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RESEARCH ON THE PRESENTATION OF PERSONALITIES AND
SKILLS OF EPITAPH OWNERS IN KHITAN SMALL SCRIPT
EPITAPHS (I)¹

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Abstract: Epitaphs, a product of ancient Chinese burial systems, possess fixed structures and compositional conventions, documenting the deceased's name, year of death, and life events. Typically consisting of three components—the opening (title and author attribution), the main body (narratives of lineage and life events, supplemented by rhymed eulogies for mourning or praise), and the conclusion (recording the writer, engraver, and date of composition)—they serve as standardized commemorative texts. Influenced by Han culture, Khitan-script epitaphs bear striking similarities to their Chinese counterparts in both form and content. While existing decipherment efforts have yielded progress in understanding the owner's genealogy and basic textual structure, research on the deceased's personal details—particularly descriptions of personalities and skills—remains limited, with associated compositional conventions yet to be clarified. Focusing on the Khitan small-script *Epitaph of Xiao Zhonggong*, this paper elaborates on the stylistic conventions for depicting the epitaph owner in Khitan small-script epitaphs and interprets relevant vocabulary. This pioneering analysis addresses a gap in current scholarship.

Key words: personalities and skills, Khitan small script epitaph, compositional conventions

I. Introduction

The Khitan script was once used in the Liao Dynasty in history. There are two kinds of Khitan script, which are Khitan large script and Khitan small script. With the fall of the Liao Dynasty, the Khitan script also became a dead script. Since the rediscovery of Khitan script documents in 1922, the study of the Khitan script has now had a history of 100 years. Both the Khitan large script and the Khitan small script have not been completely deciphered yet.

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The extant Khitan script materials are predominantly inscriptions, with epitaphs being the most abundant among them. So far, there are more than 40 pieces of inscriptions in Khitan small script and a total of more than 30 pieces of inscriptions in Khitan large script and paper documents found and published.

Epitaph is the product of the continuous development of the ancient Chinese burial system. It has a fixed form and a specific style of writing, mainly recording the deceased's name, year of death, and life stories.

An epitaph consists of several parts, including the beginning part, the main part and the ending part. The beginning part includes the title of the epitaph and the author who writes it. The first part of the main body is the narrative text (xu wen 序文 in Chinese), which records the deceased's family lineage, name, title, life experiences etc. The second part is the mingwen 铭文, which mostly uses rhymed verses to express mourning and praise for the deceased. The ending part includes the names of the writer, the engraver, and the engraving date of the epitaph.

The Khitan people were influenced by the Han people in aspects such as writing, literature, art, and philosophy. The Han people's funeral culture has also had a significant impact on that of the Khitan people. The forms and contents of epitaphs in Khitan script are quite similar to those epitaphs in Chinese. An epitaph in Khitan script also consists of the beginning part, the main part and the ending part.

II. Presentation of Personalities and Skills of Epitaph Owners in Khitan Small Script Epitaphs

At present, certain progress has been made in the research of deciphering epitaphs in Khitan script. A relatively large amount of content regarding the genealogy of the epitaph's owner can be deciphered. About the writing format of the epitaphs, some understanding has been gained. In general, the first two or three lines of the Khitan epitaph is the title of the epitaph and the writer of the epitaph. It is the beginning part of the epitaph. The part after that is the narrative text of the main part. It describes the marriages, offspring and life stories of several generations of the ancestors of the the epitaph owner.

According to the current interpretation achievements, we can accurately identify and smoothly interpret the ranking of the children of each generation. It can be clearly seen in the epitaphs in Khitan script that the ordinal numbers (with masculine and feminine genders) are used to mark the ranking of the children.(Jishi, 1996)

The content from Line 39 to Line 41 of the *Epitaph of Xiao Zhonggong* in Khitan small script portrays the personalities of the epitaph owner Xiao Zhonggong. The writing format for depicting the personalities of the epitaph owner is uniquely distinctive. In these three lines, there are five sentences, all concluding with the identical phrase 來土 叙比只約 ci-eu k-li₂-û-ji₂, which means “with (have)” and “call/say (consider)”. Preceding this phrase in each sentence are two words that describe the epitaph owner’s personalities, ten words in total. The specific content is as follows:

ku-û-er hul-l-ha-án p-ul-uh-jj₂ ci-ge₂-li₂ n-de-én ci-ue-ra p-û-ud ku-û-d ulu MANAGE-l-ha-ai
人 余 並 人 未 知
man and man not manage

此為天 相約 月中為矢 火火化全此 亦為 芳凡 火火化全為 中凡全³ 來化為 來去
 or-a-an sui-ji₂ ir-l-én-de h-ui-ri-d-li e₂ ün-én cu-dú h-ui-ri-ge₂-én- bir-g-s ci-ri-én ci-eu
 生 至 這 運? ⁴極 至
 born arrived this luck extreme arrived

叔此只約 曲令 力本 來关委谷付伏 及必 令仕全北 因 付业列半 以全委坐 九策伏列
 k-li₂-û-ji go-t a-ar ci-i-is-d-b-ñ u-un t-mu-d-li₂ bod b-áng-hu-ai h-s-ge₂-te₁ tou-li-ñ-hu
 謂 家於 孝 身
 said home filial piety body

³ The Khitan small script with outer frames in the text are the key words analyzed in this section of the article.

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go-er REGION-a or-ci ra-l-ó-ul-ha-ai sh-ia lu₃-úr d-p b-ur₂-l-ha-al g-úr n-ad-bot t-abu h-s-l-û-ñ

家 疆 善 國 捺鉢

home border kind country Nabo

困 中 來 全 市 並 本 止 安 关 穴 出 及 女 竹 火 央 化 泰 当 公 北 乃 州

bod ai-ci d-od-ha-ar p-úr-i nai gú-u-un dor h-ui-ri-ge₂-én-er 77-po-ucu

身 官 吏 之 禮 至 篤

body official rite reach earnest

Line 40:

來 关 忝 全 付 伏 來 止 叔 北 只 狗 州 欠 又 及 穴 南 及 女 及 全 止 几 只 平 泰 北 公 司 狗

ci-i-is-d-b-ñ ci-eu k-li₂-û-jj₂ ucu- m-u nai hor-u-un-u d-p ku-û-ul-ge₂-li₂ n-iuk-jj₂

孝 謂 小 大 官 民 友

filial piety said small big official people friend

穴 全 久 艾 全 存 及 和 凡 和 只 安 止 平 泰 当 公 竹 全 付 伏 公 中 來 与 來 止 叔 北 只 狗 地

nai-d da₂-aju s-ra-ir₂-en g-en-û-úr eu-ul-ge₂-én-er dor-d-b-ñ n-ai-ci-én₂ ci-eu k-li₂-û-jj₂ 79

官 哀 悌 謂

officials brotherly love said

令 全 方 並 方 弱 央 平 並 中 火 力 出 及 女 弱 火 央 化 泰 北 央 來 交 女 关 竹 及 列 咄 忝 升 安

t-abu-al-ha-al es au-ul-ha-ai iú-a-án u-un es h-ui-ri-ge₂-li₂ ui ci-ie-271-i al-ir₂ hu-üen-is-ó-úr

未 改 未 至 事

not promote not reach affair

又 欠 市 全 北 矢 及 安 止 平 泰 当 公 竹 屋 列 冬 和 來 止 叔 北 只 狗 地 凡 來 才 力

m-qó-od-d-li₂ de-u-úr eu-ul-ge₂-én-er dor MANAGE-hu-as-en ci-eu k-li₂-û-jj₂ us₂-g ci-ia-qo

禮 謂 字

rite said writing

中 來 中 泰 当 央 止 安 全 和 方 中 列 央 來 止 來 泰 北 付 乃 火 全 泰 火 无 卡 升 央

ai-ci-l-ge₂-én ui p-úr-s-en al-l-hu-an ci-eu ci-ge₂-li₂ b-am h-s-ge₂-ud tau-su-ó-ui

事 子 嗣 之 並

Line 41:

Following the five structurally consistent sentences that recount the personalities of the epitaph's owner, the final sentence of this paragraph summarizes the ten personalities of the epitaph owner, that is, 𠂇 国 和 中 凡 个 来 化 当 北 乃 州 来 关 忝 公 丹 伏
兮 公 丹 伏 公 丰 来 与 兮 屋 列 冬 方 申 列 百 忝 宅 央 全 来 去 几 nem bod-en bir-g-s ci-ri-
én 77-po-ucu ci-i-is-d-b-ñ dor-d-b-ñ n-ai-ci-én₂ dor MANAGE-hu-er SIX-l-hu (al-
l-hu) em-110 ab ui-s ci-eu ku. 𠂇 nem means “one” while 国 和 bod-en means “of body”, and 𠂇 国 和 means “of one body” (*yī shēn*—“body”) in Chinese). 宅 ab means “ten”, 央 全 ui-s means “affairs” (personalities), and 来 去 ci-eu means “with”, 几 ku means “man”. 宅 央 全 来 去 几 ab ui-s ci-eu ku means “the man with ten personalities”. Of these ten personality-related terms, four have been deciphered: 北 乃 州 77-po-ucu corresponds to the Chinese character 篤 du, signifying “earnest”; 来 关 忝 公 丹 伏 ci-i-is-d-b-ñ corresponds to 孝 xiao, meaning “filial piety”; 公 丰 来 与 n-ai-ci-én₂ maps to 悌 ti, denoting “brotherly respect”; and 兮 dor aligns with 禮 li, standing for “rite”.

⁶ In CWJ, this word is recorded as 𠂔𠂔𠂔 SIX-l-hu. By examining the rubbings and comparing this word with the same word appearing in Line 40 and Line 46 of the epitaph, the author determines that the first glyph should be 𠂔 al, and thus revises it to 𠂔𠂔𠂔 al-l-hu.


In the currently published Khitan small script documents, many epitaphs follow a relatively fixed format when describing the personalities of the deceased. Through detailed decipherment of existing materials, the author of this paper has identified—for the first time—the compositional conventions governing such descriptions in Khitan small script epitaphs, which are presented here for the first time.

III. Interpretation of the Words Describing Personalities

The main part of the epitaph in Chinese records in detail the tomb owner's life, deeds, personalities, and other information. It is usually divided into the following sections: the first section states the tomb owner's family background and life, which will trace the origin of the tomb owner's ancestors (such as ancestral home, official background of the family), and records basic information about the tomb owner, including birth and death years, courtesy names, alias, and birth order. Then it narrates the tomb owner's life experiences in chronological order, including career in the imperial examinations, official career (appointments and removals, political achievements), marriage and family (information about spouses and children), etc. The third section is the conclusion (ending), which briefly describes the funeral arrangements after the tomb owner's death, or expresses mourning and commemoration for the tomb owner. Sometimes, it introduces a rhymed text (epigraph) with the phrase "Inscription says" (銘曰 *ming yue*).

The second section is one of the core contents of the epitaph, which states the personalities and evaluation of the tomb owner (Section of "Praising Virtues"). Through specific examples or general descriptions, it praises the tomb owner's personalities (such as filial piety 孝悌 *xiao ti*, incorruptibility 清廉 *qinglian*, loyalty and bravery 忠勇 *zhong yong*, kindness 仁厚 *ren hou*), talents and skills (such as literary talent, martial arts, ability in governance), etc. For example, 王之于國忠也，於家孝也，于民惠也，于官廉也，於人信也，而五德兼備，貴處人臣之極，天之報施不為薄也。(The prince was loyal to the state, filial to his family, benevolent to the people, incorruptible in officialdom, and trustworthy to others. Endowed with these five virtues, he attained the highest rank among officials, which is a testament that heaven's rewards are by no means meager.) (Extracted from *The Epitaph of Yelü Renxian* 耶律仁先墓誌銘 *Yelü Renxian Mu zhi ming*)

In Chinese epitaphs, words expressing personalities such as loyalty 忠 *zhong*, filial piety 孝 *xiao*, respectfulness 恭 *gong*, reverence 敬 *jing*, bravery 勇 *yong*, incorruptible 廉 *lian*, and trustworthy 信 *xin* often appear to praise the tomb owner. By comparing it with Liao-dynasty epitaphs in Chinese, the author, in the series of papers, will seek

符列出 半空 宅 及 及 令 金 茶 b-hu-án ai-d dur^o m-o t-em₂-er corresponds to 子男四長曰特末, while 中 火 火 未 土 生 不 中 文 考 凡 l-iú-ung ci-eu to-on l-ie-ên shǐ corresponds to 隴州團練使, 兮 止 半 止 和 戈 力 夫 空 dor p-ai-sǐ-en sh-a-rí-d ci-as-a to 牌印郎君. The part of 又 忒 欠 中 凡 兮 矢 火 无 谷 茶 m-oi₂-qó bir-g dor-de h-d₃-ge-er following the person's name Temo, may describe this person's character. The part may correspond to 押班端慤, and 又 忒 欠 中 凡 m-oi₂-qó bir-g may correspond to the Chinese word 端慤 duan que, which means upright and sincere. 中 凡 bir-g may correspond to 慤 que, whose etymology may share the same origin as  boroyjiyun that means “simple” or “plain” in Mongolian, which is similar to it both in pronunciation and meaning.

The following are examples of the word 𐰽𐰚 bir-g that appear in the currently discovered Khitan small script epitaphs.

1. 中 公 公 共 九 兩 安 百 文 在 火 可 丹 刀 火 化 為 本 中 九 來 化 公 可 香 矢 火 火 來 (Xu 40)

l-ge-er us-g dai-úr em-ie ra-iú bai b-ir-iú-shī a-ar bir-g ci-ri-er bai-is-de h-ui-ci

字(書)下

至

writing under

reach

Based on the context, the words 中凡 bir-g, 采化芥 ci-ri-er and 可忝矣 bai-is-de in the aforementioned sentences all denote personalities. The word 采化芥 ci-ri-er was previously recorded as 采化芥 ci-ud-er in the CWJ (2017)⁸; however, after examining the rubbing, the author concludes that it should be 采化芥 ci-ri-er, and hereby makes this correction. The two personality-denoting terms 中凡 bir-g and 采化芥 ci-ri-er frequently appear together (as will also be seen in the following examples).

2. 吳 关 凡 安 和 來 关 喬 全 丹 夏 戊 金 夾 中 凡 仍 夏 中 喬 公 列 为 方 丑 午 为 本 文 为 屏 出 生

qid-i g-úr-en ci-i-is-d-b-ir, sh-em, qú bir-g ta, -ir, -l-ge, -er hu-a-al-pa dor-a-ar qú^x-a-dol-án abu

契丹 國之 孝

善 慤

Khian state's filial piety

kind sincere

北中丹伏 炅 火 (Zhi 4)

⁸ CWJ: Chinggeltei & Wu Yingzhe & Jiruhe. (2017). Qidān xiǎozì zài yánjiū [Further Research on Khitan Small Script]. Neimenggu: Nèi Měnggǔ Dàxué Chūbǎnshè [Inner Mongolia University Publishing House].

or-l-b-ñ tai ui

烏魯本 太尉

Uluben Grand Commandant

This sentence describes the personalities of Uluben Taiwei. Terms such as 朶央忝公丹及 ci-i-is-d-b-ir₂, 丕金夫 sh-em₂-qú, 中凡 bir-g, 仍及忝公 ta₂-ir₂-l-ge₂-er, 列力方丑 hu-a-al-pa, 竹力本 dor-a-ar, and 丈力屏出 qú^x-a-dol-án all denote personalities. 朶央忝公丹及 ci-i-is-d-b-ir₂ signifies filial piety, 丕金夫 sh-em₂-qú represents kindness, and 中凡 bir-g can be deciphered “sincere”. Given the context, the interpretation of this word’s meaning makes sense.

3. 朶央忝公中 仍及和 列化公 丹力 丑升化中 住及弱和 丕冬余 力 全及类⁹ 坐

ci-i-is-d-bir ta-u-en hu-ud-er b-qo hu₂-u-ud-bir mu-u-ji-en m-as-qu deu s-u-si tel

孝 章之 第三 子 仁 聖之 長 弟

Xiao Zhang’s the third son Ren Sheng’s elder brother


竹火 屋列 丙公 丹升及扎 中凡 朶化公 (Tai 9-10)

dor-ud MANAGE-hu em-er b-ó-o-or bir-g ci-ri-er

慤

upright and sincere

This part is taken from *Eulogy for the Late Imperial Grand Uncle*, describes the lineage and personalities of the epitaph’s owner. It can be translated as “The third son of Emperor Xiaozhang¹⁰, the eldest younger brother of Emperor Rensheng¹¹, whose nature is...”. All terms following the word 全及类 s-u-si “nature” denote the personalities of the epitaph owners. Here, 中凡 bir-g appears again alongside 朶化公 ci-ri-er—interpreting 中凡 bir-g as “upright and sincere” also makes sense.

⁹ The last glyph of this word was incorrectly recorded as 天 (243), which denotes “heaven” in the electronic transcriptions of previous studies. It is not the 天 (243) but another glyph with a very similar form. The rubbing is as follows: . Based on the usage of this glyph in word formation, it may be a variant glyph of the glyph 天 (293), and is thus tentatively recorded as 天 here. The author of this paper interprets the meaning of 全及天 s-u-si as “nature” or “innate quality”. A detailed account of this interpretative analysis will be elaborated in subsequent articles.

¹⁰ Emperor Xiao zhang 孝章皇帝 refers to Yelü Zongzhen 耶律宗真, Emperor Xing zong of Liao 遼興宗.

¹¹ Emperor Rensheng 仁聖皇帝 refers to Yelü Hongji, Emperor Daozong of Liao 遼道宗.

In the Khitan small script epitaph Zhong, the term 𐰽𐰺𐰍 bir-g-s — a form derived from 𐰽𐰺 bir-g with the suffix 𐰍 s — appears as a word denoting personalities. Hereinafter, we shall examine the meaning of this term within the context of sentences in Khitan small script.

1. 凡安和 失和 又 未仕当 中凡全 业商存当 列而並丰 丑本 (Dao 16)

g-úr-en ui-en GREAT ci-mu-én bir-g-s p-23-ra-én hu-od-ha-ai pa-ar

国之 事之 大 慤

Country's affair great upright and sincere

九安和 央和 g-úr-en ui-en signifies “the affairs of the state (country)”. 又 translates to “great”, while the subsequent terms—央仕当 ci-mu-én, 中九全 bir-g-s, 业丙在当 p-23-ra-én, 列而直半 hu-od-ha-ai, and 丑本 pa-ar—all denote personal qualities. In this context, the author argues that 央仕当 ci-mu-én and the aforementioned 央化当 ci-ri-én (央化芥 ci-ri-er) are variant forms of the same word, and they regularly co-occur with 中九全 bir-g-s (中九 bir-g). Moreover, 中九全 bir-g-s corresponds to the Chinese character 慤 que, which conveys the meaning of “upright and sincere”.

2. 机关事务局付伏中凡只办为中只安无空关与机关事务局由本公司安屋令百文存及

ci-i-is-d-b-ñ ai ku-û-un a-ai u-úr sh-111-i-én, ci-i-is d-od-ha-ar n-iuk-úr MANAGE-t y-ie-ra-u

孝 父人之 親 友 知 興¹²

filial piety father man's relative friend manage prosperous

公中來与 百公 令欠为冬 亦与 中凡全 (Zhong 28)

n-ai-ci-én, em-er t-qó-a-as ün-én, bir-g-s

悌 慤

brotherly respect upright and sincere

Among the already deciphered words in this sentence, there are ㄅㄨㄛ ㄘㄧˊ ㄟ ㄉㄩㄣˋ ㄈㄢˋ ㄕㄜˊ ㄩㄥˋ ci-i-is-d-b-ñ “filial piety” and ㄅㄨㄛ ㄘㄧˊ ㄟ ㄉㄩㄣˋ n-ai-ci-én₂ “brotherly respect” which denote personalities, each of which echoed by corresponding words such as ㄅㄨ ai “father”, ㄅㄨ ㄘㄧˊ ci-i-is “relative” and ㄅㄨ ㄘㄧˊ ㄟ n-iuk-úr “friend”. In this context, interpreting ㄅㄨ ㄘㄧˊ ㄟ bir-g-s here as 懃que—a term representing the personalities of being upright and sincere—stands to reason.

¹² As recorded in Liao Shi-Guoyu Jie 《遼史·國語解》 [Explanations of National Languages in the History of Liao], Yeluwan Xingwang ye 耶魯碗興旺也 “Yeluwan signifies prosperity”. The author interprets 万文在及 y-ie-ra-u as xing 興 “prosperous” based on its pronunciation.

3. 才存 令仕公北 中凡全 未及与公 中考存 几卡 药 步丹伏 业只化 几 屈及药 (Zhong 31)

ia-ra t-mu-d-li₂ bir-g-s ci-u-én-er l-iau-ra ku-su es 292-b-ñ p-û-ud ku MANAGE-u-ji₂

慤

未

人 知

upright and sincere

not

man manage

Too few words in this sentence have been deciphered, making it impossible to determine whether the interpretation of 中凡全 bir-g-s as 慤 que “upright and sincere” in this context is reasonable.

4. 凡火 杰 佻关 全及类 北乃州 令欠为 毛 列艾升及肉 药 万去化关 才存 夷及

g-ui ong sui-i s-u-si 77-po-ucu t-qó-a nem hu-aju-ó-o-ón es y-eu-ud-i ia-ra 50-u

國王

生 性

篤

一

非

Prince

born

personality earnest

one

not

列赫秀 全金万 令夷药及 令仕公北 中凡全 竹全丹火公 辰化关 令扎关 (Zhong 35)

hu-she-e₂ d-em₂-y t-gú-ji₂-ir₂ t-mu-d-li₂ bir-g-s dor-d-b-iú-er har₃-ri-i t-or-i

封

confer

In this sentence, 凡火 g-ui 杰 ong is a transliteration of the Chinese term 國王 guo wang, which means “prince” here. 佻关 sui-i denotes “to be born” while 全及类 s-u-si signifies “nature” or “inborn disposition”. What follows 全及类 s-u-si is a description of the epitaph owner’s personalities, with the deciphered term 北乃州 77-po-ucu corresponding to 篤 du, meaning “earnest” or “devout”. Drawing on a close examination of already-published epitaphs in Khitan small script, it is plausible that the subsequent terms 中凡全 bir-g-s, 竹全丹火公 dor-d-b-iú-er, and 辰化关 har₃-ri-i also refer to personal qualities. 中凡全 bir-g-s interpreted as 慤 que “upright and sincere” in this context is reasonable.

5. 未关秀全丹伏 药 万夷平列夷 穴 又金夫 包 万未和 尤安 中凡全 业 列艾 万夷关

ci-i-is-d-b-ñ jau y-au-ul-hu-an nai sh-em₂-qú gor em-ci-en om-úr bir-g-s áng hu-aju y-ie-i

孝

百

道之

首

善

三

道之

元

慤

filial piety hundred virtues’ foremost kindness three cardinal guides origin upright and sincere

□ 夷公夷及 (Zhi 7)

□-au-ô₂-úr-ir₂

In this sentence, the phrase 孝关忝仝付伏 弔 百央平列央 穴 ci-i-is-d-b-ñ jau y-au-ul-hu-an nai translates to “Filial piety is the foremost of all virtues,” while 兂金夫 包 百央有 尤安 sh-em₂-qú gor em-ci-en om-úr corresponds to “Kindness is the origin of the three cardinal guides.” These expressions depict two of the epitaph owner’s personalities: filial piety and kindness. The subsequent sentence, beginning with 中凡仝 bir-g-s—a term denoting yet another of the owner’s character traits—follows the same structural pattern, serving as a parallel description of the personalities. In this context, interpreting 中凡仝 bir-g-s as 慤 que, meaning “upright and sincere” is reasonable.

6. 固芬 低 仝 雨欠发有 及火 中凡仝 来化当 仝 丙刃芬 不 祜 平有 才 金 丰 亩 付伏
 bod-er 231 s-ón-qó-dz-ci u-un bir-g-s ci-ri-én d-iu-ir-er xa-she ul-en ia-LUCK₂-ai 342-b-ñ
 身以 慤 德? 福?
 body upright and sincere virtue luck

付丙有当芬 (Xian 19)

b-23-ra-én-er

忠¹³

loyalty

In this sentence, starting from 中凡仝 bir-g-s, the terms such as 来化当 ci-ri-én, 仝 丙刃芬 d-iu-ir-er, 不 祜 xa-she, 平有 ul-en, 才 金 丰 ia-LUCK₂-ai, 亩 付伏 342-b-ñ, and 付丙有当芬 b-23-ra-én-er may all refer to a person’s moral characters. Among them, 仝 丙刃芬 d-iu-ir-er may corresponds to 德 de “virtue”, 才 金 丰 ia-LUCK₂-ai to 福 fu “luck” and 付丙有当芬 b-23-ra-én-er to 忠 zhong “loyalty”. Here, 中凡仝 bir-g-s, which can be interpreted as “upright and sincere”, like in the previous examples, appears together with 来化当 ci-ri-én, indicating moral character.

7. 仝杏 开关 穴 可 仝 中 忝 方 又 仝 各 火 冈 有 及 及 子 央 又 列 世 矢 亩 中 中凡仝 来 又 当
 s-uni DAY-i nai bai-d-l-ge₂-al-ir s-eng-un 305-en o-o-l₂ 116-xua hu-áng-de 343-bir bir-g-s ci-ir₂-én
 夜 日 官 詳穩 慤
 Night day officer Xiangwen upright and sincere

¹³ Sulongga. (2021). xīnfāxiàn qīdān dàzì xiǎo chéngē biéxū mùzhīmíng yánjiū [A study on newly found Epitaph of Xiao Cheng Biexu in Khitan large script]. Nèi Měnggǔ Dàxué [Inner Mongolia University].

𠬞𠬞𠬞𠬞 𠬞𠬞𠬞 𠬞𠬞𠬞 𠬞𠬞𠬞 𠬞𠬞𠬞 𠬞𠬞𠬞 𠬞𠬞𠬞 𠬞𠬞𠬞 𠬞𠬞𠬞 𠬞𠬞𠬞
na₁-li₂-ge-y SIX MONTH-s giu-ai hu-áng-ci sǐ tu p-o-l₂-b-ir y-lu₃ ai h-ui-ri-ge-ir or-de tou-ul-û-ui

六 月 任 司 徒 成 半 年 至

Six months be Situ became half year reached

公 关 𠬞 令 𠬞 主 𠬞 及 𠬞 (Xiang 24)

n-i-gu t-le kei p-o-ri₅

女 古 南 𠬞 成 為

Nügu southern Ke became

This sentence describes the promotion of the epitaph's owner. In this part, 𠬞𠬞𠬞 hu-áng-de may mean “on the frontier”; 𠬞𠬞 343-bir, 𠬞𠬞𠬞 bir-g-s, and 𠬞𠬞𠬞 ci-ir₂-én should be three terms referring to moral characters; 𠬞𠬞𠬞 na₁-li₂-ge-y is presumably a verb; 𠬞𠬞𠬞 SIX MONTH-s denotes “six months”; 𠬞𠬞 giu-ai means “to take up the post”; 𠬞𠬞𠬞 𠬞 hu-áng-ci sǐ tu may refer to “Frontier Situ”; and 𠬞𠬞𠬞 p-o-l-b-ir indicates “to become”. This part can thus be interpreted as “The Xiangwen (a official title) conducted himself (in such a manner) on the frontier; after serving for six months, he was promoted to ‘Frontier Situ’.” The word 𠬞𠬞𠬞 bir-g-s here appears together with the word 𠬞𠬞𠬞 ci-ir₂-én, which is the different spelling form of 𠬞𠬞𠬞 ci-ri-én.¹⁴ In this context, interpreting 𠬞𠬞𠬞 bir-g-s as “upright and sincere” is reasonable.

IV. Conclusion

By comparing epitaphs in Khitan small script with epitaphs in Chinese, this paper systematically summarizes, for the first time, the descriptive conventions concerning the personalities and skills of the epitaph owner in epitaphs in Khitan small script. Meanwhile, through the comparison between epitaphs in Chinese and epitaphs in Khitan small script, it attempts to interpret the term 𠬞𠬞𠬞 bir-g-s (𠬞𠬞 bir-g) in *Epitaph of Xiao Zhonggong* in Khitan small script, which denotes the personalities of the epitaph owner.

In the detailed interpretation of words expressing the epitaph owner's personalities in Khitan small script epitaphs, the study finds that 𠬞𠬞𠬞, 𠬞𠬞𠬞, and 𠬞𠬞𠬞 are actually different spellings of the same word. The glyph 𠬞, 𠬞, and 𠬞 have similar

¹⁴ Both 𠬞 and 𠬞 are pronounced ri and are often used interchangeably in the spelling of Khitan small script.

pronunciation ri. In addition, it is concluded that 𐰺𐰍𐰏 s-u-si means “nature” or “innate quality” and is often placed before words expressing personalities.

There are altogether ten words expressing the epitaph owner’s personalities in the *Epitaph of Xiao Zhonggong*, namely 𐰺𐰍𐰏, 𐰺𐰍𐰏, 𐰺𐰍𐰏, 𐰺𐰍𐰏𐰏𐰏, 𐰺𐰍𐰏𐰏𐰏, 𐰺𐰍𐰏𐰏, 𐰺𐰍𐰏, and 𐰺𐰍. Among them, four words—𐰺𐰍𐰏, 𐰺𐰍𐰏𐰏𐰏, 𐰺𐰍𐰏𐰏𐰏, and 𐰺𐰍—have been interpreted. This paper interprets 𐰺𐰍𐰏 as 慤 que, which means “sincere and honest”, and explores its Mongolian cognates. The author holds that 𐰺𐰍𐰏 corresponds to the Chinese character 正 zheng “upright”, 𐰺𐰍𐰏𐰏𐰏 to 恭 gong “respectful”, 𐰺𐰍𐰏 to 智 zhi “wise”, 𐰺𐰍𐰏 to 勇 yong “brave”, and 𐰺𐰍 to 贤 xian “virtuous”. As for the other five words expressing personalities in Khitan small script, their interpretation will be completed gradually in subsequent series of papers.

It can be seen from the comparison between Khitan small-script epitaphs and Chinese epitaphs that this research method can not only decipher the Khitan words that have not been interpreted in academic circles, but also clearly reveal the profound influence of the Central Plains Han culture—especially the funeral culture—on the Khitan people. Khitan-script epitaphs are basically consistent with Chinese epitaphs not only in writing methods and stylistic formats, but also in the vocabulary and stylistic norms used to evaluate and describe the deceased’s personalities and skills.

This study is not only of great value to the research on Khitan scripts, but also provides precious first-hand materials for the study of exchanges, communication and integration among ethnic groups in the history of China.

Abbreviations

The name of the epitaph in Khitan small script

Cha: Xiao Chala Xianggong Muzhiming 蕭查剌相公墓誌銘 (Epitaph of Xiao Chala Xianggong)

Dao: Daozong Huangdi Aice 道宗皇帝哀冊 (Eulogy for Emperpr Daozong)

Tai: Gu Tai Shuzu aice故太叔祖哀冊 (Eulogy for the Late Imperial Grand Uncle)

Xian: Xianwu Jiangjun Baligong Muzhiming顯武將軍拔里公墓志銘(Epitaph of General Xianwu Bali gong)

Xiang: Yelü Xiangwen Muzhi 耶律詳穩墓誌 (Epitaph of Yelü Xiangwen)

Xu: Liaoguo Xuwang Muzhi 遼國許王墓誌 (Epitaph of the Prince Xu of Liao)

Zhi: Yelü ZhixianTaiwei Muzhiming耶律智先太尉墓志铭 (Epitaph of Yelü Zhixian Taiwei)

Zhong: Yue Guowang Xiaozhonggong Muzhiming 越国王萧仲恭墓志铭 (Epitaph of Xiao Zhonggong Prince Yue)

The name of the epitaph in Chinese

Cha in Chinese: Xiao Chala Xianggong Muzhiming 蕭查剌相公墓誌銘 (Epitaph of Xiao Chala Xiangong in Chinese)

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