

Runic Inscriptions and *Tamgas* in Govi-Altai Province, MONGOLIA¹

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Abstract

The great significance of ancient inscription is that it becomes evidence of that historical period. Approximately 170 runic inscriptions, date back to Old Turkic, Uighur period, had been registered in the territory of Mongolia so far.

Govi-Altai runic inscriptions are located along the central road headed from Beshbalik to west southern until silk road in the period of Ancient Turkic, Uighur and they play important role in the studies of philology and history since they have many state and military ranking words and personal names.

In this article, reading-lexical features and relevant *Tamgas* of 18 inscriptions discovered in Govi-Altai province have been studied. As of today, a total of 18 Runic inscriptions were discovered in 7 places from this province. The Biger's 4 inscriptions had been discovered in 1969 for the first time by team "Inscription studies" of the Mongol-Soviet's history and culture's joint expedition, whereas our team discovered Davirt II inscription in 2020, and also research team from Institute of Archaeology, Academy of Sciences discovered Khushuut Tolgoi's inscription. The research team completed a hand painting of 95 *Tamgas* related to these inscriptions.

Keywords

Mongolian Runic Inscription, *Tamga* (sign, stamp), Govi-Altai, Mongolia, Ancient Turkish

1. Introduction

The year 2020 was declared as the 1300th-anniversary of the Bilge Tonyukuk monument by UNESCO. Associated with this, numbers of foreign and national scholars published research

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The length of the first line is 40 cm and the height of the letter is 15 cm, the length of the second line is 35 cm and the height of the letter is 12-29 cm, space between lines is 1 cm.

The inscription consists of 2 lines and 5 characters translated by Dr. Battulga Ts. as the following: the first line: ᠠᠯᠤᠨᠭᠠᠭᠠᠨ ᠠᠭᠤ ᠠᠭᠤ ᠠᠭᠤ ᠠᠭᠤ ~ č ük Q W T ~ öčük qut ~ ... goodness; the second line: ᠯᠤᠭᠤᠨ ᠪᠣᠯᠤᠨ ᠶᠤᠨ ᠶᠤᠨ ᠶᠤᠨ ~ η G B Y η ~ ηḡy bayn ~ ... rich. (Battulga Ts., 2005a, 2006).

But we read the second line slightly different, however we agree on the reading of the first line, W the first character of the second line as l, the fourth character l as o and l. It consists of 11 characters and we read as the following:

The first line: ᠠᠯᠤᠨᠭᠠᠭᠠᠨ ᠠᠭᠤ ᠠᠭᠤ ᠠᠭᠤ ᠠᠭᠤ ~ č ük Q W T ~ čök qut;

The second line: ᠯᠤᠭᠤᠨ ᠪᠣᠯᠤᠨ ᠶᠤᠨ ᠶᠤᠨ ᠶᠤᠨ ~ L G B W L η ~ luy bolun

or Čök qutluy bolun (*Čök kutlu olsun*) or it can be translated as *Čök! be blessed.*

Third inscription

The length of the first line is 25.5 cm and the height of the letter is 7.5-8 cm, the length of the second line is 24 cm and the height of the letter is 14.5-10.5 cm, space between lines is 18 cm.

The researcher Battulga Ts. found this inscription in 2005 but his article was published only in 2020.

Prof. Battulga Ts. translated as the following: the first line: ᠠᠯᠠᠨᠭᠠᠭᠠᠨ ᠠᠭᠤ ᠠᠭᠤ ᠠᠭᠤ ᠠᠭᠤ ~ l n g p a ~ älänäg apa ~ Eleneg (Ilinig) Apa; the second line: ᠶᠠᠶᠢᠰᠤ ᠶᠤᠨ ᠶᠤᠨ ᠶᠤᠨ ᠶᠤᠨ ~ Y G š ~ yayış ~ offering. (Battulga Ts., 2020, p. 168).

2.2. Inscription of Biger

The first four inscriptions from inscriptions of Aaragiin Bichigt khad, located 20 km from center of Biger have been found by team "Inscription studies" of the Mongol-Soviet's history and culture's joint expedition in 1969 and deciphered by M.Shinekhoo (Shinekuu M., 1971). He transcribed letters and words, therefore he could translate the meaning of each transcription into Manchu, Kazakh, and Mongolian comparatively, thus his works still used as an important source for the research works (Gongorjav G., 1999, p.205). Later, the scholar Ts. Battulga reviewed it again and deciphered three remained inscriptions (Battulga Ts., 2008).

First Inscription

The length of the first line is 19 cm and the height of the letter is 4.5-5.5 cm, the length of the second line is 25 cm and the height of the letter is 3-7 cm.

The scholar M.Shinekhoo translated this as the following: the first line: ᠤᠴᠢᠷᠯᠠᠷ ᠵᠣᠯᠢ ᠵᠣᠯᠢ ᠵᠣᠯᠢ ᠵᠣᠯᠢ ~ U Č U R L R J O L Ī ~ UČURLAR JOLĪ; the second line: ᠠᠷᠲᠤᠷᠠᠳᠤ ᠠᠷᠲᠤᠷᠠᠳᠤ ᠠᠷᠲᠤᠷᠠᠳᠤ ᠠᠷᠲᠤᠷᠠᠳᠤ ᠠᠷᠲᠤᠷᠠᠳᠤ ~ A R T U R D A ~ ARTURDA or "The encounters are increased on the road. (Shinekhoo M., 1971, p. 37).

Prof. Battulga Ts. translated as the following: the first line: $\text{ᠨᠢᠶᠡᠳᠡᠬᠡᠶᠢᠨᠢ} \sim \check{c} W R \eta R Y W L \check{i}$
 $\sim \check{c}ur \text{ anar yoli}$; the second line: $\text{ᠴᠢᠷᠢᠨᠢᠶᠡᠳᠡᠬᠡᠶᠢᠨᠢ} \sim W L R T W Q D a \sim olurtuqda$ or Chur, he has a path.
 (Battulga Ts., 2008, p. 72).

We read only $\text{ᠬᠢ} \sim \eta R \sim \text{anar}$ differently than Ts. Battulga's reading, so that we suggest to read this as "his direction (that direction), and it can be translated as "Chur, his direction (that direction) path 2. is".

Second Inscription

The inscription consist a total of 8 characters, length of the line is 21.5 cm and height of letter is 3-4.5 cm.

The scholar M. Shinekhoo read this as: $\text{ᠬᠢᠷᠢᠨᠢᠶᠡᠳᠡᠬᠡᠶᠢᠨᠢ} \sim B L I L D K M Z \sim BALA IL \check{A}DIKM\check{A}Z$
 $\sim \text{Servant openly (this citizen) ingratitude (didn't help)}$. (Shinekhoo M., 1971, p. 38). Whereas prof. Battulga Ts. read this as: $\text{ᠬᠢᠷᠢᠨᠢᠶᠡᠳᠡᠬᠡᠶᠢᠨᠢ} \sim b \eta i l d[-t] \check{u}k m z \sim b\check{a}n\check{i} \text{ eld}[-t]\check{u}k m\check{a}z \sim \text{Didn't make me go there / Doesn't pick me up, don't allow me to follow ...}$ (Battulga Ts., 2008, pp. 73–74)

Third Inscription

The length of the line is nearly 63 cm, the height of the letter is 6 cm.

The scholar M.Shinekhoo read the inscription as: $\text{ᠬᠤᠯᠦᠭᠢᠨᠢᠵᠣᠷᠲᠢ} \sim K \check{O} L G N I J O R T \check{i} \sim K\check{O}L\check{U}G N I J O R T \check{i} \sim \text{Kölüg is travelled}$. (Shinekhoo M., 1971, p. 38). Whereas prof. Battulga Ts. reads as: $\text{ᠬᠤᠯᠦᠭᠢᠨᠢᠵᠣᠷᠲᠢ} \sim k \check{u} l g N \check{i} Y W R T i \sim k\check{u}l\check{u}g \text{ an}\check{i} \text{ yor}(t)\check{i} \sim \text{Kulug made him/her go}$ (Battulga Ts., 2008, pp. 74–75).

We consider that $\text{ᠨᠢ} \sim N \check{i} \sim \text{an}\check{i}$ is the part of the title and suggest to translate this as "Külüg Ani traveled".

Fourth Inscription

The length of the line is 16 cm, the height of the letter is 3-1.5 cm.

The scholar Shinekhoo M. read this as: $\text{ᠮᠨᠪᠢᠲᠦᠯᠦᠭᠢ} \sim M N B I T P \sim M\check{A}N B\check{I}T\check{I}P \sim \text{I wrote [Ma (I, and) wrote]}$ (Shinekhoo M., 1971, p. 38). Whereas prof. Battulga Ts read this as: $\text{ᠮᠨᠪᠢᠲᠦᠯᠦᠭᠢ} \sim N N B i b \eta \sim \text{an}\check{i}n \text{ ab}\check{i} \text{ bi}\eta \sim \text{Its hunting was in thousands}$ (Battulga Ts., 2008, p. 75).

Fifth Inscription

The length of the line is 6 cm, the height of the letter is 2.8 cm.

Prof. Battulga Ts. read this as : $\text{ᠭᠶᠻ} \dots \sim \dots G Y Q \sim \dots y \text{ ayqa} \sim \dots \text{in/of month}$ (Battulga Ts., 2008, pp. 75–76).

2.5. Inscription of Khushuut Tolgoi

In 2020, researchers Batbold N., Amgalantugs Ts., and Aldarmunkh P., from the Institute of Archeology, Mongolian Academy of Sciences discovered this inscription and Battulga Ts. launched the first studies by reading the inscription as follows “ᠠᠬᠢᠰᠢᠬᠤᠲᠤ ᠲᠣᠯᠭ᠎ᠠ ~ T W η R č ~ Tuŋrač (≈ Toŋrač)[Personal name]” (Battulga Ts., 2020, p. 188).

2.6. Inscription of Khulsana Am

Ariyajav B., the Turkish researcher discovered the runic inscription with 5 characters in 2015 from the place called Khulsana Am of Erdene soum, Govi-Altai. The scholar Mönhtulga R. read this inscription in the same year and presented it in the “Studies on the Mongolian textology” international conference (Mönhtulga R., 2015) and published it in his works later in 2018 (Mönhtulga R. & Ariyajav B., 2016; Mönhtulga R., 2018, p. 72). He deciphered the inscription as: “ᠲᠣᠪᠢᠷᠠ ᠲᠤᠶ᠋ᠠᠨ ᠲᠤᠷᠠᠮ ᠲᠤᠰᠤ ᠲᠤᠰᠤ ᠲᠤᠰᠤ ~ T W B R a ~ tobīra ~ etrafında dolaş” (Mönhtulga R. & Ariyajav B., 2016, p. 85).

However we agree with his writing, reading, and transcription, we consider to translate this as “*above, upward (a little high ground).*”

2.7. Inscription of Shaakhar Tolgoi

The Shaakhar Tolgoi inscription located in Chandmani soum, Govi-Altai province, was discovered by the expedition team to collect materials for a reference book named “Historical and cultural monuments in Mongolia” (Gongorjav G. & Enkhbat G., 1996). The researcher Boldbaatar Yu. deciphered it and launched a scientific study (Boldbaatar Yu., 2001). His work was translated by Napil B. into Kazakh and introduced (Napil Bazilhanuli, 2000, pp.77-78). Moreover, prof. Battulga Ts. published his research work on this inscription. (Battulga Ts., 2005c, 2020, pp. 192–193)

First inscription

The length of the line is 14.5 cm, the height of the letter is 6-4 cm, the rock’s front size is 44 cm x 107 cm.

The scholar Boldbaatar Yu. transcribed the inscription as: ᠪᠠᠯᠴᠢᠷ ~ b(a)lčur ~ [b(a)l(a)čur] and proposed to read it as “Bal-chur” (Boldbaatar Yu., 2001).

Second inscription

Prof. Battulga Ts. read this as ᠰᠢᠬᠠᠬᠢᠷ ᠲᠣᠯᠭ᠎ᠠ ~ š W G D ~ šoyd (≈soyd [sywō]?) ~ Sogd? (Battulga Ts., 2020, p. 192). We specify that we have not found the monument yet.

Third inscription

Prof. Battulga Ts. deciphered it as ᠰᠠᠭᠤᠰᠠᠨᠠ ᠲᠤᠰᠤ ᠲᠤᠰᠤ ᠲᠤᠰᠤ ~ ssṅü ~ äs äsänü ~ Safe and sound, healthy (Battulga Ts., 2020, p. 193). Also, we could not spot the inscription.

3. Lexical features of Runic inscription in Govi-Altai province

All inscriptions except the Biger have been studied since 2000. This indicates that the research work in this area has been done well in recent years compared to the date the inscriptions were first discovered. Exploring the location of these inscriptions, Prof. Battulga Ts. noted that they cover the land from Orkhon valley to Beshbalik city in the period of Ancient Turkic, Uighur, respectively along the central road headed to the silk road. The Biger lake's area and Biger soum of this province "... were probably the main stopover, a subsidiary place where travelers, their horses and animals have rest while heading to the west" (Battulga Ts., 2020, p. 163).

The ancient runic inscriptions that belonged to the region we take into consideration are all rock inscriptions small in size and engraved in stone rock mostly. They contain the meaning of journey blessing, travel notes, and the name and title of a person associated with the inscription.

Small inscriptions engraved on the rock are usually belong to the person who wrote it. These types of inscriptions are brief travel notes small in size and content.

Since the inscription belongs directly to the person who engraved it by himself, a first-person reflexive suffix is used often. For example, *bitigim-script mine, my script* (Zurk uul), *er atim-hero name my* (Doloodoi), *bitidim- wrote I* (Darvi, Khogjim), *bertim-gave I* (Örtöörn bulag), *urtim- engraved I* (Khanin khad), *ündätim-called I?* (Tariat övöljöö), *kettim-went I* (Shiveet Khairkhan) and so on." (Gerelmaa N, 2018b: 511)

Although above mentioned personal name and title occurred often in the rock inscriptions we are studying, the narrative was written by the stranger or companion who traveled together such as right hand, lower rank official. This is clear from the fact that a grammatical conjugation of the third person is used to express the action in the text. For example, the word "yortı"- expresses the meaning of "to go, to move" in old Turkish language occurs in three inscriptions and all refer to the third-person pronoun which conjugated by "tï-" suffix and expressed the meaning of "he/she traveled".

3.1. Regarding some phrases

We highlighted some of the words and expressions of runic inscriptions related to the topic we are studying, which are unique in terms of meaning and usage. We compared them with the vocabulary of other rock inscriptions and the main classical monuments.

ᠶᠣᠷᠲᠢ – yortı (went, traveled)

This word is the most occurred verb in these inscriptions. The ancient Turkic inscriptions located in the region we take into consideration are all rock inscriptions, therefore small in size, and have the meaning of traveling through the land. So that, the word ᠶᠣᠷᠲᠢ – yortı or "traveled" occurs in many inscriptions. Observing the grammatical conjugation of the word in these inscriptions, the information was written in the past tense referring to the third person shows that the text was written not by a traveler but somebody else.

The verb *yori-* (*to go, to move*) of Turkish language is very unique in terms of its appearance, the meaning expressed, and also evolution during the process of language usage of the written records and modern Turkish language.

In old Turkic dictionary the word has the following meaning: Hereto, 1. to go, to move, to escape, 2. to enter, 3. to be, to live etc. (Nadelyaev V.M. et al., 1969, p. 274). The verb “*yori-*” is used mostly to express the meaning of *to go* and *to travel* in the classical runic inscriptions. The meaning to go, to travel in the classical runic inscriptions widely expressed by the verb “*yori-*”.

For example,

𐰉𐰺𐰽𐰸.𐰪𐰽𐰺𐰼𐰾𐰾.𐰸𐰻𐰾𐰶𐰇𐰚.𐰸𐰻𐰾𐰶𐰇𐰚.𐰸𐰻𐰾𐰶𐰇𐰚.𐰸𐰻𐰾𐰶𐰇𐰚.𐰸𐰻𐰾𐰶𐰇𐰚.𐰸𐰻𐰾𐰶𐰇𐰚.𐰸𐰻𐰾𐰶𐰇𐰚.𐰸𐰻𐰾𐰶𐰇𐰚 [Blg.q. N4]

Transcription: *edgü bilgä kişig edgü alp kişig yorıt maz ermiş.*

Translation: *Good wise person, good hero person not allowed to go.*

𐰾𐰺𐰽𐰸.𐰪𐰽𐰺𐰼𐰾𐰾.𐰸𐰻𐰾𐰶𐰇𐰚.𐰸𐰻𐰾𐰶𐰇𐰚 [Tunyk.I.N1]

Transcription: *qayanıma ötüntüm, sü yorıtdım.*

Translation: *To the king request handed, troop made to go I.*

𐰶𐰾𐰽𐰸.𐰪𐰽𐰺𐰼𐰾𐰾.𐰸𐰻𐰾𐰶𐰇𐰚.𐰸𐰻𐰾𐰶𐰇𐰚 [Tunyk.II.N3]

Transcription: *türk sir bodun yorıduqı bu.*

Translation: *Turkic people went is (history) this.*

The verb *yori-* we take into consideration, lost its lexical meaning and remained as the suffix of Present Simple in modern Turkish language. (Zeynep Korkmaz, 2003, p. 611). But, the form “*yürü-*” which derived in the result of vowel alternation, has been kept and expresses numbers of meaning such as “to walk, to go by foot, to speed, to pass, to change, to rise, to ascend” (<https://sozluk.gov.tr/>). Moreover, it expresses the meaning of “to die” when it is used as an idiom.

The verb stem “*jori-*” (*to aim, to head to*) which has the same etymology as the word “*yori-*”, has been kept in the Mongolian language. Lexical meaning is “1. to do the best, to try until complete any work. 2. to go, to travel from one place to another (Tsevel. Ya, 2013, p. 387). And hyponym words such as “*зорилго - purpose, зорилт - aim, зорумог - persistent, зоруйд - intentionally*” derived from this root. And also, the synonym “*жорчи- зорчих (to travel)*” is actively used.

𐰶𐰾𐰽𐰸.𐰪𐰽𐰺𐰼𐰾𐰾 - **qutluy boluᠭ (be blessed)**

The word “*qutluy boluᠭ*” or “be blessed” is the word of travel blessing has been written and remained in the two inscriptions from this region. Hereto, in the Inscription of Altan Khad II, the word 𐰶𐰾𐰽𐰸.𐰪𐰽𐰺𐰼𐰾𐰾 – *qutluy* or “blessing” was written by breaking into syllables to the next line. Regarding the context of the inscription, it is declared that a high-ranking official had been passed through the region, therefore wished him to be safe and blessed on his journey. The “*qut*” root of the word “*qut-luy*” has the meaning of “blessing goodness, happiness” and it has been kept in the form of a compaund word like “*qutug öljei - (favour blessing)*” in the Mongolian language.

ᠤᠯᠤᠭ ᠶᠠᠶ᠋ᠠ - uluy qaya (Great rock, big rock)

We have discovered “ᠤᠯᠤᠭ ᠶᠠᠶ᠋ᠠ - uluy qaya”, the two worded and a one-lined inscription which engraved on the rock left to the Inscription of Davirt Buuts I located in Taishir soum of this province. Considering the fact that it was engraved in a different rock located on the left side and also its letter and grapheme are small compared to the I inscription we suppose that the two inscriptions are not directly related to each other. The combination “uluy qaya” which means “great rock, big rock” is a metonym for the whole area and mountain with numerous rock cliffs. The “qada” form of “qaya” derived in the result of consonants alternation $y \sim d$ occurs in the classical written Mongolian whereas at present, the “хад (had)” form is actively used in modern Mongolian language.

ᠬᠠᠨ - aṅar (to him/her, towards him/her)

The researchers have been translated this word that occurred in the *Biger Inscription I* contrarily. The scholar Shinekhuu M. and academician Bold L. have combined the word to the previous word within the context and read it as a one-word (Bold L., 1990, p. 22; Shinekhuu M., 1971, p. 37) whereas prof. Battulga Ts. considered it as a pronoun and translated as “his, their” (Battulga Ts., 2008, p. 72). The suffix “-ᠨᠠᠷᠠ/-ᠨᠠᠷ” referred to this word structure is the alternative version of directional case suffix “-ᠶᠠᠷᠠ/ -ᠭᠡᠷᠦ” that commonly occurs in the ancient Turkic inscriptions. According to the spelling rule, this morpheme must be connected after to the third person reflexive suffix. Consequently, the ᠬᠠᠨ – aṅar is the demonstrative pronoun formed by directional case suffix and has the meaning of “to him/her, to his/her direction, there”. Our study on the grammatical feature of rock inscriptions known as runic small inscriptions shows that the content has the meaning of travel note and it also specifies the character of the region. Therefore, the words that are commonly appeared have been formed using the locative and directional case suffixes of noun declension. Moreover, it has not been occurred by its basic form as used widely in the classical runic inscriptions, but the alternative version -ᠨᠠ/-ᠨᠠ or -ᠨᠠᠷᠠ/-ᠨᠠᠷᠠ appears quite frequently which comes mostly after the third-person reflexive suffix (Gerelmaa N., 2018a, pp. 135–136).

Observing this word within the context in the *Biger Inscription I*, we suppose that it can be translated as “1. čur aṅar yoli 2. olurtuqda” or “Chur, to his direction (that way) road to be ...”. In our view, this is a statement clarified the direction of a traveling road.

ᠲᠣᠪᠷᠠ - tobra (hill (high ground) or pick, above)

The word consists of 5 characters engraved in one-line on the Khulsana Am Inscription, located in Erdene soum of the province. The fact that the size of the grapheme is relatively large, and it has been dug and carved readable enables to transcribe and read it simply. The researchers Mönhtulga R. and Ariyajav B. who discovered and studied the inscription, have been translated as “*tobīra* – to round!” and proposed that the word root “tob-” probably has the same etymology as the Mongolian words such as “dub dugui - дув дугуй (very round), tobugur-товур (bumpy), toboyi - товой (to roughen), dobu - дов (hill)” (Mönhtulga R. & Ariyajav B., 2016; Mönhtulga R., 2018, p. 72). If clarify the meaning abovementioned words which are used actively until nowadays in Mongolian language, *товур* (*bumpy*) – is an uneven surface with

patches raised above the rest, something distinguished from the surrounding, to become bumpy, barrow-bumpy ground, etc. Additionally, the words as “*оѳ моѳ (lump)* – looks differently here and there, *доѳоѳ (hillock)* – high ground, small hill, *моѳруу (knob)* - round, bumpy decoration” are all hyponym words derived from the root “*tob*”. It is proposed to translate the word as *tobira*” or “to go round-” in the previous studies. The prior researcher assumed that a verb derived by the suffix “-ra” is added after the root “*tob*” which means “round, bumpy, lumpy”. But, we recommend that this morpheme is “-ra / -re” a local adverb building suffix which common in Mongolian, Turkish languages. It has been kept in the structure of the adverbs such as “*dotur-a* (inside), *yadar-a* (outside), *deger-e* (above), *door-a* (below), *oyir-a* (near)” of Mongolian language. And also, this morpheme-adverb common appears in the ancient turkic written documents. For instance, *ᠨᠠᠶᠢᠨᠢ ᠣᠨᠷᠠ* (in front of), *ᠨᠠᠶᠢᠰᠢ* asra (below), *ᠨᠠᠶᠢᠯᠢ* içrā (inside), *ᠨᠠᠶᠢᠵᠢ* taşra (outside), *ᠨᠠᠶᠢᠭᠢ* egirā (around), *ᠨᠠᠶᠢᠬᠢ* tegrā (surrounding), etc.

In our opinion, the verb root “*tob*” we focused on has the meaning of “bumpy, lumpy, roughen upward” and “*tobra*” variant conjugated by the suffix “-ra” is the local adverb which means “high land or peak, above”. Observing the single word *ᠨᠠᠶᠢᠳᠤᠷᠠ* – *tobra* has been written and engraved separately on the rock, it is possible to define that it was a special sign placed at the beginning of the upward road.

ᠶ᠋ᠯ – esen (healthy and safe)

The word occurs in the Shaakhar Tolgoi inscription situated in Chandmani soum, Govi-Altai province. *ᠶ᠋ᠯ – esen* expresses the meaning of “healthy and safe, peaceful” and it has been retained in the structure of compound words which has a similar meaning as “*энх эсэн, эсэн мэнд*” (peace and healthy, healthy and safe) in the Mongolian language. This meaning is also used actively in modern Turkish language and the verb *esenle* which means “to greet, to greet asking one’s health” has been derived. However this word does not appear in the runic classical inscriptions and other rock monuments, it has been inscribed and remained in the runic inscription of the Uighur period (Osman Mert, 2009, pp. 169, 171; Azzaya B., 2013a, 2013b).

3.1. Titles and ranks

In the vocabulary of the runic inscriptions related to the region, we take into consideration titles and ranks are frequently occurred. Inscriptions that noted regarding high-rank official has been traveled and passed through the region are the majority.

Our research work aimed only to clarify the lexical feature of the inscriptions. Therefore, we have explained the meaning of words and phrases included in the structure of titles and ranks, and also compared words and phrases that may have the same etymology. We did not aim to clarify the difference of title words regarding their rank and determine whether it is a military title or a title of government officials.

ᠨᠠᠶᠢᠨᠢ ᠣᠨᠷᠠ ᠶ᠋ᠯᠢᠭᠢᠨᠢ ᠲᠤᠳᠤᠨᠢ - el bitiginiḡ tudunī (Tudun of state document)

The title named “Tudun” used to have awarded to an official in charge of the state border and regional affairs, occurs in the classical runic inscriptions and the small inscriptions such as the “Khol Asgat”. The role and significance of title Tudun are not stated clearly in these inscriptions. But interestingly it appears in the Altan Khad inscription as a combination of “*el bitiginiḡ*

tudun” or “Tudun of state document”. Though, the official titled Tudun is not involved in military affairs but seems to have played a key role in state documents and official relations.

𐰽𐰺𐰍 - **bal čur (Bal Chur)**

The title 𐰽𐰺 – čur has been stated many times in the rock inscriptions located in Mongolian territory and some small inscriptions. This title means “hero, ...” and mostly appears in a compound word taking a determinant in front. For example, *bilig čur* (Bilig Chur), *tinig čur* (Tinig Chur) in the runic inscription of Doloodoi, *yagiz čur* (Yagiz Chur) in the inscription of Tevsh and etc. The compound title 𐰽𐰺𐰍 - bal čur occurs in the Shaakhar Tolgoi Inscription I, in the region we have been observed. Although the word “bal” might be associated with “balbal stone” which is often stated in the classical runic inscriptions, regarding that the title includes in the part of a proper noun, the researchers have not translated it but transcribed it as it is.

𐰽𐰺𐰍𐰺 - **külüg anī (Külüg Ani)**

The title occurs in the Biger Inscription III. It appears as 𐰽𐰺𐰍𐰺 𐰽𐰺𐰍𐰺 -külüg anī yortī or “Külüg Ani traveled” in the frame of context. The current study does not support the previous translation of this word. In the prior studies, the “in anī” was considered to be the third-person pronoun and translated as “him, his”. (Battulga Ts., 2008, pp. 74–75; Shinekhuu M., 1971, p. 38). But in this inscription “külüg anī” was engraved along with the relevant *Tamga* followed by the verb “yortī – traveled” in the Active voice. That is why it is not possible to translate it as “let him go, travel, send”. And also, *Tamga* located between these words specifies the title name Külüg Ani which can not be separated.

The word “*külüg*” which means “famous, well-known” in the structure of this title name often occurs in the ancient Turkic inscriptions as a common noun. There is evidence that this word is used actively in Mongolian language in this meaning. For instance, in order to describe “famous hero man or good horse” in “The Secret History of the Mongols” the compound word “хүлэг баатар, хүлэг морь(hüleg baatar, hüleg mori)” (paladin, steed) is widely used. However, in modern Mongolian, only “külüg mori-хүлэг морь (best horse)” is actively used.

𐰽𐰺𐰍 - **bäk apa (Bekh Apa)**

Although the title name which occurs in the Bugat inscription, is not mentioned in other rock inscriptions and main monuments, the word “apa” takes a determinant in front and appears in the structure of ranking nouns. Prof. Ts. Battulga in his research work to transcribe the inscription said “... a determinant widely occurred in front of title aP apa shows that it is directly connected to the merit performed and ranking position of title recipients. For example, “*inanču apa yarγan tarqan*” was written in Koltigin stele (right side: 2nd line) and reveals that *inanču apa* – Honest Apa (father?) is the honored tarqan. Even though the qb (bäk) has the meaning of strong and stable, it is not a personal name, but it is an ornament or determinant of the titleholder. (Battulga Ts. 2020)

𐰽𐰺𐰍𐰺 - **alp oruᅇu (Hero Oruᅇu)**

This title name appears in the runic inscription of Davirt buuts. The word “alp” which means “hero, heroic” was used widely as an adjective and also in the structure of ranking words. But it has appeared only 2 times as a proper noun in the Tariat stele named oWro oruᅇu/ uruᅇu, related to the Uighur period. The scholar Ts. Battulga surveyed this word which means “flag,

banner” and presented his detailed explanation by leaning to the oral dialect and written documents of Mongolian language (Battulga Ts. 2020).

4. *Tamgas* of runic inscriptions in the territory of Govi-Altai province

Most of inscriptions discovered in Mongolia were accompanied by one or several *Tamgas* as a component. In our opinion, identifying the fact that a writer or engraver used to engrave the inscription along with *Tamga* of his tribe was probably the accustomed practice and common tradition. Therefore, it is not possible to study *Tamga* and the inscription separately.

We have classified *Tamgas* as directly related and indirectly related. *Tamgas* directly related or attached to the inscriptions are possibly engraved at the same time when inscription has been engraved, whereas *Tamgas* have been located around the site where inscription has been found are considered to be an indirectly related *Tamga*.

The inscriptions regarding a travel note have been written by people and their leaders traveling mostly on the official matter or military purpose, while *Tamga* has been engraved by their followers according to status among tribes, titles, and ranks.

Likely, travelers and their leaders, and superiors passing by mostly on official matter or military purpose wrote their travel note, while the followers engraved their own tribe’s *Tamga* in order of title, rank, and tribe’s status.

The two inscriptions, the Altan Khad (3 inscriptions) and the Biger (7 inscriptions) discovered in Biger soum, Govi-Altai province, consist a total of 10 separate inscriptions. The Altan Khad has directly related 2 and indirectly related 8 *Tamgas*, whereas the two inscriptions of Biger have directly related one *Tamga* each. The Shaakhar Tolgoi inscription of Chandmani soum consist of directly related 3 and indirectly related 25 *Tamgas*. It is interesting that many variants of one *Tamga* occurred. The small rocky hill named “Shaakhar” located in the valley of a great mountain not only is rich in runic inscription and *Tamga* but also rock paintings linked to the Bronze age, the late Bronze Age, and the early Iron age and also some of the paintings of other periods are common.











Our “preliminary” study on *Tamga* of Khulsana Am inscription discovered in 2015 from Tuv province was based on the photos taken by R. Munkhtulga¹ and his research work, and *Tamga* of Bugat inscription found in 2016 was based on the photos by B.Bayar² that is why we will conduct a detailed study on indirectly related *Tamga* at a subsequent time.




















Tamgas related to the runic inscriptions found in Govi-Altai province, a representative of the Western region, are slightly different in terms of their form depending on the shape, location, and other circumstances. Nevertheless, they are a variant of one *Tamga* and the main aspect is they were faced properly or inverted. In our study, we aimed at describing them not distorting their shape, size, and direction as depicted on the rock in order not to reduce the scientific value.







¹ Archeologist, research worker, Institute of History-Archeology, Academy of Sciences, Mongolia


























² Producer, MNB (discovered firstly)





4.1. Figures of *Tamgas*


Tamga of the Altan Khad inscription: Alt.Kh.III.1 ; Alt.Kh.III.2 ; Alt.Kh.+1 ; Alt.Kh.+2 ; Alt.Kh.+3 ; Alt.Kh.+4 ; Alt.Kh.+5 ; Alt.Kh.+6 ; Alt.Kh.+7 ; Alt.Kh.+8 ;































Tamga of the Biger inscription: Bgr.III.1 ; Bgr.IV.1. ; Bgr.+1. ; Bgr.+2. ; Bgr.+3. ; Bgr.+4. ; Bgr.+5. ; Bgr.+6. ; Bgr.+7. ; Bgr.+8. ; Bgr.+9. ; Bgr.+10. ; Bgr.+11. ; Bgr.+12. ; Bgr.+13. ; Bgr.+14. ; Bgr.+15. ; Bgr.+16. ; Bgr.+17. ;

Tamga of the Bugat inscription: Bugat.1 ; Bugat.2 ; Bugat.3 ; Bugat.4 ; Bugat.5 ; Bugat.6 ;



Tamga of the Davirt inscription: Davrt.I.1 ; Davrt.+1 ; Davrt.+2 ; Davrt.+3 ; Davrt.+4 ; Davrt.+5 ; Davrt.+6 ; Davrt.+7 ; Davrt.+8 ; Davrt.+9 ; Davrt.+10 ; Davrt.+11 ; Davrt.+12 ; Davrt.+13 ; Davrt.+14 ; Davrt.+15 ; Davrt.+16 ; Davrt.+17 ; Davrt.+18 ; Davrt.+19 ; Davrt.+20 ; Davrt.+21 ; Davrt.+22 ; Davrt.+23 ; Davrt.+24 ;


Tamga of the Khushuut Tolgoi: Khosh.T.1 ; Khosh.T.+1 ; Khosh.T.+2 ; Khosh.T.+3 ;

Tamga of the Khulsana Am: Khuls.A 1 ;

Tamga of the Shaakhar inscription: Shahr.I.1 ; Shahr.I.2 ; Shahr.I.3 ; Shahr.+1 ; Shahr.+2 ; Shahr.+3 ; Shahr.+4 ; Shahr.+5 ; Shahr.+6 ; Shahr.+7 ; Shahr.+8 ; Shahr.+9 ; Shahr.+10 ; Shahr.+11 ; Shahr.+12 ; Shahr.+13 ; Shahr.+14 ; Shahr.+15 ; Shahr.+16 ; Shahr.+17 ; Shahr.+18 ; Shahr.+19 ; Shahr.+20 ; Shahr.+21 ; Shahr.+22 ; Shahr.+23 ; Shahr.+24 ; Shahr.+25 ; Shahr.+26 ; Shahr.+27 ;

4.2. Features of *Tamgas*

A total of three runic inscriptions were discovered from Shaakhar tolgoi of Chandmani soum. The first inscription contains directly related 3 *Tamgas* and also the figure  located next to them. The figure can be both a wild goat *Tamga*, or an image of a wild goat. The wild goat *Tamga* mostly has  figure, or it has a more designed image than the actual image of a wild goat. But, a horn of a wild goat (antelope), head, and a tail are clearly described in the above-mentioned figure. Therefore, we believe that it is possible to be a rock painting not a *Tamga*.

To sum up, 18 runic inscriptions have been discovered from 7 places in the region of Govi-Altai province and nearly 95 *Tamgas* related to these inscriptions were registered so far. Among these, the most occurred *Tamga* related to these inscriptions is *Tamga*  and its variants which have been depicted in the Biger, Shaakhar, and Bugat monuments. Some *Tamgas* are depicted very clear and accurate whereas some are blur and look like overlapped with other rock paintings. Furthermore, we believe that the materials of the preliminary studies will be the important

source to identify which tribes people in which period travelled to the west to participate in which historical events, and by tracing after *Tamga* of the runic inscription to determine which tribes where and how many inscriptions left behind and clarify an association between inscriptions.

Abbreviation

Alt.Kh.III.	The Altan Khad Inscription – III
Alt.Kh.+	(indirect) <i>tamgas</i> related to the Altan Khad Inscription
Blg.q. N4	The Bilge Khagan Stele, North side, 4 th line
Bgr.III.	The Biger Inscription – III
Bgr.IV.	The Biger Inscription – IV
Bgr.+	(indirect) <i>tamgas</i> related to the Biger Inscription
Bugat.	The Bugat Inscription
Davrt.I.	The Davirt Inscription – I
Davrt.+	(indirect) <i>tamgas</i> related to the Davirt Inscription
Khosh.T	The Khushuut Tolgoi Inscription
Khuls.A	The Khulsana Am Inscription
Shahr.I.	The Shaakhar Inscription – I
Shahr.+	(indirect) <i>tamgas</i> related to the Shaakhar Inscription
Tunyk.I.N1	The Tunyukuk Stele – I, North side, First line
Tunyk.II.N3	The Tunyukuk Stele – II, North side, Third line

5. Conclusion

The great significance of ancient Inscriptions is that it becomes an evidence of that historical period. Approximately 170 runic inscriptions date back to the Turkic, Uighur period had been registered in the territory of Mongolia so far. Based on location and special characteristics of Mongolian runic inscription, the territory can be classified into western, northern, central, southern, and eastern. Mongolian runic inscriptions found in Western region: Bayan-Ulgii, Khovd, Govi-Altai, Uvs, Zavkhan; in the category of Central region: Uvurkhangai, Arkhangai, Bulgan, Tuv, Bayankhongor, and inscriptions from Ulaanbaatar; in the category of Northern region: Khusvgul, Orkhon, Selenge, Darkhan-Uul; in the category of Eastern region: Dornod, Sukhbaatar, Khentii; in the category of Southern region: Dundgovi, Dornogovi, Umnugovi, Govisumber provinces are included. From there, if the discovered place is unknown the inscription is registered in Ulaanbaatar and except 3 provinces located in the northern region such as Orkhon, Selenge, Darkhan-Uul, Mongolian runic inscriptions had been registered in 18 provinces so far.

Mongolian runic inscription relevant to the Western region found in Zavkhan province differs by its writing method, whereas runic inscriptions found in Bayan-Ulgii, Uvs, and Khovd are similar to the Yenisei inscriptions that is why they are different from Mongolian runic inscription regarding its characters.

Govi-Altai runic inscriptions are located along the central road headed from Beshbalik to west southern until silk road in the period of Ancient Turkic, Uighur and they play important role in the

studies of philology and history since they have many state and military ranking words and personal names.

In this article, reading-lexical features and relevant *Tamgas* of 18 inscriptions discovered in Govi-Altai province have been studied. As of today, a total of 18 runic inscriptions were discovered in 7 places from this province. Initially, the Biger's 4 inscriptions had been discovered in 1969 by team "Inscription studies" of the Mongol-Soviet's history and culture's joint expedition, whereas our team discovered Davirt II inscription in 2020, and also research team from Institute of Archaeology, Academy of Sciences discovered Khushuut Tolgoi's inscription. The 14 inscriptions from above mentioned 18 were discovered and registered since 2000 indicates that in the previous years' research work has been done well in this region.


Ancient Turkic inscriptions belonged to the region we take into consideration are all rock inscriptions and small in size, engraved in stone rock mostly. The inscriptions contain the meaning of journey blessing and travel note which followed the name and title of the owner. In other words, 32 words appear in duplicate numbers in runic inscriptions discovered in this province and 15 words or 47% are the titles and personal names.

Even though personal names and titles occur many times, the content was written by third people such as servants, lower rank officials, and people who traveled together. It becomes clear when the grammatical conjugation of the third person is used in order to express an action in the inscriptions. For example, the word "yori-" expresses the meaning of "to go, to move" in old Turkish language occurs three times in the inscriptions and all refer to third-person which conjugated by "-ti" suffix and expressed the meaning of "he/she traveled".

The research team completed a hand painting of 95 *Tamgas* that belonged to these inscriptions. The three inscriptions such as Altan khad, Biger and Khushuut Tolgoi found in Biger, Govi-Altai, consist of 11 separate inscriptions. There are 2 directly and 7 indirectly belonged *Tamgas* to Altan khad III inscription, Biger's has 1 *Tamgas* each belonged directly, 17 *Tamgas* belonged indirectly, and Khushuut Tolgoi's inscription has 1 *Tamga* belonged directly, and 3 *Tamgas* belonged indirectly. Chandmani soum's Shaakhar Tolgoi's inscription has 3 directly and 25 indirectly belonged *Tamgas*, and it attracts researchers with many variants of the one *Tamga*.

The inscription of Bugat has 6 directly belonged *Tamgas* which 4 of them are variants of the one *Tamga*. Our research team went for studying this inscription but we haven't found it yet. We will discuss this indirectly belonged *Tamga* in the further studies.

But the Davirt I inscription has 1 directly belonged *Tamga* and 24 indirectly belonged *Tamgas* to the two inscriptions. The Inscription of Khulsana Am is located in a big rock and it has only one *Tamga* belonged.

The most occurred *Tamga* is  and its variants related to these inscriptions and depicted in Biger, Shaakhar, Bugat, and Khushuut Tolgoi's monuments. Some *Tamgas* depicted very clear and accurate whereas some are blur and look like overlapped with other rock paintings.

Furthermore, we hope that these preliminary studies will be the important source for identifying which tribespeople in which period traveled to the west to participate in which historical events and by tracing after runic inscription's Tamga we will detect which tribes where and how many inscriptions left behind and clarifying an association between inscriptions.

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