

IS OLD CHINESE *DÚ* 犢 A LOANWORD?

Yabei Cao


Peking University, Beijing

ABSTRACT

Norman (1982) proposes that *dú* 犢 ‘calf’ is a loanword from Altaic languages, and the hypothesis is often cited by later scholars. Based on the recently unearthed documents and texts, a new phonological analysis of Old Chinese, and the cross-language phonetic corresponding rules, this paper argues that *dú* is not a loanword but a native Chinese word. Unearthed documents from the pre-Qin period provide earlier uses of *dú* than those from the Han dynasty mentioned previously. Combining the time of early uses, the *xiesheng* series and character interchanges related to *dú*, and a new reconstruction of the Old Chinese sources of the Middle Chinese initial **d-*, the paper argues that there is no phonetic correspondence between *dú* and the Altaic *t*-initial morphemes. The paper also points out that a basic condition of establishing a loanword hypothesis through historical documents is that the cross-language phonetic correspondence should exist at the time reflected by the earliest uses of the word.

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Yabei Cao (曹亞北) [caoyabei@pku.edu.cn]; Department of Chinese Language and Literature, Peking University, 5 Yiheyuan Road, Haidian, Beijing, 100871, China;

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0829-2442>

KEYWORDS

Dú 犢 Loanword Altaic languages Unearthed documents and texts
Cross-language phonetic correspondence

1. A LOANWORD FROM ALTAIC LANGUAGES?

Norman (1982, 244) proposes that the Chinese word *dú* 犢 ‘calf’ (Middle Chinese **duk*) is borrowed from Altaic languages. He supports this hypothesis mainly with two arguments. First, “this word is undoubtedly related to the following Altaic forms”: Mongolian *tuyul* ‘calf less than a year old’, Evenki *tukucān* ‘calf’, Lamut *tu--tuyu-* ‘to calve’, and Manchu *tukšan* ‘calf’. Second, “the relatively late appearance of the Chinese term also speaks in favor of its loan status”. In a footnote (1980, 244, footnote 2), Norman says that the earliest occurrences of *dú* 犢 are in Han compilations: the dictionary *Erya* 爾雅 and the *Liji* 禮記 (Ritual records).¹ Here are examples found from the two books:

- (1) 犧牲、駒、犢，舉書其數。
Xī shēng, jū, dú, jǔ shū qí shù. (*Liji*, “Yueling” 月令; 2nd–1st century BCE.)
‘As for the animals used for sacrifice, foals, and calves, the numbers need to be recorded.’
- (2) …黑腳，犗；其子，犢。
Hēi jiǎo, quán; qí zǐ, dú. (*Erya*, “Shi chu” 釋畜; 3rd–1st century BCE.)
‘The black-foot (or black-leg) cattle is called *quán*; The child (calf) is called *dú*.’

Admittedly, if a word appears late in a language and has corresponding forms in one or more neighboring languages, it is quite reasonable to argue that it is a loanword.

If the phonetic-semantic relation between the words in Chinese and Altaic languages can be established, a historical connection is plausible: that Chinese borrowed a word from Altaic. As shown above, the word for ‘calf’ has a wide distribution in different Altaic languages. And Norman (1982, 244) says, “the Altaic forms are either verbs like Lamut *tuyu-* or deverbal nouns like Mongolian *tuyul*, it would seem unnatural for an Altaic language to borrow a Chinese noun as a verb since verbs and nouns are

- and related characters in paleographic materials: Begin with Guodian Chu bamboo slips), *Zhongguo wenzi yanjiu* 中國文字研究 2: 85–78.
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上古漢語中的“犢”是借詞嗎？

曹亞北

北京大學

摘要

羅傑瑞先生(1982)指出“犢”是來自阿爾泰語的借詞，後來多被學者引用。本文根據出土文獻材料、古音分析和譯音對應，說明“犢”不是阿爾泰語借詞，而是漢語固有詞。先秦出土文獻中有不少“犢”的用例，這比以往提到的漢代用例要早；根據用例時代和與“犢”相關的諧聲、通假、異文並結合古音學對定母字的新研究可知，“犢”與阿爾泰語首輔音為 t 的語詞不具備語音對應。文章據此指出，根據歷史文獻建立借詞說的基礎條件是：跨語言的語音對應要存在於語詞始見用例所反映的年代。

關鍵詞

犢 借詞 阿爾泰語 出土文獻 跨語言語音對應