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191186. Санкт-Петербург,
Дворцовая наб., д. 18
Тел.: +7 (812) 315-87-28
<http://orientalstudies.ru>
mongolica@orientalstudies.ru
kulgan@inbox.ru
dnosov@mail.ru

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e-mail: pvcentre@mail.ru; *web-site:* <http://www.pvost.org>

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D. Koç, K. Yıldırım

The Word ‘Tatar’ in Various Forms in Chinese Sources

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The word ‘Tatar’, as in reference to various ethnic communities, peoples, and characters at different times and places in history, appear in various forms in classical Chinese texts. We will attempt to identify the original written forms of some of these names as they appear in several primary sources, in addition to the purpose behind the use of selected characters, their spelling, their different readings, and their reconstructed forms. Our aim is to both reveal the historical course of names referring to the Tatars (in which we believe ought to be used very carefully both in historical and linguistic studies) as well as to contribute to better understanding of content and meaning of the names.

Key words: Tatar, Chinese Sources, Historical Context, Language Content.

Dinçer Koç — Ph.D. (History). Assoc. Prof., History Department, Faculty of Letters, Istanbul University (Ordu Cad., 6, Fatih, Istanbul, 34126).
dincerkoc@istanbul.edu.tr

Kürşat Yıldırım — Ph.D. (History). Assoc. Prof., History Department, Faculty of Letters, Istanbul University (Ordu Cad., 6, Fatih, Istanbul, 34126).
kursat.yildirim@istanbul.edu.tr

The word Tatar was given to those peoples who had lived in the south of the Mongolian Empire during the reign of Genghis Khan. *The Secret History of the Mongols* states that Tatars had lived in an area lying between the two lakes of Buyür and Kolen. These people were most definitely described as the ancient enemies of the Mongols at the time the Mongol Empire was established. One such an example of this, according to the *Secret History*, is that Genghis Khan gathered his men and had decided to destroy the Tatar people completely [Manghol-un Niuça Tobça’an, 1948. P. 82]. At around the same period, the Tatar name was also recorded in Islamic books such as Al-Juwayni and Ibn Athir under the name Tatar, as well as mentioned in various European sources as Tartarus, Tartara, and Tartari — albeit that these names very much attributed to the Mongols [T’ang, 1970. P. 92]. Why is there a difference between the names Tatar versus Mongol name, despite being given to the Mongols in both the East and West? It is likely that at the time Rashid el-Din had written *Jāmi’ al-Tawārīkh* he perhaps thought that the Buyür Nor Tatar people were the largest group of people inhabiting the Asian steppes before the time of Genghis Khan, and therefore had lumpingly referred to everyone as ‘Tatar’. This in fact is the most widely accepted view by scholars [Ögel, 2001. P. 50].

There are a few important records in the primary Chinese sources about names that directly understood as inferring to the ‘Tatars’. The first of these is *Xin Wu Dai Shi* (新五代史); whilst the second *Meng Da Bei Lu* (蒙鞑備錄), which was written by Zhao Gong, who is said to have met the Mongol prince Mukali in 1221.

The ‘Tatar’ chapter of *Xin Wu Dai Shi* states that “Dada (達鞑) [Tatar] is a people who are descendants of Mohe (靺鞨). They lived in the northeast of Xi (Turkic: *Tatabi*) and Qidan (Turkic: *Kitan*). They then were pushed out by Qidan, whereby their people and tribes ended up becoming disbanded. A number of Tatars who were subjects of Qidan had ended up taking refuge to Bohai. Another tribe which had originally settled in the Yin (Altai) mountains had taken on the name Dada (達鞑). Towards the end of Tang Dynasty at the end of the 10th century, their name was known throughout China” [*Xin Wu Dai Shi*, 1997. P. 911].

Meng Dai Bei Lu moreover indicates that “The place where Dada (達鞑) [Tatar] had emerged is in the northernmost of Qidan. Dada (Tatar) are another people of Shatuo (沙陀). Therefore, they had not been heard of in more previous eras. There are three types of Tatar: black, white, and wild. The Dada (達鞑) and Nüzhen (女真) are from the same racial stock and are the descendants of the Mohe (靺鞨). Their inhabitants situated aro-

und the Hutong river are called Nüzhen, whilst those inhabitants situated in the north of Yin mountain are called Dada (達鞑) [Meng Da Bei Lu Jiaozhu, 1901. P. 1].

The ‘Otuz Tatar’ (‘Thirty Tatars’) in Turkic Orhun inscriptions are defined as being Mongol (Shiwei), where as the ‘Dokuz Tatar’ (‘Nine Tatars’) of the inscription are defined as being Turkic. In an article that I had previously published on the origin of the word Tatar, I had tried to make an analysis based on the Chinese sources, whereby I had proposed that the Tatar name comes from the Ruoran (柔然) people in the 5th century [Yıldırım, 2012. P. 171–190].

The Tatar name appears in Chinese sources after the fall of the Yuan Empire, and was used in direct reference to the Mongols. That is why the ‘Tatar’ chapter of Ming Shi (明史) begins as follows: “Dada (鞑鞑) is now Menggu (蒙古), which ultimately is a continuation of the Yuan (元) peoples” [Ming Shi, 1997. P. 8463].

In the chapter of Qingchao Wenxian Tongkao (清朝文獻通考) (years 1616 to 1784) titled “Turkey” (Tuerqi 土耳其), the writer mentions that Turks had gradually captured eastern territories of Roman Empire, and moreover had emplaced the Dada (鞑鞑) tribes [Qingchao Xu Wenxian Tongkao, 1936. P. 10793a]. Thus, here, the word Tatar was used refer to the Turks who settled in Anatolia in the 9th century.

There are various opinions on the origin of the word Tatar itself. Here, we wish to classify the characters that can be directly understood as being ‘Tatar’ without touching upon its origin.

“Tatar” as the Society and Dignity Name

It is understood that the word Tatar was used in reference to both a community as well as a reputation. For example:

— Tataer 塔塔兒: Qidan man Yelü Liuge (耶律留哥) — who had previously served in the Jin Dynasty — had later surrendered to the Mongols and had marched against the Jin. Liuge’s brother Yelü Dula (耶律獨剌)’s son was recorded as being Tatar (Tataer 塔塔兒) in Yuan Shi (元史) [Yuan Shi, 1997. P. 3514].

— Tataertai 塔塔兒台: Göyük Khan, who had ascended the throne of Mongol in 1246, gave both seal alongside gifts to a Chinese man by the name of Shi Heng, whereupon the Chinese man had dubbed him as being ‘Tatar’ (Tataertai 塔塔兒台) [Yuan Shi, 1997. P. 3610].

— Tata 塔塔: Tata Tonga (塔塔統阿) [Yuan Shi, 1997. P. 3048], on the other hand, was an Uighur man who had created the Mongolian alphabet as based on the Uighur alphabet. Here, the name is most likely ‘Tatar’, and must have been given to him by the Mongols because of his service to the Mongol Empire.

‘Tatar’ as a Personal Name

One can see that word Tatar as a personal name was widely used throughout the Mongol Empire.

— Tataertai (塔塔兒台): Xin Yuan Shi contains a biography on him, detailing that he was a high official in the Yuan Dynasty [Xin Yuan Shi, 1935. P. 267b].

— Various sources also cite the name Antan Tuotuoli (按攤脫脫里) [Yuan Shi, 1997. P. 3023], whereby the second part of the name is Tatar.

— General Dada (大答) was recorded in the biography of Taqay Temür [Yuan Shi, 1997. P. 3276].

— The name of Niulin’s father is Taidaer (太答兒) [Yuan Shi, 1997. P. 3143], whilst the son of Chun Zhi-hai named as Dadali (大達立) [Xin Yuan Shi, 1935. P. 278b].

— There is also a mention about the commander Dada (大答) in Hudü’s own biography [Yuan Shi, 1997. P. 3278].

“Tatar” as an Ethnic Name

The Tatar name most widely refers to the Tatars as an ethnic group. Although this name appeared as an umbrella name after the founding the Mongol Empire, it was directly related to the Tatar ethnic group during the early years of the Empire. There are many persons who were recorded in sources as being ethnically Tatar:

— Sali (撒里) was Tataer (塔塔兒) [Xin Yuan Shi, 1935. P. 312c];

— Boersu was Tuotuote (脫脫忒) [Yuan Shi, 1997. P. 3279];

— Tuoyinna was Dadacha (答答叉) [Yuan Shi, 1997. P. 3287];

— Maili was from the Tuotuolin (脫脫鄰) people [Yuan Shi, 1997. P. 3211];

— Bujir (Buzhier) was Menggu Tuotuolitai (蒙古脫脫里台) [Mongol-Tatar] [Yuan Shi, 1997. P. 3021];

— Menggütay [Mangwutai] was Menggu Dadaer (蒙古達達兒) [Mongol-Tatar] [Yuan Shi, 1997. P. 3186].

“Tatar” as an Identity

It is also possible to see the Tatar name as referring an identity in certain Chinese sources. For example, Jamukha’s biography in Xin Yuan Shi indicates that, upon the late arrival of Genghis Khan and Ong Khan whereby Jamukha will eventually join, Jamukha said furiously: “I do not fear rain and storm to meet people in time. A promise given throughout life is like a Dada (達達) [Tatar] oath” [Xin Yuan Shi, 1935. P. 260a]. For Jamukha, who was of the Black Tatar Mongol Nirun people [T’ang, 1970. P. 231], “Tatarness” was, in fact, an identity.

Xiedu, the son of the Qidan man Yelü Liuge, had served for many years in Genghis Khan’s and had ultimately made his way the ladder in terms of earning a high ranking. When Yelü Liuge died, his wife had asked Genghis Khan to send his son back to her family. Khan, in reply, had answered: “Xiedu is now Mongol” [Yuan

Shi, 1997. P. 3514]. Here, Genghis refers to his Qidan officer as a Mongol. It is understood that being Mongol is accepted as an identity rather than an ethnicity. In the Mongol Empire, such an understanding had later spread to include the Tatar name as well.

Resultingly, we have come across thirteen different names that can be read as directly referring the Tatars and Tatariness in Chinese sources. What is more is that there may be more names. These names can ultimately be divided into four classes: societal and dignity name, personal name, ethnic name, identity name. In this respect, it is understood that the Tatar name was sometimes used within a very narrow meaning in addition to being used in a broader sense.

Reconstruction of Names according to Early Mandarin (10th–12th century)¹

Pinyin	Character	Reconstruction
dádá	達鞞	ta'ta'

dádá	達達	ta'ta'
dádá	大答	ta'ta'
tātā	塔塔	t ^h a' t ^h a'
dádáer	達達兒	ta'ta'ɿ'
dādāchā	答答叉	ta'ta'tɕ ^h a
tātaer	塔塔兒	t ^h a' t ^h a'ɿ'
dádáli	大達立	ta'ta'li'
tuōtuōlǐ	脫脫里	t ^h ɔ' t ^h ɔ'li'
tuōtuōtè	脫脫忒	t ^h ɔ' t ^h ɔ' t ^h əj'
tātaertái	塔塔兒台	t ^h a' t ^h a'ɿ' t ^h aj
tuōtuōlín	脫脫鄰	t ^h ɔ' t ^h ɔ' lin'
tuōtuōlītái	脫脫里台	t ^h ɔ' t ^h ɔ' li' t ^h aj

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¹ According to [Pulleyblank, 1991].