The Chinese Language in Turfan
with a special focus on the Qieyun fragments

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Introduction

Last year, Prof. Nishiwaki’s Catalogue of non-Buddhist Chinese text fragments from Turfan finally saw the light of day. With regard to the Buddhist texts, two volumes of Catalogue have already been published, and the third one is reportedly now in preparation. Still, in the world of Sinology there remains a great demand for a catalogue of non-Buddhist Chinese texts in the German Turfan collection. Nishiwaki’s new Catalogue is, then, a timely response to this demand. To be sure, it may include some minor errors and gaps, but it is beyond a doubt that many scholars will benefit from this Catalogue, using it as a standard reference work for a long time to come. In the course of the compilation of his Catalogue, Prof. Nishiwaki consulted me about the identification of linguistic texts, including the Qieyun 切韻 and other dictionaries. I am happy to have made some contribution to the Catalogue. This paper, too, derives from this work and could be considered a supplementary note for the section concerning the Qieyun 切韻 and other dictionaries.

Historical Background

Chinese people penetrated into the region of Turfan from a very early period. In the Han period, they began to establish a military base after ousting their long-time rivals,
the Xiongnu 匈奴. Han colonial troops were permanently stationed there. Later on, Chinese kingdoms based in Liangzhou 涼州 found their way into the Turfan basin and instituted their system of administration. After that followed the period of an independent Chinese kingdom, Gaochangguo 高昌國, for almost two hundred years. After overthrowing the Gaochangguo in 640, the Tang dynasty brought a very developed administrative system and a sophisticated literary culture into Turfan, just as it did for other neighboring areas and countries. The influence of the Chinese language was so enduring and so strong that even non-Chinese inhabitants of the Turfan region acquired some knowledge of Chinese. Particularly in Tang times, because of a tendency toward cultural uniformity, the Chinese language increasingly took on an official character. A series of official documents dated the 2nd year of Kaiyuan 開元 (724), impressed with the seal of the Xizhou dudufu 西州都督府 (government office of Xizhou) and later discovered in Turfan, tells us that a certain number of foreign bandits were able to speak Chinese3 and that special caution was called for against them. Unfortunately, there is no more precise, direct material to tell us which kind of language those non-Chinese used.

Residents of the northwestern region, including the oasis cities along the Hexi corridor as far as Turfan, spoke dialects of the Northwestern type4. Therefore we could imagine, without contradiction, that some kind of northwestern dialect was spoken in daily life in and around Turfan, and that this was also the form of Chinese that the foreign bands used. On the other hand, the official language of the Tang times was based on the dialect of Chang'an 長安, the capital of the dynasty. A number of scholars from such neighboring countries as Japan, Korea and Vietnam, went to Chang'an to study advanced aspects of Chinese culture, including Buddhism. They brought back the official Chinese pronunciation of the time to their own countries; consequently, the pronunciation of Chinese in each country is related closely to the Chang'an dialect. Japanese Kan'on pronunciation is no exception in this regard. The problem is that the dialect of Chang'an itself belonged to the great Northwestern dialect, although the official language was influenced by the strong tradition of the central dialect, of which the homeland had long been contemporary Henan 河南 province. We may contend, then, that the official Chang'an language of the Tang times was a somewhat refined

4 I have previously proposed the name of Hexi 河西 as a generic term for this type of dialect. TAKATA Tokio, Tonkō siryō ni yoru Chūgokugoshi no kenkyū, 9-10 seiki no Kasei högen 敦煌資料により中國語史の研究 — 九、十世紀の河西方言, 1988, Tokyo: Sōbunsha.
version of this North-western dialect, while it still retained characteristics of the local
Northwestern dialect. Thus, while the Hexi dialect and the Japanese Kan-on, which is
derived from the Chang’an dialect, may resemble each other in certain regards, there
are also many points of difference between them. We may adduce, for instance, the
disappearance of the final -ng, which occurs throughout in all cases in Kan-on, while it
does not occur in the zeng rime-group (zengshe 曾攝) in Hexi. It is true that the Hexi
dialect extended as far as the Turfan basin. This distribution is very easy to understand,
if we take into consideration that the Chinese families governing the area of Turfan had
come from the Gansu 甘肅 region. We should also bear in mind, as I have just
mentioned, that there were many powerful regional dynasties in the Gansu region for
the several centuries preceding the unification of China under the Sui and Tang
dynasties.

The above is the outline of the use of the Chinese language in the Turfan region to the
beginning of the Tang period.

The place of the Qieyun in the Chinese literary tradition

The Qieyun was compiled by Lu Fayan 陸法言 in 601. It is considered to reflect the
phonological system of literary Chinese of the sixth century, and the analysis of its
fanqie 反切 system has led to the precise reconstruction of the Ancient Chinese
phonological system. It also provides us with the invaluable starting point not only for
the study of Archaic Chinese, for which we still lack sufficient materials for a complete
reconstruction, but also for the study of the later phonological development of Chinese.
However, historically speaking, what is much more important is that the Qieyun was
adopted as the national standard for rhyming in poetical works. Although the rigid
rhyme system of the Qieyun was abandoned as early as the early Tang, the Qieyun itself
survived with an additional rule of moderation for many years. A number of different
versions appeared, and these were repeatedly expanded by various authors. A medieval
Japanese manuscript records revisions by thirteen different authors5. In order to meet
the great demand for this text, a number of professional copyists were engaged to make
manuscript copies of the Qieyun for commercial distribution. Famous manuscript copies,
reportedly written by Wu Cailuan 呉彩鸞, are one of these commercial productions6. It

5 Thirteen authors of the Qieyun consulted by Sugahara Koreyoshi 菅原是善 (812-880)
for the compilation of his Tōkyū Setsuin 東宮切韻 are enumerated in a Muromachi
manuscript entitled Sansōki 三僧記. Kawase Kazuma 川瀬一馬, Kojisho no Kenkyū 古
6 Wu Cailuan’s Qieyun is mentioned frequently in literature. We may cite as an extant
example the famous manuscript copy kept in the Palace Museum of Beijing.
is only natural that the *Qieyun* was also one of the main objects to which the new method of block printing began to be applied in Tang times. Block prints of the *Qieyun* adapted themselves to the public's needs, incorporating various elements from calendars, divination manuals etc. Still, the *Qieyun* retained its position as an authority. The *Guangyun* 廣韻, an enlarged version of the *Qieyun*, achieved the position of official rhyme book at the beginning of the 11th century, and exercised a profound influence over the later literary framework of China.

Copies of the Qieyun discovered in Turfan

1. Manuscript editions of the Qieyun

If we consider the position occupied by the *Qieyun* and the literary activities that took place in Turfan, it is no wonder that we find some fragments of the *Qieyun* among the Turfan finds. We can divide the *Qieyun* fragments into two categories, from the viewpoint of their external form, viz. manuscript editions of the *Qieyun* and block print editions of the *Qieyun*. These two types are fairly different, both in their contents and in their date of compilation.

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<tr>
<td>Ch 2094 R/V (T IV K 75)</td>
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<td>四脚,</td>
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<td>four fragments, (1) shang 5 督 &amp; 6 止; (2) shang ping 9 魚 &amp; 10 瞳; (3) shang ping 11 模 &amp; 12 齊; (4) shang ping 20 wen 文</td>
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<td>(R) qu 12 ji 益 &amp; 14 tai 泰; (V) shang 36 yang 官, 48 gan 感 &amp; 49 gan 敢</td>
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<td>Ch 3605 R</td>
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Table 1: Ms. *Qieyun* from Turfan
We shall begin with the manuscript editions of the *Qieyun* (see Table 1). A fragment discovered in Toyok and brought back by the Otani expedition was included in *Saiiki Kōko Zufu* in 1915, and two studies based on it appeared in succession: one is by the Japanese scholar OKAI Shingo and the other by WANG Guowei. Nevertheless, the study of the edition of the *Qieyun* in the Berlin collection began only much later. It was TAKEUCHI Yoshio who first paid attention to the Berlin fragments of the *Qieyun*. He published an article in 1935, reporting the existence of the *Qieyun* with a short research note (Ch 2094 and Ch 1991). He also reported on the fragments of the block print edition of the *Qieyun*. Photographs taken by TAKEUCHI were later sent to the editors of the *Shiyun huibian* (SYHB) through OGAWA Tamaki, who was resident in Beijing at that time, and used for its compilation. WEI Jiangong published a supplement to the *Shiyun huibian* in 1948 and gathered as many extant fragments as he could at that time. In this project, XIANG Da offered WEI Jiangong the use of his handwritten copies, of which the original manuscripts are now lost.

These manuscript editions of the *Qieyun* are for the most part akin to Lu Fayan's original edition. We may postulate that they were brought to Turfan in the Tang period, sometime before the first half of the 8th century. Let us examine some examples (Plate 1). These three fragments are from one and the same manuscript. In spite of the difference of the size of each photograph, we can detect holes at even intervals in the

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7 In the first column of the table are given the numbers of Nishiwaki's Catalogue; for the abbreviation of the works cited in the three right columns, see the list at the end of this article. A circle in the grid indicates that the manuscript was included in the work in question.

8 Today's Ryukoku 8107. Plate 8·2 and 8·3 of the part of Classics, SKZ, pars altera. Another small fragment of the *Qieyun* brought back by the Otani expedition, which has been so far unknown to the academic world, is now included in the COD II.


10 WANG Guowei, “Lu Fayan Qieyun zhi duanpian” 陸法言切韻之斷片, Xueshu congbian 學術叢編 fasc. 22 (1917): this article was later included in his collected essays *Guantang bieji* 観堂別集, Ch.1., with minor change of title to “Lu Fayan Qieyun duanpian ba” 陸法言切韻斷片跋.

11 TAKEUCHI Yoshio, “Tōshōhon insho to inpon Setsuin to no danpen” 唐鈔本韻書と印本切韻の断片, *Bunka* 文化 2-7 (1935).

12 WEI Jiangong, one of the compilers of *SYHB*, says that, in 1932, he borrowed two photographs of a manuscript fragment of the *Qieyun* from ZHAO Wanli and copied them by hand. Because they were both sides of a fragment beginning from the *zhì* 止 rime of *shangsheng* tone, the fragment in question must be today's Ch 1991. A little later he succeeded in acquiring one other fragment Ch 2094. See the preface of *SYHB*, 57·58: ZLB pp. 50·51.
manuscript. The existence of these holes constitutes proof positive that this text was originally bound in a roll, which was a traditional book form in Medieval China. However, here there was an additional innovation. Some other manuscript fragments are filled with characters on both side of the paper, or in some cases, two thin papers are pasted into one sheet\(^{13}\) (for example, see Plate 2). In this case, the book is considered to have been made up in the so-called dragon scale binding (龍鱗裝 longlin zhuang)\(^{14}\), which is a transitional style from roll to booklet.

So far, scholars have not paid due attention to the external form or style of binding in the study of Qieyun fragments, so that very little is known about the specifics of dragon scale binding. Dragon scale binding was undertaken as follows. One prepares two sheets of paper of standard size and pastes them into one long sheet. Then one begins to write on one side, from the right extremity to the left. When one side is finished, one may continue to write on the reverse side, always starting at the right column. After both sides of the sheet are filled, one can start writing on another sheet. When the entire text has been completed, one piles up a dozen sheets or so, pasting them one by one on the right edge and rolling them up in the traditional style. Consequently, a book bound in the dragon scale style has the precise appearance of a standard roll. However, when the reader opens the roll, he or she can use it as a booklet. A complete set of the Qieyun in this dragon scale binding remains extant at the Palace Museum of Beijing\(^{15}\).

2. Block print editions of the Qieyun

Turning our attention to the fragments of the block print editions of the Qieyun, we find that they all derive from one and the same book, with one lone exception (T I D 1015). These were divided into pieces and used for the repair of other manuscripts. Some of these were first reported by TAKEUCHI in his above mentioned article and included later in the SYHB under the heading of De san 德三, “German no.3”. But other fragments also belonging to this same book came to be known only in comparatively recent years. (See Table 2.) This block print edition is worth our attention, because it is in a sense more developed even than the Guangyun. Its chief characteristics are as follows:

(1) The number of words contained in each xiaoyun\(^{16}\) 小韻 is often greater than in the Guangyun.

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\(^{13}\) Ryukoku 3327 R/V, Ryukoku 8107 R/V, Ch 2094 R/V, Ch 79 R/V, Ch 1991 R/V.

\(^{14}\) Also called xuanfeng zhuang 旋風裝 “fluttering in the wind” binding.

\(^{15}\) Cf. Li Zhizhong 李致忠, “Gushu xuanfeng zhuang kaobian” 古書“旋風裝”考辨, Wenwu 文物, 1981-2, pp.75-78.

\(^{16}\) Xiaoyun, literally “small rhyme”, is in practical terms a distinctive syllabic unit. In other words, all the syllables belonging to a xiaoyun are homophones.
(2) Notes for each word are also often more detailed than in the *Guangyun*.
(3) Words in the notes are occasionally accompanied by glosses.
The former two characteristics are explained in detail in ZHOU Zumo's *TWYJ*. What deserves the bulk of our attention here is the final characteristic. We may observe in Plate 3 that a phonetic gloss *jiu-yu* 九玉 is given for the word *jiu* 臼 by way of *fanqie* spelling in smaller size, when one explains the components of the character *guan* 盥.
This way of writing a gloss to a word in the notes is very particular and highly unusual. As far as we know, we may encounter the sole similar similar example in the *Shaoxing chongdiao Dazangyin*17 蘇興重雕大藏音 (1093), by Chu Guan 處觀. If this style of gloss represents an ephemeral fashion of the time, we could imagine that this edition dates approximately to the Song period, whereas other scholars have generally considered it to be a product of the Five Dynasties. In any event, it is interesting that this block print edition of *Qieyun* was brought to Turfan at a time when Chinese hegemony had already been swept away from Turfan and the Uighurs had come to power there.

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<td>shangping 25 寒 &amp; 26 huan 恆, 13 lines</td>
<td>○ ○ ○</td>
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<tr>
<td>T II D 1a1</td>
<td><em>qu</em> 26 hun 恭 ~ 28 han 翰, 9 lines</td>
<td>○ ○ ○</td>
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<tr>
<td>T II D 1a2</td>
<td><em>qu</em> 28 han 翰, 9 lines and 3 frag. lines; the title <em>Qieyun</em> is seen in the center column of the folio.</td>
<td>○ ○ ○ ○</td>
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<tr>
<td>T II D 1a3</td>
<td><em>qu</em> 28 han 翰, very small frag. (孖)</td>
<td>○ ○ ○</td>
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<tr>
<td>33 Ch 1106 V (T II T 1921)</td>
<td><em>qu</em> 28 han 翰, 8 lines, only upper part of page; 29 huan 换, small fragment</td>
<td>○ ○ ○</td>
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<td><em>qu</em> 28 han 翰, 5 lines from left lower corner of page</td>
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<td>○ ○ ○ ○</td>
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<td>T II D 1b'</td>
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<td>○ ○ ○ ○</td>
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<tr>
<td>T II D 1c1</td>
<td><em>qu</em> 35 xiao 笑, 4 frag. lines (綈)</td>
<td>○ ○ ○</td>
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<td>T II D 1c2</td>
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17 *Yingyin Song jisha zangjing* 景印宋磧砂藏經, case 48, p.57ff., Shanghai, 1936.
As mentioned above, one block print fragment (T I D 1015) is of a different edition. In the 1930s, SHIGEMATSU Shunshō of Kyūshū University brought a photograph of this fragment back to Japan, on the basis of which OKAI Shingo wrote an article. SHIGEMATSU stayed in Berlin between 1933 and 1934, a period slightly earlier than TAKEUCHI’s time there, but the publication of the fragment was delayed instead. This fragment is now lost, and all that is left is the photograph in TWYJ. Although the date of this edition is also unknown, it is beyond a doubt that the both block print editions are much later than the manuscript edition of the Qieyun.

Use of the Qieyun by the Uighurs

In the middle of the 9th century, the Uighur people penetrated into the Turfan basin and gradually solidified the basis of their rule there. Chronologically speaking, the block print editions of the Qieyun could belong to the time of this Uighur kingdom. Does this mean, then, that the Qieyun continued to be used by the Uighurs as well? In this regard, Ch 1538 is a very interesting example that demonstrates that the Uighurs used the Qieyun, too (Plate 4). This fragment is an excerpt from an enlarged edition of the Qieyun, which is considered to be one of the latest versions in the development of this text. Judging from the handwriting, there is no doubt that it was written by Uighurs. In this fragment, some fanqie spellings do not correspond with those of the Guangyun, and some entry words do not appear in the Guangyun. Some xiaoyun give the number of entry words, as is the case for the rhyme books of the Qieyun tradition. Here the fact that there are eleven entry words for the xiaoyun “ge” stands out prominently.

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21 See the first column of the verso of Plate 4.
because the Guangyun includes only 4 entry words for this particular xiaoyun. Therefore, the original of this fragment must have been a considerably enlarged version. Of course, there is no proof that this fragment was copied from the above-mentioned Turfan block print edition of the Qieyun. But it is beyond doubt that this kind of Qieyun text had been transmitted in Turfan, as we can suppose from the above mentioned block print fragments of the Qieyun.

Still, it is not clear whether the Uighur used that Qieyun in the traditional way. It would appear that they hardly observed the phonological system provided by the Qieyun. Very carefully designed fanqie spellings of the Qieyun were often neglected, and when they used the fanqie, they must have read it employing the Uighur pronunciation. Even though the genuine phonetic value of the Qieyun thus deteriorated in the Uighur period, the Qieyun continued to be an authority even in the Uighur kingdom: Such was the influence of Chinese literary culture on Uighur society.

Now we have reached the issue of the Uighur pronunciation of Chinese characters. It is a striking fact that the Buddhist Uighur of the Turfan basin developed their own pronunciation, as did the Japanese, Korean and Vietnamese. However, if we take into consideration the fact that Turfan had long been under the influence of the Chinese literary tradition, this is by no means exceptional. I pointed out the existence of this Uighur pronunciation for the first time in 1985, and although the three-stratum theory of the Uighur pronunciation that I developed in a later article has been challenged by some scholars, the very existence of a distinctly Uighur pronunciation now seems to be widely accepted. In the 1985 study, I made use of two fragments of homophonic phonetic glosses produced by the Uighurs and written entirely in Chinese characters: one now kept in Berlin, and one in Istanbul. Later, I was able to locate other small fragments of the same nature among the Berlin Turfan collection. Needless to say, these fragments supplement my earlier findings, proving that the Uighur pronunciation was widely in use. For each entry word, the pronunciation is given by means of a character of the same sound in these materials (Plates 5-8).

25 Takata, “Huihu ziyin buzhen” 回鶻字音補證, paper presented to the Conference of Dunhuang and Turfan studies held in Lanzhou 蘭州, 1996 (unpublished). SHŌGAI TO
The sound system reflected by these phonetic glosses is basically in accordance with the Uighur transcription of Chinese words. This Uighur pronunciation must have been based on a Chinese conversational dialect that had long been used in daily life in the region of Turfan. In any event, the development of the Uighur pronunciation of Chinese characters is one of the most remarkable products of the Chinese language and Chinese literary tradition.

Conclusion
In this short article, I have tried to summarize previous studies of the Turfan fragments of the *Qieryun*, and to trace the outline of the use of the Chinese language through the reception of the *Qieryun*. The *Qieryun* was undoubtedly the premier symbol of the Chinese literary tradition. It spread even into the region of Turfan, and the Chinese language symbolized by the *Qieryun* exerted wide linguistic and social influence even into the later Uighur kingdom.

Abbreviations


**SYHB** LIU Fu 劉復 et al. (ed.), *Shiyun huibian 十韻彙編*, Beijing: Beijing University, 1937.


reports that there are also some fragmentary phonetic glosses of the same nature among the St. Petersburg collection. See SHŌGAI TO, “Rosia shozō Uiguru go dampen no kenkyū 3” ロシア所蔵ウイグル語語片的研究 3, *Kyoto Daigaku Gengogaku Kenkyū 京都大学言語学研究*, 20, 2001, chapter 3, pp.271-275.

SHŌGAI TO has recently devoted considerable energy to the study of transcription in Uighur script. See his “Uiguru moji onsha sareta kango butten danpen ni tsuite, Uiguru kanji on no kenkyū (zoku)” ウイグル文字音寫された漢語佛典斷片について—ウイグル漢字音の研究—（續）, *Seinan Ajia Kenkyū 西南アジア研究*, 46, 1997, pp.1-31.

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