Insights from the Inside: An Old Uyghur Register and the Administration of the Mongol Empire[*]

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The Old Uyghur documents offer insights into daily life along the eastern Silk Roads and the administrative structures of both the West Uyghur State (mid-9th to mid-12th centuries) and the Mongol Empire (13th–14th centuries). Since they are quite difficult to read because of the cursive style of writing used in them and since they have only been preserved in fragments, publishing these documents has been a rather slow and incomplete process – particularly in comparison to the Old Uyghur religious texts, which are more numerous, although also easier to read. Fortunately, publications in recent decades (SUK) along with some recent (Moriyasu 2019; Vér 2019a) and forthcoming (Matsui) editions will have made some of the important Old Uyghur documents accessible for the broader academic community. However, not many pieces of the numerous Old Uyghur lists and registers have been published so far, even though they are very important. The catalogues in the Berlin Turfan Collection, which are available online as well, offer a fine example (Raschmann 2007, 2009).[1] If we also take into account the Arat Estate materials (Raschmann & Sertkaya 2016), we arrive at the following numbers: only eight of the 38 official registers (ca. 21%) had been published by 2019, while only 27 of the 142 private lists (ca. 16.9%) were in

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1   Both catalogues are available for download in PDF format at: https://doi.org/10.26015/ adwdocs-682 and https://doi.org/10.26015/adwdocs-590 (last access: 25 Feb. 2021).

print by that year.[2] With the publication of the critical edition of two official and seventeen private lists tied to the Mongol imperial postal system (Vér 2019a: 145–197), the situation has changed somewhat, but there is still a considerable number of registers waiting to be published.[3] A seminal article by Sir Gerald Clauson (1971) demonstrated long ago how greatly an in-depth analysis of a single list can contribute to our historical knowledge. Furthermore, the example of the Ottoman *Defter* Studies demonstrates how a systematic analysis of official registers can contribute to the flourishing of an entire field of research. The present paper aims to show the significance of research into Old Uyghur lists through a philological and historical analysis of a register.

This recently published register (Vér 2019a: 145–154, OReg01) was recorded within the postal relay system of the Chinggisid Empire (Turk.: *yam*; Mong.: *ǰam*) and contains a list of the so-called short-distance horses (*kısga at ötigi*).[4] The present analysis will shed new light on the lowest administrative level of the *ǰam* system in the Chaghadaid *ulus* and the daily practices related to the functions of the postal system.

Description of the manuscript[5]

The manuscript in question forms part of the Depositum of the Berlin Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities (Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften) in the Berlin State Library (Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin). The text is written in a cursive form of the Uyghur script which is difficult to read, and it is preserved on two separately glazed fragments: the first 36 lines are on Ch/U 8175 v, and the last 16 lines are on Ch/U 6512 v.[6] The quality of the paper is semi-coarse, and its colour is middle brown. Ch/U 8175 v is 13.7 cm long and 22.5 cm wide, while Ch/U 6512 v is 13.5 cm long and 11.8 cm wide. The recto side of the manuscript contains a Chinese Buddhist text and a list of different quantities of *böz* (i.e. a piece

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2 Before World War II, Reşid Rahmeti Arat studied and worked in Berlin, including at the Berlin Turfan collection, where he took numerous photographs of the documents preserved there. Moving back to Turkey before the war broke out to take a position at Istanbul University, he took his photo collection with him. The destruction or loss of so many pieces in the collection during the conflict left the Arat Estate the only source of these unique documents.

3 This marked the very first time one of the official registers and twelve of the private ones were published. For a classification of Old Uyghur documents, see Vér 2019a: 47–53.

4 Previously, the difference between the forms *ötüg* 'request, memorial to a superior' and *ötig/öḏüg* 'register' was not always considered in the scholarly literature (cf. Clauson 1972: 51a), but recently the different meanings have been recognised (Moriyasu 2004a: 100, 103 fn. 132).

5 See, also Raschmann 2007: 205–206, No. 202.

6 The facsimiles of the manuscripts are available via the Digital Turfan Archive (http:// turfan. bbaw.de/dta/) at http://turfan.bbaw.de/dta/ch_u/images/chu8175verso.jpg and at http:// turfan. bbaw.de/dta/ch_u/images/chu6512versototal.jpg (last access: 28 Feb. 2021)

of cotton cloth also used as a currency) written between the lines of the Chinese text.[7] The register under discussion has been preserved on the verso side of the manuscript.

Based on the features and circumstances described above, we can draw two conclusions. One, that the paper for the manuscript was re-used suggests that paper was a precious material that was scarce in the region. This claim is substantiated by the fact that numerous other manuscripts currently in the Turfan Collection had been similarly re-used: they have a Chinese (usually Buddhist) text on one side and an Uyghur text on the other or in between the lines of the Chinese text.[8] Two, it can be assumed that our register of short-distance horses on the verso side was written later than the Chinese Buddhist text on the recto side, but earlier than the Uyghur list of *böz* which is preserved between the lines of the Chinese text.

The text lists horses provided for different people, also enumerating the names of those who supplied them. The beginning of the document is unfortunately missing, but the dating (which is provided in day and month format) is continuous throughout the text. Based on the dates and writing styles used, the manuscript can be divided into two parts: part one (from line 1 to the first quarter of line 4; from the second word of line 10 to the middle of line 12; and lines 19 to 52) was written between day 21 of the 6th month and day 4 of the 7th month, while part two (from the second quarter of line 4 to the first word in line 10; and from the middle of line 12 to line 18) was added in smaller letters on or around the first two days of the 8th month. Judging by the difference in writing styles, the two parts were either written by different hands or by the same hand with different writing implements. It must also be noted that a slight difference in writing style can be detected in the last section of the manuscript as well, between lines 19 and 33 and lines 34 and 52: while the handwriting continues to remain the same, the style of the script changes as of line 34. Ultimately, this survey of the dates and writing styles may thus provide an explanation for the unchronological order of the lines (Matsui 2012: 122 n. 1) and help us to reconstruct the text as it was written in the original time sequence.

There is a ca. 0.4–0.5 cm wide margin at the top of each page. There is only one exception to this (line 31), where the title of the Uyghur ruler *ıdok kut* (Arat 1964) begins immediately at the top of the page without a margin, while the following two lines (32–33) were indented below the margin by the scribe.[9] A special feature of the script is that the strokes of the last words in the lines are usually quite long, possibly to fill in the line and thus prevent later additions.

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7   On the varying usage of *böz* in the Old Uyghur documents, see Raschmann 1995.

8   The proportion of Chinese and Uyghur texts is significant within the Old Uyghur documents. 249 of the 686 catalogued documents at the Berlin Turfan Collection have Ch/U signatures. Only 13 of these texts are official documents, suggesting that even though paper was a precious material which was sometimes difficult to obtain, the administrative system was usually supplied with it. Most of the private documents fall within the group of miscellanea (72) and of lists and registers (42) (Raschmann 2009: 319–341).

9   This feature is called an "honorific lift" by Clark and was intended to express respect for members of the Uyghur ruling family or the Chinggisid lineage (1975: 435).

The translation of the register[10]

"[...] $_{2-3}$Of the two[hor]ses for [...]TW, to go to Kočo, Čapat (provided) one horse and Tükälä (provided) on[e] $_4$horse.

$_{10-11}$[The hor]se for Altmıš, which was taken into account as a part of the *ulag* tax, (was) p(rovided) in accordance with the practice of/from Yohanan.[11] Second new day. For T// $_{12}$*Kıtay* (provided) one horse.

$_{19}$On the 21st day of the sixth month. Register of the short-distance horses: $_{20}$For Uladay, Bačak (provided) one horse; for Ali, Sävinč $_{21}$Toyın (provided) one horse; for Korčı *daruga* [...] (provided) $_{22-23}$one horse.

On the 22nd day. For Korč[ı *daruga*], Atay Ky-a (provided) one (horse).

On the [2]4th day. [Of the] $_{24}$three [horses] for [...] *elči* to go to Yemši $_{25}$Kudık-a (provided) one, Sävig one and Eš T[ämir one] $_{26-27}$horse each.

On the 26th day. Of the three horses [for] Sombuz *elči* to go to Yemši, T[...] (provided) $_{28}$one, Altmıš one and Sävinč Toyın [one horse]. $_{29}$For Bay Buka, Tayšeŋ (provided) o[ne horse]. $_{30}$For Käräy, Atay Ky-a (provided) one (horse).

On the [2]7th day. $_{31}$For the *ıdok kut* Kudık-a (provided) one, Sävig o[ne...] $_{32}$horse p(rovided). Eš Tämir (provided) one horse. *Saduk* /[...], $_{33}$Toyın-a one horse, Bačak one [horse.] $_{34-35}$For Käräy Sävinč Toyın (provided) one horse.

On the 2[8th day]. For *Buyan-a* Ky-a Tayšeŋ (provided) one[...], $_{36}$and Atay Ky-a one horse.

[On the] 29th day[...] $_{37}$to [...]/W [...] $_{38}$horse. For Togugan [...] $_{39}$one horse. For Taŋuday /[...] $_{40}$Tayšeŋ (provided) one horse, At[ay Ky-a...]

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10 Since the critical edition of the manuscript was recently published and the length of the contributions for this volume was strictly enforced, this study only includes the English translation of the text, albeit with some revisions (cf. Matsui 2021), and comments to facilitate a proper understanding. For the transcription and a detailed commentary, see Vér 2019a: 145–154. The translation is a reconstruction that reflects the chronological order in which the lines were written, based on the writing styles and dates presented in the document. The numbers in the subscript refer to the numbers of the lines as they appear in the manuscript.

11 *at altmıška ulagka tutup yohanan yaŋınča b* This sentence is peculiar and differs from the otherwise unified structure of and formulas in the document. It probably concerns the first four lines of the text and the ones that may have preceded them but unfortunately have not been preserved. Most probably, it is a kind of summary or explanation of the conditions for the payment of tax. In the Uyghur documents from the 13th–14th centuries, the word *ulag* referred to any kind of livestock that was either used by or the property of the Mongol imperial postal system, but in this case it most probably refers to a type of tax. Either way, the use of *ulag* seems to confirm that this register was written in connection with the imperial postal system. The expression *el yaŋınča asıgı birlä* 'according to the custom of the country together with interests' appears numerous times as a formula in Uyghur loan contracts (cf. SUK II: Lo12, Lo13, Lo14 and Lo29). According to SUK, the word *yaŋ* 'custom, manner, method' derives from the Chinese *yang* 樣 (SUK II: 300). Both people here (Altmıš and Yohanan) are identified as taxpayers later in this text. Their mention in this sentence might refer to a special status they maintained among taxpayers.

41On the 30th day. For Togugan KW[...] (provided) one, and 42[Sä]vig one horse. For Taŋuday Eš 43Tämir (provided) one, and Toyın-a one horse. For Töläk 44-45(to go) to Yar, Bačak (provided) one horse.

On the first new day of the seventh month. For Togugan Sävinč Toyın (provided) on[e], 46and Tayšeŋ one horse. For Soŋday, Atay Ky-a (provided) [one.]

47The second new day. For Togugan Bagluz (provided) one, 48and Sävig one horse. For Soŋd[ay] *Čapat* 49(provided) one (horse).

The third new day. [For] Toug[gan...]WN Tükälä (provided) 50one, and Intu one. For Soŋday Kulunčı (provided) on[e.]

51The fourth new day. For Togugan Kıtay (provided) one, and *Bag*[*luz*] 52one (horse). For Soŋday Sävig (provided) one horse.

4[Of the] six hor[ses] for Kıdatay *elči* to go to Kočo, 5Intu (provided) one, Kulunčı one, Kıtay one, Kasar o[ne...] 6Amrak Ky-a one and Eš Tämir one horse.

7On the 29th day. For Sadı, Čapat (provided) one horse.

8-9On the first new day of the eighth month. Of the two horses for Torči to go to Kočo, Tükälä (provided) one and Intu o[ne horse.]

12On the second [new day]. For *Tarıgčı* 13[...]Amrak Ky-a (provided) [...], Kitä one horse. 14For [ ]Y Čapat (provided) one, [Tükä]lä one and Intu 15[o]ne horse. For the document creator [...], *Oros* (provided) one 16*ulag*-horse. (From the) four (horses for) the thousand chiefs and for the *bäg*s to go (to) Kočo /// 17Yohanan (provided) one, Bagluz one, Sävig one, Takıčuk one, 18Mısır one."

The textual analysis of the document

Line 19 of the register provides the clue for the interpretation of the document: *altınč ay bir otuz-ka kısga at ötig*[i] "Register of the short-distance horses up to the 21st (day of) the 6th month". In the Uyghur documents, both *uzun* 'long' and *kısga* 'short' horses are mentioned. These adjectives refer to the distances the horses could reach; thus, an *uzun at* was a horse for long-distance travel, while a *kısga at* could be used for short-distance journeys. One more expression falls within this group of phrases, namely *ṭüli at* 'middle(-distance) horse', which appears in a text that is among the five administrative orders in the Mongol period (13th–14th centuries), unearthed at the Bezeklik Caves near Turfan (Matsui 2009: 340–341; Vér 2019a: 84–90 [PO13–17]; Vér 2019b: 192–202).[12] Based on this, a three-tier classification of the horses within the postal system can be reconstructed on the basis of the distance they were able to travel. Relying on the available data and toponyms found in the documents, I attempted to calculate the approximate distance of the range of the *kısga at*s in my PhD dissertation. I have found that it was ca. 27.5 kilometres, which corresponds to

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12 The documents were unearthed in October 1974 and are held in the Turfan Museum under museum number 74TB60–3-6. For further information on the manuscripts, see Li & Matsui 2016: 68–69.

information found in various narrative sources, as they usually state that the average distance between two postal stations was around 30 kilometres (Vér 2016: 82–83).[13]

The next problem associated with the text concerns the practice of dating. Some phrases in the text are helpful in determining the date of the manuscript. The cursive style of the script and the term *daruga* (line 21) allow us to place the text in the Mongol period (Moriyasu 2004b: 228–229). Furthermore, the appearance of the title *ıdok kut* may help us to determine a more precise time frame. In the second half of the 1270s, the Uyghur ruler, Kočkar *ıdok kut*, moved his court from Bešbalık to Kočo (Chin. Gaochang 高昌) and then to Kamıl (modern Komul, Chin. Hami 哈密); soon afterward, his successor Ne'üril was moved by Qubilai to Yongchang 永昌 in Gansu (see Map). From then on, the ruling family of the Uyghurs was in exile and thus practically unable to affect the fate of their homeland. There was only one interlude, as, shortly before his death (1318?), Ne'üril re-captured Kočo for a short period (Allsen 1983: 254–255, 259–260). A Mongol document (G 120) in the St. Petersburg Collection from 1339 (Clark 1975b), issued in the name of Yisün Temür (1338–1339), also mentions the *ıdok kut* of Kočo (₂qočo-yin iduqud-ta), but this time he seems to have been appointed by the Chaghadaid ruler (Kara 2003: 28–30). These data and the mention of the title *ıdok kut* suggest three possible dates for the manuscript: the 1270s or a bit later, around 1318 or around 1339.

The next question is the place where the manuscript was prepared. Only three toponyms occur in the document as possible destinations for people who used the postal relay service. These localities are Kočo (mentioned four times), Yemši (two times) and Yar, i.e. Yarkhoto (once). Yemši has recently been identified as Chin. Yancheng 鹽城 (Matsui 2015: 292). All three localities were situated in the vicinity of Turpan, i.e. modern Turfan. Yar was situated about ten kilometres to the west of Turfan. Kočo and Yemši lay to the southeast and southwest of Turfan, respectively, along the main east-west road. The distance between the two latter towns was around 60 kilometres by road. Based on the average distance between the postal stations in the *yam* system (ca. 30 kilometres), the estimated range of the *kısga at*s and the locations of Kočo and Yemši, I assume that the postal station where this register was written was situated somewhere midway between these two localities, probably in the immediate vicinity of Turpan.

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13 On the various pieces of information gained from narrative sources on the distances between the postal relay stations and the pace of travel within the *yam* system, see Vér 2016: 45–46.

A brief survey of the beneficiaries (i.e. the people who received the horses) and the number of horses provided yields some further information that is of interest (see Table). In general, when the beneficiaries are identifiable, they are either officials – such as *elči* 'envoy, official' or *bitig etgüči* 'document creator', which probably refers to some kind of administrator – or dignitaries, for example, *daruga* (Vásáry 2015: 255–256), thousand chiefs (*mıŋlar*), members of the nobility (*bäglär*) and even the Uyghur ruler, *ıdok kut*, mentioned above. He was reported to have received six horses at the station, which was the highest number of horses any one person received according to the document. Only one other person was granted so many horses, a certain Kıdatay *elči*, who travelled to Kočo ($_4$*kıdatay elči-kä kočo-ka bargu altı a*[t-ta]). The thousand chiefs and the *bäg*s only received five horses altogether.[14] These numbers suggest that Kıdatay *elči* (who is not mentioned in other sources) must have been a high-ranking officer or he was on a highly important mission, probably together with a small retinue.

Another interesting group of travellers is one that contains the returning guests at the postal station. The traveller who appears most frequently is a person by the name of Togugan, who came to the station every day between the 29th day of month 6 and the 4th day of month 7 (which was the last day for the particular month that a record was added to the list). During each of the last four days, another traveller named Soŋday also figured in the record, but he was only supplied one horse every day, while

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14 The text says four (*tört*), but according to the enumeration thereafter, five horses were supplied to them altogether: $_{16}$*mıŋ-lar bäg-lär kočo*[-ka] *bargu tört* /// $_{17}$*yoh(a)nan bir bagluz bir sävig bir takıčuk bir* $_{18}$*mısır bir*.

Togugan usually received two. These people might have been officers serving in the region or people in other privileged positions who were thus entitled to use the services of the relay system regularly. Other beneficiaries seem to have appeared no more than two times on the list, typically on consecutive days, which may indicate that they travelled back and forth from one of the adjacent towns, such as Yemši, Kočo or Turpan. These returning postal station guests typically received one horse per occasion, except for a certain Taŋuday, who took possession of two horses two times, and Sombouz *elči*, who might have been supplied three horses twice.

The people on the other side of the relay connection, namely those who provided the horses, were equally interesting. Most notably, it is absolutely clear that even if one traveller went away with several horses, he was always only supplied one horse by the same person. For example, when the *ıdok kut* received six horses, he did so from six different people.[15] Meanwhile, some of the providers are mentioned several times: a person by the name of Sävig appears most frequently, six times in total. There are 15 people whose names figure at least two times in the list and only seven who supplied horses only once according to our document. In five cases, the providers of the horses cannot be identified due to damage to the manuscript. These people were likely to have been either heads or representatives of local postal households (Olbricht 1954: 71–72).[16]

The Chinese sources clarify that the postal station masters were responsible for the assets and animals belonging to the station under their jurisdiction. The postal households had to provide the horses, and the postmasters were required to keep a record in a register that was to be checked each month by their superiors. The horses were expected to be healthy and well-fed, and they had to be evenly used so they would not be exhausted (Olbricht 1954: 65–66, 69–70). This may explain why only one horse was supplied at a time; however, if we also take into account the value of a horse, it seems conceivable that this practice was also meant to prevent the postal households from being overburdened. Another interesting addendum to the practice of taxation is that, if the text is read in the original chronological order (as represented by the translation above), one observes that the names of the taxpayers appeared with some regularity, implying that they paid their dues at regular intervals.

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15 $_{31}$*ıdok kut -ka kudık-a bir sävig b*[ir] $_{32}$*b at eš tämir bir at saduk* /[   ] $_{33}$*toyın-a bir at bačak bir* [at]

16 Mongol rulers registered the entire population under their rule and classified households into different categories according to their contribution to the maintenance of the state: military, peasant, artisan, mining, postal and several other kinds of registered households existed. Most of our knowledge of this practice comes from Chinese sources; we thus have detailed information from this part of the empire (Allsen 2009: 147). The members of the households were assigned to aid in the upkeep of the *yam* system with their taxes and labour. Meanwhile, they were exempted from other duties. Nevertheless, due to abuses, postal households were still exploited. In China, under Yuan rule, the estimated number of postal households was 750 000, which represented ca. 6% of the entire population (Kim 2009: 37 n. 19).

Date	Lines	Name of the beneficiary (total number of horses)	Destination	Names of the taxpayers
?	2–4	[ ]/ TW	Kočo	Čapat, Tükälä
?	10–11	Altmıš		
2nd	11–12	T//		Kıtay
	19			
21st of the **6th** month	20	Uladay		Bačak
	20–21	Ali		Sävinč Toyın
	21–22	Korčı *daruga*		
22nd	22–23	Korčı [*daruga*]		Atay Ky-a
24th	23–26	[ ] *elči* (3)	Yemši	Kudık-a, Sävig, Eš Tämir
26th	26–28	Sombuz *elči* (3)	Yemši	T[ ], Altmıš, Sävinč Toyın
	29	Bay Buka		Tayšeŋ
	30	Käräy		Atay Ky-a
27th	30–33	*ıdok kut* (6)		Kudık-a, Sävig, Eš Tämir, Saduk, Toyın-a, Bačak
	34	Käräy		Sävinč Toyın
28th	34–36	Buyan-a Ky-a (2)		Tayšeŋ, Atay Ky-a
29th	38–39	Togugan		
	39–40	Taŋuday		Tayšeŋ, At[ay Ky-a]
30th	41–42	Togugan (2)		KW[ ], Sävig
	42–43	Taŋuday (2)		Eš Tämir, Toyın-a
	43–44	Töläk	Yar	Bačak
1st of the **7th** month	45–46	Togugan (2)		Sävinč Toyın, Tayšeŋ
	46	Soŋday		Atay Ky-a
2nd	47–48	Togugan (2)		Bagluz, Sävig
	48–49	Soŋday		Čapat
3rd	49–50	Togugan (2)		Tükälä, Intu
	50	Soŋday		Kulunčı
4th	51	Togugan (2)		Kıtay, Bagluz
	52	Soŋday		Sävig
?	4–6	Kıdatay *elči* (6)	Kočo	Intu, Kulunčı, Kıtay, Kasar, Amrak Ky-a, Eš Tämir,
29th	7	Sadı		Čapat
1st day of the **8th** month	8–10	Torčı (2)	Kočo	Tükälä, Intu
2nd	12–13	Tarıgčı		Amrak Ky-a, Kitä
	14–15	[ ]Y (3)		Čapat, Tükälä, Intu
	15–16	document creator (*bitig etgüči*)		Oros
	16–18	thousand chiefs (*miŋ-lar*) and *bäg*s (5)	Kočo	Yohanan, Bagluz, Sävig, Takıčuk, Mısır

On the basis of the formal features of this document, the secondary use of the paper and the unchronological order of the text, I can confirm that this manuscript must be a rough draft of a register kept by a postal station master on the volume and composition of traffic at his postal station located in the vicinity of Turpan, along with the obligations of the postal households assigned to him, which were to be checked monthly by the authorities.

Due to the lack of any comprehensive edition of either private or official Old Uyghur lists or registers, the general features of the form and content of this type of historical source have not yet been investigated and described at the level of precision we see with other types of documents.[17] In an earlier study, I suggested that this manuscript is a kind of official document because of the supposed circumstances under which the text was produced, but argued for a rather semi-official status because of its format (primarily the lack of authentication) and aim (internal use) (Vér 2019a: 36). However, if we also consider the major characteristics of official lists already catalogued,[18] the majority of these documents, much like the register currently under investigation, have no authentication either, i.e. no seal has been affixed to them.[19] In the light of this, I would reconsider my position and stress the official nature of this document.

The register and the lower levels of the administrative system: A reconsideration

In the introduction to the edition of the Old Uyghur documents concerning the postal system of the Mongol Empire, I attempted to reconstruct the levels of administration in the Turfan region. I concluded that, the register under discussion and five other documents were issued on the lowest administrative level, i.e. they are among the archives of single postal stations. I defined the above mentioned five other documents

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17 See, for example, Matsui 2014: 611–616; Moriyasu 2019: 11–13 and Vér 2019a: 23–35. I described some special groups of lists (including the register under discussion) in connection with the postal system recently (Vér 2019a: 35–40). I would like to carry on this discussion here.

18 Cf. Raschmann 2007: 70–75 (Nos. 53–58); Raschmann 2009: 40–49 (Nos. 294–307); Raschmann & Sertkaya 2016: 96 (*U 9284 I, No. 059), 134–135 (*U 9338, No. 105).

19 According to the Catalogues of the Belin Collection three registers affixed with a seal or *tamga* (*U 9388, U 5894 [No. 298] and U 5312 [No. 56]). Of these, the latter may be dated to the West Uyghur period (9th to 12th centuries). An interesting common feature of the former two is that according to their finding signature (T III Hassa Šahri), both of them were unearthed during the third Turfan expedition in the vicinity of Turfan in a monastery complex between the 8th and 16th of December, 1916 (cf. https://orient-mss.kohd.adw-goe.de/receive/KOHDOldUygurMSBook_islamhs_00000472 (last access: 21 Feb. 2021)).

as official accounts (OAcc) on the basis of their main purpose, which was to keep an account of the finances of a single postal station (Vér 2019a: 43–44).[20]

As has been recently pointed out, Chinese tax receipt documents of the Tang period (from the 7th to the end of the 8th centuries) from the Tarim Basin usually include similar information and even offer examples of the administrative requisition order being pasted together with the receipt of fulfilment, as was also the case with three documents concerning relay in the postal system.[21] As has been proposed, these data may indicate the continuation of the administrative traditions of the region implemented in the Tang period (Matsui 2021: 164–165).

Without questioning the validity of these persuasive arguments and the considerable influence that the Chinese administrative tradition in use during the Tang period must have had on the Uyghur administrative system later, I would like to call attention to some crucial contemporaneous (i.e. 13th–14th cc.) changes that might have affected the use of the types of documents in question. In other words, besides the diachronic influences, I would also consider some synchronic factors.

One of these was the introduction of the institution of the postal system inspectors (Mong.: *todqosun/todqaγul) no later than in 1260. Their duty was to perform regular checks on the conditions of the postal stations and the traffic within the yam system. An office of this type was not known to have existed under the Chinese dynasties prior to Mongol rule (Olbricht 1954: 80). Furthermore, we also know that not only were the assets of the postal stations regularly checked, but also their finances. Moreover, in the border provinces of the Yuan dynasty, such as Gansu, which neighboured the Turfan region, the inspectors were granted extensive powers and were responsible for monitoring the financial situation of the postal households and thus the operation of the relay system as well (Olbricht 1954: 69–70, 84–85). Based on these, it seems conceivable that the traditional practices (i.e. those reaching back to the Tang period) were employed under the new circumstances in a slightly modified manner.

We know several examples from the Mongol period of how imperial practices promoted the exchange and evolution of different administrative traditions. A remarkable example that influenced the postal system as well is the unification of weights and measures (Matsui 2004), while the introduction of runners in the postal service in Iran due to the reforms of Ghazan Ilkhan (r. 1295–1304) is another fine illustration of the phenomenon in question (Silverstein 2007: 160–161). The administration of the Mongol Empire in general and its postal system in particular resulted from a centuries-long exchange between various sedentary states and the nomadic peoples around them (Allsen 2010). Taking into account that the Tarim Basin

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20 The shelf marks of the five documents are: *U 9180_Side 2/b; *U 9255; *U9256; *U9258; and *U9259. The formula in the documents can be schematized as follows (with brackets used to signify elements not attested in every document): (1) date; (2) (name of taxpayer); (3) (amount of tax paid); (4) name of tax; (5) (recipient of tax); (6) purpose of tax paid; (7) closing.

21 These documents are *U 9180_Side 2 / a-c. The first and last are categorized as provision orders, while the one in the middle is classified as an official account (Vér 2019a: 27, 33–35).

was always an important intercultural contact zone, I consider it conceivable that an administrative formula originating from the Tang period (i.e. issuing official receipts) was employed by the Uyghurs later on and then continued to be in use albeit in a slightly different manner even under Mongol rule. Without the aid of archaeology, it is very difficult to determine whether such documents have been preserved in private or official archives, but from our perspective the most important point to make is that the register discussed in this article, along with some other documents (whether they are identified as receipts or accounts), fell within the lowest administrative level of the postal system in the Turfan region.

Conclusion

Based on the findings presented in the current study, it seems highly probable that the register under investigation was written as a rough draft for a report on the volume at a postal station that focused on the obligations placed on the postal households assigned to the station in the form of horses to be provided for travellers. The place of issue could be midway between Kočo and Yemši, somewhere around Turpan. The exact date of production cannot be determined, but it is probably one of the following three periods: the 1270s or earlier, around 1318 and around 1339. Based on the circumstances under which the document was supposedly prepared and the purpose it supposedly served, I suggest that it is a type of official document made for internal administrative use. Along with five other documents mentioned in the last section of this paper, this register was prepared on the lowest administrative level of the postal system. It represents an outstanding example of intercultural exchange on the administrative level within Mongol Eurasia. The identification and study of similar documents would assist us in gaining a more elaborate understanding of the history and operation of Mongol imperial administration in general.

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