

STUDIEN ZUR SPRACHE, GESCHICHTE UND KULTUR DER TÜRKVÖLKER

Band 21

Irina Nevskaya / Marcel Erdal (eds.)

Interpreting the Turkic Runiform Sources and the Position of the Altai Corpus

Mehmet Ölmez, "Some Specific Features of
the Language of Siberian Runic Inscriptions"
122-130



KLAUS SCHWARZ VERLAG • BERLIN

2015

Some Specific Features of the Language of Siberian Runic Inscriptions

MEHMET ÖLMEZ

İSTANBUL

Although the major problems with Turkic inscriptions written with Runic letters have been solved, or seem to have been solved, some problems, as known to us all, are still awaiting a solution today. The concerns and problems of non-classical inscriptions in the Yenisei-Altai region as well as of “minor” inscriptions found in Mongolia are far more complicated and numerous than those of huge inscriptions like KT, BK and T. For me, some comparison can be made primarily from three points of view, if a comparison should be made between these two groups of inscriptions at all: 1. Differences in characters, 2. Morphological and phonological differences, 3. Lexical differences. In a comparison which is to be made in this respect, T. Tekin’s publications (KT, BK, T), and Clauson’s publications (Ongi, Küli Čor) can be used for Mongolia, while individual studies of T. Moriyasu, A. Katayama, T. Osawa (Moyun Čor, Taryat, Tes) as well as the books of O. Mert and E. Aydın can be used for inscriptions remaining from the Uyghur Khaganate. I must add, in addition to these, the work of mine, which is presently in press and compiles all these inscriptions in one volume. As far as the Yenisei region is concerned, Kormušin’s publications of 1997 and 2008 should be used as sources in such work. For inscriptions in the Altai region, we must wait to see the results of the Erdal-Nevskaya-Tybykova project.¹

Differences in characters

If any mention is to be made concerning differences between the inscriptions in Mongolia and the Siberia region, it has to consider primarily differences in characters. The letters used especially in the inscriptions in Altai were dealt with in this meeting by I. Nevskaya [see also Nevskaya 2011].

1 The recent publication of Tybykova, Nevskaya, and Erdal (2012) could not be taken into consideration in this article [*Katalog drevnetjurkskix runičeskix pjamjatnikov Respubliki Gornyj Altaj*. Gorno-Altajsk: Gorno-Altajskoe knižnoe izdatel’stvo].

As well known, the first person to point out the differences between these two groups of inscriptions, namely the use of the character ǰ for the closed *e*, was V. Thomsen [1913]: *altunlug kešig belimtä bantim* (note *bel* ʸǰǰ, *keš* ʌǰʌ in Kormušin 1997: 93).

In addition to the letter for the closed *e*, which bears a distinct phonetical significance, 9 further letters differ in these two groups of inscriptions (Tekin 2003: 23). One of them is a grapheme used for the open *e* (ä): ǰ.

As noted by I. Nevskaya in the meeting in Gorno-Altajsk, there are several letters for *ŋ* in the Yenisei-Altai inscriptions, where both the letters 𐰇 and 𐰈 are used. The list provided by Prof. Tekin reveals the existence of additional distinct letters for *m*, *š*, *t*, *däm*, *up*, *kış*.

Of the letters found by T. Tekin, *aš* is expressed as 𐰢, *š*, *s* and *baš* as 𐰣 or *liq* in Kormušin [1997: 2008]. Two more graphemes are also distinguished by Kormušin [1997: 2008], one of which is read as *šim*, while the other could not be read.

According to T. Tekin, the different graphemes in Yenisei inscriptions are as follows [2003: 23]:

| Letters | Transliteration | Phonetic values |
|---------|-----------------|-------------------------------|
| ǰ | ä | ä (open- <i>e</i>) |
| ǰ | e | e (closed- <i>e</i>) |
| 𐰇 | ŋ | ŋ (in words with back vowels) |
| 𐰈 | m | m |
| ʌ | š | š |
| 𐰢 | däm | däm |
| 𐰣, 𐰤 | up | up, üp (Irk Bitig, Yenisei) |
| 𐰥 | ot | ot (Irk Bitig) |
| 𐰦 | kış | kış |

Phonetic differences

There seem to be some differences, although slight, between the two types of inscriptions. Some of the differences, however, are due to the publisher's preference, and hence not real. For instance, when we look at Kormušin's transcription for the Yenisei inscriptions, we see these differences:

Kormuşin 29.3 *alkanıp* [^alk^an'p 1ᠣᠨᠵᠢ]

Inscriptions containing *alkın-*; TI B3 *alkıntı* [^alk^antı 1ᠮᠨᠵᠢ], KTG 9,
BK K 7 *alkıntıḡ* [^alk^ant'g 1ᠣᠨᠵᠢ]; O 8 *al[kınmazu]n* [^al...n ᠣ...ᠵᠢ]

The verb in question here, *alkın-*, is the verb 'be devastated, be destroyed'. Also in the period following the time of the inscriptions, the verb is always encountered as *alkın-* in Old Uyghur texts (*alkın-* UW_NB pp. 49-51); it would therefore probably be more convenient to read it as *alkın-* here as well.

Kormuşin 28.3 *özlk* 3ᠶᠣᠬᠢᠨ (inscriptions according to Tekin: *özlk* KT K 11, G 12). The point here, as in the example of *alkın-*, is the difference in the transcriptions: *özlik* (or *özlük*?) is the correct phonetic form of this word and the forms in Kashgari's "Compendium of the languages of the Turks" as well as Chagatai texts confirm this, too; cf. Clauson pp. 286 b-287 a.

As further examples, we can consider such readings as *töpä*, *törä*-, *törän* in Kormuşin to be *töpü* ~ *töpö*, *törü*- ~ *törö*-, *törän* [> *törön* Erdal 2002: 62].² The following reading instances are also examples of the editor's preference: *yüri*-, *yont*-, *ön*-, *öntür*-, *örün*, *tülbäri* (> *töl-böri* "Wolfjungen" Erdal 2002: 62).

Apart from this, a notable phonetic difference is witnessed in the word *bal-bal*. The word appears once in 51.4 as *balbar*: 4ᠣᠵᠣᠳ *balbar*³ Kormuşin (p. 143).

One of the most noteworthy differences between the two groups of inscriptions, Mongolia and South Siberia, is probably the word-initial *k*-/g- fluctuation:

gäyik 41.7

gimçig 41.6

güç 41.6

yaşya 41.5

2 Erdal 2002: 63, footnote 32: „Tekin 2000: 232 schließt sich an Kormuşins Lesung an, transkribiert aber *törünüm* und gibt im Glossar für *törün* die Bedeutung „akrabalik adı“; er denkt vielleicht an türkeitürkisch *torun* 'Enkel', das aber ein Lehnwort aus dem Armenischen sein soll." For *torun* s. Yong-Söng Li, pp. 222-223.

3 Vasil'ev: E 32, line A 3: *k'n'b'l'b'l'l'*; Erdal 2002: 63 ("Phantasie").

Moreover, the words *yıydar* and *yulan* with uncertain meanings must be mentioned (in lines 41.5 and 51.2 respectively).

In contrast with this occurrence of voicing in word-initial position, a few occurrences of devoicing can be found in word-medial position in a couple of examples:

bāṅkü 48.14, 15; 20.1, 28.7, 48.9, 27.8, 42.3, 30.2, 134 (for 134, see Kormuşin p. 163), *tamqa* 41.3

On the other hand, we find the forms *bāṅgü* (KT G 8 f) and *tamyacı* (KT K 13) in the inscriptions in Mongolia.

Lexical differences

The question concerning the age of the inscriptions in Mongolia, most of which belong to the Khaganate period, and of the age of the inscriptions in South Siberia has long been a point of debate. In some studies, the inscriptions in South Siberia – while in other studies those in Mongolia – are considered to be older than the other. Based on two reasons, I believe the South Siberian inscriptions to be more recent, that is, belonging to a period after the inscriptions in Mongolia, or, at least, not belonging to a period any earlier:

- There are some experts who consider the South Siberian inscriptions to be more recent because of the non-standard writing (*bāṅkü*, *yaşya* etc.) regarded as dialectal features. However, most importantly, there must first be a writing system and then its variations in different forms. It is quite unlikely that different variations and spelling forms first existed and then a standard writing system emerged from them. It must be the case that after the standard writing system had been formed, these forms were introduced in areas where the spoken language was far from the standard writing conventions which resulted in orthographic mistakes.
- While some items which appear in South Siberian inscriptions are not encountered in those in Mongolia, they appear as 'new' items found in Old Uyghur texts. Considering this, I have come to think that South Siberian inscriptions were not written before those in Mongolia. We can name *āzrua*, *kānç*, *ökünç*, *tāgzin-*, *tözü*, *tusu* among these words. Despite this, the word *āzrua* belonging to the environment of the Manichean religion is evidence on its own. As is very well known, Turks and Uyghurs

first met Manichaeism only after the Second Eastern Turkic Khaganate had ceased to exist. Some scholars may certainly claim that in this case, some of the hundreds of inscriptions are old while others are new. I do not agree with this view.

If a comparison is made between the two groups of inscriptions using Kormuşin's 1997 and 2008 publications, it can be said that the following words are first seen in South Siberian inscriptions, but not in the ones in Mongolia, which can be dated between 720 (?) and 840:

açığ a 'pity!'

adaş 'friend, comrade'

adır- 'to separate'

adırın- 'to be separated'

arslan 'lion'

art 'the back, hinder'

art- 'to become bigger, to increase; to be, or become, excessive'

asıg 'profit, advantage'

at- I 'to throw, to shoot'

atan 'a gelded camel'

*aviçga*⁴ 'an old man'

azuqsız [Mongolia inscriptions: *azuq*] 'without food, without food for a journey'

ävçi 'housewife, wife, woman'

ägin, ägnin 'shoulder'

ägsük 'deficient, defective; deficiency, defect'

älik 'roe-buck, female wild goat'

äñlä- 'to hunt (wild game)'

ärlä- 'grow up, grow up into a man'

äsiz 'a pity, deplorable'

äšin- 'to run, to gallop'

äzru[a] ('*zrw*'), *Zurvān*'

bag 'confederation (for clans), united (clans)'

bagış '(?) Shaman'

ban- 'to tie'

4 The letters written with b in the inscriptions are indicated with v in this study for the word-medial and word-final positions (Ölmez 2010).

elçi 'messenger, ambassador'

ikiz 'twin'

ingän 'female camel'

kädim [Mongolia inscriptions: *kädimlig*] 'a garment; protective clothing (?)'

kälin [Mongolia inscriptions: *kälinün*] 'bride'

känç 'young'

käš, keš 'quiver'

kiši II 'woman'

kögšin 'crane, blue-grey crane'

körtlä 'beautiful'

küdägü 'son-in-law'

laçın 'falcon'

ökünç 'repentance'

öküz 'ox'

qadın 'brother-in-law, related by marriage'

qanşıra- 'to be without father'

qaryan- 'to curse oneself, to curse one another'

qata 'times'

qatıylan- 'to harden oneself; to exert oneself, strive'

qay- 'to turn back, return'

qazyaq 'profit, gains'

qayadaš 'relative, kin'

qušla- 'to hunt birds'

säçlän- (*säçlin-* !) 'to get untied'

sär- 'to tolerate, to bear'

say 'pebble, rubble, shingle'

tamqa 'brand; mark'

tap- 'to be bound (by a service)'

taš- 'to increase; to become excessive'

tägin 'attack'

tägzin-, täzgin- 'to revolve, to rotate'

täziğ [Mongolia inscriptions: *täz-*] 'fast running'

törüt- [Mongolia inscriptions: *törü-*] 'to bring into existence, to create'

tözü (?) 'whole, all, completely'

- tul* 'widow'
turña 'crane'
tusu 'profit, advantage'
tutuy 'skirmish, fight'
tünjür 'a person who actually is, or properly could be, related by marriage'
ugr+: *ugrinta*, *ugriŋa* 'cause, because, through'
ulyat- 'to become big, or bigger; to grow up (?)'
ut- 'to win'
uyur (Kormuşin: *uyar*) 'having power, powerful, authority'
ün- 'to rise'
yalŋus 'only; lonely'
yat 'foreign'
yämlig 'position, capacity, appointment (?)'
yıta (Kormuşin: *ayıta*) 'a pity'
yoqal- 'to perish'
yoqla- 'to raise'
yotuz 'wife, woman'
yumuş 'ambassador'
yunt [Kormuşin: *yont*] 'horse'
yük 'load, burden'
yüräk 'heart'

I have not included the following words into the comparison due to the problems with their reading and meaning: *ag*, *äŋndimä*, *aquz*, *çav*, *irig*, *käŋ-*, *mal*, *munig*, *oquz*, *otaçı saŋmaq*, *tärti*, *tükändimä* (?), *ügü* (?), *ükün* (?), *yançı*, *yütim*.

The verb *az-* 'to go astray, to lose one's way' occurs only once in Ongi and *azıglıg* 'having tusks or canine teeth' occurs only once in Küli Čor while the word *eş* is encountered in several Uyghur inscriptions; hence they are excluded from the comparison.

Finally, some differences in expression in the form of differing lexical meanings must also be emphasized. In Mongolian inscriptions, the expression *iş küç* is commonly used to mean 'service'; this expression is not used in South Siberian inscriptions. The word *yumuş* with the dominant meaning of 'duty' in modern languages as its counterpart first appears in South Siberian in-

scriptions. However, there it means 'envoy, emissary'. This word may also be taken to signify 'the act of an envoy, mediator'. And, while in Mongolian inscriptions such words as *qamay*, *qop*, *qalisız*, *tükäti* appear to mean 'all, always', the word *tözü* appears in the Yenisei inscriptions as frequently as in Old Uyghur texts.

Abbreviations and Literature

BK: Bilge Qaghan inscription

KT: Kül Tegin inscription

T: Tunyukuk inscription

DTS: s. Nadeljaev

UW_NB: s. Röhrborn

Aydın, Erhan (2011): *Uygur Kağanlığı Yazıtları*, Konya.

Clauson, Sir Gerard (1972): *An Etymological Dictionary of Pre-Thirteenth-Century Turkish*, Oxford.

Erdal, Marcel (2002): Anmerkungen zu den Jenissei-Inschriften. *Splitter aus der Gegend von Turfan. Festschrift für Peter Zieme anlässlich seines 60. Geburtstags*. Hrg. von M. Ölmez / S.-C. Raschmann, İstanbul-Berlin, 51-73.

Kormuşin, I. V. (1997): *Tjurkskie jenisejskie épitafii: Teksty i issledovaniya*, Moskva.

Kormuşin, I. V. (2008): *Tjurkskie jenisejskie épitafii: Grammatika, tekstologiya*, Moskva.

Li, Yong-Söng (1999): *Türk Dillerinde Akrabalık Adları*, İstanbul.

Mert, Osman (2009): *Tes, Tariat, Şine Us*, Ankara.

Moriyasu, Takao and Ayuday Öçir (1999): 『モンゴル国現存遺蹟・碑文調査研究報告』 - *Provisional Report of Researches on Historical Sites and Inscriptions in Mongolia from 1996 to 1998*. Osaka.

Nadeljaev, V. M., et al. (1969): *Drevnetjurkskij slovar*, Leningrad.

Nevskaya, I. (2011): Some paleographic and orthographic features of Altay Runic inscriptions. In: *Orhon Yazıtlarının Bulunuşundan 120 Yıl sonra. Proceedings of the 3rd Runic symposium* Ülkü Çelik Şavk (ed.). Ankara. 589-599.

Orkun H. N. *Eski Türk yazıtları*. 2. Cilt.

Ölmez, Mehmet (2010): "Eski Türk yazıtlarının yeni bir yayımı nasıl olmalıdır?", *I. Uluslar arası Uzak Asya'dan Ön Asya'ya Eski Türkçe Bilgi Şöleni, 18-20 Kasım 2009 Afyonkarahisar, Afyonkarahisar*, 211-219.

- Ölmez, Mehmet (2012): *Orhon-Uygur Hanlığı Dönemi Moğolistan'daki Eski Türk Yazıtları, Metin-Çeviri-Sözlük*, BilgeSu yay., Ankara.
- Röhrborn, Klaus (2010): *Uigurisches Wörterbuch. Sprachmaterial der vorislamischen türkischen Texte aus Zentralasien. -Neubearbeitung- I. Verben. Band 1: ab- – äzüglän-*. Stuttgart.
- Tekin, Talat (1995): Elegest (Körtle Han) Yazıtı, *Türk Dilleri Araştırmaları* 5: 19-32.
- Tekin, Talat (1997): The first *Altınkök* inscription, *Turkic Languages*, 1-2, 210-226.
- Tekin, Talat (1998): The second *Altınkök* inscription, *Türk Dilleri Araştırmaları*, 8: 5-14.
- Tekin, Talat (2003): *Orhon Türkçesi Grameri*, İstanbul.
- Thomsen, V. (1913): "Une lettre méconnue des inscriptions de l'Énéisséi", *Journal de la Société Finno-Ougrienne* 30: 4, 1-9.
- Vasil'ev, D. (1983): *Korpus tjurkskix runičeskix pamjatnikov bassejna Eniseja*, Leningrad.