

Chinese Families From Turkic Origin

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Abstract

Turks entering Chinese society took on Chinese family name firsts. In other words, a Turk who took Chinese family name and left his/her tribe name had entered the process of rapid Sinicization. Therefore it is possible for us to keep track of who the Sinicized Turks were through Chinese family names. In my article, I want to make an overall evaluation on some Sinicized Turkic families.

Key Words: *Turkic Families, Chinese Families, Chinese Sources, China, Sinicized Turks.*

Türk Kökenli Çin Aileleri

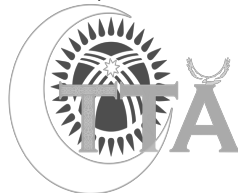
Özet

Çin toplumuna giren Türkler ilk olarak Çince aile adları almışlardır. Bir diğer deyişle, Çince aile adı alan bir Türk boy/uruk adını bırakarak hızla Çinlileşme sürecine girmiştir. Böylece Çinlileşen Türklerin izlerine, Çin aile adları vasıtasıyla ulaşmak mümkündür. Makalemde bazı Çinlileşen Türk aileleri üzerine genel bir değerlendirme yapmak istiyorum.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Türk aileleri, Çin aileleri, Çin kaynakları, Çin, Çinlileşen Türkler.*

The nomadic Turks were able to live in a wide variety of geographies and climatic conditions and were able to overcome various difficulties.

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Nevertheless, the same Turks had lost their identities in a non-mobile dominant culture. The nomadic Turks, who conquered wide sedentary territories from middle Europe to the shores of East Asia, settled in sedentary community, and before long lost their own culture as well. We can say that many Turkic tribes had disappeared in China. Early records show us that the nomadic Turks worried about losing their identity and becoming Chinese. This situation was discussed among state men of many nomadic old Turkic states. They chose not to settle in China in order not to become Chinese, and not to go to China. China is a very different place; it is a kind of grinder, in that grinds outsiders into Chinese culture. The Turkic, Mongolian, and Tungusic dynasties that over ruled China had become Chinese within a few generations. Turkic people are very well aware of this historical truth. Orkhun Inscriptions, for example, warn the Turks not to go and settle in China. The Bilge Kagan Inscription stated this very clearly in 735: “Turkic lords abandoned their Turkic titles. Those lords who were in China held the Chinese titles and obeyed Chinese emperor”¹. Again, the Köl Tigin Inscription explains how, in 732, the Turks who went to China disappeared: “They (i.e., the Chinese people) give (us) gold, silver and silk in abundance. The words of the Chinese people had always been sweet and the materials of the Chinese people had always been soft. Deceiving by means of (their) sweet words and soft materials, the Chinese are said to cause the remote peoples to come close in this manner. After such a people had settled close to them, (the Chinese) are said to plan their ill will there”². Köl Tigin Inscription says strikingly: “If you go toward those places, O Turkic people, you will die!”³.

The nomadic Turks had entered China, settled, entered the service of the Chinese state, became Chinese within a few generations, and had lost their Turkic identity upon taking Chinese family names. There was

¹ Bilge Kagan Inscription, East/7; Talat Tekin, *A Grammar of Orkhon Turkic*, Bloomington 1968, p. 264.

² Köl Tigin Inscription, South/5; Tekin, *ibid.*, p. 261-262.

³ Köl Tigin Inscription, South/8; Tekin, *ibid.*, p. 262.



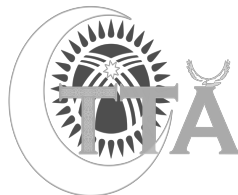
no culture of the family name in the old Turkic tradition even today there are some Turkic groups who still do not use family name, such as the Uyghurs. Therefore, Turks entering Chinese society took on Chinese family name firsts. In other words, a Turk who took Chinese family name and left his/her tribe name had entered the process of rapid Sinicization. It is possible for us to keep track of who the Sinicized Turks were through Chinese family names. People in ancient Chinese society identified themselves with their family name.

In modern China, which hosts the world's largest population, there are many families of Turkic origin. These families settled in China many centuries ago during the Hun period, and now are Chinese, both linguistically and culturally. However, we can examine the resources where the families are recorded with a specific method, whereby the roots of these families can be traced back by centuries or even millennia.

I had published a Turkish book titled "Chinese Families from Turkic Origin" to examine this issue⁴. We focused our work on 35 families, even though there are far more than that in reality. Nevertheless, our aim is not to identify all Sinicized Turkic families, but rather to contribute to studies on Turkic-Chinese historical relations. The afore mentioned study required a variety of resources and methods. There are 260 Sinicized families from the north of the China, as recorded in the Books of Wei Shu (魏書) and Tong Zhi (通志). Most of these families have disappeared, have been erased from history, have migrated to different places, or have taken on different family names, which means that they now are untraceable. Moreover, we see that some of these families only existed within a short period of history.

We need to address Chinese sources in a few categories in order to identify which Chinese families are of Turkic origin. The first of these categories is the dynastic histories. The first part that we must look at is biographies. These biographies are called zhuan (傳) in historical

⁴ Kürşat Yıldırım, *Bir Zamanlar Türk İdiler Türk Kökenli Çin Aileleri*, Ötüken, İstanbul 2017.



records, and give us information about the origin, nation, family, activities, and descent of the people who served the Chinese states. In our study, we applied biography chapters of Shi Ji (史記), Han Shu (漢書), Hou Han Shu (後漢書), San Guo Zhi (三國志), Nan Qi Shu (南齊書), Wei Shu (魏書), Zhou Shu (周書), Sui Shu (隋書), Jin Shu (晉書), Bei Shi (北史), Jiu Tang Shu (舊唐書), Xin Tang Shu (新唐書), and Song Shi (宋史). Detailed information about this is available in the biographies of Turks who came to the high positions in the Chinese states.

Another section where we get information about families in the histories is the biao (表) sections. These are chronological charts of sorts. Biao charts, especially gong chen biao (功臣表) (“successful officials table”) were very important. These records contain information about the place of many Turks and their families who served in Chinese states. The last volumes of biographies refer to peoples and communities who had lived in the north of the China. Turkic families are also mentioned in this section. For example, the names of 12 Töles families were recorded in the Gaoche (高車) section of Wei Shu. The 113th volume titled Guan Shi Zhi (官氏志) of the same source, contains the family names of Tabgach people who founded Wei Empire.

The next set sources include historical encyclopedias. The first of these is Tong Dian (通典). There are a lot of information about families both in section three (zhi guan 職官, “officials”) and last section (bian fang 邊防, “border guard”). The second encyclopedia is the Tong Zhi (通志). Chapters 25 – 30 (shi zu lue 氏族略) talk about families of Chinese society from the earliest periods to the 12th century.

Our third important source are family encyclopedias. One of the oldest of these is the Yuan He Xing Zuan (元和姓纂), was completed in 812 AD. It contains 1.232 family names. Another family encyclopedia is the Gujin Xingshi Shu Bianzheng (古今姓氏書辯證), completed in 1168 AD. It also contains 40 chapters and explains the families by one by. The third is Mingxian Shizu Yanxing Leigao (名賢氏族言行類稿), completed by Zhang Ding in 1209 AD. The fourth is Wan Xing Tong Pu (萬姓統譜),



and was written towards the end of the 16th century. The families and members of it are written individually, along side their duties and official titles. The fifth is the Xingshi Xunyuan (姓史尋源), written by Zhang Shu (1776-1847), and is a kind of Chinese family dictionary. Xingshi Kaolue (姓氏考略) (1831) by Chen Tingwei and Bai Jia Xing (百家姓) (12th century) are also worth mentioning.

The Chinese have written many works on family names. This is because they are very important in Chinese culture, and have always attracted the curiosity of the Chinese. Some of these works include:

- Chen Lianqing, Zhongguo Gudai Shaoshu Minzu Xingshi Yanjiu (中国古代少数民族姓氏研究), Changchun, 1993.
- Yao Weiyan, Beichao Huxing Kao(北朝胡姓考), Beijing, 2007.
- Yuan Yida-Qiu Jiaru, Zhongguo Xingshi Dacidian (中国姓氏大辞典), Nanchang, 2010.
- Dou Xuetian, Zhonghua Gujin Xingshi Dacidian (中华古今姓氏大辞典), Beijing, 1997.
- Chen Mingyuan-Wang Zonghu, Zhongguo Xingshi Daquan (中国姓氏大全), Beijing, 1987.

The first two stand out in particular, in that they touch upon very rare historical sources, and serve as a treasure trove for scholars. The nearly 2,000 page glossary of Yuan Yida-Qiu Jiaru lists family names according to the number of character strokes, and is particularly useful for identifying the regions in which families have spread out into today.

After settling in China, the nomadic Turks had reached a completely different culture. In my study, I had examined 35 families (Ai 愛, Cao 曹, Chan 單, Cheng 成, Di 翟, Di 狄, Ding 丁, Dong 董, Gao 高, Helian 赫連, Hun 渾, Huyan 呼延 and Hu 呼, Jin 金, Jin 靳, Lan 蘭, Li 利 and Li 李, Liu 劉, Lu 鹿, Ru 茹, Shi 石, Shi 史, Suli 素黎 and Li 黎, Suo 索, Tuoba 拓跋, Wei 衛, Wei 隗, Xie 楔, Yuchi 尉遲, Yuwen 宇文, Zhan 展, Zhan 旃, Zhang 張, Zhao 趙, Zhi 支, Zhu 祝) that still exist in modern China, and in turn have reached the following results:



1. Even though historical sources give information about the nomadic Turks, the authors of those resources often divide them into tribes, referring to some families under the tribes. Those Turks who became Chinese are only mentioned in family structures.

2. China is a geography within which the Turks melted into. Turkic, Mongolian, and Tungus families seamlessly became Chinese within a few generations in China. Some families with Turkic roots still exist today, but nevertheless have completely assimilated.

3. Turkic peoples have always been very adept at military and government affairs. This is particularly evident among the Turks who settled in China, became Chinese, and took on high positions in the various Chinese states established throughout history. There was, until recently, always a significant Turkic presence in Chinese bureaucracy and the Chinese army. Some families were even known to have raised bureaucrats and soldiers for generations for Chinese states. The members of the 35 families that we discussed in our study, too, had entered into some of these positions: Military inspector, commander of cavalry units, major general of cavalry units, chief inspector, chief consultant, prime minister, regional commander, great general, state guard general, state inspector, state secretary, minister of education, garrison general, general, interior palace guard, imperial palace chief secretary, left prime minister, left central commander, chief executive officer, governor, deputy general, high secretary, high judge etc. Although, others too had become clerics (especially from Zhi 支 family), artists (especially from Zhan 展 family), and philosophers (especially from Di 狄 family).

4. Some families who had settled in China today were seen by the Chinese as “common families” of Altai peoples. The same families recur not only among the Turks, but also among the Mongolians, Tunguses, and even Tibetans who contacted Turks sometimes. Common families can be given as follows:

- Huyan 呼延 family in Xiongnu and Xianbei;
- Dugu 獨孤 family in Xiongnu, Xianbei and Tabgach;



- Jin 金 family in Xiongnu of Gansu and Tibetan Qiang;
- Jin 靳 family in Xiongnu and Wuwan;
- Lan 蘭 family in Tabgach and later in Mongol, Yugur, Salar, Tu;
- Qifuli 泣伏 and Qifu 乞伏, early forms of Chinese Li 利 family in Töles, Xianbei, Tabgach and later Sinicized Western Turk (Tujue), Uyghur, Kitan, Korean, Tatar;
- Liu 劉 family in Xiongnu and Tabgach;
- Lu 鹿 family in Xiongnu and Xianbei;
- Ru 茹 family in Xianbei and Rouran;
- Shi 石 family in Uyghur of Tujue period and Manchu, Korean, Yugur today;
- Li 黎 family in Xianbei and Tabgach;
- Suo 索 family in Manchu, Tu, Evenki, Mongol, Yugur;
- Some Tabgach families in Tuyuhun and Tangut;
- Wei 衛 family in Xiongnu and Xianbei;
- Xie 契 family in Töles, Uyghur, Mongol;
- Zhan 展 family in Tabgach, Xianbei, Wuwan;
- Zhan 旃 family in Töles and Tabgach;
- Cheng 成 family in Xiongnu, Korean, Manchu, Mongol;
- Di 狄 family in Töles and Manchu;
- Ding 丁 family in Uyghur, Mongol, Korean, Tu.

5. Chinese families from Turkic origin mainly live in Heilongjiang, Gansu, Guangdong, Hebei, Henan, Hubei, Hunan, Jiangsu, Liaoning, Shaanxi, Shandong, Shanxi.

