亖* ČAU’[XA]-ši “army, soldiers (pl.)”, (in Jin epigraphy & with Chi. châo-hâ-shî in Ming glossary of Peking version) > 亖* ČAU’[XA]-št “army” (in Jin epigraphy & Ming glossary with Chi. châo-hâ) > 亖* ČAU-hu-čau-ghi “glory” (in Ming glossary), 亖* ČAU-la-mái “to present” (in Ming memorials)

B. Spelling contraction used as finals –

1. 亖* ČAU-du-ta-an “chief censor; Chi. 都堂 du-tang”

2. 亖* ČAU-kî-li-in “Chinese unicorn; Chi. 麒麟 qi-lín”

3. 亖* ČAU-su-un “brigade general; Chi. 總兵 zong-bîng”

2. Practical features

I. Graphic differentiation of expressions: both against logography and against phonography

A. 亖* XO’DON-on (in Jin epigraphy) ~ 亖* XO’DON (in Ming glossary) – “pine”

B. 亖* YARA-an (in Jin epigraphy) ~ 亖* YARA (in Ming glossary) – “leopard”

C. 奎* TAXŬN-hun(?) (in Jin epigraphy) ~ 奎* TAXŬN-un (in Ming glossary) – “eagle, hawk”

D. 奎* ČEČE-če-he (in Jin epigraphy) ~ 奎* ČEČE-čen-ni (gen. in Ming
glossary) – “castle”

E. 佢*hsen-yen (in Ming glossary with Chi. xian-yuan) ~ 佢*hsen-yan (in Ming memorials with Chi. xuan) < Chi. 玄 xuan

F. 太卓尖 *tai-ira-an (in Jin epigraphy) ~ 太卓尖 *tai-ira (in Ming glossary) ~ “monastery” > 太卓尖 *OMI-[i]ra “to drink” / 雨卓尖 *DAŠI-[i]ra “to overwhelm” / 雨卓尖 *i-ja-ra “to assemble” (in Ming glossary)

G. 此例*ALI-in “mountain” (in Jin epigraphy & Ming glossary) ~ 此例*ULI-e “north” (in Jin epigraphy) < Khi. 北 / 此 < Chi. 北 bei

II. Radical-homophonous differentiation

A. 东佳*JULE-le “front” ~ 东佳*JULE-ši “east”

B. 东育*AMBAN-an “big, great” ~ 东育*AMBA-la “much”

C. 东变*[DORO]-o “law, logos” ~ 东变*[DORO]-u “seal”

D. 反变*[TUR]-ra “pillar” ~ 反变*[TUR]-ya “lean, thin” (with Chi. tū-hā)

E. 东士*[bun-un “from” ~ 东父*[bun-mu “lips”

III. Implementation to graphic evolution from logography to phonography

A. 汝*SUMU “sparrow hawk” ~ 汝*ŠE ‘E-e “spring, fountain”

B. 父*[ŠIR]-XA “roebuck” ~ 父*[ŠIR]-HE-he “sand”

C. 父*[TIQO “fowl” ~ 父*[ETUKU-hun “to wear”

D. 有*TANDŮ “hundred” ~ 有*[TO’GIN-gin “dream”

Values of phonetic-complement interpretation for Jurchen writing system

1. Phonetic revision of some Jurchenograms

I. 炎: *aγa rather than *a and *γa

II. 勿: *amur rather than *amu

III. 尔: *reže rather than *he and *riye

IV. 命: *we ~ he rather than *he, *e, *u, *we

2. Tentative reconstruction of some Khitan macroscripts

I. Ethnonym: 纥厮齧*QITA-ta-in “Khitan”


3. Significances to logosyllabic writing system

I. Phonetic complements in a writing system resulting also from some shortage of syllables in the relevant lingual phonology

II. Khitan macroscript, just as Jurchen writing, logosyllabic; whereas Khitan microscript, just as Persian cuneiform, syllabophemonic with few logograms

III. Some universals contained in graphic development and borrowing, just as in language evolution and contacts

ABBREVIATIONS

Akk. – Akkadian, Chi. – Chinese, Jur. – Jurchen, Khi. – Khitan, Khi.mi. – Khitan microscript, Ma. – Manchu, Mo. – Mongol, Sum. – Sumerian