SOME NOTES ON THE PHILOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TERX, TES AND SINE USU INSCRIPTIONS

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Abstract:

Previous scholars have been assuming a close historical and philological connection between the Tes, Terx and Sine Usu inscriptions of the Uighur steppe empire. In this discussion the chronology of the three inscriptions is critically examined with the result that a new one is offered. With regard to the philological similarities it is shown that these are much less than has been supposed which is due to the fact that the function of the three inscription is not identical. Whereas the Sine usu inscription is connected with a grave structure, the Terx and Tes inscriptions are kinds of boundary stones with inscription.

Key words: *Uighur steppe empire, runic inscriptions, Tes, Terx, Sine Usu, chronology, philological relations, dating.*

Some Notes on the Philological and Historical Relations Between the Terx, Tes and Sine Usu Inscriptions

Özet:

Önceki araştırıcılar, Uygur Bozkır Kağanlığı'nın Tes, Taryat ve Şine Usu Yazıtları arasında yakın bir tarihî ve filolojik bağlantı olduğunu varsaymaktadır. Bu tartışmada bu üç yazıtın kronolojisi, bir yenisi sunulan sonuçla eleştirel olarak incelenmiştir. Filolojik benzerliklerle ilgili olarak, bu üç yazıtın işlevinin aynı olmadığı gerçeğinden ötürü, varsayılandan çok daha az olduğu gösterilmiştir. Şine Usu Yazıtı mezar yapısıyla ilişkiliyken, Taryat ve Tes Yazıtları yazılı sınır işaretleri türündendir.

Anahtar kelimeler: *Uygur Bozkır Kağanlığı, runik yazıtlar, Tes, Taryat, Şine Usu, kronoloji, filolojik ilişkiler, tarih verme.*

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The idea of this article has a rather long story and goes back to two articles, published in 1971 and 1982 respectively, by two great Turcologists. The first one, by Sir Gerard Clauson, was entitled "Some notes on the inscription of Toñuquq". In this article Clauson deals with the chronology of the Toñuquq inscription by comparing its text with the texts of the Kül Tegin and Bilgä Qaγan inscriptions. The second one, perhaps of even greater influence, was written by Sergej G. Kljaštornyj and published in 1982 under the simple title "The Terkhin inscription". In this article (1982.338) Kljaštornyj claimed that "The grammatical characteristics of the Terkhin inscription are identical with those of the Old Turkic runic inscriptions in general, and the close similarity, some times even identity, of the text with the Mogon Shine usu inscription makes it possible to refer to the remarks of G. Ramstedt, H. Orkun and S. E. Malov concerning the later when dealing with the Terkhin inscription". In the following, some short remarks concerning the correctness of this statement will be given.

As it is well known, was the Uighur Steppe empire politically based in the western and central parts of Mongolia. It followed the Second Türk Steppe empire that had been created in 692 by Elteriš Qaγan. The Uighurs formed their empire, initially together with the Basmïl and Qarluq, during 742 and 744. By the end of this period the Uighurs had established themselves firmely in Mongolia, at the same time they had expelled both the Basmïl and the Qarluq from their new empire.

There are several reasons for the great importance of the Uighurs in the history of Mongolia. The military, cultural and economical relations between the Uighurs and the Chinese Tang dynasty (as well as various western states) are well known, as is also the introduction of Manichaeism as their state religion in 761 or 762. All these actions made the Uighur policy rather different from the policy of the Second Türk Steppe empire. This last entity had stressed nomadic traditions together with a strong anti-sedentary attitude, considering everything non-Turkic as improper. This attitude is best seen in the inscription of Kül Tegin or that of Toñuquq. Thus Bilgä Qaγan, referring to the time between the first and second qaγanate, states in the Kül Tegin inscription:

Kül Tegin (S5-8): "(S5) [The Chinese people] give gold, silver and silk in abndance. The words of the Chinese people have always between sweet and the materials have 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. After such a people have settled close to them, (the Chinese) are said to plan their ill will there. (S6) [The Chinese] do not let real wise men and

real brave men make progress. … Having been taken in by their sweet words and soft materials, you Türk people were killed in great numbers. Oh Türk people, you will die! If you intend to settle at the Coγay mountains and on the Tögültün (S7) plain in the south, Oh Türk people you will die! There the ill-willed persons made harmful suggestions as follows: «If a people live afar (from them), they (i.e. the Chinese) give cheap materials; but if a people live close to them, then (the Chinese) give them valuable materials». … Having heard these words, you unwise people went close to (the Chinese) and were (consequently) killed in great numbers. (S8) If you go towards these place, Oh Türk people, you will die! If you stay in the land of Ötükän, and send caravans from there, you will have no trouble. If you stay at the Ötükän mountains, you will live forever, dominating the tribes!" (Tekin 1968.261-262)

For the reasons mentioned, the Uighur Steppe empire might be styled culturally and politically more international than the Old Türk Steppe empire(s). But, also anti-Chinese feelings as visible in the policy of the Uighur Steppe empire, for example in connection with the military aid given to the Tang emperor during the rebellion of An Lushan in 756-757. Additionally, there are other events that might be considered even more important for the history of Mongolia than those mentioned. When the Uighurs were defeated by the Kirghiz in 840, they decided to leave Mongolia and settled in the areas of Dunhuang and Turfan. On the other hand, also the Kirghiz had no intention to establish themselves in Mongolia and thus there came into existence an ethnic and political power vacuum that was slowly filled up with Mongolic speaking groups. The Uighurs might be therefor called the last ruling group of Turkic origin in Mongolia. After the Uighur steppe period, the ethnic structure of Mongolia, especially western and central Mongolia, became increasingly Mongolized. This event brought into existence also, as I have tried to show in another paper, the Middle Mongolic language or languages (Rybatzki 2010).

Coming back to the Uighurs, which are the written sources of the Uighur Steppe empire? Here, I will only deal with and mention inscriptions that originate from Mongolia. Some Manichaen paper documents that might belong to this very same period have been excluded as they are, on one hand, not relevant for our theme; on the other hand is it also disputable if these documents really belong to the Uighur steppe period (cf. the discussion in Rybatzki 2000).

The three inscriptions that form the theme of this contribution, the Tes, Terx or Tariat and the Sine usu inscriptions[1] seem to form a closely related historical

1 Compare for these three inscriptions for example the nice publication of Mert (2009).

unity. However, contrary to the opinion expressed by Kljaštornyj (cf. before), and as it will be shown in the following, is this proximity not as great as it has been generally stated. Additionally, a difference concerning purpose and location can be detected: The inscription of Sine usu is connected with a burial ground, this is not the case with regard to the Tes and Terx inscriptions. It may be thus assumpted that, on one side, the construction of these three inscriptions occurred around the same time within a timespan of about 5-10 years. On the other hand was the purpose of the constructions essentially different, as only the Sine usu inscription was erected in connection with a burial.

Other inscriptions connected with the Uighur Steppe empire differ considerably from the three inscriptions just mentioned; in some cases it is even unsure if they belong at all to the period of the Uighur Steppe empire. In the first place the inscription from Qarabalγasun, situated north of Qaraqorum, the old capital of the Mongolian empire, must be mentioned. This inscription, discovered in 1889, deals with the introduction of Manichaeism among the Uighurs. Its importance lies in the fact that it gives a complete list of Uighur rulers up to around 821. The text of the inscription was written in Old Turkic, Sogdian and Chinese (Orkun 1936.85, Schlegel 1896, Hansen 1930). Of these three texts, the Old Turkic one is nearly completely distroyed, and the Chinese one is preserved best. The preservation of the Sogdian text stands between that of the Old Turkic and Chinese ones. Another, shorter and mono-lingual, Old Turkic, inscription was found in the same location. By convenience this is called the "Smaller Qarabalγasun inscription". Its date of composition is unknown (Ōsawa 1999.144). From the Sevrey sumun in the Gobi desert comes another, very fragmentary, bilingual inscription in Old Turkic and Sogdian (Kljaštornyj & Livšic 1971). Its inclusion among inscriptions of the Uighur Steppe empire is mainly due to its bi-linguism, moni-linguistic inscriptions being seemingly characteristic for the Uighur Steppe empire. Several other inscriptions have been sometimes included into this corpus. However, these inclusions can not be supported by strict scientific standards. Inscriptions belonging to this group are for example the Runic inscription from Khutuk uula (Tryjarski & Hamilton 1975), or the short inscription in Sogdo-Uighur script from Ulaangoom (Ščerbak 1995). The last mentioned shows by content more similarities with Runic inscriptions from Southern Siberia than any other inscription discovered outside that region. Finally, related to the very end of the Uighur Steppe empire or the very beginning of the short Kirghiz domination over Mongolia, the Süüji inscription should be mentioned (Orkun 1936.155-159). This is, however, not an Uighur, but a Kirghiz inscription.

The Tes, Terx and the Sine usu inscriptions cover the reigns of the first two qaγans of the Uighur Steppe empire. The first ruler of that empire was *Kül Bilgä Qaγan*, who ruled until 747. The second ruler was his son, *Täŋridä-Bolmïš El-Etmiš Bilgä Qaγan* or *Qan*, also called *Täŋridä-Bolmïš El-Etmiš Uiγur Qaγan*, *Täŋri Qaγan*, or *El-Etmiš Qan*, in Chinese sources he is also known as *Moyanchuo*, perhaps a transcription for *Buyan Cor*. He ruled from 747 until 759 and is the main participant of the three inscriptions. He was probably born in 713 or 714. The third ruler, not directly mentioned in these inscriptions, is *Bügü* or *Bögü Qaγan*, who ruled between 759 and 779; he seems to have been responsible for the erection of some of the inscriptions. This qaγan is known from Chinese sources as *Mouyu Kehan*, which is a transcription of *Bögü Qaγan*. According to Hamilton (1990.25), Bügü's title in the Chinese part of the Qarabalγasun-inscription has to be read *Kün-Täŋridä Qut-Bulmïš El-Tutmïš Alp Külüg Baγ[a Qaγan]* (Rybatzki 2000.230-239).

The Sine usu inscription is located in the vicinity of a mountain called Örgöötü, a small river with the name Mogoitu and the lake Sine usu. It was discovered in 1909 by G. J. Ramstedt and S. Pälsi. As already mentioned was this one, contrary to the other two inscriptions, erected in connection with a burial ground and constructed for the memory of the second Uighur qaγan, El-Etmiš Bilgä Qaγan (Halén 1982.58-61). The inscription records events not only connected with the life of El-Etmiš Bilgä Qaγan, but also with Kül Bilgä Qaγan, the first Uighur qaγan. Several dates help to fix the chronological frame of the Sine usu inscription: *yïlan yïl* 741, *qoñ yïl* 743, *becin yïl* 744, *taqïγu yïl* 745, *ït yïl* 746, *laγzïn yïl* 747, *küskü yïl* 748, *bars yïl* 750, *ulu yïl* 752, and *yïlan yïl* 753.

The Tes inscription was formerly located in the valley of the Tes-river (Tesiin gol) on a hill called Nogoon-tolgoi in the western Xangaj mountain of the Xövsgöl-Aimaq (NW-Mongolia). Today the inscription is kept in Ulaanbaatar. The inscription was discovered already in 1915 by B. Ja. Vladimirtsov, but not published at that time. In the years 1969 and 1975 it was investigated by Mongolian-Russian joint expeditions. This inscription is very fragmentary with not even one line preserved in its entireness.

Die Terx inscription is located in the valley of the Terx-river (Terxiin gol), in the northwestern part of the Xangaj-mountain, close to the lake Terxiin cagan nuur. The inscription was discovered in 1957 by the Mongolian archeologist C. Dorzsüren. During investigations in 1969 and 1970 further parts of the inscriptions could be discovered, but the uppermost part of the inscription was never found. The inscription was located on a little artifical elevation, however, it was not part of a burial complex. The main part of the text of the

inscription was composed in the name of the second Uighur qaγan, El-Etmiš Bilge Qaγan, by his son Bügü Qaγan.

There is no full consensus concerning the historical and chronological relations between the three inscriptions. This uncertainty is mainly due to the fragmentarity of the Terx and Tes inscriptons, especially the Tes inscription. The oldest chronology, offered by Kljaštornyj (1982.338-341), considered the Terx inscription as the oldest inscription, erected around 753-756, and the Tes inscription as the youngest, erected around 761-762. In this frame the Sine usu inscription takes the place between the two, erected around 760. A different view is taken by Á. Berta (2004.229-230, 243-245, 269-270). According to him, the chronology of the three inscriptions is Tes, erected 750, Terx, erected 752/753 and lastly Sine usu, erected 759. The starting point for our investigation should be the Sine usu inscription. As this is an inscription related to the death of El-Etmiš Bilgä Qaγan, who died in 759, its date can be fixed with some kind of accuracy. Taking into account the time of constructing the burial or memorial place, as well as the ceremonies held in connection with the death of a qaγan, I am inclined to date the Sine usu complex together with the inscription to the years 760-761. The Terx inscription is surely older than the Sine usu inscription. This is an inscription that after a kind of mythological introduction, deals first with the events of the initial year of the Uighur empire, followed by an enumeration of the tribes and dignitaries of the empire, as well as its extent. By content the inscription might be therefor called a boundary stone. The historical part of the Terx inscription seems to be limited to the eastern and southern part of the inscription, and describes events that fall into the period between 741 and 753. Seemingly there are neither dates nor historical events enumerated in the remaining western and southern sides of the inscription. The final date 753 would thus indicate that the inscription was erected shortly afterwards, perhaps around 754 or 755. Most contradictory is the dating of the Tes inscription, dates lying between 750 to 761/762 have been suggested. Due to the highly fragmentary state of the inscription, its content and structure is very unclear. The phrase *cït tikdi örgin yaratdï* ‘he drove a stockade into the gound, he had the throne erected’ on the last, southern part of the inscription could point to the fact that this is a boundary stone too. Remarkable seems to be the fact that the Sine usu and Terx inscriptions use frequently the 1 p. perf. sg. *-dim* ‘I have done (something)’, whereas the Tes inscription, at least in the preserved parts, uses only the 3 p. perf. sg. *-di* ‘He has done (something)’. This could point to the fact that the Tes inscription was written in the memory of someone, probably El-Etmiš Bilgä Qaγan, if the date *taqïγu yïl* at the beginning of the inscription, West 4, refers to the year 757, and the ruler in line West 5, who, after a long

lacuna, *yasï tägip ucdï* ‘reached his age and died’ was El-Etmiš as suggested by Berta. For the reasons given, I am inclined to date the Tes inscription after the construction of the Sine usu inscription, that is after 760 to 761.

The philological relations and similarities between the three insciptions seem to be much more less evident than suggested, for example, by Kljaštornyj. This is not only due to the fact that the Tes inscription is very fragmentary, but also, as mentioned, because the purposes of the inscriptions were different. A philological similarity between the Tes and Terx inscription can be found in Terx East 2 and Tes North 3-4, probably connected with the mythological parts of the inscriptions. Terx East 2 reads [lacuna] *aqïza barmiš : ucuz kölkä : atlïγïn tökä : barmiš : qadïr : qasar : äbdi bärsil : yatïz oγuz* [lacuna]. This sentence is more or less identical with Tes North 3-4 that reads [lacuna] *boz oq bašïn : aqïza : ucuz kölkä atlïγïn : tökä barmiš* [lacuna] *[äb]di bärsil : qadïr : qasar*. Otherwise, only one more similarity that might connect the Tes with the Terx and also the Sine usu inscription can be detected. I will come back to this evidence soon.

In the initial part of the Terx and Sine usu inscriptions, dealing with the defeat of the Türks and the fights against the Qarluq certain similarities can be detected. These similarites are partly in verbatim, but it should be noticed that the text of the Terx inscription is always more complete, thus giving the impression that in these cases the Sine usu inscription is a kind of abbreviation of the first one. This fact could support the hypothesis that the Terx inscription is older than the Sine usu inscription. Please compare, similarities are marked in bold:

Terx E7 /// **kömür taγda yar ögüzdä : üc tuγluγ türk bodunqa** : anda : yetinc ay : tört : yegirmikä E8 /// anda : toñdardïm (?) [toqïtturtïm :] qanïn aldïm anda : yoq boldï : türk : bodunuγ anda : icgärdim : anda yana E9 /// **ozmïš tegin qan boldï : qoń yïlïqa** (743) : **yorïdïm** S1 /// **ekindi** …… becin yïlïqa (744) yorïdim … süñüšdüm : anda sancdïm : qanïn anda S2 /// **tutdïm** : …… **taqiγu : yïlïqa** (745) yorïdïm : yïlladïm : bešinc ay : üc yegirmikä : qalïšdï S3 sünüšdüm …… : icgärip : igdir bölük … [bẅ…] bän : anda : kesrä : ït yïlïqa (746) : **üc qarluq : yavlaq saqïnïp : täzä bardï : qurya [qurïya] on oq[q]a** S4 **… kirdi** : anda …… üc qarluq **laγzïn yïlqa** (747) : **toquz tatar** : … toquz buyruq beš [# [b]bïŋ] säñüt : qara **bodun** : turuyun [turuyïn] qañïm qanqa : ötündi : äcü apa atï S5 bar tedi … anda : **yabγu : atadï : anda kesrä : küsgü yïlïqa** (748) : sen äligdä [sinlägdä] küc qara bodun atamïš [temiš:]

Sine Usu N8 ertim qara : qum : ašmïš : kögärdä : **kömür taγda : yar ögüzdä : üc tuγluγ # : türk : bodunqa** /// N9 **ozmïš : tegin : qan bolmïš : qoñ yïlqa : yorïdïm : ekinti** : sünüš : altïnc # ay : altï : yanïqa : toqïdïm(?) /// N10 **tutdïm**

: qatunïn : anta : altïm : türk bodun : anta : ïnγaru : yoq boltï : anta : kesrä# : **taqiγu : yïlqa** /// N11 **üc qarluq : yavlaq saqïnïp : täzä : bardï : qurïya : on oqqa : kirti** : **laγzïn# : yïlqa : toquz [totuq]** //// **bod** /// -ïn(?) : tuyup N12 **yabγu atadï : anta : kesrä** : qaŋïm qaγan : ucdï : qara bodun : qïlïnc : // **küsgü : yïlqa** /// tay bilgä totuquγ

After this episode the two inscriptions go different ways. The Sine usu inscription speaks about the fights and the consolidation of the empire, whereas the Terx inscription speaks about administrative and geographical achievements. However, there is still one part, where all the three inscriptions can be connected. It is the story about the construction of an inscription that occurs Terx West 1-3, Sine usu East 8-10, and possibly Tes South 2-3. If the event in Tes South can be connected with the events in Terx and Sine usu, then the construction of an inscription in 752 can not be connected with the construction of the Tes inscription, as for example suggested by Berta. In this case still another, until now unknown inscription would be indicated. In the following, similarities between the Terx and Sine usu inscriptions are marked in bold, similarities between the Tes and Terx/Sine usu inscriptions in cursive:

Terx W1 **ötükän : kedin** : ucïnda : **tez bašïnda** : **örgün** …… **anda** : **yaratdïm** : **bars yïlqa** (750) **yïlan yïlqa** (753) : eki yïl W2 yayladïm : **ulu yïlïqa** (752) ötükän : ortusïnda : **aš öñüz : baš qan ïduq baš kedinindä** : **yayladïm : örgin : bunda : yarat(ït)dïm : cït : bunda toqïtdïm : bïñ yïl(l)ïγ : tümän künlük : *bitigimin : bälgümin : bunda*** W3 ***yasï tašqa : yarat(ït)dïm*** tulqu : tašqa : ***toqïtdïm* :**

Sine usu E8 ol ay /// **ötükän : kedin** : ucïnta : **tez : bašïnta** *qasar qurïdïn#* ***örgin*** *anta : etitdim : cït anta : toqïtdïm : yay anta : yayladïm* : yaqa : anta : yaqaladïm : bälgümin : bitigimin **anta : yaratïdïm** : ancip : ol yïl : küzün : ilgärü : yorïdïm : tatarïγ : ayïtdïm : **tavïšγan : yïl (751)** E9 bešinc ayqa : tägi /// **[ulu] yïlqa :** /// baš : /// **aš öŋüz bašïnta : ïduq baš : kedintä** : yavaš toquš : bältirintä : **anta : yayladïm : örgin : anta : yaratïtdïm : cït anta : toqïtdïm : bïŋ yïllïq : tümän : künlük :** ***bitigimin : bälgümin : anta : yašï tašqa :*** E10 ***yaratïtdïm toqïtdïm*** ///

Tes S2 ///zg : *qasar qurïγ* (quruγ) : *qondï : cït : tikdi : örgin : yaratdγï : yayladï* S3 ///elsär : ilgärü : qondï *bälgüsin : bitigin : bu : urdï : bu yaratdï* :

Certain similarities between the inscription, Tes and Terx, as well as Terx and Sine usu are visible. However, these similarities seem to be mainly due to the fact that the events described in the inscriptions cover roughly the same period, depicture the same historical events. By no means can the similarities

be compared with those that exist between the Old Turkic text of the Kül Tegin and Bilgä Qaγan inscriptions.

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