

The Reconstruction of The Name *Yuezhi* 月氏 / 月支

Hakan Aydemir*
(İstanbul - Türkiye)

Dedicated to Prof. Dr. Dieter Michael Job

Özet:

***Yuezhi* Adının Yeniden Yapılandırılması**

Orta Asya tarihinin kuşkusuz en önemli problemlerinden biri Çin kaynaklarında *Yuèzhī* (月氏 / 月支) olarak geçen halkın kökenidir. Bugüne kadar tarihi veya arkeolojik araştırmalar Yüecilerin kökenini ikna edici bir biçimde açıklayamadılar. Bu çalışma, Yüecilerin kökenine ve Toharlarla ilişkilerine ilişkin çeşitli kuramları tanıtarak onları eleştirel bir yaklaşımla ele almaya çalışıyor. Bu sorunu çözebilmek için Uygur ve Çin yer adlarını inceleyerek Afganistan ve Doğu Türkistan'daki Yüeci boy adı kökenli yer adlarını tespit etmeye çalışıyor. Çalışmanın sonunda, Yüecilerin Afganistan ve Doğu Türkistan'daki eski coğrafi dağılımlarını göstermek için Yüeci boy adı kökenli yer adlarını gösteren iki de harita veriliyor. Boy adı kökenli bu yer adlarına ve tarihsel verilere dayanarak *Yuèzhī* adının asli biçiminin yeniden kurgulanması yönünde bir deneme de yapılıyor.

Anahtar Sözcükler: *Yuezhi*, Toharlar, Tohar sorunu, Türkçe-Toharca ilişkileri

Abstract

One of the most important problems of Central Asian history is undoubtedly the origin of the people referred to as *Yuèzhī* (月氏 / 月支) in Chinese sources. So far, historical or archaeological research could not

* Dr., Istanbul Medeniyet University, aydemirhaakan@gmail.com, ORCID: 0000-0002-2368-71030000-0002-2368-7103.

convincingly explain the origins of the Yuezhi. The study attempts to present and critically evaluate various theories concerning the origin of the Yuezhi and their relationship to the Tocharians. To address this problem, it investigates Uyghur and Chinese place names and tries to list Yuezhi ethnotoponyms in Afghanistan and Xinjiang. At the end of the study, two maps based on Yuezhi ethnonyms are also given to illustrate the former geographical distribution of Yuezhi in Afghanistan and Xinjiang. Based on these toponyms and historical data, the study also makes an attempt to reconstruct the name *Yuèzhī*.

Key Words: Yuezhi, Tocharians, Tocharian question, Turkic-Tocharian relations.

1. Introduction¹

One of the most important problems of Central Asian history is undoubtedly the origin of the people referred to as *Yuèzhī* (月氏) in Chinese sources. So far, historical or archaeological research could not convincingly explain the origins of the Yuezhi. In his book on the Yuezhi, analysing most of the textual (Chinese, Indian, Greek), archaeological and numismatic evidence currently available, Craig G. R. Benjamin (2007) notes that “With a link between the Yuezhi and Tocharian firmly (if not absolutely) established, ... But the identification of the Yuezhi as Tocharian-speaking is by no means universally agreed upon”.² Recently, Michał Witek (2018) attempted to present and critically evaluate various linguistic, palaeographical and lexicographical approaches as well as existing theories concerning the origin of the Yuezhi and their relationship to the Tocharians. Based on his analysis, he states that “we can neither prove nor disprove any of the various hypotheses.”³

¹ I would like to express my deep gratitude to my colleague Mehmet Savan for correcting and finalizing my English as well as for his advice on making the text more readable.

² Benjamin 2007: V, 22. For theories and criticism of who the Yuezhi were, see Enoki / Koshelenko / Haidary 1996: 166-168.

³ Witek 2018: 208. Some Turkish historians think that Yuezhi are of Turkic origin. (1) In this respect, one of their main arguments is the title *Yabgu* (Mızrak 2014: 375, 380). However, neither ethnicity nor linguistic origin of a people can be suggested as evidence, since titles can easily be borrowed.

Furthermore, there is also no firm linguistic evidence as to the language of the Yuezhi.⁴ Although Mallory doubts “that the analysis of potential ethnonyms or tribal names, no matter how ingenious, can actually lead us to recovering archaeological proxies for the linguistic ancestors of the Tocharians”,⁵ I still believe we can throw some light upon their origin by their name (i.e. *Yuezhi* 月氏 / 月支), which seems currently to be the only linguistic reference that could provide us with a solution. This shall, of course, be supported also (1) by the variant *Yuezhi* (月支) of the name *Yuezhi* (月氏) and (2) by ethnotoponyms referring obviously to Yuezhi, not only mainly in North Afghanistan, but also in Xinjiang (see Map 1 below), as well as (3) through comparative method.

Mızrak's other argument relies on new genetic research which allegedly “show clearly” (sic) that the leading dynasty of Yuezhi may have been of Turkic origin (*ibid.*, 399). Although the science of genetics itself is a very objective discipline, the selection of genetic samples (depending on who chooses it, and on the selected materials themselves), however, can be quite subjective and speculative. Not to mention that – in my view – genetic origin is not the same as linguistic origin. That is, linguistic and genetic (as well as ethnic) origin are completely different phenomena which should not be confused at all. Thus genetic and ethnic origins cannot be used to prove the linguistic origins at all. (2) From methodological and linguistic point of view the argumentation of my colleague, the historian Kürşat Yıldırım is also very problematic, as he thinks that Yuezhi are actually of Turkic origin and they can be identified with the *Jūshī* 車師 (= his *Chēshī* 車師), allegedly a branch of Kushans. In his opinion the name *Jūshī* (i.e. *Yuezhi*) is of Turkic origin and should be explained as the equivalent of the Proto-Turkic **koč* / **koš* (sic) ‘ram, tup’ in plural (i.e. *Yuezhi* = *Kushan* < *Jūshī* 車師 ← **koč* > Turkic *koč*, see his, i.e. the translators note to the footnote in the Turkish translation of Beckwith’s book, see Beckwith 2011: 5, footnote 16). This is actually a popular etymology, since *Jūshī* (車師, or *Chēshī* 車師 as he thinks) has – as seen below – phonetically nothing to do with the name *Yuezhi* (cf. *jū* 車 = OCM **ka*; *shī* 師 = OCM **sri*). Unless specified otherwise, all Early Middle Chinese (i.e. EMC) reconstructions in this study are based on Pulleyblank 1991, while all Later Han (i.e. LH), and Old Chinese Minimal (i.e. OCM) reconstructions are based on Schuessler 2007. Baxter & Sagart’s (2014) OC reconstructions are cited as OCB.

⁴ As Mallory and Mair note, “there is no firm evidence from any Chinese source as to the language they spoke” (Mallory / Mair 2000: 282).

⁵ Mallory 2015: 16.

2. Research history on the reconstruction of the name *Yuèzhī* (月氏 / 月支)

Before going into the analysis of the name *Yuèzhī* (月氏 / 月支), it is worth briefly reviewing – without aiming at completeness – what has been said thus far on its reconstruction.

As far as I know, the first serious attempt concerning the reconstruction of the name *Yuèzhī* (月氏 / 月支) was made by Haloun (1937). In his view, its OC reconstruction may be **zṛjwāt-t'ia* or **ṛjwāt-t'ia*, which may reflect a foreign form **zguja* or **zgujaka*, and can be the name of Scythians.⁶ Haloun's view was accepted also by Enoki / Koshelenko / Haidary (1996), who think, “It seems most plausible to identify the Yüeh-chih with the Scythians”, and this solution is “better than any other theory”. Accordingly – in their view – **zguja* “can be considered as a transcription of the name of the Scythians”, and it “may also be proposed that the Yüeh-chih were not only called Scythians, but were Scythians themselves”.⁷ As we will see below, Haloun's **zguja* reconstruction is not correct and therefore cannot be accepted. **Zguja* can surely not be the old pronunciation of *Yuezhi* as Enoki / Koshelenko / Haidary think.

Later, Pulleyblank reconstructed *Yuèzhī* 月氏 as *ṛjwat-cje* < **ṛwāt-tēh*, which in his view may reflect “*Ἰάτιοι (?)*”, i.e. “**Ywati*”, a Central Asian tribal name mentioned in Ptolemy's *Geography* (2nd c.).⁸ He maintained this view also in his later works.⁹ As Henning said, this comparison was first made by Marquart in 1901.¹⁰

Based on the **ṛjwāt-t'ia* reconstruction of Haloun, Henning thought that it reflected a form *Gu(t)-t'i*, which is, however, phonetically unacceptable.¹¹

⁶ Haloun 1937: 315-316.

⁷ Enoki / Koshelenko / Haidary 1996: 166-168.

⁸ Pulleyblank 1962: 109.

⁹ Pulleyblank 1995: 425; Pulleyblank 1999: 156.

¹⁰ Henning 1978: 223; Marquart 1901: 206.

¹¹ Henning 1978: 223.

The last attempt regarding the reconstruction of the name *Yuèzhī* (月氏 / 月支) was made by Beckwith (2009). Beckwith thinks that “in one of the highly archaic border dialects of Old Chinese in Antiquity the word 月 ‘moon’ would have been pronounced *tokwar or *togwar”, and as “for the second character of the transcription, 氏 or 支, it is regularly reconstructed as Old Chinese *ke (Sta. 567)”, (Sta. = Starostin). Based on this – in his view – “it makes sense that the Hsiung-nu used the “royal” suffix or compounding element *ke for their overlords the Yueh-chih or *Tok^war-ke”. “In conclusion, it is clear that the name now read Yueh-chih is a transcription of *Tok^warke”, which actually would mean – in his view – “the *Tok^war kings’ (or ‘Tokharian Kings’) or ‘the Royal *Tok^war (or Tokharians)’”.¹² Consequently, according to Beckwith “*Tok^warke” is an exonym of Xiongnu origin.

I think Beckwith’s view is extremely hypothetical, since (1) – if we take into account Pulleyblank’s OC reconstruction of 氏 *tēh¹³ – Starostin’s reconstruction *ke for zhī 氏 can surely not be accepted, because the initial consonant of 氏 in OC was a dental stop *t- (i.e. *tēh), and not a velar stop *k- (i.e. *ke) as Beckwith thinks. (2) I may be wrong, but I think that it does not seem possible to replace a foreign word of two syllable (i.e. *togwar / *tokwar) with one syllable in Old Chinese. The main problem of Beckwith's view is that his conclusion is built on a chain of assumptions.

3. References to the name *Yuèzhī* in Chinese chronicles

After a short description of earlier views, we can now look at the earliest Chinese chronicles, where the name of Yuezhi appears under various graphic forms (i.e. *Yúzhī* 禺知, *Yúzhī* 禺氏, *Niúzhī* 牛氏, *Yuèzhī* 月氏, *Yuèdī* 月氏, *Yuèzhī* 月支), i.e. the *Mu Tianzi zhuan*

¹² Beckwith 2009: 381-383; Beckwith 2010: 8; cf. Starostin 1989: 567.

¹³ Pulleyblank 1962: 106-107.

穆天子傳, *Yi Zhou Shu* 逸周書, *Guanzi* 管子 and the *Shanhai jing* 山海經.¹⁴

3.1. *Yúzhī* 禹知

Mu Tianzi zhuan (穆天子傳 ‘The travels of Mu, the Son of Heaven’) is a work thought to have been written between 403 and 350 BC. It reports certain incidents that were supposed to have taken place during the life of King Mu (r. 956–918 BC). A copy of it was found in AD 281 in the tomb of the King Xiang of Wei 襄魏 (r. 318–296 BC). Yuezhi are mentioned in this work (Chapter 1) in the form of *Yuzhi* (禹知).¹⁵ Thus *Yuzhi* (禹知) seems to be the relatively oldest attested form.

3.2. *Yúzhī* 禹氏, *Yuèzhī* 月氏, *Yuèdī* 月氐

Yi Zhou Shu 逸周書 (or *Zhou Shu* 周書) is also a text unearthed in c. AD 280 in the tomb of the King Xiang of Wei 襄魏. The text was originally comprised of 32 chapters and written in the late 4th or early 3rd century BC. It seems later to have underwent two processes of redaction. Chapter 59, which mentions Yuezhi under the graphic forms *Yuzhi* 禹氏 and *Yuezhi* 月氏, was originally not part of the 32 chapters. Thierry thinks that the text was compiled under the Former Han, in the first half of the 1st century BC. According to Shaughnessy, too, “the redaction of the text as we have it today could have taken place no earlier than the middle part of the Former Han period.”¹⁶ Along with the form *Yuezhi* 月氏, the text provides also the form *Yuèdī* 月氐 in the late supplement *Yi Yin chaoxian* (伊尹朝獻) to the Chapter 59, which Thierry considers as a

¹⁴ Thierry 2005: 4; Benjamin 2007: 31-36; Taishan 2010: 421-539.

¹⁵ Thierry 2005: 4-5; Mathieu 1993: 342; Taishan 2010: 1, 26-27; Benjamin 2007: 31-36. For the Chinese text see <https://ctext.org/mutianzi-zhuan/zh?searchu=禹知>, and <https://ctext.org/mutianzi-zhuan/zh?searchu=月氏> (accessed: 7.12.2019). According to Yu Taishan *Yuzhi* (禹知) can be regarded as a transcription of *Gasiani* (Taishan 2010: 10). This is, however, phonetically impossible.

¹⁶ Thierry 2005: 5; Shaughnessy 1993: 229-230; Benjamin 2007: 31-32. For the Chinese text see <https://ctext.org/lost-book-of-zhou?searchu=禹氏> (accessed: 7.12.2019).

faulty graph for *Yuezhi* 月氏 (i.e. *dī* 氐 instead of *zhī* 氏).¹⁷ The form *Yuezhi* 月氏 occurs many times also in *Shiji* 史記 and in *Han Shu* 漢書. On the other hand, some think that the character *yuè* 月 ‘moon’ (in *Yuèzhī* 月氏) actually stands for the character *ròu* 肉 ‘meat’ from the Qing period, and thus, it should be read as *Ròuzhī* 月氏, and not *Yuèzhī* 月氏. As Thierry rightly noted, however, the reading **Ròuzhī* of 月氏 is wrong.¹⁸

3.3. *Yúzhī* 禺氏, *Niúzhī* 牛氏

Guanzi 管子 is a politico-philosophical text, which is traditionally dated to the 7th century BC. The present text was edited by Liu Xiang in about 26 BC, and “contains a wide mixture of material written by a number of unnamed writers over a long period of time. Some chapters may date from as early as the fifth century b.c., while others clearly belong to the early Han period, perhaps as late as the middle of the first century b.c.”¹⁹ The form *Yúzhī* 禺氏 occurs in this text in the Chaptres 73 (*Guo Xu* 國蓄), 78 (*Kui Du* 揆度), 80 (Qing Zhong I 輕重甲), 81 (Qing Zhong II 輕重乙), and the form *Niúzhī* 牛氏 in the Chapter 77 (*Di Shu* 地數).²⁰

3.4. *Yuèzhī* 月支

Shanhai jing 山海經 ‘Classic of mountains and seas’ is a geographical work compiled under the Han (206 BC – AD 220).²¹ The name *Yuezhi* is attested in this text (Chapter 13) in the form of *Yuèzhī* 月支.²² According to Thierry, this form occurs mainly in the texts of the 3rd century AD, and the reason that *shì* / *zhī* 氏 (i.e. 月氏) was replaced by *zhī* 支 (i.e. 月支) may be due to the fact that the *shì*-pronunciation of 氏 began to override the *zhī*-pronunciation of 氏.²³ Pulleyblank also notes that the “most probable explanation

¹⁷ Thierry 2005: 5. Thierry might be right. Therefore the form *Yuèdī* 月氐 will not be examined here (cf. *dī* 氐 < LH *tei^B*, OCM **tī*?).

¹⁸ Thierry 2005: 30, note 34.

¹⁹ Rickett 1993: 244; Thierry 2005: 6; Benjamin 2007: 33-34.

²⁰ For the Chinese text s. <https://ctext.org/guanzi/zh> (accessed: 7.12.2019).

²¹ Thierry 2005: 6; Fracasso 1993: 357.

²² For the Chinese text see <https://ctext.org/shan-hai-jing?searchu=月支> (accessed: 7.12.2019).

²³ Thierry 2005: 6.

for its replacement by 支 or 枝 in Later Han is that the palatalization of the dental stops had made it no longer suitable to express the foreign sound.”²⁴

4. Reconstruction of the name *Yuèzhī* (月氏 / 月支)

As can be seen from above, there are many different forms that are thought to be related to Yuezhi, which have emerged at different times and sources. As we will see below, however, there are still a few other names that have not been associated with the Yuezhi so far. This is not at all surprising, for Chinese sources have often recorded different names for the same people.

There are many reasons underlying this fact (e.g. difference of exonym / endonym, interlingual allonym, multiple copying of chronicles, chronological differences of Chinese chronicles, phonetics of intermediary language, phonetic changes of the name over time, phonetic updating of foreign name, etc.). I will only touch, however, upon the last one (i.e. *phonetic updating of foreign name*), and not all of the above reasons. The main problem here is, of course, (1) how to reconstruct them, and (2) whether all these forms are really related to the Yuezhi or Tocharian.

As for the reconstruction, as can also be seen from the above literature review, excellent researchers have put forward different ideas on the subject. However, as the problem has not yet been solved, and no consensus has been reached, we can clearly understand how difficult and complicated the problem is. I also intend to contribute to the solution of this complicated problem through a reconstruction. Of course, I do not claim that this will solve all the problems related to the above names in a snap. Still, it does not seem possible at this time to solve all the related problems. But I think that the reconstruction of *Yuèzhī* (月氏 / 月支), i.e. the most important one among these, will contribute to the understanding of other variants as well. Therefore, in this study, I will particularly focus on the form *Yuèzhī* (月氏 / 月支).

²⁴ Pulleyblank 1962: 106-107.

4.1. *Yuèzhī* 月氏

Needless to say, a correct determining of the first occurrence of the form *Yuezhi* 月氏, is the first step to its reconstruction. Since it seems to have first occurred in the Former Han, our first reconstruction must be based on Old Chinese (OC).²⁵ So we should start with the opinions concerning the reconstruction of the first graph *yuè* 月. In connection with the reconstruction of the form *Yuezhi* 月氏, Pulleyblank (1995) reconstructed the first syllable *yuè* 月 as OC **ɣwat*.²⁶ Schuessler's OC reconstruction (2007) is also **ɣwat* (LH *ɣyat*).²⁷ Baxter reconstructed it first as **ng^wjat* (/ **Nwjat*) in his book in 1992.²⁸ He seems, however, to have changed his opinion later, since in the book *Old Chinese: a new reconstruction* (2014), Baxter and Sagart give the OC form as **[ɣ]^wat*.²⁹ As seen, there is a general consensus on the OC reconstruction of *yuè* 月.

The case of the second syllable *zhī* 氏 is, however, a more challenging problem. Baxter and Sagart as well as Schuessler do not provide any OC reconstruction for it. Pulleyblank, however, reconstructed it as **tēh* in connection with the form *Yuezhi* 月氏 that he reconstructed first as **ɣwa:t-te:h* which – for him – is probably the equivalence of the form *Ἰατιοι*, a tribal name mentioned in Ptolemy's *Geography*.³⁰ He later seems, however, to have changed his opinion, since he has given in 1995 and 1999 not an OC form, but an EMC **ɣwat-teiǎ* = **Ywati* (sic) for the form *Yuezhi* 月氏.³¹ His *Ἰατιοι* (i.e. **Ywati*) reconstruction for the donor

²⁵ Old Chinese is the language of texts and documents from the beginning of writing, around 1250 BC, to the Han period (206 BC – AD 220, Schuessler 2007: xi, 1). Thus, the records of the Han dynasties are also the sources of Old Chinese (*ibid.*).

²⁶ Pulleyblank 1995: 425; Pulleyblank 1999: 156.

²⁷ Schuessler 2007: 595.

²⁸ Baxter 1992: 226.

²⁹ Retrieved from

<http://ocbaxtersagart.lsa.umich.edu/BaxterSagartOCbyMandarinMC2014-09-20.pdf>.

³⁰ Pulleyblank 1962: 66.

³¹ Pulleyblank 1995: 425; Pulleyblank 1999: 156.

form, however, cannot be accepted. Taking into account Pulleyblank's earlier OC reconstruction **ɣwa:t-te:ɦ* and based on Baxter/Sagart's and Schuessler's OC reconstruction for the *yuè* 月 mentioned above, the possible OC reconstruction of the form *Yuezhi* 月氏 seems to be **ɣwat-tēɦ* (or **[ɣ]^wat-tēɦ*).

The main problem is, of course, (1) how to interpret this reconstructed OC form; (2) on what grounds do we have to choose one over another; (3) what was the donor form and how to reconstruct it; (4) what is more important, how do we verify the donor form or its reconstruction?

As for the first question above, I think the OC **ɣwat-tēɦ* with **ɣ-* is the most possible reconstruction for the form *Yuezhi* 月氏, since some other variants of the name *Yuezhi* mentioned above (that will be analyzed below) have also an initial voiced velar nasal **ɣ-/ *ɣ^w-* (LH **ɣy-*) in OC. This is the first key to the solution of the problem. According to Pulleyblank there is some evidence that the **ɣ-* and its aspirated variant **ɣ^h-* were used in the Han period to represent a foreign initial **y-*. Thus, in his view, the use of **ɣ-* to represent a foreign **y-* shows that “Chinese had no better equivalent;”³² (i.e. OC **ɣ-* / **ɣ^h-* ← foreign **y-*).

1. “**ɣiap-pa-la*” = **Yapala* < *Yapana* (old name of Gandhara)
2. “**ɣei-la-gye-tei*” = **Yaxartes* (= Gr. *Ιαζάρτης* ‘Jaxartes’)
3. “**ɣ^hēāp-goh*” = **Yabgu*³³

Based on the above remarks, it would be plausible to suggest that the donor form had an initial **y-*. That is, the initial **ɣ-* of the OC **ɣwat-* seems to go back to a foreign **y-*. Before we go into the evidence for it, however, we also have to analyze the final **-t* of the OC **ɣwat-*.

³² Pulleyblank 1962: 93, 99 (cf. Old Turkic *yabgu* ~ *yavgu*). There are – in his view – also indices in transcriptions before the Tang period that **ɣ-* was used to stand for a foreign initial *ø-* ~ *y-* (Pulleyblank 1966: 17). Schuessler, however, suggests in OC not a **ɣ^h-*, but a **hɣ-* (s. Schuessler 2007: 5, 51, 56). Baxter also agrees with Schuessler: **hng-* (s. Baxter 1992: 206, 209), cf. Pulleyblank 1962: 143.

³³ Pulleyblank 1962: 93-95.

As for the final **-t* of the first syllable **ɲwat-*, it seems to represent a foreign coda **-r*. Most common and widely noted correspondence of a foreign **-r* in OC is actually the **-n*.³⁴ According to Pulleyblank, however, a further possible equivalent for a foreign **-r* was **-t*. This was the normal equivalent of a foreign (e.g. Altaic) **-r* in the Tang period, but – in his opinion – “Chinese **-t* for **-r* occurs sporadically at a much earlier period”.³⁵ One of his few examples is *Mǎnqū* 滿屈 (< OCB **mʰ[o][n]ʔ-[kʰ]ut*) for *Bakur* (= Pacorus), the name of the king of Parthia who sent an embassy to China in AD 101, which – in his opinion – seems very probable on historical grounds in spite of the phonetic difficulties.³⁶ Thus, on these grounds I suppose that the final **-t* of the first syllable **ɲwat-* reflects a foreign **-r*, and think that the **ɲwat-* itself goes back to a foreign syllable **yar-* (or **ⁱar-*): OC **ɲwat-* ← foreign **yar-*.

How to verify or prove it at all? For the time being I think this is only possible in two ways, i.e. by taking into account (a) the LH 月支, and (b) by ethnotoponyms like *Yārki* (ياركى) and *Arči* (ارچی), the place names in Afghanistan, which in ancient times part of the territory of The Great Yuezhi (*Da Yuezhi* 大月氏), and by *Arki*, *Archi* and *Argi* place names in Xinjiang (see Map 1 and 3 below). Let us start with the first one.

4.1.1. LH 月支 ‘Yuezhi’

As we have seen above, the form *Yuèzhī* 月支 occurs first in Later Han, mainly in the texts of the 3rd century AD. The first syllable *yuè* 月 occurs in this period as LH *ɲyat*, and the second syllable *zhī* 支 as LH *tše* (< *kie*, OCM **ke*).³⁷ The most probable explanation for the replacement of 氏 (月氏) by 支 (i.e. 月氏 > 月支) in Later Han

³⁴ Schuessler 2007: 85; Pulleyblank 1962: 228.

³⁵ Pulleyblank 1962: 228; Pulleyblank 1966: 17.

³⁶ Pulleyblank 1962: 227; for another probable example see Pulleyblank 1983: 456.

³⁷ See Schuessler 2007: 595, 614; cf. *zhī* 支 (~ 枝) ‘branch’ < MC *tšye* < **kje* (Baxter 1992: 211, 294, 569), OC **ke* (Baxter / Sagart 2014), EMC *teiā* / *tei* < **kye* < OC **kēh* (Pulleyblank 1962: 100, 107, 262).

is – in Pulleyblank’s view – “that the palatalization of the dental stops had made it no longer suitable to express the foreign sound.”³⁸ Pulleyblank seems to be right. At this point, however, another question arises: what kind of foreign sound could it have been? I think the answer is fairly simple. Since the Later Han reconstruction of *Yuèzhī* 月支 would have sounded as **ɲyat-tsé*, drawing upon this and what has been said above, we have to think that the LH **ɲyat-tsé* reflects a foreign **yār.śi*, which, in my view, is clearly the equivalence of the name *Ārsi* [arɛi] ‘Tocharian’, i.e. of the self-designation of the Tocharian A-speakers.³⁹ The answer is also that the foreign sound which has been represented by the LH *-tś-* (i.e. *tse* 支) might have been a voiceless alveolo-palatal fricative <ś> [ç], just like in *Ārsi*. This assumption seems also to be in concordance with Pulleyblank’s statement that in the Chinese of the Han period dental affricates were used for foreign palatals.⁴⁰ As seen, the foreign (i.e. *Ārsi* ‘Tocharian’) palatal fricative <ś> [ç] was replaced by the LH dental affricate *-tś-*. Hence, based on this analysis, it seems reasonable to think about the following line of development:

LH 月支 **ɲyat-tse* ← **Yarśi* ~ **Arśi* ‘Tocharian’ > ToChA *Ārsi*
(s. the stemma below)

4. 1.2. *Yārki* (ياركى)

The second key for understanding the form *Yuezhi* 月氏 is its OC phonetic form, to be more precise, the second syllable *zhī* 氏. As we have seen above, its OC form is **tēh*. The initial **t-* refers clearly to a kind of plosive consonant in the donor language, and surely not to a fricative <ś> [ç] as in ToChA *Ārsi*. This inevitably necessitates a rethinking of the current etymology of the name *Arśi*. Before, however, reconstructing and analyzing the equivalence of the second syllable **tēh* 氏 (in *Yuezhi* 月氏) in the donor language, and

³⁸ Pulleyblank 1962: 106-107.

³⁹ Pulleyblank 1962: 109.

⁴⁰ Consequently I agree with Craig G. R. Benjamin who rightly thinks that the term “Yuezhi” refers to a dynasty ruling over a confederation “of pastoralist nomads, including tribes of different ethnicities and different languages” (Benjamin 2007: 120).

the foreign initial sound replaced by the OC **t-*, it is worth briefly looking at the current views on the origin of the TochA *Ārśi*. These views can be discussed under two groups: (1) some scholars think that *Ārśi* goes back to a form **ārki* (i.e. TochA *ārki* ‘albus’;⁴¹ **ārki*⁴²); (2) other scholars, however, think that *Ārśi* originated from Sanskrit *ārya* (i.e. TochA *Ārśi* ‘ordained beggar monk; Aryan’ ← Prakrit **ārśa-* / **ārža-* ← Skr. *ārya-*).⁴³

The second view, however, poses serious problems and is surely not tenable considering that the initial consonant (i.e. **t-*) of the second syllable in OC **ɣwat-tēh* refers clearly to a plosive consonant in the donor language, and not to an alveolo-palatal fricative <ś> [ç] or to a palatal approximant **-y-*. In addition, the supposed Iranian intermediate form **ārśa-* / **ārža-* is not attested either. Thus, although unproven so far, I think the first opinion is correct. But how can this be proven? By ethnotoponyms referring obviously to Yuezhi, mainly in North Afghanistan and Tarim Basin (see Map 1 and 3 below), as I indicated above, as well as by other toponyms occurring in Chinese historical texts concerning Yuezhi

As is well known, after Yuezhi had been defeated by Xiongnu in 2nd century BC, they migrated from their homeland, i.e. territory between Dunhuang and present-day Qilian 祁連 (in Gansu), toward the west, first to the Ili Valley and ca. 30 years later to Bactria including the northern part of present-day Afghanistan, and overthrew the Greco-Bactrian Kingdom there. They established a kingdom for themselves and dominated the surrounding territories. These people are called *Da Yuezhi* 大月氏 ‘Great Yuezhi’ in Chinese sources. A relatively small group of Yuezhi, however, did not take part in the migration westward. They are called *Xiao Yuezhi* 小月氏 ‘Lesser / Little Yuezhi’ in Chinese sources.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Poucha 1955: 25.

⁴² Hirotooshi 2014: 107.

⁴³ Pelliot 1936: 265; Bailey 1937: 906; Krause / Thomas 1964: 168; van Windekens 1976: 623; Carling 2009: 48b; Douglas 2013: 57; cf. Sieg 1937: 130-139.

⁴⁴ For history and migrations of Yuezhi *inter alia* see the following studies: Haloun 1937, Maenchen-Helfen 1945, Henning 1978: 224; Enoki /

Consequently, it is not surprising that we find toponyms in Afghanistan pertaining to Yuezhi. However, toponyms bearing their name can be found not only in Afghanistan, but also in Xinjiang. Their occurrence as toponyms is particularly important, since they would help reconstruct the phonetic shape of the name *Yuezhi*. Thus, I make an attempt to collect the ethnotoponyms from the available Chinese, Modern Uyghur and other sources, which, in my view, might have to do with Yuezhi, and finally to transfer the data onto a map (see below). This hopefully will help also partially map the former factual historical geography and locations of Yuezhi in Afghanistan and Xinjiang.

The ethnotoponyms, which in my view might have to do with Yuezhi, appear generally (1) in four different phonetic forms in and around Afghanistan as well as in Xinjiang, that is in form of *Arĉi* and *Yarki*, and (2) in form of *Argi*, *Arĉi* and *Arki* in Xinjiang as seen on the maps below as well. To better understand the relationship between these names and TochA *Ārśi*, and thereby reconstruct the OC **ɣwat-tēh*, we need to clarify the relationship of these toponyms with each other. As a working hypothesis and based on the ethnotoponomic data above the following phonetic developments can be reconstructed for TochA *Ārśi*, and the OC 月氏 **ɣwat-tēh*:

4.1.3. The probable (incomplete) stemma of the TochA *Ārśi* (= *Yuezhi*)

- (1) *Arki* ← OCM 焉支 **ʔan-ke* ← **Arki* [arki] ~ **Yarki* [jarki] → Afg. *Yārki* / بارکی
- (2) MUyg. ٺارغى / *Arġi* ← **Argi* **Arei* [arei] ~ **Yarki* [jarki] → OC 月氏 **ɣwat-tēh*
- (3) LH 焉耆 **ʔan-gi* **Arĉi* [arĉei] ~ **Yarĉi* [jarĉei]
- (4) Afg. ارچى / *Arĉi* TochA *Ārśi* ~ **Yarśi* → LH 月支 **ɣwat-ʃse*
- [ortʃi:] [arei]⁴⁵ [jarei]

Koshelenko / Haidary 1996; Thierry 2005; Liu 2001; Mallory 2015; Benjamin 2007; Yu 2010a.

⁴⁵ Because of the phonetic form *Ārśi* [arei], the name *Tokuz Ersin* in Old Turkic inscription (S3) *Kül Tegin* (732 CE) should be transcribed rather as *Tokuz Eršin* ‘Nine *Ārśi*’ with <š> [ʃ], which refers to the *Ārśi* tribal organization of Turkic type; i.e. Old Turkic *Eršin* [erʃin] < *Erši* [erʃi] + Plural -n ← *Ārśi* [arei].

4.1.3.1. As seen above, based on various toponymic evidence, **Arki* and **Yarki* seem to be the oldest reconstructable forms. However, it is for the time being not quite clear which one is the primary form. In order to know this, we first need to know the etymology of the name. Without doing so, it would be difficult to determine the primary form. This, however, must be left to the specialists in Indo-European linguistics.

The form **Arki* [arki] seems to be verified by the OCM 焉支 **ʔan-ke*, a form occurring in *Shiji* 史記. Pulleyblank has reconstructed it, however, as “*’ian-kye” from a form **Argi*, and remarked that it was mentioned in *Han Shu* 漢書 as the name of a mountain in Gansu.⁴⁶ As I mentioned above, the most common and widely noted correspondence of a foreign **-r* in OC is the **-n*.⁴⁷ Thus the first syllable OCM 焉 **ʔan* seems to represent a foreign syllable **ar* (in *Arki* [arki]). As for the second syllable OCM 支 **ke*, Pulleyblank may be right about the reconstruction **kye* for 焉支, and I may be wrong. Still, if we take into account the fact that, the palatalization of velars carried out sufficiently later than the palatalization of dental stops and dental stops had not yet been palatalized in Former Han period Chinese,⁴⁸ the reconstruction OCM 支 **ke* (or *kie* ?),⁴⁹ for 焉支 in *Shiji* (i.e. OCM 焉支 **ʔan-ke*) chronologically seems to be more reasonable. Thus, I suppose that the OCM 焉支 **ʔan-ke* seems to represent a foreign **Arki* [arki].

As for the form **Yarki* [jarki], it occurs in Afghanistan as *Yārki khēl* (پارکی خېل), the name of a village in Ghazni.⁵⁰ It is, however, for the time being not quite clear whether *Yārki* with initial *y-* is a relative primary or secondary form. As for the form **Arki* [arki] above, it can be confirmed by the following facts:

⁴⁶ Pulleyblank 1983: 20.

⁴⁷ Schuessler 2007: 85; Pulleyblank 1962: 228.

⁴⁸ See Pulleyblank 1962: 105, 108-109. For chronology of the palatalization of the OC initials **K-* see also Baxter 1992: 210-211, 569.

⁴⁹ For *kie* cf. *zhi* 支 < “LH *tse* < *kie* < OCH **ke*” (sic) (Schuessler 2007:635).

⁵⁰ See <https://www.geonames.org/1438984/yarki-khel.html> (N 33°05'30", E 68°04'55", accessed: 7.12.2019).

a) *Ājī* (阿濟) / *Arki*:

According to the geographical description in *Xiyu tuzhi*⁵¹ (Chap. 9), *Ājī* (阿濟) is a district name in northeast of Barköl County (*Zhenxi fu* 鎮西府) in Xinjiang. According to Zhong the Uyghur name of *Ājī* (阿濟) is *Arki*⁵² (see Map 3).

(b) *Ājī* (阿濟) / *Arki*:

According to the geographical description in *Xiyu tuzhi* (Chap. 20), *Ājī* (阿濟), that is *Ājī èlā* (阿濟鄂拉) ‘Mount Aji’, is the name of a mountain range⁵³ near Urumchi (*Wulumuqi* 乌鲁木齐) in Xinjiang. The second component *è-lā* (鄂拉) goes back – in my view – to the Mongolic form *ayula(n)* ‘mountain’. According to Zhong, the Uyghur name of *Ājī* (阿濟) is also *Arki*, and its present-day name is Mount Bogda (*Bogeduo shan* 博格多山);⁵⁴ (cf. the other mountain name *Arčī*, i.e. *Ā-ěr-qí* 阿尔齐) under the number (4) below, see Map 3).

4.1.3.2/3 The LH 焉耆 **ʔan-gi* reflects a foreign **Argi*. As generally accepted, it is the ancient name of the present-day Karashahr (*Yanqi* 焉耆), a Tocharian city in Xinjiang in ancient times⁵⁵ (see Map 3).⁵⁶ *Argi* has also been attested in form of *Argiya* ‘a man from *Argi*’ in the Niya documents.⁵⁷ It has escaped attention so far that the reconstructed form **Argi* as the name of settlements can actually be shown in relatively many places of

⁵¹ *Xiyu tuzhi* (西城图志), an illustrated book of Western regions with many maps is a detailed description of the region of Xinjiang from the Qing period (1644-1911). It was compiled in 1756 and completed in 1782 (see Zhong / Wang / Han 2002: 177, 186); Zhong 2008: 18.

⁵² Zhong 2008: 18.

⁵³ Zhong / Wang / Han 2002: 3003, 313; Zhong 2008: 18. *Ājī èlā* (阿濟鄂拉) is mentioned also in *Xiyu tong wenzhi* 西域同文志 (IV/5b). For its Turkish edition see Yıldırım 2015: 85.

⁵⁴ Zhong 2008: 18; see N 43°47'36", E 88°20'40" (<https://www.geonames.org/9274813/bogeda-feng.html>, accessed: 7.12.2019).

⁵⁵ Pulleyblank 1983: 20.

⁵⁶ N 42°03'43", E 86°33'59" (<https://www.geonames.org/1529031/yanqi.html>, accessed: 07.12.2019).

⁵⁷ Henning 1938: 571.

present-day Xinjiang. Without aiming at completeness, the following two toponyms can be mentioned in Modern Uyghur:

(a) *Argi Bulaq* (ئارغى بۇلاق)

‘Argi Spring’ in Toksun County (*Tuokexun xian* 托克逊县). Its Chinese name is *A'er bulake* (阿尔布拉克)⁵⁸ (see Map 3).

(b) *Argistan Davan* (ارغستان داقان < *Argi-stan*)

‘Argiland Mountain Slope’ in Hejing County (*Hejing xian* 和静县). Its Chinese name is *A'ergasutan daban* (阿尔尕苏坦达坂)⁵⁹ (see Map 3).

As seen, both the LH 焉耆 **ʔan-gi* and the Uyghur MUyg. *Argi* (ئارغى) [argi] preserved the intermediate form **Argi* which goes back to an older form **Arki* (i.e. *Argi* ← **Argi* < **Arki*). Thus we can safely say that these and other *Argi* place names are actually remnants of Yuezhi.

As for the form OC 月氏 **ɲwat-tēh*, its first syllable OC 月 **ɲwat* – as noted above – is quite clear. The second syllable *zhi* 氏, however, still requires explanation. It appears to be a problem that the initial **t-* of the OC **tēh* 氏 and the **k-* [c] of the reconstructed foreign form in **Yarki* [jarci] do not match. As is well known, however, that if perceptually the phoneme boundaries between /k/ and /t/ are lost, we can transcribe the phoneme articulated in this manner as [c], the voiceless palatal plosive. A [c] can also appear, however, as an allophone of /k/ just like in Turkish or in many other languages. That is, in some articulations /k/ and /t/ can be phonetically quite similar. Given this fact, I think it seems not to be groundless to suppose here a phoneme substitution (i.e. OC **t-* ← foreign **[c]*). If we take into account that the phonetic development **k* > **c* > **tē* > **ɛ* < *ś* > reconstructed on the base of the onomastic (i.e. toponymic and historical) data above, can be verified partially

⁵⁸ Sabit / Nasir 1994: 2b; coordinates: N 42°10'49.2", E 82°39'07.8" (<https://www.google.com/maps/place/42%C2%B010'49.2%22N+82%C2%B039'07.8%22E/@33.057767,95.4455176,3.88z/data=!4m5!3m4!1s0x0:0x0!8m2!3d42.1803333!4d82.6521667>); accessed: 7.12.2019.

⁵⁹ Sabit / Nasir 1994: 3a. Its coordinates remain unknown for the time being.

in Tocharian B as well (i.e. $*k > *c > *ε <ś>$),⁶⁰ the assumption of a $*[c]$ (in $*Yarki$ [jarci]) does also not appear to be unfounded. In other words, as a loanword adaptation strategy, Old Chinese replaced the ill-formed foreign syllable $*ki$ [ci] having an initial $*k-$ [c], with a well-formed one (i.e. $*tēh$ 氏), just like in many other – *inter alia* Turkic – loans in Chinese, in which – as one of the phonotactic constraints or processes – the unlicensed initials were deleted, or changed to licensed ones. Based on what has been said, I think highly possible that the OC 月氏 $*ηwat-tēh$ reflects a foreign $*Yarki$ [jarci].

4.1.3.4. The LH 月支 $*ηyat-tse$ has been explained in detail above, which goes back to a form $*Yarsi$. Therefore it will not be repeated here. As for the Afg. $Arčī$ (ارچی) [ɔrtʃi:], it occurs – as seen below – alone or as the first component of many compound place names in the north of Afghanistan. I think that they all are remnants of *Yuezhi* as a tribal name. As I mentioned briefly above, after their westward migration (2nd c. BC) from their homeland to Bactria, *Da Yuezhi* (大月氏) ‘Great Yuezhi/Arki’ settled there and dominated the surrounding territories including the northern part of the present-day Afghanistan and also Sogdiana, the valleys to the north of the Amu Darya in present-day Uzbekistan.⁶¹ Thus, it is not surprising at all that we find many toponyms in Afghanistan pertaining the Great Yuezhi/Arki. The toponyms $Arčī$ (ارچی) [ɔrtʃi:] in the north of Afghanistan, however, reflect a later stage of phonetic development (i.e. $Arčī \leftarrow *Arči$ [artʃi] < $*Arki$). This at the same time means that when the Yuezhi came to Bactria, their name (endonym) sounded as $*Arči$ [artʃi], which occurs today as $Arčī$ (ارچی) [ɔrtʃi:] in Afghanistan.

The phonetic form $Arčī$ can also be attested in Xinjiang, which is one of the strongest proofs for the $Arčī$ (i.e. Great Yuezhi) expansion from East to West. This name occurs in the form of $Ā'ěrqi shān$ (阿尔齐山) ‘Mount $Arčī$ ’ in the *Map of Kucha (Qiūcí 龜茲) County* (1909), where the Mount $Arčī$ (阿尔齐) is situated to

⁶⁰ For the Tocharian B development $*k > *c > *ε <ś>$ see Peyrot 2008: 74-75.

⁶¹ Craig 2007: x.

the east of Kucha (Kuche) River and southeast of the present-day Telemet Tunnel (*Tielimaide daban* 铁里买德达坂)⁶² (see Map 3). According to Zhong, the Uyghur name of the Mount *Ā'ěrqi* (阿尔齐) is “*Archī*”,⁶³ i.e. *Arčī*. Although this may seem like the only example of the phonetic form *Arčī* in Xinjiang, I am sure that future research will reveal many other similar names.

The geographical locations of the *Arčī* (ارچی) place names in Afghanistan are very interesting and important, since most of them are concentrated (see Map 1 below) along the northeastern border areas of present-day Afghanistan, to be more precise, along the northeastern foothills of the Hindu Kush mountain ranges in Afghanistan. It is, of course, not certain, but I suppose as a working hypothesis that this fact may well refer to the territorial expansion of the *Arčī* (Great Yuezhi) population and southern boundaries of *Arčī* (Great Yuezhi) settlements. This phenomenon seems to be a kind of ethnic, territorial and settlement boundary. To put it differently, from an onomastic point of view the *Arčī* (ارچی) place names may refer to a border line along the northern foothills of the Hindu Kush mountain ranges between *Arčī* (Great Yuezhi) and non-*Arčī* (non-Great Yuezhi) population or settlements. This at the same time would mean that these place names referring to *Arčī* population, groups, settlements or territory may have been given by the southern neighbours of *Arčī* (Great Yuezhi). At this point, of course, the question arises as to “who” these neighbours were. The answer will probably be “Tocharians”. If we look at Map 2 below, it can clearly be seen that the southern neighbours of *Arčī* (Great Yuezhi) were the so-called *Tokarak* / *Taghāarak* / *Tugarak* / *Tugrak* etc. tribes, i.e. Tocharians. The same phenomenon can also be observed with the Tocharians, whose settlements are lined up along the southern foothills of the Hindu Kush mountain ranges. This cannot be a sheer coincidence. I intend to show this phenomenon in a later study in other regions as well. I call this phenomenon «ethnotoponymic boundary», when it comes to those ethnotoponyms line up between ethnic, territorial and settlement

⁶² Zhong 2008: 10. *Tielimaide daban* 铁里买德达坂 is a mountain pass located in Tian Shan Mountain ca. 164 km to the north of Kucha.

⁶³ Zhong 2008: 10.

boundaries. Thus, the distribution of the ethnotoponyms in question shows that Arčī (Great Yuezhi) and Tocharians (*Tokarak*, etc.) settled in different but neighbouring regions.

Here, it is needless to particularly emphasise that this is very important in terms of the historical geography of the Tocharians and Great Yuezhi. Based on the above, I think it is not unreasonable to assume that the *Arčī* (ارچی) place names along the northern borders of present-day Afghanistan constitute the southern settlement boundary of Arčī (Great Yuezhi) people. These are as follows (see Map 1 below).

1. *Manṭaqah-ye Archī Guzār* is a locality in the Darqad District of Takhar Province, Afghanistan.⁶⁴
2. *Dasht-e Archī* is a second-order administrative division in Kunduz Province, Afghanistan.⁶⁵
3. *Dasht-e Archī* is the name of a plain in Kunduz Province, Afghanistan.⁶⁶
4. *Archi*, *Archī* is a populated place in *Dasht-e Archī*, the second-order administrative division of Kunduz Province, Afghanistan. Its alternate name is *Chichka*, *Chika*, etc.⁶⁷
5. *Archī Kōtal* (~ *Archi Kotal*) is the name of a pass in Gurzīwān, a locality in Faryab Province, Afghanistan.⁶⁸
6. *Archī Kham* is a populated place in Shahr-e Buzurg District in Badakhshan Province, Afghanistan.⁶⁹
7. *Archī Poshteh* (~ *Archē Pushtah*) is the name of a mountain (2835 m) in Shahid-e Hasas District in Oruzgan Province, Afghanistan.⁷⁰

⁶⁴ N 37°19'10", E 69°25'48", <https://www.geonames.org/1465292/mantaqah-ye-archi-guzar.html>; accessed: 29.10.2019.

⁶⁵ N 36°57'49", E 69°9'26", <https://www.geonames.org/7053313/dasht-e-archi.html>; accessed: 29.10.2019.

⁶⁶ N 37°1'30", E 69°10'28", <https://www.geonames.org/1143839/dasht-e-archi.html>; accessed: 29.10.2019.

⁶⁷ N 37°4'13", E 69°17'54", <https://www.geonames.org/1145001/chichkah.html>; accessed: 29.10.2019.

⁶⁸ N 35°39'14", E 65°20'45", <https://www.geonames.org/1148422/archi-kotal.html>; accessed: 29.10.2019.

⁶⁹ N 37°11'52", E 70°8'13", <https://www.geonames.org/1467402/archi-kham.html>; accessed: 29.10.2019.

8. *Nahr-e Archī* is the name of a canal in Kunduz Province, Afghanistan.⁷¹
9. *Dasht-e Archī* is a populated place in Imam Sahib District in Kunduz Province, Afghanistan.⁷²

4.1.4. *Wūzhī* 烏氏 / 烏枝

Before examining other variants of the name Yuezhi, it is worth analyzing the variants of the name *Wūzhī* 烏氏 / 烏枝, since a correct understanding of these two will also help understand other variants. To the best of my knowledge, these names have not been considered as variants of the name *Yuezhi* so far. As will be seen below, Pulleyblank has never linked these variants to Yuezhi, although he used these variants as an analogy for some phonetic phenomena. Based on historical events, only Craig G. R. Benjamin carefully associated the variant *Wūzhī* 烏氏 with the name *Yuezhi* with a question mark: i.e. “*Wuzhi* (Yuezhi?)”.⁷³ I think he is right about this association.

The name *Wūzhī* 烏氏 is attested (1) as an ethnonym in *Shiji* 史記 (Chap. 129).⁷⁴ As Benjamin writes, “Sima Qian mentions a chief named Luo of the *Wuzhi* (Yuezhi?) who, during the reign of the first emperor of the Qin (Huangdi r. 246-210 BCE), was a successful intermediary in both the jade and horse trade markets”.⁷⁵

(2) *Wūzhī* 烏氏 is also the name of an ancient locality in Gansu, which in Later Han was called *Wūzhī* 烏枝.⁷⁶

Taking into account that Yuezhi migrated away from their homeland Gansu westwards, then it is not surprising to find a name pertaining Yuezhi in Gansu. *Wūzhī* 烏氏 occurs as an ethnonym in

⁷⁰ N 33°1'44", E 65°16'55", <https://www.geonames.org/1477368/arche-pushtah.html>; accessed: 29.10.2019.

⁷¹ N 36°58'26", E 69°13'23", <https://www.geonames.org/1148421/nahr-e-archi.html>; accessed: 29.10.2019.

⁷² N 37°08'00", E 69°10'00", <https://www.geonames.org/1143838/dasht-e-archi.html>; accessed: 29.10.2019.

⁷³ Benjamin 2007: 32.

⁷⁴ For the Chinese text see <https://ctext.org/shiji?searchu=%E7%83%8F%E6%B0%8F>.

⁷⁵ Benjamin 2007: 32; for the translation of the relevant passage in *Shiji* 史記 see Watson 1993/II: 440 and Benjamin 2007: 32.

⁷⁶ Thierry 2005: 7; Pulleyblank 1962: 106, 263.

Shiji 史記, and can be connected to Yuezhi, which clearly shows, in my view, that *Wūzhī* 烏氏 or *Wūzhī* 烏枝 in Gansu is a place name of ethnotoponym origin dating from the Yuezhi time.

As for their reconstruction, the phenomenon between OC 月氏 **ŋwat-tēh* and LH 月支 **ŋyat-tśe* can also be observed here. Let us start with the second syllable. Just like in the case of OC 月氏 > LH 月支, the OC 烏氏 was also replaced by the 烏枝 in Later Han (i.e. OC 烏氏 > LH 烏枝). That is the *zhī* 氏 (in 烏氏) was replaced by the *zhī* 枝 (in 烏枝). As noted above, the most probable explanation for the replacement by 枝 “in Later Han is that the palatalization of the dental stops had made it no longer suitable to express the foreign sound.”⁷⁷ Hence, the second syllable *zhī* 氏 (in 烏氏) can be reconstructed as **tēh* in Old Chinese, and the *zhī* 枝 (in 烏枝) as **tśe* (< *kie*, OCM **ke*)⁷⁸ in Later Han. As for the first syllable *wū* 烏, its reconstruction is OCM **ʔâ* in Old Chinese, and LH **ʔa* in Later Han.

Thus, it follows that the form *Wūzhī* 烏氏 can be reconstructed as **ʔâ-tēh* in Old Chinese. Just like the **tēh* in OC 月氏 **ŋwat-tēh*, this OC **ʔâ-tēh* seems to reflect a foreign **aki* [aci] / [a:ci] (cf. **Arci* [arci] ~ **Yarki* [jarci] see the stemma above), which probably goes back to an older form **arki* (i.e. OC **ʔâ-tēh* ← **aki* [aci] / [a:ci] < **arki*).

Considering the reflexes of foreign **/-r/* in the syllable-final position in Old Chinese,⁷⁹ and the cases of **-r* in other variants (i.e. OCM 焉支 **ʔan-ke* ← **Arki* [arki], and OC 月氏 **ŋwat-tēh* ← **Yarki* [jarci], see the stemma above), there is no reason for the syllable-final **-r* in **arki* to disappear when borrowed into Old Chinese.

I may be wrong, but taking into account this circumstance, I suppose as a working hypothesis that the syllable-final **-r* in **arki*

⁷⁷ Pulleyblank 1962: 106-107

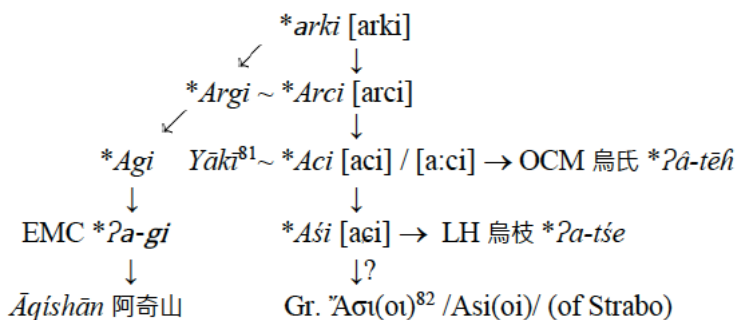
⁷⁸ See Schuessler 2007: 595, 613; cf. *zhī* 支 ~ 枝 ‘branch’ < MC *tśye* < **kje* (Baxter 1992: 211, 294, 569), OC **ke* (Baxter / Sagart 2014), EMC *teiă* / *tei* < **kye* < OC **kēh* (Pulleyblank 1962: 100, 107, 262).

⁷⁹ See Schuessler 2007: 80 ff.

should have already disappeared in a dialect of the donor language (i.e. in Yuezhī). That is, the loss of **-r* may be a dialectal feature. This at the same time would mean that **arki* changed first to **aki*, and borrowed only after that into Old Chinese (i.e. OC **ʔâ-tēh* ← **aki* [aci] / [a:ci] < **arki*). Probably the same phenomenon can also be seen in case of the other variants *Yúzhī* 禺知, *Yúzhī* 禺氏, *Niúzhī* 牛氏.

However, since – just like **Arci* [arci] > **Arčī* [artčī] > Tocharian *Ārsi* [arēi] – the plosive **-k-* [c] in **aki* [aci] / [a:ci] (< **arki*) has changed in time first to an affricate **-tṣ-*, and then to an alveolo-palatal fricative **-ç-* in the donor language (i.e. **-k-* [c] > **-tṣ-* > **-ç-*), in Later Han period the need arose to replace the OC 氏 **tēh* (in OC 烏氏) with the LH 枝 *tṣe* (in LH 烏枝), for in the said period “the palatalization of the dental stops had made it no longer suitable to express the foreign sound.”⁸⁰ This may be the reason that the foreign fricative **-ç-* was replaced by the dental affricate *-tṣ-* in LH 枝 *tṣe*, and so thus emerged the LH 烏枝, which in my view reflects a foreign **Āsi* [aci]. Based on these assumptions, the phonetic developments of the forms in question can be summarized in a stemma as follows:

4.1.5. The probable (incomplete) stemma of 烏氏 / 烏枝



⁸⁰ Pulleyblank 1962: 106-107

⁸¹ See “*yākiy tūyrak*” ‘Yākī (i.e. Arki) and Tocharians’, the name of a tribal union in Mahrnāmag (9th c.), see Müller 1913: 12; for *tūyrak* ‘Tocharians’ see Aydemir 2014.

⁸² In view of Marquart *Asioi* corresponds to the *Asiani* (of Trogus Pompeius) and *Yuezhi* of Chinese records. That is according to Marquart *Yuezhi* is the

The mountain name *Āqí* 阿奇 (in *Āqíshān* 阿奇山)⁸³ may also belong here, which is called *Aqitag* (< *Aqi* + Uyghur-Turkic *tag* ‘mountain’) in Uyghur. *Āqí* 阿奇 reflects a foreign **Agi* [agi] / [ɑ:gi], which probably goes back to **Argi* examined above (i.e. *Āqí* 阿奇 < EMC **ʔa-gi* ← **Agi* < **Argi* < **Arki*). There are certainly other place names of this kind in the ancient territories of Yuezhi (i.e. Arki) in Xinjiang that need to be systematically collected (see Map 3).

After the examination and reconstruction of *Wūzhī* 烏氏 / 烏枝, we can now return to the other variants *Yúzhī* 禺知, *Yúzhī* 禺氏, *Niúzhī* 牛氏. However, we have to put aside the first two variants for the time being, since there are insurmountable difficulties as their reconstructions. Namely, there is still no reliable OC reconstruction of the first syllable *yú* 禺. It can, however, be suggested – and very interestingly – that they both reflect probably a foreign form with an initial **y-* (and without a medial **-r-*), if we take into account EMC **ɲuǎ* for *yú* 禺. Sinological linguists will surely provide a better answer to this question. As for the other variant *Niúzhī* 牛氏, the situation is relatively better as seen below.

4.1.6. *Niúzhī* 牛氏

As noted above, *Niúzhī* 牛氏 is attested in *Guanzi* 管子. The first syllable *niú* 牛 can be reconstructed as OCM **ɲwə* and OCB **[ɲ]^wə*. Accordingly, the OC reconstruction of *Niúzhī* 牛氏 may be **ɲwə-tēh* or **[ɲ]^wə-tēh*, which – just like 烏氏 / 烏枝 – seems also to reflect a foreign form without **-r-* (i.e. OC **ɲwə-tēh* ← **yaki* [jaci] / [ja:ci]⁸⁴ < **Yarki* [jarci] < **Yarki* [jarki]). If this reconstruction is correct, we can suppose as a working theory that all the three forms (i.e. *Niúzhī* 牛氏, *Yúzhī* 禺知, *Yúzhī* 禺氏), the earliest variants of the

same as *Asioi*: “ΑΣΙΟΙ = 月支”, i.e. *Yuèzhī* (Marquart 1901: 206). According to Yu, however, *Asioi* (i.e. *Asii*) are one of the four tribes of the Sakās as seen in the Western historical records (Yu 2010b: 9).

⁸³ N 41°49'00", E 90°38'00", https://geographic.org/geographic_names/name.php?uni=-2609077&fid=1194&c=china; accessed: 16.12.2019.

⁸⁴ See *Yākī* in “*yākiy tūyrak*” ‘*Yākī* (i.e. Arki) and Tocharians’, the name of a tribal union in Mahrnāmag (9th c.), see Müller 1913: 12.

name *Yuezhi*, go back to foreign forms with initial *y-, in which the medial *-r- had disappeared already in donor language (i.e. OC **ɣwə-tēh* ← **yaki* [jaci] / [ja:ci] → *Yākī* in “*yākiy tūyrak*” ‘Yākī (i.e. Arki) and Tokharians’ in Mahrnāmag, 9th c.).

5. Conclusion

If we leave out the last three variants (i.e. *Niúzhī* 牛氏, *Yúzhī* 禺知, *Yúzhī* 禺氏), which require further research, the examinations of all other variants of the name *Yuezhi* examined above refer clearly to an older form **Arki* (~ **Yarki*). Thus, I think that **Arki* / **Yarki* was the name of the people recorded as *Yuezhi* (月氏 / 月支) in Chinese sources, which was later changed to *Ārsi*, the name of Tocharian A speakers.

At this point, of course, the question arises as to whether *Yuezhi* are Tocharians. My answer to this question is definitely “yes”, because (1) Tocharian A speakers called themselves *Ārsi*, which goes back to an older form **Arki*. (2) Since the name *Yuezhi* (月氏 / 月支) in Chinese sources goes back to a foreign form **Yarki*, a variant of **Arki*, both *Yuezhi* and *Ārsi* (i.e. **Arki*) are one and the same people. (3) Since the language of Tocharian A in the Old Turkic (Uyghur) *Maitrisimit nom bitig* (a translation of the Tocharian version) is called as *twqry*⁸⁵ (i.e. Tocharian) *language*, it is almost sure that the name *Tochar* and its variants were used as an exonym for Tocharian A (i.e. *Ārsi*) speakers. Thus, if *Ārsi* was called *Tochar*, and *Ārsi* is the same as *Yuezhi*, then we can safely say that *Ārsi* are actually Tocharians. In other words, *Ārsi* was an endonym, that is a self-designation, while *Tochar* was an exonym, an external name used *inter alia* for Tocharian A speakers as well.

At this point another question arises, “whose” name was actually the name *Tochar*? For the time being it does not seem possible to give a definite and clear answer to this question with linguistic methods. As a working hypothesis, however, and based on the three type of *Yuezhi* ethnonyms (i.e. 1. **Arki*, 2. **Yarki*, 3. **Asi* / **Aci*) examined above, I suppose for now that *Yuezhi* should have

⁸⁵ Old Turkic *Twqry* ‘Tocharian A’ ← Sogd. *twryr* [tuɣre] / [toɣre] < Sogd. *twyr’k* [tuɣrāk ~ toɣrāk]; for more information on *Twqry* see Aydemir 2009.

consisted of at least three relatively large groups. The leading dynasty could have been the **Arki* or **Yarki* (=Tocharian A) in any case. Yuezhi could have other large tribes, too, for it was probably a tribal confederation, which could consist of many other tribes. As Benjamin also rightly thinks the term “Yuezhi” refers to a dynasty ruling over a confederation.⁸⁶ It is, therefore, not groundless to suppose that *Tochar* (= Tocharian B?) was the largest or one of the largest tribes or groups in this confederation, and their tribal territories were probably located to a large extent to the west of the Yuezhi confederation. The Chinese could have contact only with the **Arki* (or **Yarki*), as they were the ruling dynasty. Since Tocharians and other tribes were subjugated and held little importance in the Yuezhi confederation, they were out of sight for the Chinese. When the Yuezhi were pushed westward by the Xiongnu, their tribal confederation disintegrated, and the Tocharians (= Tocharian B speakers?) located to the west of the Yuezhi territory were pushed as a domino effect, and consequently had to escape further west, where they were known by the surrounding peoples (Bactrians, Sogdians, Persians, Greeks, Indians) as *Toḡar*, their own name, while the Chinese continued to call the former tribes of the confederation as *Yuezhi*.

A similar phenomenon can also be seen in the case of the ethnonyms *Kipchak* and *Kuman* of Turkic origin in the Middle Ages. *Kipchak* were used by Arabs and Persians, while western sources called them as *Kuman*, though they both were one and the same. The name *Toḡar* was later used as an exonym also for the *Ārśi* groups living under the domination of Tocharians. Many other analogies can be shown from the Eurasian Steppe for the assumptions above concerning the Yuezhi and Tocharians.

The processes described above undoubtedly show that we now should look at the Tocharian-Turkic ethnic and linguistic relations from a very different perspective. Namely, there is also no particular need to emphasize that the correct understanding of the Yuezhi question is not only of fundamental importance for Central

⁸⁶ Benjamin 2007: 120.

Asian history, but also for the historical background of Tocharian-Turkic or Yuezhi-Turkic ethnic and linguistic relations.

Finally, I do not think that this paper has fully addressed every question referred to above. Certainly, there are still many questions that demand further scrutiny, with certain aspects necessitating additional expansion. I hope, however, they will be clarified by further studies. Consequently, we should not forget, that the Yuezhi question is one of the most complicated and challenging questions of Central Asian history.

Abbreviations

- Afg. = Pastho
 Chin. = Chinese
 Gr. = Greek
 LH = Later Han, see Schuessler 2007
 MC = Middle Chinese = Schuessler 2007, Baxter / Sagart 2014
 MUyg. = Moder Uyghur (Turkic)
 OC = Old Chinese
 OCB = Old Chinese, see Baxter / Sagart 2014
 OCM = Old Chinese Minimal, see Schuessler 2007
 Sogd. = Sogdian
 TochA = Tocharian A

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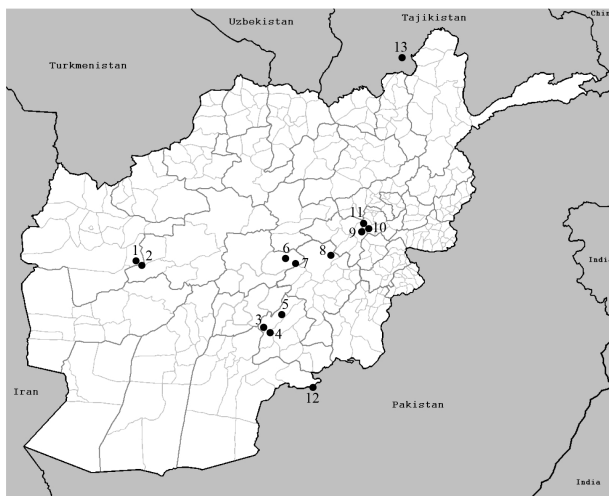
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Map 1: *Archī* ارچی and *Yārki* یارکی (= *Yuezhi*) ethnonyms in North Afghanistan

Afghanistan

- | | | |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. <i>Archī Kham</i> | (N 37°11'52", E 70°8'13") | populated place |
| 2. <i>Manāqah-ye Archī Guzār</i> | (N 37°19'10", E 69°25'48") | locality |
| 3. <i>Archi, Archī</i> (ارچی) | (N 37°04'13", E 69°17'54") | populated place |
| 4. <i>Dasht-e Archī</i> | (N 37°08'00", E 69°10'00") | populated place |
| 5. <i>Dasht-e Archī</i> | (N 37°01'30", E 69°10'28") | plain |
| 6. <i>Dasht-e Archī</i> | (N 36°57'49", E 69°9'26") | administrative division |
| 7. <i>Nahr-e Archī</i> | (N 36°58'26", E 69°13'23") | canal |
| 8. <i>Archī Kōtal (Archi Kotal)</i> | (N 35°39'14", E 65°20'45") | pass |
| 9. <i>Archī Poshteh</i> | (N 33°01'44", E 65°16'55") | mountain (2835 m) |
| 10. <i>Yārki</i> (یارکی) | (N 33°05'30", E 68°04'55") | populated place |



Map 2: Tocharian ethnotoponyms and ethnohydronyms in Afghanistan*

Afghanistan

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. <i>Taghāarak</i> | (33° 44' 18" N, 63° 13' 39" E) intermittent stream |
| 2. <i>Taghāarak</i> | (33° 43' 53" N, 63° 14' 05" E) spring |
| 3. <i>Tugrak ~ Tughrak</i> | (32° 06' 29" N, 66° 04' 09" E) populated place |
| 4. <i>Tūgarak</i> | (32° 14' 03" N, 66° 26' 02" E) populated place |
| 5. <i>Tokarak ~ Tukarak</i> | (32° 42' 22" N, 66° 49' 39" E) populated place |
| 6. <i>Jare Tokarak</i> | (33° 32' 41" N, 66° 52' 15" E) intermittent stream |
| 7. <i>Tokarak Sela ~ Tokarak Shelah</i> | (33° 30' 11" N, 67° 09' 11" E) intermittent stream |
| 8. <i>Tūkrūk</i> | (33° 47' 51" N, 68° 00' 58" E) populated place |
| 9. <i>Tokarak ~ Tukarak</i> | (34° 18' 25" N, 68° 41' 58" E) populated place |
| 10. <i>Tokarak Ghar</i> | (34° 17' 12" N, 68° 43' 06" E) mountain |
| 11. <i>Tokarak</i> | (34° 19' 29" N, 68° 41' 49" E) intermittent stream |

Pakistan

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 12. <i>Tokarak ~ Tokarak Rūd</i> | (31° 13' 21" N, 67° 25' 33" E) stream |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|

Tajikistan

- | | |
|--------------------|--|
| 13. <i>Tugarak</i> | (37° 48' 00" N, 69° 40' 19" E) populated place |
|--------------------|--|

* s. Aydemir 2014: 66.



Map 3: *Arki*, *Argi*, *Arċi* (= *Yuezhi*) ethnotoponyms in Xinjiang

- | | |
|--------------------------|--|
| 1. <i>Arki</i> (MUyg.) | <i>Ājī</i> (阿濟), district
(no coordinates; estimated geographical position) |
| 2. <i>Arki</i> (MUyg.) | <i>Ājī èlā</i> 阿濟鄂拉 ‘Mount Aji’
(N 43°47’36”, E 88°20’40”) |
| 3. <i>Argi Bulaq</i> | (نارغى بۇلاق) ‘Argi Spring’, <i>A’er bulake</i> (阿尔布拉克)
(N 42°10’49.2”, E 82°39’07.8”) |
| 4. <i>Argistan Davan</i> | (ارغىستان دافان) ‘Argiland Mountain Slope’, <i>A’ergasutan daban</i> (阿尔尔苏坦达坂) (no coordinates) |
| 5. <i>Arċi</i> (MUyg.) | <i>Ā’ěrqi shān</i> (阿尔齐山) ‘Mount Arċi’ |
| 6. * <i>Argi</i> | <i>Aqitag</i> (Chin.+MUyg.), <i>Āqi</i> 阿奇 (< * <i>Agī</i> < * <i>Argi</i>),
<i>Āqishān</i> 阿奇山 ‘Mount <i>Āqi</i> ’ (N 41°49’00”, E 90°38’00”) |
| 7. * <i>Argi</i> | LH 焉耆 * <i>?an-gi</i> . Karashahr / <i>Yanqi</i> 焉耆; populated
place (N 42°03’43”, E 86°33’59”) |