

**On the Old Uyghur Part of a Bilingual Inscription of the
Petition Documents for Inviting Master Qinghe (清和真人)
Preserved in the Yongle Gong**

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Abstract: In the stele corridor of Yongle Temple in Ruicheng County, Yuncheng City, Shanxi Province, China, there is a ‘Petition Inscription’ embedded in the wall. This inscription contains two Chinese petition texts, each followed by a line of Old Uyghur text, with an additional Old Uyghur line at the end. The first two Old Uyghur lines summarize their respective Chinese texts, while the third serves as a colophon, recording the name of the carver of the Old Uyghur part. Although the Chinese texts date to 1249, the engraving must be later, and the Old Uyghur part was likely added during this process.

Key Words: Old Turkic, Old Uyghur, Chinese loanwords, inscription, petition

Özet: *Yongle Gong Tapınağı'nda Saklanan Çift Dilli Qinghe Üstadi (清和真人) Davet Dilekçesi Belgeleri Yazıtının Eski Uygurca Bölümü Üzerine*

Çin'in, Yuncheng Şehri, Ruicheng İlçesi, Shanxi Eyaleti'ndeki Yongle Tapınağının stel koridorunda, duvara gömülü bir ‘Dilekçe Yazısı’ bulunmaktadır. Bu yazıt, iki Çince dilekçe metninden oluşmaktadır. İki Çince metnin sonunda birer satır Eski Uygurca metin ve yazıtın en sonunda bir satır daha Eski Uygurca metin yer alır. Birinci ve ikinci Eski Uygurca satırlar, birinci ve ikinci Çince

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belgelerin özetidir. Üçüncü satır ise kolofon niteliğinde olup Eski Uygurca kısımların oymacısının adını belirtir. Çince metinler 1249 yılında kaleme alınmış olsa da, taşa kazınma tarihi mutlaka bu tarihten sonradır. Eski Uygurca kısımlar, Çince belgelerin taşa kazınması sırasında eklenmiş olabilir.

Anahtar sözcükler: Eski Türkçe, Eski Uygurca, Çince alıntılar, yazıt, dilekçe

Introduction: Yongle Gong (永乐宫, Palace of Eternal Joy), located in Ruicheng 茲城 County, Yuncheng 运城 City, Shanxi 山西 Province, China, is one of the three ancestral temples of the Quanzhen School (全真教) of Taoism and the largest extant Taoist temple from the Yuan Dynasty. Its construction began in 1247 and was completed in 1358. Yongle Gong is best known for its grand and exquisite mural art, which attracts numerous visitors.

Besides the murals, Yongle Gong features a notable *Stele Corridor* (碑廊), in which there are 39 inscriptions, with the earliest dating back to the mid-6th century and the latest to the 19th century. The majority of these inscriptions belong to the Mongol-Yuan period (13th-14th centuries). The stele corridor is divided into eastern and western sections. On the eastern side, there is an untitled stele embedded in the wall. According to its explanatory plaque, the stele is referred to as *Yuan qinghe yandao xuande zhenren zhuchi yongle gong zhuyan shengshoubei* 元清河演道玄德真人住持永乐宫祝延圣寿碑 (*the Stele Master Xuande of the Qingheyan Route of the Yuan Dynasty, who presides over Yongle Gong, and pray for the Emperor's longevity*). This stele actually consists of two independent Chinese Petition Documents (请疏文) written in the same year. Interestingly, the first document is followed by one line of Old Uyghur script, while the second one is followed by two lines

of Old Uyghur script.¹ In *Records of Yongle Gong* (永乐宫志², hereafter shortened as *Records*) this inscription was entitled as *Hanmeng shuwen bei* 汉蒙疏文碑 (Stele of Petition Documents in Chinese and Mongolian). It can also be found in *The Complete Collection of Stone Inscriptions of the Three Jin: Volume of Ruicheng County, Yuncheng City* (三晋石刻大全•运城市芮城县卷³, hereafter shortened as *Complete Collection*) with the title *Shuwen bei* 疏文碑 (Stele of Petition Documents). In the explanatory plaque beside the stele and in the above mentioned two books the Old Uyghur part of the inscription was mistakenly identified as Mongolian and no one tried to read it.

1. Overview of the Stele and the Chinese part of the Inscriptions

The stele is rectangular in shape, measuring 59 cm in height and 98 cm in width. The inscription consists of two Chinese Petition Documents, written vertically from top to bottom and horizontally from right to left. Judging from the calligraphy, the text appears to have been written or engraved by the same person.

The first document contains 19 lines and records an invitation by *Hu-ya-hu-si* 忽押忽思 (*Quyaqus?), *Xuanchai hejie shandong denglu du daluhuachi* 宣差河解山东等路都达鲁花赤 (Imperial Commissioner and Daruyači of Hejie, Shandong and other Circuits) to *Qinghe yandao xuande zhenren zhuchi yongle shifang da chunyang gong zhuyan shengshou zhe* 清和演道玄德真人住持永乐十方大纯阳宫祝延圣寿者 (Master Xuande of Qingheyen Route, who presides over the palace of the Eternal Joy in ten directions and great pure Yang, and pray for the Emperor's longevity). The date given is *the tenth month of the year of Jiyou* 己酉年十月.

¹ Around early September 2024, Dr. Wen Xu 温旭 from Shanxi Normal University sent me images of a rubbing of this stele, asking if I could read the “Mongolian” part on it. Based on the images, I first confirmed that it is not Mongolian but Old Uyghur. On September 30th, I visited the Yongle Gong to conduct an on-site investigation of this inscription. After returning to Hohhot, I began reading the inscription and writing this article. Here, I would like to thank Dr. Wen Xu for providing the information.

² *Records of Yongle Gong*, pp. 32-33.

³ *The Complete Collection of Stone Inscriptions of the Three Jin: Volume of Ruicheng County, Yuncheng City*. pp. 94-95.

The second document consists of 17 lines. It records an invitation by *Da-li-si-ban* 荚里思班, who held the same position as the petitioner in the first document, to the same *Qinghe yandao xuande zhenren*. The date is the *seventh month of the year of Jiyou* 己酉年七月, same year as the first document, but three months earlier.



Photo of the inscription by Altan Khasbaatar

Based on the nature of the documents, the inscriptions were likely engraved at a later time. In other words, the two documents were originally paper-based and may have been copies kept at Yongle Gong, which were later carved onto stone. This engraving would have taken place no later than the 13th to 14th centuries.

No records of the petitioners in the two documents have been found in historical materials yet. *Yongle shifang da chunyang gong* 永乐十方大纯阳宫 (The palace of the Eternal Joy in ten directions and great pure Yang) refers to Yongle Gong. *Qinghe yandao xuande zhenren* is the title of Yin Zhiping (1169-1251), the sixth patriarch of the Quanzhen School of Taoism, who was granted it in the spring of 1249.⁴

⁴ *Qinghe yandao Xuande zhenren xianji zhabei* 清和演道玄德真人仙迹之碑 (Stele of the immortal traces of master Xuande of Qingheyen Route), *Collection of the Daoist Inscriptions*, pp. 538-541; About Yin Zhiping, see Pregadio 2008, pp. 1171-1172.

The two documents were written in the same year, *the year of Jiyou*. Both the *Records* and *Complete Collection* regard this year as 1309. This is clearly incorrect, as *Yin Zhiping* had passed away more than fifty years earlier. Therefore, the *year of Jiyou* inscribed on the stele should be 1249. In this year, shortly after being granted the title Master Xuande in the spring, he was invited twice – in July and October – to preside over *Yongle Gong*. However, likely due to his advanced age, he did not accept the invitations. One of the petitioners, *Hu-ya-hu-si* 忽押忽思, can also prove that the *year of Jiyou* is 1249. His name appears on another much larger inscription housed in *Yongle Gong*, titled *Dachao chongjian chunyang wanshou gong zhi bei* 大朝重建纯阳万寿宫之碑 (Stele of the Great dynasty's reconstruction of chunyang longevity Palace), which was inscribed in the third year of the *Zhongtong Era* (中统三年, that is 1262). It is impossible that the same person held the same position for 47 years.



Rubbing of the inscription (*Complete Collection*. p, 94.)

2. Interpretation of the Old Uyghur Part

There are three lines of Old Uyghur on the stele: the first line located between lines 17 and 18 of the first Chinese document; Second line is between lines 16 and 17 of the second Chinese document; And the last line positioned after the last line (line 17) of the second Chinese document. Because there was not enough space for the third line, the remaining text was continued on the right side, that is, below the text

of line 17 of the second Chinese document. With the exception of a small portion of the first line which is damaged, the Old Uyghur part is very clear. The depth and thickness of the engraved characters are nearly identical to those of the Chinese characters. Therefore, the Old Uyghur part should have been carved onto the stele at the same time as the Chinese text. The following orthographic features can be observed: except *m(ä)n*, all consonants *n* and *ŋ* are written with a small dot on the left; the two dots of the consonants *š* and *ž* on the right are also written without exception.

Line 1.

Transliteration: *syŋkqyw čyŋšyŋ ny syŋklyyr šw bytyk*
 Transcription: *siŋhio činšin-ni siŋläyir šu bitig*
 Translation: Petition document for inviting Siŋhio Činšin

Line 2.

syŋk qw čyŋ šyŋ ny syŋk l'yyr šw bytyky 'wl
siŋ-ho čin-šin-ni siŋ-läyir šu bitigi ol

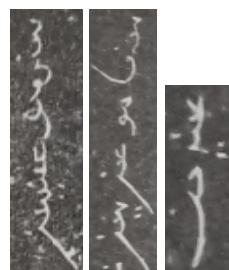
This is the petition document for inviting Siŋhio Činšin

Line 3.

čyŋž y' ny syŋkl'yyr šw bytyk bw 't? k'z yk bytyk l'r ny m' 'yqy'?
bytydym
činš-in-ni siŋläyir šu bitig bo ... käz-ig bitig-lär-ni m(ä)n ayyin
bitidim
 Petition document for inviting Činšin. I, ayyin, wrote this ...
 document.

3. Commentary

siŋhio/siŋho činšin: Old Uyghur transliteration of Chinese *Qinghe zhenren* 清和真人. It appears twice in line 1 and 2, with a slight



difference in spelling. Činšin also appears once in the third line. In the first line, it is written as *syŋkqyw čyŋšyŋ*, which can be read as *siŋhio činšin*. In the second line, it was written separated as *syŋk qw čyŋ šyŋ*, corresponding to *siŋ-ho čin-šin*. In the third line, *činšin* appears as *čyŋž y'*, could be read as *činž-in*. Chinese *qing* 清, pronounced with *ts-* in Middle Chinese and in the Yuan Era, is recorded in Old Uyghur

as *siŋ*. Because the initial *s* lacks the two dots on its right side that would indicate the consonant *š*, it can only be read as *s*. *s-* is a well-known Uyghur adaptation of Middle Chinese *ts-* (although *ts-* was preserved in some Chinese loanwords in Old Uyghur). The Chinese character *he* 和 has two slightly different spellings: *qyw* and *qw*. Taking into account that Chinese *heshang* 和尚 “Buddhist monk” is *hošaŋ* (Wilkens 2021: 281) in Old Uyghur, the letter *y* in the first spelling might be a carving error. The spelling *qyw* could also be interpreted as *hiu*, perhaps an attempt to reflect the original diphthong (和 *yua* according to Guo Xiliang 2011: 27).

As shown above, Chinese *zhenren* 真人 (pronounced *teiɛn nɛzɛn* according to Guo Xiliang 2011: 362, 368) was transliterated three times, each with a different spelling. The first two spellings use the same characters, differing only in that the first is written as a single word, while the second separates the Chinese *zhen* 真 and *ren* 人. The third is also written separately, but not based on the principle of separating the two Chinese characters. Instead, the letter *š*, *ž* was used for the consonant *š*, which in Old Uyghur script needs to be written separately from the following letter. The first two spellings can be read as *čin-šin*, but considering the sound represented by the Old Uyghur character *ž* in line 3, its Old Uyghur form could also be read as *činžin* (or even *čenžen*?).

siŋläyir: appears once in each line of the inscription. In the first line, the end of the word is damaged and should be restored as *siŋläyi[r]*. The spellings in the second and third lines are almost the same, with the only difference being that in the second line it is written separately as *synk l'yyr*, while it is continuously written in the third line as *synkl'yyr*.

Based on the context of the Old Uyghur part and the corresponding Chinese text, *siŋ*, root of *siŋläyir*, should reflect Chinese *qing* 请 (“to request”, “to invite”). This is further supported by the fact that the Chinese *qing* 清 in *Qinghe zhenren* 清和真人 is also transcribed as *siŋ* in the Old Uyghur text. However, it is worth



noting that the Chinese verb *qing* 请 is also recorded in Old Uyghur as *čeylä-* (Wilkens 2021: 226), with *č-*, a relatively uncommon adaptation of Chinese *ts-*. In Middle Chinese, both 清 and 请 were pronounced as *ts iey* (Guo Xiliang 2011: 436, 437). Even in the Yuan time, the pronunciations of these two words had not changed significantly. For instance, in the *Menggu Ziyun* 《蒙古字韵》, they were transcribed in the 'Phags-pa script as *tsing* (Zhaonasitu & Yang naisi 1987: 34). Nevertheless, it remains unknown why the form *siŋ* was used for chin. *tsing*. *+lä-* is clearly the denominal verb suffix. As already described by Erdal (2004: 240), the Old Turkic aorist suffix typically takes the form *-yUr*, but there are still a few instances of *-yIr*, such as *ogšayır* cited in Erdal (2004: footnote 425) and *ašayır* found in the *Suv 632:16* (Kaya 2021: 609). The form *siŋläyir* observed in our text evidently also belongs to this less common variant.

šu bitig: *šu* is the Old Uyghur transliteration of the Chinese word *shu* 疏 (“memorial”, “petition”, “commentary”), combined with the Old Uyghur word *bitig* (“document” or “text”) to form a specific phrase, which can be translated as “petition document” or “memorial document”.

... käz-ig bitig: This phrase likely refers to a specific type of document. Although it is clearly carved, we cannot determine the pronunciation, meaning and etymology of the word preceding *käz-ig*. This makes it impossible to confirm the meaning of the entire phrase. It has presumably a Chinese origin. The meaning of the second word *käzig* is equally unclear. It seems possible that this word corresponds to the special official title *kesig* (Chinese *qiexue* 怯薛, “imperial guard”) from the Mongol-Yuan period, which might indicate the identity of the person who invited *Qinghe zhenren* 清和真人. Dr. Jens Wilkens (p. c.), on the other hand, is inclined to interpret it as “line” and hypothesizes that the preceding word, which



cannot be accurately deciphered, might be a numeral indicating the number of lines in the inscription.⁵ However, it is clear that the preceding word is neither a numeral indicating the number of lines of the Chinese part nor the word *üč* “three” indicating the number of lines of the Old Uyghur part. According to Dr. J. Wilkens’ thought, *käzig* could also mean “paragraph”, in which case the preceding word might refer to *iki* “two”, indicating the two separate documents of the Chinese part. However, based on the spelling, all these possibilities seem unlikely.

ayyin: name of the writer of the Old Uyghur part. Dr. J. Wilkens leans toward reading it as *ayyin*, and I accept his reading. However, it is also possible that it could be read as *qiyin* or *qiqin*.

biti-: to write.



Conclusion: The “Petition documents” inscribed on this stele originally existed only in Chinese and were written in 1249. Later, they were presumably engraved onto the stele based on a copy of the documents preserved at the Yongle Gong. The Old Uyghur part was likely added at this time. The reason for its inclusion remains unclear. One possibility is that the person who inscribed the Chinese part and the Old Uyghur part were the same individual, namely *ayyin*. While engraving the Chinese text, he might have written the Old Uyghur part without specific reason or just because he was an Uyghur.

The Old Uyghur part merely condenses the core content of the Chinese text in the form of a short summary, and largely consists of phonetic transcriptions of Chinese terms, which may not hold significant academic value. However, from a lexicographical perspective, especially in the study of foreign elements in Old

⁵ Earlier this year, I asked Dr. Wilkens (Göttingen Academy of Sciences and Humanities in Lower Saxony, Germany) via email regarding certain words in the inscription that I was unable to confirm. On February 24, he replied with his suggestions. Here, I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to Dr. Wilkens for his kind help. I also thank Dr. Hans Nugteren (Göttingen) for discussing the material with me and for his meticulous polishing and revisions of this English article.

Uyghur, it does hold some value, as some of the Chinese loanwords appearing here are documented for the first time, while others, although found in other texts, have different spellings compared to those in this inscription.

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→ Appendix

Document one

1. (01)宣差河解山東等處都達魯花赤 疏
2. (02) 謹請
3. (03) 清和演道玄德真人住持永[樂]
4. (04) 十方大純陽宮祝延
5. (05) 聖壽者
6. (06)窃以
7. (07)老聃□□□三千里當行即行禦冠居鄭圃四十年
8. (08)時止則止蓋大道貴不滯物而至人初無常心
9. (09)我真人飽腹中書為林下侶洗心飲殘月露注顏食
10. (10)盡朝霞妙舞胎仙時騰神雀□鍾白酒醉墨寓歸石
11. (11)榴皮一粒丹砂仙風喚迴楊柳樹達嬰兒之姪姪去
12. (12)婦姑之勃礪有物混成與消息
13. (13)玄風孤振神化難名止則□葉？待風動則孤雲出岫
14. (14)應時通脫？與道周旋所有永樂宮一派飛湍流盡古
15. (15)今閑日月千章秀木吟殘字宇宙好風煙非了達人孰
16. (16)維持是朝鐘暮鼓不妨齊粥隨緣秋月春花好與溪
17. (17)山作主顚若北顧冀其南轅 謹疏
18. (01) [Line 1 of Old Uyghur part] siŋhio činšin-ni siŋläyir šu
bitig
19. (18) 己（己）酉年十月 日疏
20. (19)宣差河解山東等路都達魯花赤 忽押忽思

Document two

21. (01)宣差河解山東等處都達魯花赤第 疏
22. (02) 謹請
23. (03) 清和演道玄德真人住持永樂
24. (04) 十方大純陽宮祝延
25. (05) 聖壽者
26. (06)窃以必有至人乃可弘
27. (07)玄元之道若無勝境殆難居陸地之仙夫永樂宮者
28. (08)條華列于東西山河界于南北茂林條竹乃

29. (09)純陽游息之鄉白石清泉寔蒲阪秀明之地仰惟
30. (10)玄門大宗師清和真人開闢宗門之教主張柱史之風稱
31. (11)帝者之尊師為天下之教父伏望
32. (12)暫離仙闕便乘鶴駕而來
33. (13)俯順輿情庶慰霓旌之望幸無多讓早賜
34. (14)光臨謹疏
35. (15) 己(巴)酉年七月 日疏
36. (16)宣差河解山東等處都達魯花赤第 答厘思班
37. (02) [Line 2 of Old Uyghur part] siŋ-ho čin-šin-ni siŋ-läyir šu
bitigi ol
38. (17)權河解山東等處都達魯花赤 怯石都忽思
39. (03) [Line 3 of Old Uyghur part] činš-in-ni siŋläyir šu bitig bo
... käz-ig bitig-lär-ni m(ä)n ayyän bitidim