

Univerzita Karlova v Praze

Filozofická fakulta

Ústav pro archeologii

Lucie Šmahelová

Kül-Teginův památník.

**Turkický kaganát a výzkum československo-mongolské expedice v Chöšöö-Cajdam
1958**

Kül-Tegin monument.

**Turkic Khaganate and research of the First Czechoslovak- Mongolian
expedition in Khöshöö Tsaidam 1958**

Disertační práce

vedoucí práce - Prof. PhDr. P. Charvát, DrSc.

2014

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Lucie Šmahelová

Kül-Tegin monument

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Kül-Teginův památník

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Poděkování českým kolegům a přátelům

V úvodu své práce bych velice ráda poděkovala všem svým spolupracovníkům a přátelům, kteří se na mé práci jakýmkoliv způsobem podíleli, neboť veškerá pomoc pro mne byla při náročném zpracování tohoto tématu zcela zásadní. Můj dík patří především Prof. Petru Charvátovi, DrSc. za odborné vedení mé práce, PhDr. Veronice Zikmundové Ph.D. z Ústavu jižní a centrální Asie FF UK a Mgr. Jakubu Maršálkovi Ph.D. z Ústavu Dálného východu FF UK za cenné konzultace k prostředí současných a původních nomádských kultur. Vzhledem k tomu, že v našich zemích se tímto tématem téměř nikdo nezabývá, byli mi nepostradatelnou oporou při řešení mnohých otázek. Zároveň bych chtěla poděkovat vedení Archeologického ústavu AV ČR v Praze za zpřístupnění archivních materiálů z roku 1958 a zejména pak pracovním archivu za jejich vstřícný přístup a pomoc. V tomto ohledu bych také ráda poděkovala Mgr. Heleně Heroldové Ph.D. za pomoc při pátrání po materiálech z expedice v depozitářích Náprstkova Muzea v Praze. Za poskytnutí pracovního zázemí jsem velice vděčná svým bývalým i současným zaměstnavatelům, PhDr. Janu Frolíkovi CSc. (ARÚ AV ČR Praha, v. v. i.) a Mgr. Filipu Lýskovi (Regionální Muzeum v Českém Krumlově), jejichž podpory si velice vážím.

Na osobní úrovni bych ráda vyjádřila poděkování především svým rodičům, kteří mne po celou dobu nesmírně podporovali a také svým přátelům Radimu Hanušovi, Mgr. Petrovi Limburskému Ph.D., Ing. Čenkově Čišeckému a dalším, kteří mi pomohli s mnoha dílčími úkoly.

Nesmírně cenná byla pro mne vzácná setkání s posledními žijícími členy expedice PhDr. Lumíra Jisla, s MUDr. Emanuele Vlčkem, panem Aloisem Kleiblem, prof. D. Navaanem a také s paní Věrou Jislovou, kteří už bohužel dnes nemohou být svědky dokončení této práce. Chtěla bych proto svou práci věnovat památce PhDr. L. Jisla, jeho blízkým a v neposlední řadě i svým rodičům s nesmírnou úctou k přátelským a rodinným vztahům, bez nichž by práce vůbec nemohla vzniknout.

Acknowledgements to my foreign colleagues and friends

I would like to express thanks to many colleagues and friends who helped me to finish this work. Namely to Prof. D. Bayar and Prof. D. Tseveendorj and their colleagues, who kindly gave me access to the materials stored in the Institute of Archaeology MAS in Ulaanbaatar. I appreciated a lot also the help of Prof. Dr.Dr.h.c. J. Bemman, Dr. Ernst Pohl and Dr. Ursula Brosseder from the Universität Bonn and Prof. Dr. Hans-Georg. Hüttel and Dr. Burkhard Dähne from DAI Bonn who kindly allowed me access to their libraries and generously shared with me the results of their own current researches in the Orkhon Valley. I also achieved valuable help of A. Tseel and his colleagues from the National Museum of Mongolian History in Ulaanbaatar. I would like to thank to my Turkish colleagues Prof. Dr. A. Taşağil and Burcu Gündoğdu from TIKA, dealing with the Bilgä-Khan project, who provided many valuable consultations on the topic to me. A big thank for consultations on the general Turkic issues belongs also to colleagues Prof. K. Tabaldiev and Prof. N. Bazilkhan dealing with the Turkic problematic in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan territories and many others.

I am very grateful to have had an opportunity to meet with some last members of the expedition as Prof. D. Navaan, MuDr. Emanuel Vlček, Alois Kleibl and also with Věra Jislová, Dr. Jisl's wife, who shared her memories with me. It was a great pleasure for me to meet them at least for short moments, because while I am finally writing these lines none of them are alive anymore- my big thanks belong to all of them. Hence I would like therefore to devote this work to the memory of PhDr. Lumír Jisl, his colleagues and family for their invaluable work and also to my parents for their great support that made this work realizable.

Abstrakt

Tato práce je věnována výzkumu jedné z nejvýznamnějších lokalit historie Turkického kaganátu a pilotnímu projektu první československo-mongolské expedice v roce 1958, jejíž výsledky si klade za cíl po padesáti letech sumarizovat a zpřístupnit široké badatelské veřejnosti. Na základě materiálů shromážděných dílem v archivu Archeologického ústav AV ČR v Praze a dílem v depozitářích Archeologického ústavu MAV v Ulánbátaru byly tyto dlouhodobě oddělené a nedostupné informace zpracovány a spojeny v plnohodnotný celek, který umožnil uzavřít nedocenitelnou a bohužel nedokončenou práci předčasně zemřelého PhDr. Lumíra Jisla. S ohledem na současné turkologické problémy, k nimž má právě památník prince Kül-Tegina mnoho co říci, je tato práce zároveň zaměřena na formulaci zásadních otázek z hlediska nových poznatků současného dění v oboru. Vzhledem k současnému stavu bádání si tyto otázky kladou za cíl spíše pootevřít prostor pro mezioborovou diskuzi a navrhnout možná dílčí řešení. Mezinárodní význam projektu a dlouhodobý zájem četných zahraničních institucí, věnujících se problematice Turkického Kaganátu, byly hlavním popudem k napsání této práce v anglickém jazyce, neboť jinak by snaha o zpřístupnění těchto materiálů ztratila svůj prvotní smysl.

Abstract

This thesis has been elaborated on the basis of research of the first Czechoslovak-Mongolian expedition, the pioneer and solitary foreign project of Czech archaeology, unsurpassed up to now. The current work attempted to enclose the research in honour of PhDr. Lumír Jisl and his unfinished but extremely valuable project, whose results are to be presented here, The following text is based mostly on materials collected from archives and depositories both in Czech Republic and Mongolia and available results of present Turkological studies. Regarding current state of researches the aim of this work is rather to formulate fundamental questions based on the research results, suggest some possible partial solutions and open space for further investigations than to proclaim some fixed statements.

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1. Introduction

In 2002, devastating floods afflicted the Institute of Archaeology of CAS, and a part of documentation, which had been gathered over many years, was damaged by it. During the elimination of flood consequences new sorting of material took place, and documentation of earlier research, which had never been fully completed, was re-discovered. Among these was the documentation of the archaeological research in Mongolia in 1958, in which several members of the Institute took part. This expedition had been intended as the beginning of long-term international co-operation, which, however, did not succeed. In later years the focus of the Institute's co-operation shifted elsewhere. The founder and father of this project was PhDr. Lumír Jisl, whose premature death caused the majority of the expedition's material to stay unelaborated, although the results of the expedition are of crucial importance even to the present-day international research on the topic.

The main subject of the present thesis is to assume PhDr. Jisl's commenced but unfinished work and bring it to a close. In the course of my own work, I encountered a number of intriguing questions related to the topic and connected to Turkology and Inner Asian studies, which have been continually discussed by the academic world. Some of these questions underwent significant progress since Jisl's time, some, on the other hand, remain hardly less puzzling. Summarization and formulation of these questions seemed to be the necessary first step before starting any further research.

In view of this situation I decided to structure my thesis in the following way: the first, introductory, chapter is focused on the history of the Jisl's expedition, sources of information and definition of the tasks. The actual results of my work with Jisl's material – editing the materials which have not been published before and cataloguing the finds of the expedition – are included in the attachments (chapter 7, 8 and 9). The main text of the thesis shall address particular topics of research which are closely related to the expedition's work. In each chapter I attempt to sum up the current state of research, as I was able to establish it, and to formulate questions raised by it, sometimes suggesting possible solutions.

Second chapter of the thesis is dedicated to the general problematics of the Orkhon Valley and interpretation of its eminent role in historical and state-forming processes on the territory of Inner Asia. Understanding its environmental and historical substrate is crucial to explain the emergence and

development of the Turkic Khaganate. Numerous researches – especially in last years – had greatly contributed to contemporary acknowledgement of nomadic state infrastructure and their results have to be at least shortly highlighted and summarized in this context.

The third chapter comprises the main groups of questions highly debated in contemporary Turkology and closely related to the problematic of Turkic Khaganate and Kül-Tegin monument research interpretation. These are the discussions on Turkic ethnogenesis and cultural formation, philological issues of cultural affiliation and ethnic substrate of the Inner Asia, the emergence of the Göktürk ethnicon and its connection with the Mongolian territory, questions of the Turkic burial rite, meaning of the Turkic monuments and memorials etc. In view of the state of research which is seriously hindered by the lack of data interpretable by traditional historical science I often allow myself hypothetical scenarios which are not intended as solutions to the problems but as alternative hypotheses that may show the scale of possible variants to be tested in further research.

The actual text of this work should serve as a complementary report enriched by new knowledge in the light of research within last 50 years and also an open field for further investigation solved on the interdisciplinary level suggested in final chapters.

1.1. History of the First Czechoslovak- Mongolian expedition 1958

The idea to organize a Czechoslovak expedition to Mongolia was initiated by the director of Institute of Archaeology in Prague Dr. J. Böhm after the ethnographical journeys of Dr. P. Poucha in 1955. His idea got a concrete shape after meetings with Dr. Rinčen and Cevegmid, members of Mongolian Scientific Committee, in 1956-1957. Dr. L. Jisl, who was charged with organization of the proper expedition, was then sent to Mongolia to choose a suitable object of excavation. Kül-Tegin monument in Khöshöö-tsaidam, one of the Orkhon Turkic funerary complexes from 8th century, seemed to fit all the postulates. This site, discovered already by Jadrincev in 1889, has never been disturbed or systematically excavated yet before. The only scientific activities so far were focused mostly on solving philological problems (decipherment of Turkic runic alphabet) and individual detecting soundings (V.V. Radlov 1891, W. Kotwicz 1912, D.D. Bukinic 1934). This offered almost ideal conditions for a demonstration of new systematic methods in archaeology, as the expedition should have first of all educative purpose; introduction of new methods of research into Mongolian archaeology. The working team consisted of the Czech and Mongolian parts. Czech members were: Lumír Jisl - archaeologist, Antonín Knor - archaeological assistant, Josef Váňa - economist, Emanuel Vlček – anthropologist and medicine doctor¹, František Buřil - surveyor, Alois Kleibl – photographer, Josef Vorlíček – driver. The Mongolian part of the team was represented by archaeologists Ser-Odjav, Perlee, Navaan, ethnographist Badam-Khatan and students of Choybalsan University in Ulaanbaatar. The Russian archaeologist Volkov with his wife, who were actually working in the University in Ulaanbaator, took part as special guests.² The fieldwork started in 1958, on the 19th of July, and

¹ Except his anthropological duties he was in charge of health of expedition members and also worked as a medical man for the local population when needed (over 400 medicals was made by him among the local herdsmen). Nevertheless most important part of his job was scientific, focused on anthropological research of the Khalkha ethnics, the very first and complex one, based on anthropometric, dental and serological measurement in Khujirt sanatorium in Orkhon (sample counted hundred people). Similar data collection he had done on the Mongolian members of expedition and also local herdsmen from the base neighbourhood, which he also took samples of hair and fingerprints. MUDr. Vlček procured the comparative material by collecting on recent cemeteries in surroundings. Within his researches he especially paid attention on the phenomenon of the so-called „Mongolian spot”, the pigmentation in the pelvic area occurring in small children, a typical mark of the Yellow strain. For this purpose he examined circa 200 newborns and children under the age of five years from Maternity and Children's Hospital in Ulaanbaatar. His analyses confirmed the older theory of Dr. Hrdlička about the Asian origin of North American Indians and also proved some possibility of continuation of the Hun type into Mongolian population. These results of modern Mongolian ethnics research was summarized in his report, saved in Archive of Institute of Archaeology in Prague. MUDr. E. Vlček also published in: *The ABO System of Blood Groups in Khalkha Mongols*. MAN 60, Article 124; *Klimax, Geburtnanzahl und Zahl der lebenden Kinder bei den Chalda-Mongolen*. *Ärztliche Jugendkunde*, 52, Hf. 7/8, s. 229 n.; *A Contribution to the Anthropology of the Khalkha-Mongols*. (The anthropologist and physician report on the Czechoslovak-Mongolian archaeological expedition in the year 1958), *Acta Facultatis rerum naturalium Universitatis Comenianae*, T. IX, 1965, Fasc. VI, VII, *Anthropologia*, s. 285 – 367; etc.(source of the list: Martinovský, 2000, p. 423)

² Besides the archaeological research also some palaeontological questions were solved. RNDr V. Zázvorka, leader of Department of Geology and Palaeontology of National Museum in Prague, had joint the Czech expedition later in September 1958. He had taken samples from excavation site and identified the origin of balbal-stones as local one. His main tasks were however to prepare separate palaeontological project in Western Mongolia (Zagan-Olom).

continued until 14th of September. Within these two months the area of Kül-Tegin monument was excavated by means of a method of cross trenching, subsequently divided into 15 sunken features in accordance with demands of the archaeological situation. The main trench-line had cut the whole monument in (longitudinal) east-west axis, so it caught all the main parts of the funeral complex, as it was spread symmetrically along this east-west line.³

Besides the archaeological results, a great benefit brought by the expedition is the collection of ethnographic material based on cinematographic and photographic documentation of Mongolian ethnic groups and their culture.⁴ Unfortunately these outputs were hardly presented in the media, in a few articles and books of mostly scholarly character, and very little popularization work was done.⁵

The successful year 1958 was considered a starting season of a long-term systematic excavation project and a first step in the field of scientific cooperation between the two countries. In conformity with such an idea collective fieldwork were supposed to continue in 1960 and in the meantime all excavated materials from season 1958 should have been elaborated. However due to bureaucratic obstructions and misunderstandings on both sides the developing cooperation had gone astray.

In 1959 the Mongolian team, in spite of the previous agreement, continued the excavations independently, urging the Czech team to join them.⁶ Although the Czech side had held ready to continue a year later in 1960, Dr. L. Jisl hastily built a research team and negotiated the departure of the expedition. However the preparation was stopped out of decision of the foreign department ČSAV, which refused to give permission to set out and sabotaged the whole project. Despite the official apologetic and explaining letter of J. Böhm and private correspondence of L. Jisl with the Mongolian side it was a plight and the cooperation was endangered. Meanwhile the Czechoslovak project inspired other European countries to arrange further scientific expeditions to Mongolia, and this also weakened the Czech position. In 1961 the Mongolian side, via the Czechoslovak Embassy in Ulaanbaatar, nevertheless suggested to organize a new a joint expedition in 1962. However, the Embassy report confused the year 1962 with 1961, so L. Jisl's newly prepared project failed again. Only in 1962 Jisl was permitted to continue his work in Mongolia, but for one person and one week only. Later in 1963 Jisl left for Mongolia once again just for a study trip and during his journey visited the site for the last time. Despite the hard endeavour of L. Jisl all attempts to initiate Czechoslovak-Mongolian scientific cooperation failed. Later the whole project definitely collapsed with the premature death of L. Jisl in 1969. Since that time only a preliminary report and a few articles were written on the topic by L. Jisl

³ More about the research methods is to be found in attached in excavation report.

⁴ Most of these materials, captured by A. Kleibl, are kept in the archive of Institute of Archaeology in Prague (ARÚ AV ČR, Praha, v. v. i.). Some of them were also published in; *L. Jisl, Mongolei, Kunst und Tradition, Prague 1960.*

⁵ M. Martinovský, 2000, p 423.

⁶ Independent fieldworks partly continued even in 1960 (according to telling of recently departed Prof. Navaan) , but unfortunately no finding report were put down and no information about working seasons 1959-1960 is available.

(see the list of literature) but most of the materials have remained unelaborated in archives and depositories, partly in Prague, partly in Ulaanbaatar. Unfortunately, Jisl's thesis was lost during the floods in 2002,⁷ but its part had been published in 1997.⁸ This part extensively deals with the Turkic history and culture and therefore here is only to be summarized in few chapters to provide a general view on Turkic problematic. My main focus will therefore be on the "lost" archaeological part dedicated to the research, which has never been released yet.

1.2. Tasks and issues of research

The time which elapsed from the moment of Jisl's expedition and the state of documentation, which did not allow the complete reconstruction of the project, featured the necessity to gather all possible types of sources concerning the expedition. Therefore, in the present work, great emphasis was laid on gathering as much information from multiple types of sources (archive, museums and collections, interviews with witnesses and fieldwork), as possible. Given the current state of research in the field of Turkic problematic, my further original intention to solve some selected questions (typology of pottery, character of the funeral rite and function of the monument etc.), which should have been one of the main target of this thesis, had to stay open due to the lack of comparative materials. Nevertheless these questions became the basis for a number of considerations and hypotheses pointing to further investigations and comparative analyses that should be carried out.

Namely typological and petrographical analyses of different kinds of pottery from the site would probably answer many questions concerning the use of the monument within the time. For their proper analyses is therefore necessary to make a comparison with excavation results from other Turkic funeral sites - not only in Mongolia but also on the broader context of Central Asian and Siberian territory. Especially the older Mongolian reports and excavations – as, for example, the Tonyukuk monument in Nalaikh – may offer a great amount of worthy information in this respect. The same problem appears in the question of Turkic funeral rite manifestations which had been observed more or less territorially without complex comparative analyses and many results of current researches are still unpublished. The area of problematic of Turkic cultures and history requires yet more extensive investigation before some final statements could be done. On the other hand the Khöshöö Tsaidam monuments represent one of the most important research points and provide many interesting and helpfull contributions to the Turkic issue. During my work with the archaeological material and

⁷The original and only version is kept in private hands of V. Jislova, to whom I thank for lending all materials.

⁸ L. Jisl, *The Orkhon Türks and problems of the archaeology of the Second Eastern Türk Khaganate in: Annals of the Náprstek Museum Praha*, Nr. 18, 1997, Prague.

archaeological context I understood the necessity of interdisciplinary approach combining Inner Asian philology, history and anthropology. Therefore I decided to dedicate one part of the thesis to the specification of questions in which such interdisciplinary co-operation would be especially beneficial.

1.3. Sources and methods of research

1.3.1. Archive and museum materials

As outlined above, the actual tasks of my research were focused on gathering of all available sources of information about the expedition in 1958. These sources were narrow and strictly limited to the old research documentation from 1958 and the archive correspondence, which has been kept in the archives of the Institute of Archaeology and Academy of Sciences in Prague. On the other hand, the archaeological material from the expedition has been stored, since 1958, in the depository of the Institute of Archaeology in Ulaanbaatar and the National Museum of Mongolian History *ibidem*. Unfortunately all the competent participants of the expedition have already passed away,⁹ and thus the inheritance of Dr. L. Jisl provides the only relevant source of information, although not complete anymore. The enclosure and evaluation of the original project and an analytical report requested the following consecutive steps.

Prague

Jisl's preliminary report, diaries, plans and pictures kept in archive of the Institute of Archaeology in Prague, had to be saved and digitalized due to their bad condition after 50 years. Some data were unfortunately even lost due to the devastating floods in the Czech Republic in 2002, which took away also some parts of the Prague archive, including the Jisl's dissertation thesis, and severely damaged the photodocumentation from 1958. All the saved items (plans, photonegatives and diaries) were scanned, described and included in the central database of Digital Archive ARU AV ČR.¹⁰ An essential and integral part of completing the materials and gathering Jisl's inheritance is also the translation of Jisl's preliminary report.¹¹ Some materials are also kept in other archives (Central Archive of Academy of Sciences, Náprstek Museum of Prague, etc.) or in private hands of Jisl's family; these have been also studied and searched through for additional informations. Of great importance are also the recordings of interviews made for Czech broadcasting, and a documentary film from the expedition that provide an indication of the project backstage. As virtually none of the

⁹ Prof. Navaan, last living member of the Mongolian team, passed away in 2010.

¹⁰ Digital archive available in: <http://digiarchiv.arup.cas.cz>

¹¹ Available Prague archive materials are included in attachment, Part II.

participants of the expedition is alive anymore these are the only sources of information about the research from 1958.

Ulaanbaatar

Second task incorporated gathering and identification of findings, mentioned in Jisl's preliminary report. The original context had to be recovered to prepare the reconstruction of research, necessary for further analytical steps. Most of the findings from the excavation 1958 were discovered in the depository of the Institute of Archaeology MAS in Ulaanbaatar in approximately 15 open wooden boxes that stayed almost untouched since 1958. It also contained some "recent intrusions", caused by handling with opened boxes within last 50 years. Due to missing inventory numbers it was a tough proposition to determine the origin of the finds, and without Jisl's list of materials and old photographic documentation of A. Kleibl this task would have been practically insolvable.¹² The findings, identified with the original Jisl's context, have been elaborated including drawing and photographic documentation (2007 – 2010), a work that has never been done before. I created a new database of findings based on my working numbering and used it as a background for compilation of the catalogue of finds. I am fully aware of the possible difficulties that could have occurred due to the double evidence numbering, but since I had confronted the current status with the original list of finds (see the List of finds in the Catalogue of Finds, chapter 7, attachment), I hope to prevent any misunderstandings in dealing with the materials. Archaeological finds kept in Ulaanbaatar were summarized in the catalogue (attachment, chapter 7).

A few findings are also kept in National Museum of Mongolian History. Some bronze and iron artefacts have been displayed in the permanent exposition, and fragments of roof tiles and pipes are stored in the local depository (Inventory numbers enumerated in the chapter 7.1.). These have not been examined due to the problems of accessibility,¹³ but as they are of only marginal importance in the whole context I had decided that for the purpose of the present work the original documentation from 1958 is sufficient. Some findings – mostly the stone sculptures and architectural features have remained on the site, now in charge of TIKA, Turkish institution handling the project of Orkhon monuments since 2000. All pieces from Kül-Tegin and Bilgä-Khan monuments were moved to a recently built local Museum of Khöshöö Tsaidam nearby, where they are protected from atmospheric conditions. Nevertheless some of the sculptures are probably lost (sculptures and some building

¹² Some of the original finds may be missing because not all of excavated artefacts had been registered.

¹³ After long-winded and complicated negotiation with the direction of the Museum I finally got oral agreement to make a documentation of these pieces, but meanwhile the management changed and no time was left for further talks.

materials etc.) or at least I failed to obtain any information about their current storage.¹⁴ Again they are registered only within the photographic documentation of 1958 (attachment 9.1.).

1.3.2. Study on the research

In the course of my work I faced many difficulties and discussed the issues with many specialists and competent persons. First I focused on searching for the participants of the original expedition and any information about the expedition as the archive materials were not complete. I succeed in contacting Mudr. E. Vlček and A. Kleibl, who were already very old and their serious state of health unfortunately did not allow any intensive cooperation. Nevertheless both of them assured me that all concerned materials are only kept in Institute of Archaeology and they have nothing special to add, except the Vlček's current Mongolian anthropological material which actually deserves a special scholar interest. A. Kleibl lost his photodocumenation deposits due to some serious life events. I have also talked with Jisl's family (his wife and sister, who unfortunatly later passed away). Věra Jislová was so kind to offer me the copy of Jisl's dissertation work whose original was unfortunately lost during the floods in 2002 damaging the Prague archiv. At this point should be noted that after the departure of V. Jislová in current time PhDr. L. Bělka is in charge of processing the estate of L. Jisl and dealing with his texts and materials. Hence I turned attention to the Mongolia and continued on searching there. In 2008 I managed to find Prof. D. Navaan who was still active working on excavations despite his old age (90) and he provided me as much information as possible.¹⁵ The only new information was that the research of Kül-Tegin continued one more season in 1959 or 1960 in the surroundings of monument (perhaps uncovering one of the adjacent small memorials), but there was no excavation report carried out. Although these fragments of history were only additional in the course of my research, I am very gratefull for the memories and any information I could obtain after 50 years.

My further research was focused on searching and elaboration of the materials from 1958 and meeting with scholars solving the same or close Turkic issues in Mongolia as Prof. D. Bayar and Prof. D. Tseveendorj and their colleagues in the Institute of Archaeology MAS in Ulaanbaatar. Namely Prof. Bayar provided me lots of valuable consultations on this topic and I feel sorry for his early departure in 2011 without seeing the results of my work. I also achieved valuable help of A. Tseel and his colleagues who asisted me with identification of the card index concerning the Kül-Tegin finds kept in the National Museum of Mongolian History in Ulaanbaatar, although I failed in getting the access to these materials in the end. I have also discussed the topic with Turkish colleagues who were in

¹⁴ Already in 1958 L. Jisl mentioned occasional destroyoing of sculptures by local people.

¹⁵ Prof. Navaan unfortunately left in 2009 or 2010.

charge of excavation of neighbouring Bilgä-Khan monument in Khöshöö Tsaidam, Prof. Dr. A. Taşağıl and Burcu Gündoğdu to obtain some comparative information for my research. When researching the Orkhon Valley general context I appreciated a lot the consultations with Prof. J. Bemman, Dr. Ernst Pohl and Dr. B. Dähne from the Universität Bonn and Prof. Dr. H.G. Hüttel from DAI Bonn who kindly allowed me access to their libraries and generously shared with me the results of their own current researches in Orkhon Valley. I also owe them a lot for help during my stays in Mongolia and background they kindly offered to me within their fieldworks. Valuable consultations on the general Turkic issues gave me also colleagues Prof. K. Tabaldiev and Prof. N. Bazilkhan dealing on the Turkic problematic in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan territories. Beside the numerous consultations I based my work on study of library sources in Mongolia and Germany (Universität Bonn, DAI Bonn, DAI Berlin) and also on participating on numerous conferences in Germany, Turkey and Mongolia where I had opportunity to discuss the topic with other colleagues in the Turkic branch.

1.3.3. Fieldwork

For the completion of my work also field research in Mongolia proved to be inevitable. I periodically visited Mongolia in the subsequent years 2006, 2007, 2008, 2010 and 2011 spending there at least one month a year to continue the study and work on materials. Each of my stays in Mongolia was divided between actual fieldwork on the site of Khöshöö Tsaidam (mainly focused on prospection) and work in the depositories of Institute of Archaeology MAS in Ulaanbaatar. Due to my status of private researcher I was not able to obtain permission for some deeper field research or surface survey. Nevertheless, repeated visits to the site, its detailed observation and documentation permitted me to gather a substantial amount of supplementary material. Besides the work in depositories, which was of crucial importance of the whole project, the immense helpfulness of my Mongolian colleagues allowed me to learn many important facts which completed the one-sided history of the expedition as recorded in the Czech Republic.

2. Specification of the locality

The Göktürk empire, one of the subsequent nomadic empires that ruled over the vast grassland area with the center in Mongolia, and one which had left perhaps the strongest imprints in later history, begun its existence in the mid-6th century, by overcoming the power of its predecessor, the Juan-Juan kaghanate. Its founders called themselves Türk and were ruled by a clan (sometimes referred to as “charismatic clan”) named Ashina. In the time of their emergence, China, their southern neighbor, was undergoing a period of disintegration known as “Southern and Northern dynasties”, which facilitated the Türk growth in power and expansion. The kaghanate’s center lied in the Orkhon Valley of Central Mongolia, while its western fringes soon stretched far west, subjugating many Siberian nomadic tribes. While this First Türk kaghanate, for a certain period, maintained diplomatic relations with the Byzantine Empire, and Byzantine sources complement the rich Chinese sources about the Türks, some basic questions concerning this empire remain open, such as the question of the origin and language of its founders. Later in the 6th century China was unified and ruled subsequently by the Sui and Tang dynasties, which caused the weakening and fall of the First Kaghanate ruling dynasty into a state of dependence on China.

The object of the present research, the Turkic monuments in Khöshöö Tsaidam, belong to the period of the Second Kaghanate, which was built by the same dynasty in 683. The founder of the Second Kaghanate, the Il-Täris Kutlug Khan, revolted against Tang China and re-gained independence for the Türks with the priceless help of Tonyukuk, a Türk who was educated in China and became the main counsellor for Il-Täris Khan (681-694) and his two successors, his brother Qapaghan (694-716) and his son Bilgä-Khan (717-734), who held rule together with his brother Kül-tegin. Although Kül-tegin and Bilgä-Khan succeeded in rule by means of a bloody coup during which they exterminated most of their relatives, Tonyukuk was spared and probably retained his influence. After the death of Bilgä-Khan the Türk empire rapidly declined and in 744 was overthrown by an Uyghur dynasty. During the Second Kaghanate period commemorative complexes and steles with runic inscriptions were erected to the memory of Kül-tegin, Bilgä-Khan and Tonyukuk (whose complex, however, is located far to the east, near the present-day Ulaanbatar. The Second Türk kaghanate is the first of nomadic empires from which we possess documents written in a nomadic language.

2.1. Khöshöö Tsaidam

A brief introduction to the topic

The monuments of Khöshöö Tsaidam are located in the northeast area of Orkhon valley (Ögii-nuur somon, Arkhangai aimag, Kül-Tegin monument N47°33' - E102°49', Bilgä-Khan monument N47°20' - E102°50'). The site lies approximately 380 km to the west from the Mongolian capital Ulaanbaatar, 40 km northwards from the Genghis Khan's former capital – the city of Karakorum, contemporary Kharkhorin, and some 20 km northeast from the Kharabalgasun fortress, the ancient Uyghur city of Ordu-Balyk. The steppe of Khöshöö Tsaidam forms a part of the upper Orkhon valley, which spreads from the lake Ögii-nuur in the north down to Kharkhorin (Karakorum) in the south and surrounded along by the rivers Orkhon and Khögshin-Orkhon and mountain ridges of Khangai. Some of the hills are of volcanic origin, such as the Chuluut (2.5 km from Kül-Tegin's monument). The altitude of the steppe is around 1200 m above sea level. Pedological analyses in the place of research proved diluvial sediments as a product of erosion of the mountains bedrock, washed or slid down to the basin. By the river Khögshin Orkhon were found alluvial shingle terraces, moved from upper parts of the stream.¹⁶

The name of Khöshöö-Tsaidam, in translation “*The Steppe with Sculptures*”, is perhaps related to the numerous statues originally decorating the inner area of monuments.¹⁷ These monuments present the funeral or more precisely the memorial precinct of the ruling dynasty that represents the luxurious type of Turkic funeral architecture in the period of the Second Eastern-Turkic khaganate (8th century AD). The steppes of the Orkhon valley, where this site is located, are considered to not only have formed the political, religious and power centre of the East – Turkic kaganate (established 680 AD),¹⁸ but also to have played a significant role

¹⁶ Jisl 1959 a: 7-8

¹⁷ Vertical stones, so called *balbals*, placed in rows eastwards from the Turkic sites, are very common phenomenon in the steppe all over Mongolia and neighbouring countries, despite the fact that the Orkhon rows of *balbals* are extremely long. Therefore the term may rather point to something not usual, as perhaps the statues of Chinese production, completing the atypical conception of Orkhon monuments. An analogical toponyme (Khöshöötiin khöndii – the Valley of Sculptures) exists in the Sukhbaatar aimag where it refers to a valley with many stone sculptures from the period of the Mongol Empire.

¹⁸ The Orkhon valley is often identified with the sacred forest of mountain Ötükän, the legendary centre of Gök Türk empire (for more information see for example Jarich G. Oosten, Henri J. M. Claessen. *Ideology and the Formation of Early States*, 1996, Pages 124-125).

in the history of other nomadic empires. It seems that since the early historical periods important religious and political traditions were often linked to this area¹⁹.

Researches of these monuments have a major contribution to the current Turkological studies due to its philological and historical value. Understanding the occurrence of Turkic monuments in Khöshöö Tsaidam and its historical role so far requires a short excursion into the history of the Orkhon Valley in general; a brief introduction of its natural and archeological *milieu*. The Turkic site itself must be viewed in a broader context as one piece of an intricate mosaic of rich correlations that shaped this area for centuries.

2.2. The Orkhon valley

2.2.1. Natural conditions of the Orkhon Valley

This cultural landscape is located in central Mongolia, some 360 km south-west of Ulaanbaatar, the capital, along the Orkhon River, which flows north, draining into Lake Baikal in Russia. Over 90% of Mongolia's huge land area is high-level pasture or desert wasteland, at an average altitude of around 1,500 m. Water is at a premium and the river valleys have therefore assumed great importance, becoming the focus for settlements of various kinds.

The inscribed property straddles the Orkhon River, which provides water and shelter, key requisites for its role as a staging post on the ancient trade routes across the steppes and for its development as the centre of the vast Central Asian empires. Specifically, the inscribed property provides evidence of the 6th-7th century Turkish memorial sites, the 8th-9th century Uighur capital of Khar Balgas, the 13th-14th century Mongol capital of Kharakhorum, the earliest surviving Mongol Buddhist monastery at Erdene Zuu, the Hermitage Monastery of Tuvkhum, the Shankh Western Monastery, the palace at Doit Hill, the ancient towns of Talyn Dorvoljin, Har Bondgor, and Bayangol Am, deer stones and ancient graves, the sacred mountains of Hangai Ovoo and Undor Sant and archaeological and ethnographic evidence attesting to the long and enduring tradition of nomadic pastoralism.

¹⁹

All elements necessary to express the Outstanding Universal Value of the property of Orkhon Valley Cultural Landscape are included within the boundaries of the inscribed area. The ecology of overall landscape and pastoral practices are vulnerable to lowering water table, associated with tree-cutting and mining, pollution of watercourses and the effects of over-grazing. The visual integrity of the landscape is vulnerable to modern roads, tracks and power lines. Lack of maintenance of monastery buildings, city walls and Turkic graves could impact on integrity.

2.2.2. Notes on Geology²⁰

The most common type of rocks are mainly low temperature and low pressure metamorphites of Carboniferous strata (presently green schist) associated with sediments like sand-gravels of Tertiary and low Quaternary age, locally associated with red conglomerate layers (as the Ugey-Nuur Lake). The area is located in extensive depression of graben type which according to some scientists is determined by right-shift disruptions in the E-W direction linked to increased Quaternary volcanic activity, indicated by occurrence of massive cones and generally all kinds of basalts. Depression is significantly filled with terrigenous sediments of Pleistocene age, alluvial sediments, slope sediments and soils with dominance of eolic material.

2.2.3. Notes on Pedology

In addition to widespread alluvial soils along the watercourses (including the periodic streams and wadi) are increasingly present also calcisols and cambisols, mainly bound to bedrock hypergenous substrates of both basic and acidic rock types. Beside the prevalent flat parts of depression covered by standard steppe type also hilly terrain occur and in the highest parts of rock steppes are present initial, barren and shallow soils of regosol and leptosol subtypes.

2.2.4. Grazing conditions

Due to its convenient location and extremely rich water supplies the Orkhon Valley provides rich pastureland and thus an ideal conditions for seasonal migration. Its lateral protrusions in

²⁰ Berkey, C.P., Morris, K.K., 1927. *Geology of Mongolia*. Am. Mus. Nat. Hist, New York, 475 pp;
Mongolian Academy of Sciences and Academy of Sciences of USSR National Atlas of the Peoples Republic of Mongolia, 1990, Ulaanbaatar, Moscow.

the form of protracted notches into neighbouring Khangai mountains in the west is an ideal refuge for winter season, narrow and protected valleys with sufficient grazings and water sources of the small streams. At present, in the steppes of investigated area predominate the grasses of *Cleistogenes*, *Stipa*, *Allium* and *Artemisia* genera with local representation of *Caragana* species.

2.3. Historical background of the Orkhon Valley

The Orkhon valley may be characterized by many emblematic names: the centre of empires, the land of ancestors, the sacred region, the place of power and cult, the theatre of history, the omphalos of nomadic world. Even if we ignore these mysterious attributes, which however very appropriately illuminate its historical status, it cannot be denied, that this area played an essential role in the history of the nomads. The valley lies almost in the geographical centre of Mongolia, covering approximately 70 km in length and 30 km in width, densely laced with many branches of the river Orkhon and shielded on both sides by the mountains of Khangai. It hides a well protected and fertile green piece of steppe, opportune to inhabit in any season. Such a position offers many strategic advantages, but perhaps the immense importance of the valley rests not only in its geographical nature - in spite of having a lion's share on it. Orkhon Valley used to be considered as the traditional centre of nomadic empires in ideological, religious and political sense. Over successive centuries, the Orkhon Valley was found very suitable for settlement by waves of nomadic people. The earliest evidence of human occupancy dates from the sites of Moiltyn Am (40,000- 15,000 years ago) and "Orkhon-7" which show that the Valley was first settled about 62,000-58,000 years ago. Subsequently the Valley was continuously occupied throughout the Prehistoric and Bronze ages and in proto-historic and early historic times was settled successively by the Huns (Hsiung-nu), Turkic tribes, the Uighurs, the Khitans, and finally the Mongols.

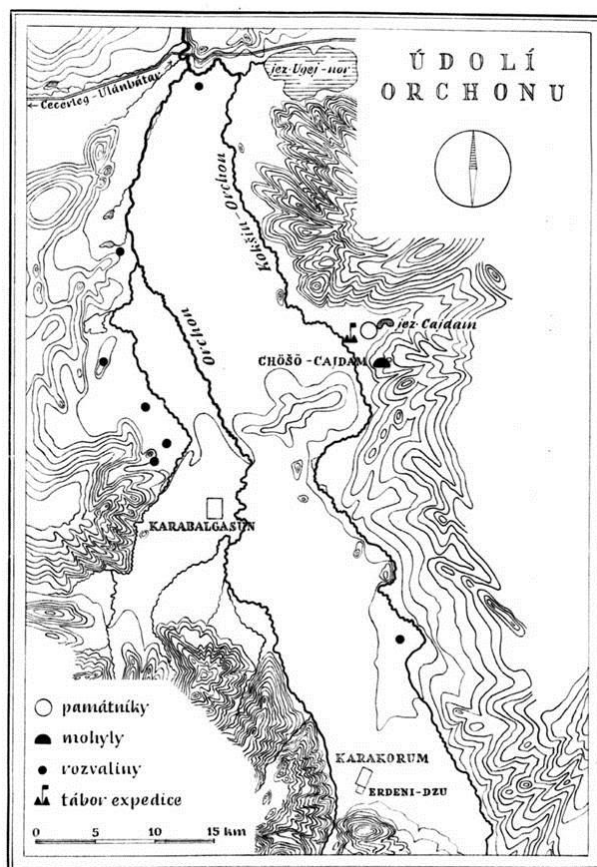


Fig. The Orkhon Valley with main sites marked in the map (Jisl's documentation 1958)

The reason for such popularity has to be retraced back in the deepest history. The original roots of its ideological role can be hardly precisely defined due to lack of written sources from the prehistoric periods. However later examples (supported/demonstrated by additional historical sources) can shed some light on the important status of the Orkhon Valley. Seeing the map above we can observe a clear concentration of historical sites of main importance: , between all the Orkhon monuments of Turkic leaders, dealt in this thesis, the capital of Uighur khaganate – the Kharabalgasun (ancient Ordu Balyk) and Genghis Khan's Karakorum were located here not too distant from each other. Due to close historical connections and interrelations of these sites it is necessary to introduce them in few sentences.

2.3.1. The city of Kharabalgasun

The city of Ordu Baliq,²¹ the current Kharabalgasun,²² had been built in 744 AD, shortly after the collapse of Second Eastern Turkic khaganate.²³ Ordu-Baliq, the capital of Uighur khaganate, was an affluent and great town with palaces, temples, merchant shops, monasteries and large hinterland occupying approximately 40 sq. km. Ordu Baliq, designed by Sogdian architects. It was a fully-fortified commandry and commercial entrepot typical of the central points along the Silk Road. *Tamim ibn Bahr*, the ambassador of Samanid Empire, described the city during his journey in 821 AD as a great town, "*rich in agriculture and surrounded by rustaqs (villages) full of cultivation lying close together. The town had twelve iron gates of huge size. The town was populous and thickly crowded and had markets and various trades*"

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Ordu-Baliq flourished until 840 AD when it was demolished by the invading Yenisey Kyrgyzes. The well-preserved remains today consist of concentric fortified walls and lookout towers, stables, military and commercial stores, and administrative buildings. Remains of a water drainage system have been discovered. Researches established that certain areas of the town were allotted for trade and handcrafts, while in the center of the town stood palaces and temples, including a monastery. The palace had fortified walls around it and two main gates, north and south, as well as moats filled with water and watchtowers. The site of Ordu-Baliq, currently being researched by the DAI team since 2009, is very close to the culture of Second Eastern Turkic khaganate and Khöshöö Tsaidam monuments dealt in this thesis.

²¹ Variously spelled *Ordu Balyk*, *Ordu Balik*, *Ordu-Baliq*, *Ordu Balig*, *Ordu Baligh*, meaning "city of the court" and also known as *Mubalik*.

²² Also written as *Karabalgasun*, *Kara Balgasun*, *Khar Balgas*, the "black city" or "black walls" in translation, named after the current looks of ruins.

²³ In 744 C.E., after the defeat of the last Göktürk Kaghan by the Uigur-Qarluq-Basmyl alliance, the Uyghurs under Bayanchur Khan established their imperial capital Ordu Baliq on the site of the old *ördü* ("nomadic capital").

²⁴ Minorsky, V. Tamim ibn Bahr's Journey to the Uyghurs. *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 12 (2): 31..



Fig.1.:Aerial photography of Kharabalgasun site (according to B. Dähne, DAI Bonn).

2.3.2. The city of Karakorum

Genghis Khan and his clan originated from Khentii, the region in northeastern Mongolia,²⁵ a worshiped area and one of the sacred places in Mongolia today. With high probability also his final resting place must be assumed somewhere here. But despite the fact Genghis Khan followed his roots to return to Khentii, his successors built Karakorum, the capital of the Mongolian empire, app. 500 km westwards from Khentii in Orkhon. The most probable reason to explain these events is the political and ideological power of the Valley, stronger than family ties, and current ancestral territory, stronger than any other sacred place. It is the ideology of human origin, the eldest of the heavenly origin of nomadic leaders.

Following the Secret History of the Mongols, before Genghis Khan's conquest the area of Karakorum is believed to have been the center of the state of the Kereits, a nomadic union of probably Turko-Mongol stock in which Nestorian Christianity is said to have strong influence. The Kereits ruled over most of Central Mongolia and in the time of Genghis

²⁵ Khentii Mountains with the most sacred precinct of Burkhan khaldun mountain are legendary linked to the personality of Genghis Khan, his history and cult. His nativity, important chapters of his life and very probably his death as well are situated here (see The Secret History of the Mongols,).

Khan's expansion were the hegemony of the Mongolian steppe area. The Kereits are attested and known for their conversion to Nestorianism from the beginning of the 11th century, and an existence of a city is, due to the lack of material about 10th and 11th centuries, neither confirmed nor denied.²⁶

The city of Kharakorum was probably built by Ögedei Khan, Genghis Khan's first successor. The city reached its peak under Möngke Khan, during whose reign (1250-1259) the Franciscan missionary and envoy of the Pope visited Mongolia. Rubruck left an impressive description of the city as a walled city with four gates, with an extraordinary number of temples of various religions (Buddhist temples, mosques and a Nestorian church), living quarters of artisans, and the city was dominated by a marvellous palace built by Ögedei Khan, in whose courtyard the Guillaume Bouchier, a silversmith from Paris, mastered the famous fountain. Rubruck describes it in his account as a

“large tree made of silver, with four silver lions at its roots, each one containing a conduit-pipe and spewing forth white mare's milk. There are four conduits leading into the tree, right to the top, with their ends curving downwards, and over each of them lies a gilded serpent with its tail twined around the trunk of the tree. One of the pipes discharges wine, a second caracomos (refined mare's milk), a third boal (a drink made from honey), and a fourth rice ale, known as terracina.... At the top, he made an angel holding a trumpet, and beneath the tree a cavity capable of concealing a man; and there is a pipe leading up to the angel through the very core of the tree ... Outside the palace there is a chamber where drink is stored and where stewards stand ready to pour when they hear the angel sound the trumpet.”²⁷

The city lost its importance after Khubilai Khan moved his capital to Beijing, but probably existed until the 15th century when Dayan Khan, unifying Mongolia for the last time, used it as his headquarters. In the 16th century, under Tusiye Khan Gombodorji, the main leader of Khalkha, a magnificent Buddhist monastery was built on the same site which became the new center of Khalkha Mongolian power and headquarters of the Mongolian spiritual leader

²⁶ cf. e.g. Grousset p. 190-191, Rashid-ad-din T.1 p. 126.

²⁷ *The Mission of Friar William of Rubruck. His journey to the court of the Great Khan Möngke 1253-1255.* Tr. by Peter Jackson; Introd., notes and appendices by Peter Jackson with David Morgan (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1990). The most substantial first-hand early Western account of the Mongols. An older translation of Rubruck is available on-line at: <https://depts.washington.edu/silkroad/texts/rubruck.html>. Cf. also Knobloch p. 147.

Zanabazar, who, with his brother the Tüsiyetu Khan were the most influential Khalkha politicians of the last period of Mongolian independence. ²⁸



Fig.2: Karakorum and Erdene Zuu-google maps(according to DAI Bonn source).

The historical and political value of the Orkhon valley has been recognized not only by historians, but also of the modern Mongols who build their cultural identity on the heritage of the great nomadic empires. The Unesco list of the World cultural heritage evaluates its historical value in the following lines:

Overall, the Orkhon Valley retains a high level of authenticity as a continuous cultural landscape, reflecting the long-standing traditions of Central Asian nomadic pastoralism. The

²⁸. Abtai Sain Khan, ruler of the Khalkh Mongols and grandfather of Zanabazar, the first Jebtsundamba Khutuktu, ordered construction of the Erdene Zuu monastery in 1585. Building materials from Karakorum were re-used in its construction. The monastery was damaged in 1688 during one of the “Oirad wars” and rebuilt in the 18th century (by 1872 it had 62 temples and housed up to 1000 monks).

basic use of the land has remained consistent over the centuries and has not adversely affected the component archaeological features of the landscape, the authenticity of which remains high individually and collectively. Although some modern features have obtruded into the landscape, the way in which the landscape is used is still essentially traditionally nomadic, with herdsmen moving their flocks across it in season transhumance. The pastoral management regime of the grasslands and the continuing intangible and tangible cultural heritage associated with the nomadic way of life are integral to the property's continued authenticity.²⁹

²⁹ Source: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1081>.

2.4. The Orkhon valley in the light of current research

The Orkhon valley arouses interest of scholars and scientists since the end of the 19th century and from the early 20th century onwards it has been studied by numerous Mongolian and international archaeological expedititons. Especially in the last years the Orkhon valley attracts intensive attention of many scientific teams from different countries and institutions. These current researches are very useful also for explanation of Khöshöö Tsaidam historical context and provide interesting comparative materials for their further research.³⁰ The main role in the focused historical period play the German expeditions, namely the *University of Bonn* and *Deutsches Archäologisches Institut (Commission for Archaeology of Non-European Cultures KAAK DAI Bonn)* cooperating with *Mongolian Institute of Archaeology MAS* on many long-termed projects. Except the running excavation project of Karakorum (since 2000), also the five-year research of Kharabalgasun fortress has been initiated recently in 2009. Meanwhile also a wide-spectral spatial prospection including the geomagnetic research and surface surveys was carried out throughout the wide territory of Orkhon.³¹ This surface prospecting has revealed many sites, mostly of medieval origin, and collected a large amount of interesting material. Some of these results are considered even in this thesis as they seem to have predictive value relative to the Khöshöö Tsaidam context. Especially the research of the nearby Kharabalgasun fortress, yet not finished, is promising to bring a new hope into clarification of the relationships between the Turkic and following Uyghur kaganate, both based on the same ethnic mixture and perhaps a strong cultural affinity. The closest paralel nevertheless offers the neighbouring monument of Bilgä-khan, the twin of Kültegin's one, excavated by the joint Turkish-Mongolian expedition supported by *Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency (TICA, TIKa)* in 2001-2003. Though not fully published yet, the Turkish results yielded lot of valuable information.³²

³⁰ For example the latest Mongol-Chinese projects excavating the Uyghur cemeteries nearby Khudjirt (Khotont sum, Olon dov) published in: *Arheologiin sudlal* XXX, Fasc. I-IV, Ulaanbaatar 2011.

³¹ „Geo-Archaeology in the Steppe – Reconstruction of Cultural Landscape in the Orkhon valley, Central Mongolia“ project headed by the Department of Pre- and Early Historical Archaeology of Bonn University in 2008 – 2011 (results available in: *Studia Archaeologica Instituti Archaeologici Academiae Scientiarum Mongolicae (Arheologiin sudlal)*, Tomus XXX, Fasc. 5, Ulaanbaatar 2011, p. 69)

³² Information available for example in publication of Turkish International Cooperation Administration; The project of the Turkish monuments in Mongolia, 2003 studies, Ankara 2005.

2.5. History of Turkic studies in Orkhon valley

2.5.1. Khöshöö-Tsaidam

The monuments of Turkic aristocracy in Khöshöö-Tsaidam, built in the memory of the leaders of the Second Eastern Khaganate, became the most important points of turkological research in Central Asia; not only due to its historical value itself, but, above all, due to the accurate dating of construction linked with the specific historical events and personalities, mentioned in the inscriptions carved on memorial stelae. The history of its research has a very long tradition involving three main phases; first phase 1889 – 1912 is linked with the rediscovery of the site on account of the pioneer and adventurous expeditions responsible for first ethno-archaeological surveys and attempts of its protection. Within this period the Turkic runic alphabet had been finally deciphered,³³ based on the bilingual Orkhon Turk-Chinese inscriptions, and site had been published in frame of wider elaboration of Yenisei- Orkhon runic writing monuments. Second phase of examination 1924 – 1958 included many episodes and was closed by larger archaeological research. Third phase, the present stage dates from 1997 and it is connected with massive Turkish-Mongolian and German researches of Orkhon valley.

The Orkhon memorials were first discovered in 1889 by the Russian scientist N. M. Jadrincev, a scientist connected with the beginnings of the archaeological researches in Mongolia. His expedition was sent by Eastern-Siberian department of RGO from Irkutsk and the main target was mapping and examining of the Orkhon Valley monuments, referenced by the travellers of 13th and also 19th century AD (Plano Carpini, William Rubruck, Marco Polo; M. V. Pevcov, I. V. Paderin, G. N. Potanin etc.). Beside the Erdene-Dzuu and Kharabalgasun ruins prospection he had documented the monuments of Khöshöö-Tsaidam, carried out measurements of some stone statues and taken estampages of yet undeciphered inscriptions, which promising bilingual potential he had already appreciated. Except the two main Orkhon royal memorials he detected another two in northern neighbourhood, less luxurious, consisting of stone plates (the sarcophaguses) of engraved floral ornament instead of cubic sacrificial stones, shorter rows of balbals and less numerous statues, which however also bore

³³ Danish philologist Vilhelm Thomsen deciphered Orkhon inscriptions in 1893 (The Orkhon Inscriptions: Being a Translation of Professor Vilhelm Thomsen's Final Danish Rendering" in Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies, University of London, Vol. 5, No. 4 (1930), pp. 861-876).

runes and marks (tamgas). These should belong to some eminent persons according to Jadrincev's description, who supposedly connected them with the rulers of Kharabalgasun or Karakorum.³⁴ Jadrincev's expedition with all its cartographical, ethnographical and archeological notes on history of Central Asia laid the foundation stone of later scientific research of archaeological monuments in Mongolia.

Jadrincev's reconnaissance encouraged the following research of the site of Khöshöo Tsaidam in 1890 that had been done by the Finnish expedition of A. O. Heikel,³⁵ focused on summary research of written records in the wide territory of Lake Baikal and Yenisei areas.

One year later the Russian Academy of Sciences set an Orkhon expedition led by V. V. Radlov, which had discovered and described large number of archaeological sites.³⁶ Amongst all of them Radlov first had made a small excavation of the monument of Bilgä-khan, that had indicated not a funeral but rather memorial character of the site.

Except the scientific expeditions another activities left traces on the sites in recent history. In 1896/7 a Chinese government in Northern Mongolia Czjan-czjun of Uliastay decided to protect the stela of Kültegin, fallen and damaged after the stone turtle broke into pieces. Stela has been moved on a new pedestal, cut off from a sacrificial stone laying in the westernmost part of the area. For better protection against the weather conditions the stela was also covered by a roofed construction. In 1909 the pavilion was already damaged as was noticed by the French expedition of V. de Lacoste, therefore the last Manchu amban, the governor of Urga San'-do, had built a new pavilion in 1911.³⁷

In 1912 in frame of Russian committee research of Central and Eastern Asia another expedition worked on the memorials of Khöshöo-Tsaidam. V. L. Kotvic excavated a smaller monument located northwards, where he had uncovered a small pit with a coal pieces and also a newly found stone statue in Kül-Tegin monument area, which had been moved to St. Petersburg.³⁸ Further excavation in 1933-4 paid attention to all monuments in Khöshöo-Tsaidam, which had been partly excavated by D. D. Bukinic. Two northern moulds/mounds,

³⁴ The historical identity of the site was still unknown at that time. Expedition results had been summarized in Jadrincev's report the very same year; Ядринцев Н. М., Предварительный отчет о поездке с археологической и этнографической целью в Северную Монголию и вершины Орхона. ВСОРГО, Иркутск, 1889.

³⁵ Heikel, 1892

³⁶ Results of this expedition were carried out in „Sbornik trudov Orkhonskoj ekspedicii“ and „Atlasy drevnostej Mongolii“.

³⁷ Kotvic, 1914

³⁸ Kotvic, 1915

considered tombs of Bilgä-Khan and Kül-Tegin by Radlov, were in fact memorials of two unknown Turkic aristocrats.

Second attempt of reconstruction and protection of the memorials came in 1935, initiated by the Mongolian writer D. Tsatsagdorj, and wooden roofed constructions had been built over the stelas of Bilgä-Khan and Kül-Tegin and also in the memorial of Tonyukuk in the Nalaikha somon. Later in 1970 all these sites were fenced.

First large-scaled excavation in Khöshöö Tsaidam is linked with the Czechoslovak-Mongolian expedition led by L. Jisl and N. Ser-Odjav, which examined the Kül-Tegin monument. Within this research finally the conception of the memorial and its construction features was uncovered. Since this first bigger research some Russian-Mongolian teams worked on Turkic memorial complexes in 80's and brought new results on their typology.³⁹ Another Mongolian-Japanese took place in 1996-8 and the project called "Epigraphica" was focused on revision of epigraphic monuments and aerial prospection of the Turkic monuments, carried out in a topographical plan.

The latest research on Orkhon memorials organized by the Turkish-Mongolian expedition working in Orkhon since 1997, had had a broad-spectrum targeting from archaeological, epigraphic, topographical, geophysical and photogrammetric research to restoration and conservation of Bilgä-Khan and Kül-Tegin memorials. Amongst the main tasks also the topographical plan of Khöshöö Tsaidam and geomagnetic survey of both memorials were made. Also the samples from the stone stelas with inscriptions and statues were taken for laboratory analyses. Excavation work on Bilgä-Khan monument and another small one situated close to the Kül-Tegin's one started in 2000. The small unknown memorial was made of four stone plates decorated with two carved phoenixes facing each other in heraldic position. Within the excavation a small golden dish and a spoon-like artefact was found.⁴⁰ The results of Turkish-Mongolian research are to be summarized in the following chapter.

³⁹ Voitov, 1996; Bayar, 1997

⁴⁰ Bayar, 2004, p. 74

2.5.2. The research of Kül-Tegin monument

The complete description of archaeological situations is included in the translation of Jisl's report of 1958 (see the attachment 8.2.), for ease of reference I bring a short summary of the whole conception with is based on the original report. As the whole area had been excavated through a method of cross trenching, subsequently divided into 15 sunken features in accordance with demands of the archaeological situation, the main sondage line had cut the monument in (longitudinal) east-west axis. The structural conception was so far uncovered as follows:

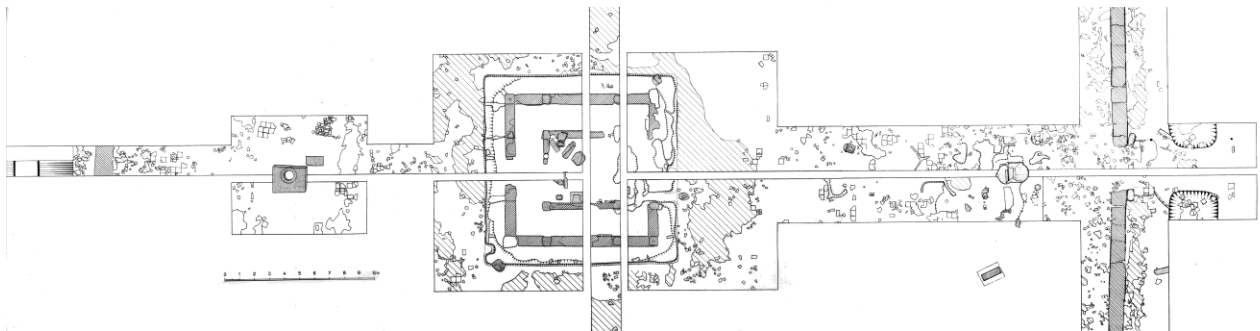


Fig.3: Groundplan of excavated area (according L. Jisl 1958)

Access to the area from outside was bordered by 3 km long row of balbals in east-west direction, which should represent the number of defeated enemies according to the inscription. In the time of Jisl's expedition still 169 of them had been preserved (standing or lying) and there is a high probability that such a balbals also surrounded at least the eastern walls (remnants scattered nearby te gate) if not the whole monument in general. The row of balbals offers also subsidiary information about the period of its erection. Contrary to strict Chinese architectural parameters applied in the whole monument, Turkic builders basically followed the eastern direction in a much more relaxed way by observing the sunrise position. Therefore a deviation is noticed in the line of stones, running till point of 1800 m directly eastwards, then slightly diverts to the south-east direction and after another 1 km the line goes back again to the east. As the deviation presents $3^{\circ}30'$ to the south, it is obvious that balbals were built after the summer solstice time, when the ecliptic was slowly going to the south. This fact corresponds to the date 1. 8. 732, mentioned on the stela. ⁴¹

⁴¹ (Jisl, 1959, p. 90) The line of balbals have been measured by the expedition in 1958 as illustrates one of the plans (plan of measurement in attachment, 9.2), but in current terrain is almost unreadable. Some of the balbals could be traced yet, fallen and half-buried under the surface, but the row could be partly reconstructed just in first 500

The funerary area itself has a rectangular shape measuring 67.25 x 28.85 meters, originally surrounded by a timbered ditch (1.50 – 2 m narrow) and approximately 1 m thick fence wall from hard-packed grey clay, plastered and red painted. Wall and ditch were interrupted from the entrance gate on the east side. The inner area looked like a paved courtyard with separate objects of cult along east-west line: funerary runic stela on turtles back, row of statues, central shrine – the place of cult, and sacrificial stone in the western end.

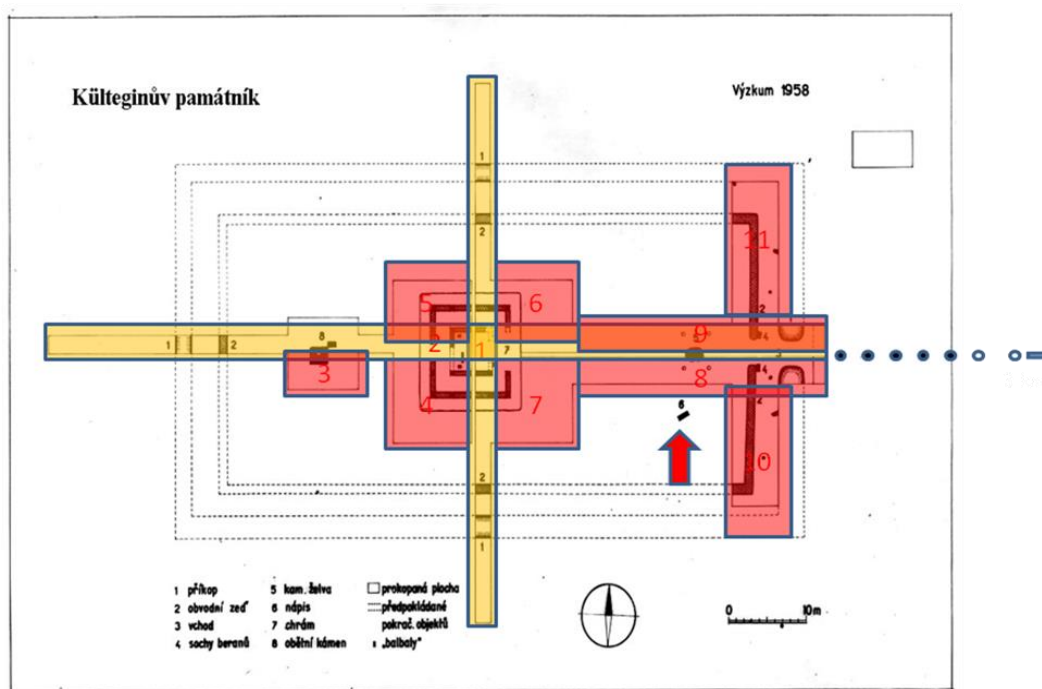


Fig.4: Kül-Tegin monument; layout plan of the excavated part and marked trenches (according Jisl, 1958)

2.5.2.1. *The entrance part* (Trench 2, 8, 9)

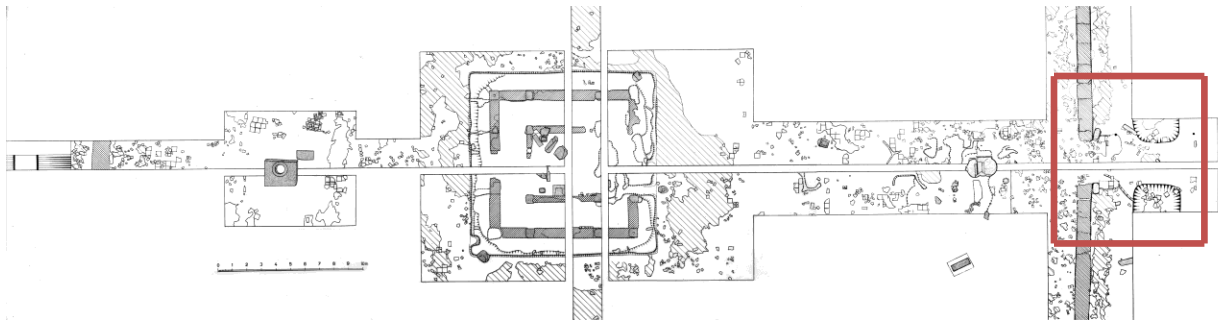


Fig.5: Groundplan of excavated area with marked entrance part.

Complex was accessible from east by a paved path, going from the ditch terminals to the slightly elevated paved doorstep, most likely covered with a roof (roof tiles fragments scattered, red plaster and clay facade decorations found nearby). Entrance door itself was 3 m wide and guarded by sculptures of two rams (*Fig.6*), facing each other.⁴² From the inner side of the entrance was a small hollow 3.30 m long (N-S), a small water basin connected per pipes with a southern terminal of a ditch. This equipment could have had perhaps not only practical (drain off the rainwater) but at the same time a cultic function⁴³. According to L. Jisl observation this explanation is also supported by positioning the pool as an obstruction in the entrance door and even by the fact, that the drain pipes mouth led from the rim of the pool instead of bottom, what should keep the water inside as much as possible.



Fig.6: Two rams facing each other in gate (Kleibl 1958).

⁴² Similar in the case of Bilgä-Khan's monument.

⁴³ Entering the underworld through a water or water element as a protection against the evil spirits is quite common idea, met by many cultures.

2.5.2.2. *Stone turtle and stela (Trench 2,8,9)*

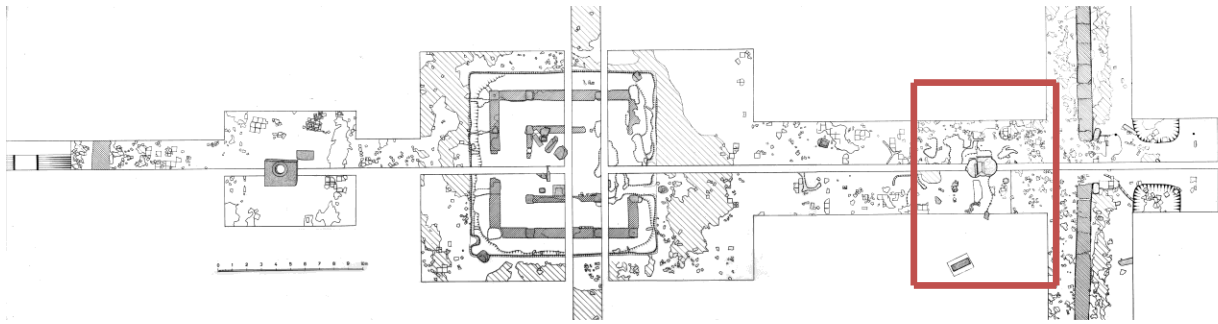


Fig.7: *Groundplan of excavated area with marked turtle part.*

According to similar findings of plaster and roof tile fragments further behind the entrance animals (ca 8 meters in the west direction) originally stood a small pavilion (3.20 x 3.75 m), built from hard-packed and white plastered clay. Simple saddle roof of wide roof tiles was supported by 4 wooden columns. On the façade was probably fastened a clay relief of a dragon head whose purpose is yet not clarified.⁴⁴ This pavilion protected a stone turtle (2.25 m long) facing towards the shrine and bearing a funerary stela with bilingual Turko-Chinese inscription, describing Kül-Tegins life and deeds.⁴⁵ Due to the damage of turtle, the stela was moved (1896-7) to a secondary position and fixed on a new pedestal, unfortunately cut off from the sacrificial stone. The pavilion was at least twice restored (1896/7, 1911), but in 1958 just fragments of roof tiles and bricks left to remind this attempts of renovation.



Fig.8: *Runic stela, broken turtle and clay relief (Nr.Kult 5558). Kleibl 1958.*

⁴⁴ Dragon reliefs may be perhaps linked with some apotropaic function as Jisl suggested, but it could also remind the Chinese symbolics of royal family, where the dragon is used as an Emperor's mark and phoenix as sign of Empress (Olivová, 2008, p. 78). According to oral information some foreign colleagues do not consider this image for dragon but rather for some daimonic creature what would turn our attention back to the magical-apotropaic function. Unless the position of the sculpture is reconstructed, it is hard to interpret its significance.

⁴⁵ „The (Chinese) inscription for the monument was written by emperor himself“ (Liou Sü (887-946), *T'iou Tchang shu*, 194 A. 15a; translation of Dr. Timoteus Pokora found in Jisl's estate).

2.5.2.3. *Processional path* (Trench 2,6,7,8,9)

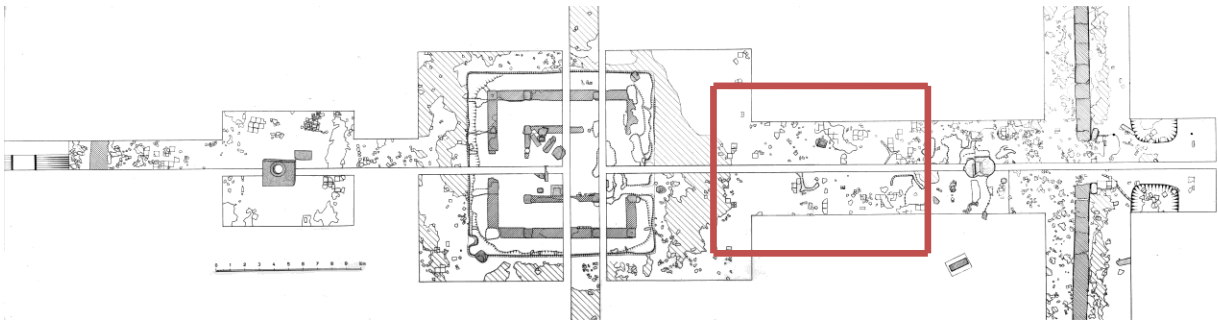


Fig.9: Groundplan of excavated area with processional path marked.

The turtle pavilion was probably connected with the central shrine by a passageway lined with marbled stone sculptures of worshippers and officials, whose fragments were scattered all over then surface. During the time of Jisl's exvavation there were already preserved only few of them: standing man with a sword (or battle axe), weeping woman with a scarf, two kneeling men and a man holding a disc-shape artefact. Statue of man kneeling on one knee, mentioned in older sources, was said to be thrown into the Orkhon River according to eye-witnesses of local herdsman.⁴⁶ According to colour traces some of the plastics were probably polychromic. Due to the huge devastation it is impossible to guess how many sculptures originally accompanied the monument and what was their original appearance. Nevertheless the passageway could be undoubtedly compared to the tradition of Chinese processional paths of the imperial tombs, as will be discussed later.



Fig.10: Man with sword (FP48226), kneeling man (FP000048254),woman with scarf (FP48216),(Kleibl 1958.

⁴⁶ Jisl, 1959 e.p. 157.

2.5.2.4. *The central shrine (Trench 1,2,4,5,6,7)*

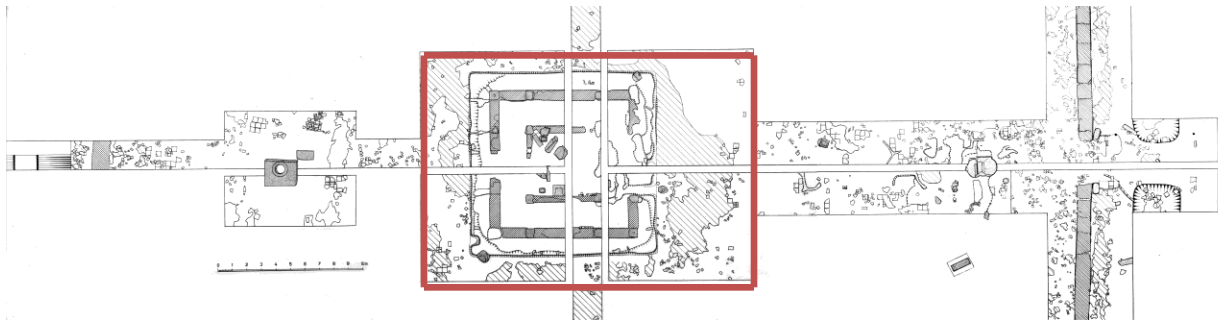


Fig.11: Groundplan of excavated area with shrine area marked.

The main shrine was built approximately in the centre of the area on an artificial pedestal from hard-packed grey clay (13 x 13 m large and 0.86- 0.88 m high), which was originally accessible from east and west side by steps. Pedestal surface and steps were paved with floor tiles. Temple building on the top was of a square shape with dimensions approximately 10.25 x 10.25 m and its space was divided by external and internal wall into two parts – inner room and ambit. Walls were built from slightly burnt bricks in „opus spicatum“, their surface was white plastered and red painted. Analogous to the turtle pavilion, there was a dragon clay relief fixed on the façade, which had been also somehow decorated with cannellured clay slabs. Gutter tiled roof was carried by 16 wooden columns, fixed in stone bases. Gutter tiles finials had a shape of discs decorated with floral motifs in form of eight-leave rosettes, slightly different type than the Bilgä-Khan ones (*Fig.12*).



Fig.12: Gutter tile finial from Kül-Tegin (a) compared to Bilgä-Khan type (b).

The inner room of the shrine (4.40 x 4.40 m) was apparently a place of worship with sitting statues of Kül-Tegin and his wife and two standing priests or servants beside the smoothed stone slab. Hard to tell, if it could be an altar or remnants of sarcophagus, because its

surroundings was badly harmed by robbery trenches.⁴⁷ Sacrificial character of this place is also indicated with 3 deep pits with pottery offerings and other materials, situated in front of the stone slab – an altar (?). In one pit the famous head of Kül-Tegin, his tiara and parts of his wife's statue were found.



Fig.13: Tiara of Kül-Tegin statue (FT 19540, Kleibl 1958; sacrificial pit Nr. 2), fragment of stamped pottery (KE 37/Kult 5058; sacrificial pit Nr. 3), fragment of stamped roof tile (ST 29/Kult 558; sacrificial pit Nr. 1).

With high probability this happened in the wake of violent outrage and so far it might be connected with the horizon of destruction. Inside the shrine were found many fragments of red painted plaster including a piece with floral patterns, what indicates that the inner walls were decorated with paintings. According to Chinese written sources there had been Kül-Tegin's battle scenes and portraits painted on the four inner walls, depicted by famous Chinese craftsmen sent by emperor.⁴⁸ Among the numerous finds uncovered in the destruction of shrine were also fragments of small marble plastics (or vessels), metal artefacts and fragments of roof tiles.



Fig.14: Findings from shrine destruction: bronze buckles, gilt iron buckle, shoe spear (Kult 1458b), marble ram head (frg. of vessel? Kult 1358e), iron arrowheads (Kult 1458b); Kleibl 1958.

⁴⁷ In the preliminary report Jisl suggests a reconstruction, that the two sitting statues of Kül-Tegin and his wife was placed on the top of marble-slabled altar, meanwhile on each side of it was standing the priest or adjutant. (Jisl 1959 a: 93).

⁴⁸ „They painted the pictures with such a skill and natural manner that (the Türks) thought they never seen the like.“ after Liou Sü (887-946), *Yiou Tchang shu*, 194v A. 15a and Ou-yang Siou (998-1061), *Sin Tchang shu*, 215 B. 2b, Translations of Dr. Timoteus Pokora from Jisl's estate.

2.5.2.5. *The sacrificial stone (Trench 2,3)*

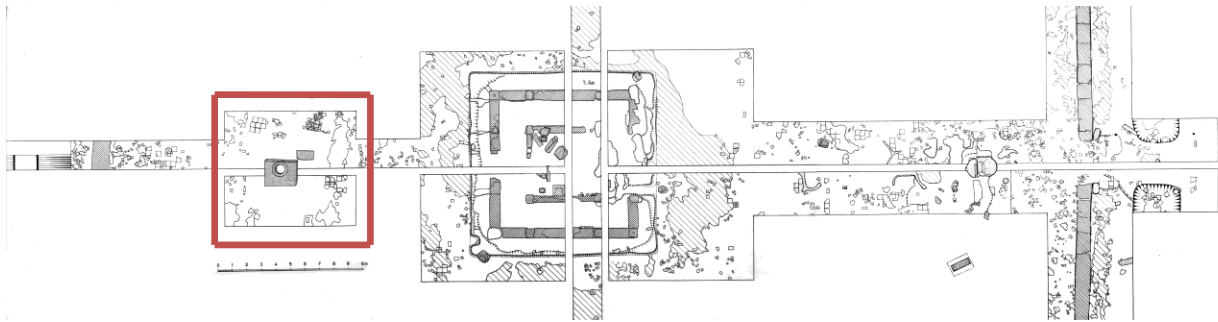


Fig.15: Groundplan of excavated area with sacrificial stone marked.

Behind the Kül-Tegins shrine on the west side, as the last part of this monument, was placed so called „sacrificial stone“. This granite stone had an ashlar shape (2.23 x 2.23 x 1.15 m) with slightly convexed flanks and its original weight is supposed to be some 14.3 t (before cut-off in 1896/7). A cylindrical opening – sacrificial hole – in the middle was filled up to 0.60 m with soil, fragments of tiles, recent finds and pottery – from ancient till modern Chinese stoneware. This fact points to a long tradition of worship of this place.⁴⁹ Just under this sacrificial hole a furnace was found in a pit, 0.18 m deep and 0.40 m in diameter, containing burnt slate and coils, but no burnt bones or indication of the expected grave were found here. Sacrificial stone reposed on a low clay paved pedestal with roof tiles and mortary fragments all around, so it comes to an idea that it was covered by some similar pavilion as the turtle. Even another fragment of façade clay dragon relief was found here (*Fig.16*).



Fig.16: Clay dragon eye (SP 39/Kult 4158), gutter tile finial (ST 20/ Kult 5458), pottery (KE 55/ Kult 5358)

⁴⁹ Even nowadays, 50 years after excavation, there has been some new offerings thrown inside as paper money etc. which clearly shows the strong and continuing tradition of the place of worship.

Due to lack of time and numerous robbery trenches the research was terminated at this point and site had been conserved for the next season.⁵⁰

2.5.3. The research of Bilgä-Khan monument

Analyses of the research of the Kül-Tegin monument can't be considered without regarding the results of TIKA research of neighbouring Bilgä-Khan monument. Although not all Turkish results are currently available, at least basic comparison is very useful. Both monuments bear the same type of rectangular fenced form and in the E-W axis follow the same architectonic conception; bilingual stela with stone turtle, central shrine of cult and sacrificial stone. Most of the constructive features are also identical.

Bilgä-Khan memorial lies approximately 1 km southern to the Kül-Tegin and it is the bigger one of them. According to the recent researches another memorials have been discovered, in total number of seven (Khöshöö Tsaidam 1-7), some of these five smaller memorials are of traditional Turkic form of rectangular fence without inscriptions and nameless.⁵¹ Perhaps they belong to some Turkic aristocrats, maybe the members of ruling clan or some high officials. All these memorials as the Bilgä-khan's have been documented in a wide frame of the topographic plan of Khöshöö-Tsaidam, covering the area of 20 km².⁵²

The Bilgä-Khan memorial is slightly bigger, covering the area of 90 x 60 m with E-W orientation as the Kül-Tegin's one and also as other Turkic funeral monuments. Surface of the area was covered with an aeolic sand layer, in some parts up to 1 m thickness. The bilingual stela was secondary located beside the marble turtle inside the protective iron fence in the eastern part of monument. Around these fragments also some sculpture parts were found; amongst them the statue of Bilgä-Khan and his wife Pofu, some fragment of sitting figure and torso of a stone lion, all of them harmed. Other sculptural fragments were scattered in the fence surroundings. In the western part a stone cube block with central opening, analogical to

⁵⁰ The findings themselves are kept in Mongolia, partly in Institute of Archaeology MAS in Ulaanbaator and partly in the National Museum of Mongolian History in Ulaanbaator. These are not much numerous, mainly roof tiles, facade decorations, plaster pieces, different fragment of sculptures and pottery and also few metal artefacts (see the catalogues in attachment). Some of the sculptures had been left in the site and at present time they are kept in the Khöshöö Tsaidam museum, built by Turkish TIKA (Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency) in 2008/9.

⁵¹ Bayar, 2003, p. 77. Some of these small monuments are also mentioned by L. Jisl in his report.

⁵² Bayar, 2004, p. 75

the Kül-Tegin's one was found and right beside the stone fence of four plates with carved decoration of bird figures (perhaps depicting phoenixes). Rest of the monument surface was covered with vegetation.

The whole area was excavated with a E-W trench measuring 10 x 70 m and crossing alongside all the main parts of memorial from the entrance to the sacrificial stone in the western end. Memorial was protected by earthen wall of quadratic form and a ditch around. The wall dimensions were 72 x 36 m and the ditch, in the distance of 6 m from the wall, was 6 m wide and 2 m deep. The excavation works did not uncover any rests of wooden construction as in the memorial of Kül-Tegin.⁵³

Inside the ditch in its N part were found fragments of a big -shaped pottery, decorated with a stamped pattern of rhomboids, analogical to the pottery found in Khara-Balgasun, the ancient Ordu-Balyk, and other Uyghur sites;⁵⁴ the pottery is of the very same type as findings from Kül-Tegin's site (*Fig. 17*).

In between the wall and the ditch nine broken *balbals* were uncovered, some of them in their original position. Another two were found along the northern wall. With high probability such *balbals* were originally surrounding the whole area along the wall;⁵⁵ this supports a hypothesis suggested by L. Jisl and based on his observation of Kül-Tegin's memorial.⁵⁶

Entrance gap was located in the E side of the area, guarded by two stone sculptures of rams,⁵⁷ but no remnants of gate and also no water basin or drainage system were uncovered as in the entrance of Kül-Tegin, what is quite striking difference in comparison to the general similarity of other details.⁵⁸

Some 8 meters westwards from the entrance a marble block in shape of turtle was found, whose head was broken off. In the middle the sculpture was harmed in form of crack, caused by the fall of 4m high stone stela, originally set on the turtle's back. As the Kül-Tegin's one, the turtle was facing towards the central shrine on the W side and placed on an earthen hard-packed 40 cm high platform, faced by brick layer. All around were found numerous fragments

⁵³ Bayar, 2004, p. 76

⁵⁴ Dtto, Chudjakov, Ceveendorj, 1982.

⁵⁵ Bayar, 2004, p. 76,

⁵⁶ Jisl, 1959.

⁵⁷ Jisl mentions the lions instead, but perhaps there was some confusion with other sculptures of Bilgä-khan.

⁵⁸ I dare to suppose that this feature was rather not detected than absent at all.

of mortar, plaster and roof tiles indicating that the turtle with stela were originally covered with some roofed construction.⁵⁹

Also the central shrine construction showed resemblance with the Kül-Tegin's one including the 80 – 100 cm high platform. But the area itself was slightly larger as the whole memorial, platform measuring 16 x 16 m and the shrine 13 x 13 m. In front of the shrine entrance were uncovered a sacrificed ram remnants, some 62 cm under the surface level. The bones were not placed in a vessel, as it appears in the stone fences in Altai area,⁶⁰ but were laid directly on the ground. Despite the fact, that the dating of this sacrifice is not possible, prof. D. Bayar suggested very interesting comparison with the sacrificial practices of Mongolian herdsmen based on the way of the bones position.⁶¹ Taking into account the recent sacrificial activities in the Kül-Tegin's monument, also this act could belong to the Mongolian times. Inside the shrine the statues of Bilgä-Khan and his wife Pofu were originally situated and this place undoubtedly served for ceremonies (*Fig.17*).

Analogically to the Kül-Tegin's even this memorial was enclosed by a large granite block (240 x 228 x 130 cm) with central opening. Inside the opening were uncovered numerous finds as bones of sacrificed animals and also some small broken parts of the stela with runic inscription. Excavation around the sacrificial stone uncovered fired spots containing ashes, coals and animal bones, including a horse skull. In the vicinity of the sacrificial stone, 170 cm northward, was situated a typical Turkic stone fence (160 x 130 cm) of plates with engraved decoration;⁶² a feature that is missing in Kül-Tegin's monument from unknown reason.⁶³

This place offered the biggest surprise of the research. In between the stone and fence some 30 cm under the surface level a treasure was found. In the layer of red fired clay in the space of dimensions 40 x 80 x 30 cm were subsequently uncovered 1878 silver, 78 golden and 304 bronze artefacts and 26 precious stones. The most numerous finds were silver plates with the

⁵⁹ On both places of Bilgä-Khan and Kül-Tegin monuments were found the same types of building material. These could be partly connected with the reconstruction in the beginning of 20th century, but they presumably follow some older type of construction.

⁶⁰ Kubarev, V.D., 1984, p. 55-56.

⁶¹ Limbs of the animal were laid at the bottom, upon them the body was stowed, topped with the ram skull (Bayar, 2004, p. 78).

⁶² These stone elements are very usual parts of Turkic funeral architecture, together with a typical fence deserving particular attention - their possible sense and origin is to be analysed within the chapter about architectonical conception and funeral rite.

⁶³ Whether this stone fence was only damaged within the past or has really never been there is hard to tell and both possibilities should be considered. In Bilgä-Khan's case it may be a stronger combination of Turkic and Chinese features or it might even indicate the presence of another personal cult (his wife or son?). This issue can not be solved without more information about the research but open a space for many interesting considerations.

eight-leave rosette relief, silver and golden vessels, belt-buckles and appliques. Among the most interesting findings are the two silver deer figures, decorated with gold engraved details, and set of miniature vessels (mugs and cups), perhaps used for sacrificial purposes.⁶⁴ The unique artefact presents a golden tiara of very similar type as is depicted on the head of the Kül-Tegin statue, decorated with embossed floral motifs and a bird of prey with precious stone pendant in the forehead part.⁶⁵



Fig.17: Sacrificed ram remnants, pottery and Bilgä-Khan's treasure (according Bayar 2004).

⁶⁴ Type of the vessels corresponds to the findings from Kurai, Tuekta, Justyd I and VII and other Altai sites (Kiselev 1949, Kubarev V.D. 1979, Kubarev V.D., Bayar D. 2002)

⁶⁵ The findings themselves are kept in Mongolia, partly in Institute of Archaeology MAS in Ulaanbaator, partly in the National Museum of Mongolian History in Ulaanbaator and some (namely the sculptures) are kept in the Khöshöö Tsaidam museum, built by Turkish TIKa (Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency) in 2008/9. The TIKa project followed up on the Turkish research of Bilgä-khan monument (2001-2003) in order to protect the stone features and sculptures in the site. The project was aimed partly to the restoration and reconstruction of the Orkhon monuments, partly to build a museum to shelter the original artefacts from the weather and human activity.

2.6. Questions of Turkological studies

The Turkic problematic, especially questions of early history and ethnogenesis of Turkic tribes, is very wide and complicated topic to study, dealt by historians, philologists, religionists, ethnologists and archaeologists together. Due to its eminent historical role Khöshöö Tsaidam monuments in the Orkhon Valley open a number of key topics exceeding into many scientific branches. This work does not attempt to answer numerous questions of Turkic problematic but rather to outline some interesting aspects and issues, based on observation of Khöshöö Tsaidam monuments that should be regarded in further investigation. The research of Kül-Tegin and Bilgä-Khan memorials together represent only small piece of the historical puzzle, but offers a lots of interesting points of view to consider in following chapters.

3. Kül-Tegin monument

A mirror of historical and social events inside the Second Turkic khaganate

“When the blue sky above and the brown earth below were created, between them a human being was created. Over the human beings, my ancestors Bumin Kagan and Istemi Kagan ruled. They ruled people by Turkish laws, they led them and succeeded.”⁶⁶

The runic monuments emerge in the large territory occupied by the Turkic ethnics in Southern Siberia, Central and Eastern Asia in connection with the consolidation of the first early medieval state formations. Despite the strongly propagandistic character of most inscriptions they authentically reflect contemporary events. Amongst them the Khōshōō Tsaidam texts represent the supreme form of Turkic writing, therefore I decided to give them the word between the lines to gloss the Turkic history.

3.1. Brief introduction into the history of Turkic khaganates

The First Turkic khaganate (551 – 744 n.l.) arose on the territory of Northern Mongolia after the defeat of Juan-Juan khaganate.⁶⁷ The Bumin kaghan (T’u-men) made in 546 AD a preventive strike against the rebellious groups of Tiele and Uyghurs, planning a revolt against the Juan-Juan rulers. For the successful intervention he asked for the Juan-Juan princess in order to create a kinship with the ruler family. However Juan-Juan kaghan Anagui refused to

⁶⁶ The Kül-Tegin Inscription, 1st side, line 1.

⁶⁷ The Juan-Juan tribes (also called *Zhouan Zhou-zhan*, *Juan-Juan* or *Nirun*) which established the Juan-Juan or Nirun khaganate in 5th century AD on the territory of Mongolia from Manchurian border to the Turfan, are sometimes labelled as pseudo-avar and connected with the later Avar invasions into Europe in the middle of 6th century AD. But this identification is highly debated and being questioned based on many facts discussed among contemporary scholars. The ethnic belonging of Juan-Juan to the Turkic speaking tribes appears in the light of modern linguistic research as questionable as the Juan-Juan texts – though written in the Turkic runic script – indicate many grammar and language deviations from the Turkic dialects. Therefore is more probable that in the Sayan-Altai environment is yet another non-Turkic ethnics of unknown origin. After the decay of Xiongnu federation the Juan-Juans probably formed a new confederation led by Xianbei people who remained in the Mongolian steppes after most Xianbei migrated south to Northern China and set up various kingdoms. The Avars in Europe rather present a community of nomadic tribes of various origins which may also contain some residua of expelled Juan-Juan tribes, but generally it was a mixture of ethnically different invaders labelled by one dominant name – similarly as their predecessor Huns and later Tatars (Golden, Peter B. (1992). *An Introduction to the History of the Turkic Peoples: Ethnogenesis and State-Formation in Medieval and Early Modern Eurasia and the Middle East*, pp. 76-79. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz).

give his daughter to someone he called a "blacksmith slave"⁶⁸ Outraged Bumin turned to the Western Wei (535 -554), a successor state of the Northern Wei (T'o-pa, Toba), and in 551 obtained a bride from Chinese court. The following year 552 he initiated revolt against the Juan-Juan and defeated them, establishing the First Turkic khaganate in Ötüken. Anagui committed a suicide, Juan-Juan state collapsed and remnants of Juan-Juan fled to the Eastern Wei. Turks persuaded them and exterminated them from the historical map of Inner Asia.

When the blue sky above and the brown earth below were created, between them a human being was created. Over the human beings, my ancestors Bumin Kagan and Istemi Kagan ruled. They ruled people by Turkish laws, they led them and succeeded.

From all four sides there were enemies. They sent their lance-bearing armies to conquer all those people in the four quarters of the world and made them still. They made bow those, who had heads and made kneel those, who had knees. To eastwards up to the Kadyrkhan mountain forests and westwards as far as the Iron Gate they went on campaign

There were Kok (Blue) Turks between the two boundaries, having neither rulers nor masters. Wise kagans were they. Great kagans were they. Their buyruqs (officials), too, were wise and brave, indeed. They were great too. Both the lords and people were straightforward and honest. For this reason, kagans were able to rule the state..⁶⁹

During the reign of Muqan kaghan (Muhan, 553 – 572) the Turkic khaganate became a hegemon in the Central and Eastern Asia and his power reached from the Korean Gulf in the east to the Caspian Sea in the west and from the southern deserts up to the Baikal Lake in the north. The military-political heyday of the khaganate in the middle of the 6th century AD resulted in the early feudal restructuralization and hierarchization of the Turkic society. The continuous expansive politics and disputes with the conquered tribes, however, caused permanent inner instability and induced riots. This precarious situation was even intensified

⁶⁸ As Anagui's "blacksmith slave" (鍛奴 / 锻奴, Pinyin: duànnú, Wade-Giles: tuan-nu) comment was recorded in Chinese chronicles, some claim that the Göktürks were indeed blacksmith servants for the Juan-Juan elite and that "blacksmith slavery" may indicate a form of vassalage within Juan-Juan society. This reference indicates that the Turks specialized in metallurgy, although it is unclear if they were miners or, indeed, blacksmiths. Whatever the case, that the Turks were "slaves" need not be taken literally, but probably represented a form of vassalage, or even unequal alliance. (Denis Sinor, *Inner Asia: history-civilization-languages : a syllabus*, Routledge, 1997).

⁶⁹ Kül-Tegin inscription, 1st side, line 1-3.

from outside by the economic and political rise of their southern neighbour – the Chinese empire during the reign of Sui dynasty (since 581 AD).

They (the lords) thus passed away (lit.: 'fled away to Tengri'). As mourners and laments there came from the east, the representatives of the people of the Böküli Čölüg (Korea), Tabyač (Chinese), Avar, Rome, Kirgiz, Uc-Quriqan, Otuz-Tatar, Qıtañ and Tatabi, this many people came and mourned and lamented. So famous kagans were they. Then the younger brothers became kagans, and their sons became kagans. But, apparently the younger brothers did not resemble their elder brothers. The sons did not resemble their fathers. Unwise kagans succeeded to the throne. Bad kagans succeeded to the throne. The lords and people went unfair. Since they give way to Chinese people, since they were defrauded by them, younger and elder brothers became revengeful and enemy to each other. Turkish people were exiled. The kagans were exiled. Chinese people made your kind sons slave; made your beautiful daughters servant. The Turkish lords forgot their Turkish titles. Those lords held Chinese titles and obeyed the Chinese emperor for fifty years, and gave their deeds and services to him. They went on campaigns up to the Böküli kagan in east, and as far as the Iron Gate in west. They gave the Chinese emperor to rule the state and lordship.⁷⁰

After the death of Taspar kaghan (Tatpar) in the very same year their mutual power rivalry escalated into a military conflict. Protracted wars had a heavy impact on the lives of common population deteriorated even by the worsened weather conditions and the country starved from hunger to such an extent that *instead of flour milled bones were used*. Crisis of the First Khaganate culminated in the disintegration of the Turkic empire into two parts (582 – 603 AD); the Eastern khaganate in the Eastern Asia (Göktürk empire with centre in Mongolia) and Western khaganate (Onogur empire /from “On-oq” – Ten Arrows tribes/ in Central Asia). Both states fought against each other and against the Chinese empire either. In 664 there was a provision of the new administrative reform due to which all areas north of Gobi Desert became a part of the Khangai province and territory of the Eastern Turks came under the Chinese rule. Turkic tribes were now addicted to the Chinese empire, they lost their rights and got a tax burden including the “blood tax” with mandatory participation in China’s military campaigns. Long-term worsening situation and political pressure ultimately resulted in the

⁷⁰ Kül-Tegin inscription, 1st side 4-8.

rebellion in 679 AD, which was initiated by descendant of the royal dynasty Ashina, but the rebellion was suppressed and internal discords together with strong Chinese interferences chased the new kaghan into the Gobi, where he was captured and executed in 681 AD.

Then, Turkish common people said as follows: "I had a state. Where is my state now? Who do I give my state to? I had kagans. Where is my kagan now? Who do I give my deeds and services to?" So they became hostile to the Chinese emperor. They became hostile and strike against, (but) they submitted again. They were near to annihilated. They couldn't get that they gave all their deeds and services, they had no warn against. All Turkish people degraded, they had no generation and went to ruins....⁷¹

One of his chieftains, the Kutlug-čor, another Ashina descendant, took seventeen men and resorted to the In'šan mountains. Consequently his troops were accompanied by numerous rebelants (cca 5000), mostly poor Turkic people who wanted to get back their herds and pastures. Their position was yet strengthened by the arrival of the Chinese emissary of Turkic Ashina origin, who instead of peace negotiations joined the Turkic troops. He achieved the Turkic name Tonyukuk, became the main leader of the Turkic army and the main advisor of Kutlug, who declared himself the Il-Täris kaghan. Still in the same year their army defeated the Chinese border troops and in 687 approached to the nowadays Beijing, where they were repulsed and forced to retreat to the Gobi.

..Then Turk Tengri above, Turkish holy Earth and Water said as follows: "in order to Turkish people would not go to ruin and in order to it should be a nation again", they rose my father Ilteris Kagan, and my mother Ilbilga Katun, to the top and sat them upwards on the throne. My father, the kagan, gathered together seventeen brave lords. All having heard that they went off on campaigns, those who were in towns went off to fields, and those who were on mountains went down, gathered together seventy brave men. Tengri gave them power, my father's army was like wolves, their enemies were like sheep. Having gone on campaigns forward and backward, gathered together seven hundred soldiers. After they had numbered seven hundred men, he brought them to order and trained people who had lost their state and their kagan, people who had turned to slaves and servants, people who had lost the Turkish institutions, brought to order and followed the rules of my ancestors. Then he gave people Tolis and Tardush states...⁷²

⁷¹ Kül-Tegin inscription, 1st side 9 -10.

⁷² Kül-Tegin inscription, 1st side 10 – 13.

The war was interrupted for next six years during which time Il-Täris with Tonyukuk continued on the inner politics aimed to break the Tokuz-Oghuz union and conquer their land. They reunited the tribes with a mixture of diplomacy and re-established the state in the Ötükäñ, the strategically advantageous Orkhon Valley. The area was separated from the Chinese border by a large wasteland hard to exceed for the Chinese infantry; on the contrary the Turkic cavalry it was easily accessible territory, namely in the autumn and winter time when is the right time for predatory incursions into the agricultural lands. The neighbouring territories of Az and Chik tribes (Tuva), Kyrgyz, Khitan, Tatar and other nomadic tribes in Southern Siberia and Manchuria, whose economic and political system was not as advanced, easily came under the domination of the Turkic kaghan what make the Turkic khaganate even stronger. Rich pastures of the river Orkhon, Tola and Selenge nourished numerous herds and supported the boom of nomadic pastoralism. All these aspects had strenghten the position of newly born Second Eastern khaganate.

Chinese people were our enemy in south, Tokuz-Oguz people in north with Baz Kagan on head were our enemies too. The Kirgiz, Quriqan, Otuz-Tatar, Qitan and Tatabi – they all were hostile to us. My father, the kagan, was on campaigns forty-seven times and engaged in twenty battles. By the grace of Tengri, he took the realm of those who had had a realm, and captured the kagan of those who had a kagan; he subjugated enemies. He made powerful enemies kneel and proud ones to bow.⁷³

After the death of Il-Täris kaghan his younger brother Mojo (691 – 716 AD) came to throne, runic inscription call him as Qapaghan kaghan. He continued with the military expansive politics and strenghtening of the khaganate status.

My father, the kagan,) after he had founded (such a great) empire and gained power, passed away (lit.: 'went flying'). Balbals erected for my father, the kagan, were first erected from Baz Kagan's balbals. My uncle succeeded to the throne then. My uncle, the kagan, organized and nourished Turkish people anew. He made poor people rich and few people numerous..⁷⁴

⁷³ Kül-Tegin inscription, 1st side 14 -15.

⁷⁴ Kül-Tegin inscription, 1st side, line 16.

His army six times attacked the Chinese territories along the river Huang He in 693 - 706 AD. The northern provinces were many times devastated by the nomadic invaders and the population was forcibly incorporated into the Turkic army. The military expansions reached as far as Iron Gate and Kadyrkan area (Dagestan) and from Tokharistan to Hingan forest in the East. Turks conquered the Kidans (696 – 697 AD), defeated the troops of Bayirqs, one of the Tokuz-Oghuz tribes (706 – 707 AD), in 709 they subdued the Tuvan Chiks and Az tribes and finally launched a military campaign across the Sayan to the Yenisei Kyrgyz territory. In 711 – 712 Turkic army attacked across the Altai the Syrdarja regions, but on at the border with Tokharistan they were stopped and repulsed by the Arabian tribes who were claiming this territory either. Turkic tribes penetrated also into Manchuria (Hingan) and to the Northern Gate of Eastern Turkestan (Beshbalyk, the capital of Western Turks), where they were defeated by the Chinese army led by the Beshbalyk governor in 714 AD.

Together with my uncle, the kagan, we went on campaigns eastwards up to Green River (= Yellow River) and Shantung plain, and we went on campaigns westwards as far as the Iron Gate, (We went on campaigns up to the land of Kirgiz) beyond the Kogmen (mountains)....

...Eastwards as far as beyond the Khingan mountains we thus settled and organized people; westwards as far as Kanju Tarman we thus settled and organized Turkish people.⁷⁵

But the military failures have stimulated new riots of formerly subdued tribes and people – Karluks, Az people, Izgils and Tokuz-Oghuz. Some of these tribes even crossed the Chinese border to apply for protection the Chinese emperor. In the year 716 on the banks of the Tola River Turks suppressed the Bayirq rebellion, but one of their military troops assaulted from backup the Qapaghan kaghan who was returning from the retaliatory mission with just a small group of warriors. They killed him and sent the kaghan's head to the Chinese emperor as an expression of sympathy. That moment was another breaking point for the Second Eastern Khaganate, whose existence was again seriously endangered.

Because of your unruliness, you yourselves betrayed your wise kagan, who had (always) supported you. And you yourselves betrayed your good realm, which was free and independent. And you (yourselves) caused discord. Where did the armed (people) come from and dispersed you? Where did the lancer come from and

⁷⁵ Kül-Tegin inscription, 1st side, line 17, 21.

carried you away? You, people of sacred Otukan mountains, it was you, who went away.

Those (of you), who meant to go to east went to east, and those (of you), who meant to go to west went to west. In places you went away, your (only) profit was the following: your blood ran like a river, and your bones were heaped up like a mountain; your sons worthy of becoming lords became slaves, and your daughters worthy of becoming ladies became servants..

Because of your unawareness and because of your mischievousness, my uncle, the kagan, met his death. First I erected balbals (for him) beginning from Kirgiz kagan's. Tengri, which had raised my father, the kagan, and my mother, the katun, and which had granted them a state, For the name and fame of the Turkish people would not perish..⁷⁶.

After the death of Qapaghan kaghan one of his son, Bögü, proclaimed himself emperor despite the legal claims to succession of his cousins - the sons of the Il-Täris kaghan, Mogilien and Kül-Tegin. They actively participated in all campaigns and attacks as leaders of Turkic army and except their hereditary rights they had a great merits on the khaganate consolidation. The lawless deed of Bögü did not stay long without response; the younger Il-Täris' son Kül-Tegin supported by the Turkic nobility raided in 716 AD with his troops into the headquarter of self-appointed kaghan, killed him along with his brother, family, followers and councilors except the Tonyukuk. After extermination of their power-hungry relatives he enthroned his brother Mogilien, from now on called the Bilgä-Khan, the Wise kaghan. Bilgä-Khan, however, takes the government at the time when khaganate is on the verge of extinction, endangered by the power conflicts, defeats and rebellions of many tribes. Many tribes crossed the Chinese border and proclaimed themselves vassals of the Tang dynasty. Kül-Tegin became the leader of Turkic army and was charged to restore order in the empire.

..Tengri

enthroned (me). I did not become ruler of wealthy and prosperous people at all; (on the contrary,) I became a ruler of poor and miserable people, who were food-less inside and cloth-less outside. I and Kultegin, my younger brother, consulted together. For the name and fame of people, which our father and uncle had ruled, would not perish, and

For the sake of Turkish people, I did not sleep at night and I did not relax by day. Together with my younger brother, Kultegin, the two šads, we worked to death

⁷⁶ Kül-Tegin inscription, 1st side, line 17, 23 -25.

and I won. Having won and gathered in that way, I did not let people split into two parts like fire and water. (When) I (succeeded to the throne) in all countries people, who had gone (in almost all directions) vagrant people came back utterly exhausted, without horses and without clothes came back. In order to nourish people, I, with great armies, went on campaigns twelve times, northwards against Oguz people, eastwards against the Qitan and Tatabi, southwards against Chinese, (and I fought ...⁷⁷

Tonyukuk – a very old man approaching his seventy now – stayed among the counselors of the new kaghan. Turkic army attacked in the summer 718 one of the Tokuz-Oghuz tribes, the Uyghur territories, and defeated also the rebellious tribes of Tatars and Karluks. The spoils of war and conquered territories were divided among the Turkic tribes what strenghtend the Bilgā-Khan authority either.

After (that), since I had fortune and since I had good luck – my Tengri was gracious! – I brought people to life, who were going to perish, and nourished them. I dressed naked people with clothes and I made poor people rich and few people numerous. I made them superior than people, who had great states and (esteemed rulers).

I subdue all people, who live in four parts of the world. There was no enemy left. Many of them submitted to me.⁷⁸

In that time Xuanzong became the ruler of Chinese empire (712 – 756 AD) and the Tang dynasty finds itself on the top of the power. Tonyukuk advised the kaghan to send a message with peace proposals to the Tang emperor (718 AD), but these attempts to establish peace did not meet any friendly welcome in China. The self-confident Tang dynasty felt strong now, the emperor was ready for hard intervention against the Turkic tribes to avert the nomadic threat behind the northern borders once for all. In response he therefore sent his army (allegedly of 300 00 men), whose main striking part consisted of cavalry of renegade Basmyls, Khitans, Tatars and deserted Turkic tribes. The emperor intended to attack the headquarter of Turkic khaganate and destroy the core of the empire in Ötükän (Khangai mountains in Orkhon Valley), but this generous plan failed. Turkic tribes came to meet them and slaughtered under the Beshbalyk in 720 AD. Subsequently they attacked the Chinese territory and ravaged

⁷⁷ Kül-Tegin inscription, 1st side, line 17, 25 - 28.

⁷⁸ Kül-Tegin inscription, 1st side, line 17, 29-30.

boundary provinces. Turkic counterattack turned into devastating revenge campaign and perhaps therefore another peace proposal sent to Chinese emperor in 721 AD was finally accepted.

That opened conflict with China undoubtedly changed the mutual relations between both empires for a long time. The Chinese emperor recognized the Turkic khaganate as a respected and full fledged partner and their contacts took place at the level of diplomacy and trade. Their relations were reinforced by political marriages between the royal clans and by numerous agreements on mutual non-interference in domestic affairs, maintaining the territorial status quo. Such contracts were mutually beneficial, but whether these trades were advantageous is a controversial issue, outlined in one of following chapters devoted to foreign politics.

Defeat of Oghuz people in 723/724 AD stabilized the inner situation of Turkic khaganate and Bilgä-Khan continued peacemaking politics towards the neighbouring states and subjected tribes of varied ethnic composition. Nevertheless the forced unification of such a complex formation of Second Eastern Khaganate did not last long. In 731 AD his brother Kül-Tegin died and kaghan himself was poisoned by his relatives three years later. In the Khöshöö Tsaidam in Orkhon Valley, the centre of Turkic empire, the monuments were built in their honor and their deeds and personalities were immortalized by the bilingual Turko-Chinese inscriptions on two stelae. As a matter of respect and mutual relations the Chinese emperor Xuanzong had sent his court craftsmen to build these memorials. The sons and grandsons of Bilgä-Khan – Türk-Bilgä-Khan (734 – 739 n.l.) and Tengri-Khan (740 -741 n.l.) continued the political ambitions, but perhaps lacked the authority and power of their father and grandfather, necessary to keep the khaganate unified and stable. In 742 AD began another clash of the Eastern khaganate, this time with fatal consequences. The young Tengri-Kaghan was killed by his own uncle. Subsequently another conflict blazed and unions of Basmyls, Uyghurs and Karluks started large revolts that caused the decay of the khaganate and many members of Göktürk family including the new Kutlug Yabgu kaghan were killed. The Chinese empire again took advantage of the split of Turkic khaganate to enforce the vassalry of Turkic territories and encouraged the revolting association of Uyghurs, Basmyls and Karluks. Last rulers Özmiş and his son (742-744 AD) were killed trying to resist the Chinese pressure and suppress the revolts. Turkic tribes were quickly and irreversibly losing their territories and power until finally the Yabgu Tufa, ruler of the Uyghurs, was significantly elected under a

very Göktürk name Kutlug Bilgä Kül what actually strated the Uyghur sovereignty. In the very site of former core of the Turkic empire a new Uyghur khaganate (745 – 840 AD) had arisen, developing the heritage of Göktürk culture in another chapter of history. Last mentions about the Turkic tribes and Göktürk people occur in written sources until 941 AD.⁷⁹

3.2. Runic inscriptions - propaganda tools

*....Then Turk Tengri above, Turkish holy Earth
and Water said as follows: "in order to Turkish people would not go to ruin and
in order to it should be a nation again", they rose my father Ilteris Kagan, and my
mother Ilbilga Katun, to the top and sat them upwards on the throne.⁸⁰*

Dynamics of the formation of Central and Eastern Asian empires is related not only to the conquest of new pastures but also to submission of new territories with different economic and cultural systems that might bring some economic benefits. Conquering state is therefore trying either to subdue countries and nations with developed economies or at least to enforce the legal claim to recover taxes. In that moment the nomadic polity turns into the empire. Building upon the policy of Hsiung-nu federation, the first nomadic steppe empire became the Turkic khaganate, controlling to the year 576 AD a large area between Manchuria and Yellow River to the Caucasus and Bospor channel.

One symptom of advanced nomadic civilization is also developed letters and historiography with all his politic potential. One step ahead of the Hsiung-nu federation, the Göktürks were the first Turkic people known to write their language in the Old Turkic script. Beginning of the Turkic written tradition dates back to the stele of Taspar kaghan (Tatpar kaghan, 572–580 AD), erected in 582 AD in Bugut (Bayan Tsagaan Gol, Arkhangai aimag, Mongolia).⁸¹ Bugut

⁷⁹ Ahmet Taşağıl: *Göktürkler*, AKDITYK Yayınları, Ankara, 2012, p.359-62

⁸⁰ Kül-Tegin inscription, line 11 -12.

⁸¹ More information to the topic in:

Findley, Carter V. (2005). *The Turks in World History*. Oxford University Press US.

Bazin, Louis, "Turcs et Sogdiens: Les Enseignements de L'Inscription de Bugut (Mongolie), Mélanges Linguistiques Offerts à Émile Benveniste", *Collection Linguistique, publiée par la Société de Linguistique de Paris*, LXX, Paris, 1975, pp. 37;

Yoshida, Yutaka-Moriyasu, Takao, *Bugut Inscription, Provisional Report of Researches on Historical Complexes and Inscriptions in Mongolia from 1996 to 1998*, Tokyo, 1999, pp. 122-124 etc.

inscription is yet written in Sogdian language, but soon afterwards the first Turkic runic inscriptions appear. All the Turkic monuments are examples of advanced propaganda manifesting the idea of eternal heaven, the divine origin and authority of the kaghan or some Turkic leader. Motifs of mythology, war, expansion, conquest of new territories and national merits are the most frequent topics, occurring in the runic inscriptions of Orkhon Valley, along Selenga River, in Yenisei region and other areas. All these Early Medieval Turkic texts reflect the propagandistic mind of Turkic aristocracy in form of rather universal socio-politically engaged manifests. This areal and long term thematic universality of inscriptions (from Turkic khaganate to Khazar period 10th century AD) suggests that strong dynastic and structural heritage of Turkic khaganate was the source of political unity of Turkic tribes growing out of the deep tradition.⁸² These traditions are later reproduced even in the Mongolian propaganda of Genghis Khan cult and other Asian empires, whose leaders legitimacy is derived from the heavenly origin or divine ancestors.⁸³

With the emergence of Turkic empire its traditional culture gradually transformed into a new civilization, within which occurred partial transition to a settled way of life and urbanization, that resulted establishment of power centers as the Kharabalgasun fortress. With this development is to be linked also the unprecedented flowering of literature, especially in the period of Uyghur khaganate (9th century). At the beginning of the flowering of the advanced nomadic civilization is just the birth of the Turkic khaganate, the very first Eurasian steppe empire with the character of early medieval state system.

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⁸² Such a collective traditions might be observed also in frame of the mythological and religionistic ideas in the wide Turkic territory, from the Orkhon through the Caucasus to the proto-Bulgar tribes on the Danube the same Turkic deity appears called *Tenger, Tengri-khan, Tangra* – The (Eternal) Heaven

⁸³ The Mongolian *tenger, tengri* - the eternal blue sky/heaven – is similar as for the Turks the supreme deity, Father of the nation and ancestor of the Khan.

3.3. “Genesis” and ethnogenesis of Turkic tribes

3.3.1. General questions of the ethnogenesis of Central Asian steppe nomads

“Altaic cultural matrix?”

The Eastern part of Eurasian steppes, Mongolia and adjacent territories present the earliest and misty scene of the Turkic history; this is where the origin of both the earliest known Turkic tribes and the Göktürk Khaganate is conceived by scholarly consensus⁸⁴ but the Turkic influence very soon started to spread westwards.

The process of formation of the Turkic nomadic unity is the subject of long-lasting discussion. Unfortunately, this discussion seems to be hindered by certain stereotypes of the Western-style conceptions of history, of which the most prominent is the tendency to identify states and empires with ethnicity and languages. Although it has been recognized by students of European history that the emergence of ethnic states is rather typical for the Modern period of history, and recently many historians of Inner Asia accept this point and try to re-consider the general theory of nomadic empires, the imagination of the great Inner Asian nomadic empires as ethnically and linguistically coherent formations keeps to play a powerful role in the study of Inner Asian history. According to this traditional conception, the Skytho-Saka empire was a state of Iranian speaking nomads with common mythological ancestry, culture and religion, the Xiongnu empire was a state of nomads with a single cultural and linguistic affiliation whose identification has been the source of endless debates between Turkologists, Mongolists and recently scholars of Yeniseic,⁸⁵ the Turkic empire used to be viewed as a state of Turkic speaking nomads with common ancestry and culture. Within such conception the Juan-Juan empire constitutes a provocative exception. The fact that no particular language, culture and mythology has been attributed to it causes this powerful and long-lived nomadic empire to remain neglected and almost unrecognized next to its famous predecessors and successors.

⁸⁴ For more about the topic see Golden, 1992.

⁸⁵ cf. Janhunen, 1998.

The somewhat surprising but long established image of Central Asian history as a sequence of separate states emerging “from nowhere” with blank periods in between is probably also connected to the character of written sources we possess about them. Since the nomadic states either did not use script or used it only during relatively short periods during the peaks of their power, most written sources about nomads come from their settled neighbors, who, in their turn, used to record only information which they considered relevant for themselves. Some of the Turkic tribes are even distinguishable and named only when reached the area of Western Europe in the 4th – 5th century AD with the Hun invaders (Bulgars, Onogurs,...). The earliest history of Turkic tribes is undoubtedly hidden inside the opaque polyethnic tribal confederation of Hsiung-nu (Xiongnu, the Huns), whose origin is also often refer to. Nevertheless the Hsiung-nu ethnogenesis itself is too hazy aswell to provide any guidance; Chinese sources register the emergence of Hsiung-nu only from the moment when they enter the federation in the 4th – 3th century BC. This moment is however strongly reminiscent of the following Turkic tribes emergence that became “visible” for the Chinese neighbours only when evolving some first state-forming activities in 5th century.

Another problem, connected in particular to the Turks (but also of general importance), is posed by the unclear connection between the Turkic-speaking nomadic peoples of Inner Asia and the Turks as founders of the Göktürk khaganate (see later in this chapter). As is often the case, the problem derives from the use of terminology: The Turkic languages, an important language group most probably present in Inner Asia long before the emergence of the Turk empire, received its scholarly designation ex-post, after its most prominent representative from the 6th century. Hence the paradoxical situation that - according to some opinions - the Turks, founders of the great Turkic empire were originally not Turkic speaking. This is just an example of how often sticking to terms can create otherwise non-existent paradoxes.

Further in this chapter I try to suggest certain alternative approaches which, in my opinion, may be helpful in the discussion about particular questions of Turkic ethnogenesis. Among the methods, which, if used cautiously, may bring significant amount of new information into the discussion, belong above all use of **analogies from different historical periods** as well as from the **present-day nomadic societies**, and the study of **oral history**.

To summarize the historical parallels which are most at hand, we shall begin with the Scytho-Sarmatians and the Hsiung-nu or so-called “Asian Huns”. About the latter abundant literature

exists in Chinese sources, the disadvantage of which lies in the difficulties of precise interpretation and in the ever-present tendency of the Chinese historians to distort the historical events. The same applies to the sources about the Juan-Juans, who otherwise present an intriguing example of nomadic empire whose veil of common name and political unity is more transparent and betrays the state's complexity. With the Mongol empire, due to the abundance of sources, in particular the Secret History, the monumental work by Rashid-ad-din and the descriptions by the Franciscan friars Carpini and Rubruck our knowledge becomes much more detailed. Many processes during the evolution of the Mongols and their empire would have remained unknown to us were there not these three extraordinary sources. Finally, although not a typical nomadic state, the Manchu empire with its colossal amount of historical records sometimes provides useful hints for the study of Central Asian ethnic history.

Concerning modern nomadic societies the most obvious object of study are the nomads in rural areas of Mongolia. However, remnants of nomadic societies can be also found in Kyrgyzstan, Siberia and China. On my opinion, results of anthropological studies of these societies may provide useful clues for careful reconstruction of history.

Oral history, a young field of study in Inner Asia, seems to provide especially interesting type of information. Since whole Inner Asian culture relies to large extent on oral transmission, oral histories often contain rather ancient layers. Most importantly, oral history brings the interpretation of the historical events "from within", providing us with alternative insight to our established way of understanding the causes and consequences.

3.3.2. Questions of "Ethnicity" of the Inner Asian nomads

3.3.2.1. Ethnicity versus political unity

In the perspective of modern Western scholarly discourse the notion of an "ethnic group" is defined as a *human population with the myths of common ancestors, history and culture that share a common territory and sense of solidarity*.⁸⁶ Smith's definition does not mention

⁸⁶ According to ethnosymbolical paradigm defined by Smith, D. Anthony in: Etnický základ národní identity. In.: Hroch, Miroslav, *Pohledy na národ a nacionalismus: čítanka textů* (Praha: Sociologické nakladatelství, 2003, p. 270-297. Smith defines the *ethnie* on the basis on few essential attributes: own collective name, myth of common ancestry,

language. In the traditional Inner Asian studies the question of ethnicity is usually conceived in the connection to a certain language or language group, which further complicates the study. In the nomadic world, however, it seems that such definition is rarely applicable to the greater groups known under the names of “Hsiung-nu”, “Turks”, “Khitans”, “Mongols” and others. The sources about Hsiung-nu say that their core consisted of two separate groups and a third group formed by the descendants of Chinese. The mysterious Juan-Juan are usually described as a loose confederation of various tribes ruled by one powerful tribe, which may apply to the steppe tribal confederations in general. The case of the Turks will be discussed later. When describing the Tatar tribal confederation, Rashid-ad-din says:

“Because of their greatness and honourable position other Turkic⁸⁷ tribes, their different names notwithstanding, became famous under their name and called themselves Tatars. And those different tribes based their splendour and honour in counting themselves to the Tatars and became famous under their name, similarly to the present time when, due to the benefaction of Chinggis Khan and his family, since they are Mongols, all the other tribes such as the Jalairs, the Oirads, the Onguts, the Kerayits, the Naimans, the Tanguts and others, of whom every one used to have a special name, they for the sake of self-appreciation call themselves Mongols in spite of that they did not use this name in the past. And their present-day offsprings in this way imagine that they were Mongols ever before, but it is not so, since in the past the Mongols were only one tribe among other steppe Turkic tribes....

At present the situation is even such that the people of China, the Jurchid, the Uighurs, the Kipchak, the Karluks, the Turkmen, the Kalach and all the Tajik captives which grew up in the Mongolian milieu call themselves Mongols. And this whole union of various peoples consider it beneficial for their greatness and honour refer to themselves as Mongols.”

This description of the evolution of a nomadic empire can be further supplemented by other historical evidence, e.g. the case of a contingent of Caucasian Alans who joined the Mongol army and later became an imperial guard, played an important role in the 15th century struggle for power and at present their name is found among other clan names in the Mongolian Republic and Inner Mongolia.

shared historical memory, one/more of the distinguishing elements of common culture, connection with a „homeland“ and feeling of solidarity with the relevant sections of the population. Although these principles were formed with regard to the present questions of nationality, their retrospective historical validity is obvious.

⁸⁷ In Rashid-ad-din’s work the expression „Turk“ or „Turkic“ refers to the steppe nomads in general, regardless their linguistic affiliation and origin.

In the traditional Central Asian studies the ethnicity and language of the Hsiung-nu and the Juan-Juan has been long debated without a satisfactory conclusion, while the ethnicity of the Turks, Mongols and other later groupings of whose languages we possess direct evidence are usually not subject to discussion. However, the above-mentioned facts may lead us to contemplating the Hsiung-nu tribal federation, as well as other nomadic empires, as a political groupings rather than ethnic unities. In such way the study of ethnogenesis of the steppe nomadic tribes would be facilitated. Indeed, if we, following the description of Rashid-ad-din, imagine the steppe nomads as groupings of peoples whose composition was largely the same but in part changing due to incomers (such as the Chinese among the Hsiung-nu or the Alans among the Mongols) or departing groups (such as the Hsiung-nu groups leaving for China and Siberia or the Oirat Mongols leaving for Russia) and whose name and legacy kept changing following the change of the leading groups, some of the insolvable questions of ethnogenesis may become irrelevant. In such way, tracing the ethnic origins of the Turkic tribes, it is only probable that their ancestors were part of the large Hsiung-nu empire.

3.3.2.2. *Ethnicity versus cultural unity*

The three great nomadic empires - the Scytho-Saka cultural entity of the Early Iron Age that covered the huge territory from the Lake Baikal to the Black Sea area, the Hsiung-nu empire and the Turkic empire – possess several common features: their funeral rite is often represented by the rich burials with horses in chamber mounds;⁸⁸ the area of Altai was linked with metallurgy and all these tribes played a significant role in the manufacture;⁸⁹ scytho-siberian dynamic animal style is directly followed by the Hsiung-nu art and its tradition shows continuity in various parts of the steppe areal, such as the Xianbei empire and the nomadic cultures of Ordos. Briefly summarized; despite of the apparent ethnic (linguistic) heterogeneity within the great nomadic empires their cultural expressions were almost uniform or at least very close to each other. Obviously, the superficial archaeological similarity is hardly sufficient to proclaim ethnic identity in the modern sense, but nevertheless indicates a certain continuity that should be taken into account in the search for alternative

⁸⁸ The Turkic burials in Altai region show a strong resemblance with the Hun and Scythian burials with horses indicating some cultural continuity; the typical Turkic stone fences have its own story considered in the chapter of funeral rite.

⁸⁹ Pazyryk culture was famous for its skilled metallurgists, later the Hsiung-nu are responsible for spreading the iron metallurgy in the steppes of Central Asia and finally the Turkic tribes served as the blacksmiths of Juan-Juan as the legends tell.

models of historical development in the nomadic areas. The material which may be collected from written sources, recent analogies and oral histories presents a picture of constant motion within the whole nomadic area. For the older periods we have evidence of the grandiose movements of whole bulks of people on long distances (the Yuezhi to Bactria and Qinghai, the Tuyuhuns to the Qinghai area, the Xianbei spreading over the whole steppe area for several decades, the Hsiung-nu migrations to Ordos and to the West, the spread of the Mongols far west from their original abodes, and others). More recent and detailed histories, as those of the constitution of the Mongol empire, the Oirat migrations towards Tibet, Mongolia and Volga, or the migrations within the Manchu empire show that a great amount of smaller migrations on long distances was constantly going on. Another important feature, well documented from the Mongol time but probably present in former times too, was the strict exogamy practiced by the nomads. In the Mongolian era the image given by the sources is that virtually all families must have been bilingual. In this picture of constant migration and mixing of peoples and languages the cultural uniformity attested within the great nomadic empires calls for attention, signaling that a certain cultural expression, stemming from a certain way of life, worldview and religion, probably was the major factor in shaping the groupings of people with a common sense of solidarity and unity. Powerful cores, from which certain types of cultural expressions were radiating over large areas, can be detected within Inner Asia. In the eastern steppe region two such cores are visible – the Sayan-Altai region and western Manchuria. We may possibly consider the existence of an *Altaic cultural matrix* leaving imprints on the cultural development of the concerned area.

3.3.2.3. *The Mongols as the model of formation of a nomadic empire*

In this way, it seems that, even though it is difficult to speak about an ethnic unity within the steppe nomadic tribes, we can nevertheless postulate a cultural unity which in certain historical periods helped creating a sense of solidarity that was able to unify various groups under a single leadership and conquer the neighboring settled cultures. The priceless evidence of Rashid ad din's work and the Secret history of the Mongols presents us with an insight into the momentous motivations and more general principles that enabled the process of the unification of the steppe nomadic tribes under the rule of Genghis Khan, the leader of a minor and remote tribal grouping, and the subsequent merging processes which included the assumption of the name "*Mongol*" by all the different ethnic groups, the linguistic unification

which included the assumption of Mongolian by the, mostly Turkic, tribes but also the strong change of Mongolian under Turkic influence, and, lastly, the assimilation of the former taiga and forest dwellers by the steppe nomadic way of life, culture and religion.

To summarize the picture of this development, as reflected in the historical sources, before Genghis Khan's expansion Mongolia was inhabited by nomads speaking various dialects of Turkic and Mongolic, and, most probably a Turkicised Mongolic and mongolized Turkic (inbetween), and probably by a lesser number of Tungusic and Yeniseic speakers. The unification under Genghis Khan's rule was prompted not only by his military achievements but also by the belief that he was supported by Heaven and thus was the bearer of the "good fate", an important notion in the nomadic thinking, which made part of the tribes in the steppe and on its fringes (e.g. the Uyghurs and the Onguts) join him voluntarily. Since the Mongols were much less in number than the main steppe tribes, who assumed their name, the bulk of inhabitants of the steppe Mongol state were the Tatars, the Kerayits, the Naimans, the Oirats, the Onguts and others, who subsequently formed the anthropological base of the present-day Mongols. On the linguistic level this merging process is documented by the fact that the present-day Mongolian retained some of the main religious terms of steppe nomads, which are first evidenced by the Turkic inscriptions: The expression Tengri for Heaven and the Ötökän, originally a sacred mountain/mountain range, which in Mongolian developed into the Mother-Earth deity Etügen, but probably also into the name of Mt. Olgontengri in present-day Mongolia. The awareness of the foreign origin of the conquerors is hidden in the legends describing the "Heavenly origin" of the Genghis Khan's clan, the ground of their legacy during the next centuries: In some sources it is mentioned that the Genghis Khan's clan people were distinguished by green eyes and reddish hair, which testified to their origin from a heavenly deity, in other words, their atypical appearance and foreign origin were connected to their "superhuman" abilities and their legitimacy.

This picture supports the view that perhaps there were never new ethnics emerging from "nowhere", but their substances were always present and hidden in the shadow of actual events and leaders – some of these ethnics played their historical role and left – or better said transformed into another historical period. Thus the Hsiung-nu followed the older traditions of Scythians and they themselves were later followed by Turks and these by Xianbei and

Mongols – but meanwhile the ethnic composition probably stayed more or less the same. At some point, this process had exhausted – the last wave caused by the movement of these let's say “ethnospheric plates” was the Mongolian expansion. The modern state-forming processes and border setting fixed these ethnic interactions in a firm geographic framework. Therefore the inflow of nomadic waves into Europe had ceased and also the inner ethnic transformations in the steppe had stopped. Nevertheless these processes are still active; however, only taking place at the latent level of ethnic and territorial conversions in frame of blending families or clans, sometimes growing into ethnic conflicts.

These visible processes naturally raise the questions concerning languages used and the origins of the particular ethnic groups. The constant scholarly debate about linguistic issues of the Central Asian ethnic groups prior to the Mongolian comprises questions of the Altaic theory, issues of the linguistic affiliations of the Hsiung-nu, the Xianbei, the Juan-Juan, and many other ethnic groups, whose names are known from the written sources. It seems that in this field, similarly to history and archaeology, researchers are facing the need to find alternative models of language developments than those shaped on the Indo-European case.

3.3.3. Divergence of Turkic cultures in the Central and Eastern Asia

...we went on campaigns eastwards up to Green River (= Yellow River) and Shantung plain, and we went on campaigns westwards as far as the Iron Gate, (We went on campaigns up to the land of Kirgiz) beyond the Kogmen (mountains)...

.... Eastwards as far as beyond the Khingan mountains we thus settled and organized people; westwards as far as Kaḡu Tarman we thus settled and organized Turkish people.⁹⁰

3.3.3.1. Ethnogenesis

In the perspective of modern Western scholarly discourse the notion of an “ethnic” is defined as a *human population with the myths of common ancestors, history and culture that share a*

⁹⁰ Kül-Tegin scription, line 19, 21.

*common territory and sense of solidarity.*⁹¹ In the nomadic world it seems that such definition has a very limited range of applicability. Seemingly beginning with the First Turkic kaghanate such definition may be applied. However, as Sinor notes, although the Chinese sources treat the Turks as an ethnic group with common ancestry, in the same time they note several different legends of origin, which is most probably to be explained by the fact that the Turkic informants belonged to different groups with different ancestral myths. Such opinion is corroborated by an analogy again drawn from the later Mongol period. In the first chapters of the Secret history of the Mongols a consistent mythological description of the evolvement of the contemporary Mongol tribes is presented. In Rashid-ad-din, however, more important ancestral myths are mentioned in relation to various groups (the core Mongols and the closely related groups), which seems to point to the fact that many groups with different self-consciousness about their origins were united under the name of the Mongols. At present, all of these legends are forgotten without any trace and all the present-day Mongols, relating to their mythological origins, refer to the version of the Secret History which gives all the tribes their position in the common Mongol genetic structure.

Likewise the ethnogenesis of Turkic tribes is so far a very complex and unclear process which, however, influenced the history in the whole Central and Eastern Asia. It is not a history of one ethnics but a multi-layered process formed by many nations and cultures that have influenced and shaped each other for a long time. If we try to apply the Smith's definition of an ethnic group, in the case of the Turkic tribes it can be probably applied from the time of formation of the First Khaganate, i.e. in the period of the formation of the early Middle Age nomadic states, when the Turks enter the scene of history as a well organized and self-confident unity. However, even in that time and after it is not possible to speak about a purely Turkic population, since the khaganates permanently formed confederations of both Turkic and non-Turkic tribes which were co-operating or contending for power among themselves, following the current political situation. In general it can be stated that the ruling class or the leading tribes were most often Turkic (speaking?), but such a confederation was always joined by various tribes of different origin, for whom such symbiosis seemed perspective and advantageous, or who were forcibly subdued. In the case of the Turkic

⁹¹ According to ethnosymbolical paradigm defined by Smith, D. Anthony in: Etnický základ národní identity. In.: Hroch, Miroslav, *Pohledy na národ a nacionalismus: čítanka textů* (Praha: Sociologické nakladatelství, 2003, p. 270-297. Smith defines the *ethnie* on the basis on few essential attributes: own collective name, myth of common ancestry, shared historical memory, one/more of the distinguishing elements of common culture, connection with a „homeland“ and feeling of solidarity with the relevant sections of the population. Although these principles were formed with regard to the present questions of nationality, their retrospective historical validity is obvious.

khaganates, like the other nomadic empires mentioned before, we are rather dealing with polyethnic tribal groupings whose consistency largely depended on the actual political and economic situation. It is also interesting to note that Rashid ad din, several centuries after the formation of the Turkic empire, calls all the steppe nomadic peoples Turks, regardless their origin and “ethnicity” (language and mythological affiliations). In his work the designation “Turk” apparently applies to the nomadic life-style and common culture, similarly as the Chinese or Byzantine sources used a general “fashion” name for eastern invaders.

3.3.3.2. *Note on linguistic background*

The linguistic issues connected to Inner Asian nomadic empires concern mainly two large language families – Indoeuropean and Altaic – and marginally also the almost extinct Yeniseic, Samoyedic and Paleo-Asiatic language groupings. As already mentioned, the language of the Scytho-Sakas was presumably Indo-European, and the languages of the Hsiung-nu and the Juan-Juans have not yet been indentified, although numerous hypotheses exist. The language family which seems to have played a crucial role in Mongolia during the 1st millenium is undoubtedly the Altaic family. A long-lasting debate among linguists begun with postulating the existence of a language family with common ancestor called Proto-Altaic and starting the reconstruction work by J. Ramstedt, followed by others, and continued by a strict rejection of this theory by G. Doerfer. At present, some linguists tend towards more moderate opinions, speaking of an areal, rather than a genetic, relationship between the Turkic, Mongolic and Tungusic.⁹² Unlike the issue of a common ancestor of the three language branches, the postulation of a common ancestor of all extant Turkic languages seems plausible. This hypothetic language, called “Proto-Turkic“, in its later stage „Pre-Common-Turkic“ by M. Erdal,⁹³ could have been a common base for all present-day Turkic languages. In the next stage, the „Old Turkic“ – the language of the Turkic inscriptions found on the Khaganate territory and therefore probably the language of the ruling elite of the Khaganate, showed deviations and innovations which distinguish it from the idiom called „Common Turkic“ – the supposed base of most of the modern Turkic languages. When searching for parallels, such linguistic situation may be caused either by the fact that the deviant dialect lies on an edge of the dialectal continuum, exposed to the

⁹² Erdal, 2004, p. 10.

⁹³ Erdal, 2004, p. 11.

influence of different languages (cf. the case of Khitan),⁹⁴ but may also happen within centralized states with fixed borders in which the language serves as a political tool, such as the modern Khalkha Mongolian.

It should also be born in mind that in nomadic societies the status of oral language is entirely different from settled cultures. The function and importance of spoken word is equal to writing in settled societies, and memory is usually trained to contain large corpuses of text. Therefore a process in which one dialect is codified, imposed over all others and elaborated according to the political and religious priorities of the ruling elite is well possible without the existence of a written language.

Following such considerations, one of the possible scenarios for Old Turkic may be that the language which we first encounter on the Turkic runic inscriptions, being the easternmost of all Turkic dialects, had, before it was first written, undergone a certain period of evolution within the frame of centralized nomadic states (Hsiung-nu, Juan-Juan, First Turkic kaghanate). Since, on the other hand, the scarce evidence we possess about the half-mythical Ashina clan, suggests Iranian connotations, it is possible that the ruling clan of foreign origin was at some stage (the names of rulers of the First Khaganate are non-Turkic while some of the Second Khaganate rulers bear Turkic names) assimilated by the language and cultural milieu of the steppe nomads whose language became the official language of the empire. The spread of the Turkic languages over the large Eurasian area is, however, by no means connected only to the Turk empire and Old Turkic. On the contrary, Old Turkic, its temporary importance notwithstanding, is not the direct ancestor of the greater part of modern Turkic languages. The earliest attested migration of Turkic speakers westwards, is, following glottochronological dating, estimated by some around 500 BC (the Bulgaric branch retaining distinguished by rhotacism-lambdacism) (Nutschell) is, by other researchers, seen as possibly connected to the Hsiung-nu expansion.⁹⁵ The present-day Chuvash may be the last remnant of a larger group of Turkic speakers who migrated to the Urals before the emergence of the Türks. Another remnant of the most archaic wave of Turkic migration may be the Khalaj in Azerbaijan. Later, probably in the time of the emergence of the Türks, the Turkic languages seem to have been widely spoken by nomads living to the west from Mongolia (Dzungaria and present day Kazakhstan). These Turkic nomads, pressed from the

⁹⁴ Janhunen, 1996 p.141.

⁹⁵ Janhunen 1996 p. 189

east by the expanding Turks, migrated westwards, when they subsequently became known under the various names of Kimek, Kipchaks, Kumans, Pecheneg and others.⁹⁶ In the same time, however, parts of the Turks migrated and settled far to the west, such as the ruling elite of the Khazar Khanate in the Volga steppes. During the same time the political influence of the Turks seems to have caused gradual turkicisation of the Southern Siberian tribes, former speakers of Iranian, Yeniseic, Samoyedic or Paleo-Asiatic languages. The Sakha subsequently migrated to the north, carrying their Turkic language as far as the Northern Ocean.

The Indo-Europeans of Tarim, Transoxiana and parts of Iran were turkicised in a gradual process of wars and cultural contacts and the major events in the spread of the Turkic language milieu were completed by the Seljuk conquest of Asia Minor. Besides these massive movements, also an innumerable multitude of small-scale migrations and contacts which have mostly not been recorded but may be imagined on the ground of modern parallels created the present shape of the Turkic speaking area, in which most languages belong to the other groups than those descended from the language of the Turkic Khaganate.⁹⁷

3.3.3.3. *Divergence background*

In the Turkic ancestral legends the first leader and founder of Turkic tribes is said to be of foreign origin, and partly of divine or supernatural nature. The later official ideology is based on the divine power of the ruling “charismatic” clan and on the ancestral myths which, however, give us some etymological clues.⁹⁸ The names of the very first leaders are probably of non-Turkic origin, and so is the name of the ruling clan Ashina, whose origins are derived from the she-wolf. The linguistic affiliation of this half-mythical clan has been a long-debated subject, and in recent years the debate has been turning in favour of an Indo-European language.

Summarizing the established facts, the Altai region belonged to the Indo-European nomadic sphere before the presumed Turkic expansion. It has been supposed that Iranian (Skythian)

⁹⁶ Golden, 1990.

⁹⁷ Johansson, 1998, p.82-3

⁹⁸ These are solved in chapters below.

and Tocharian belonged to the important languages of the region. According to M. Erdal the first evidence of Turkic languages comes from the beginning of Christian era from Kashgar and other places, in which Indo-European languages were prevailing.⁹⁹ While the question of the Hsiung-nu language will hardly be solved, we may, based on the above mentioned reflections, suppose that the Turkic linguistic element was present within their empire, which, from the anthropological point of view, included populations of Mongoloid type. Observing the situation in Inner Asia in more recent times, the situation when nomads and semi-nomads of different origin dwell intermingled on a certain area, while retaining their respective cultures and languages over long periods of time, was especially common in regions offering conditions for various way of subsidy, to which the Altai region belonged. Archaeological sources show that the nomadic cultural complex was primarily Indo-European and the Mongoloid people assumed it relatively late, perhaps in contacts with the Scythians and Tokharians, who, in their turn, gradually assumed more settled way of life, leaving the steppes to the former hunters and forest dwellers of the East, who may have contained proto-Turkic elements (see below).

Very likely the name Ashina reflects the former linguistic milieu of the Altai region affected by Tokharian and Iranian neighbouring groups in the Altai vicinity. Some Proto-Turkic populations who were probably part of the Hsiung-nu empire may have, after its disintegration, moved to the Altai region where, at the turn of 5th/6th century AD still prevailed the europoid population. The mongoloid flow from Transbaikalia, which arrived soon after may perhaps be partly connected to some Turkic migrations. Turkic groups thus probably settled and took shape in Altai sometime during the 5th century, involved in iron metallurgy (which might be the heritage of Hsiung-nu culture) and consequently gathered under the group called Türk. In this case Altai would not have been the Turkic ancestral homeland, although it played an essential role in ethnogenetical, mythological and ideological formation of later state, and this processes are also reflected by the ancestral legends connecting some supernatural events with the Altai region. The ideological emphasize of the Altai region may also, hypothetically, reflect its status of the center of the Scythian empire of old, which was used by the Turks to legitimize their rule over another nomadic empire.

⁹⁹ Erdal, 2004.

The theory of the Proto-Turks being not indigenous to Altai is supported also by the Chinese sources mentioning first Turkic tribes called *Tiele* in 4th century AD somewhere in the northern areas of China (*Gaoche*, “people with high wheeled-chariots”, perhaps settling the Gansu areas, later subdued to the Göktürks in frame of Turkic khaganate).¹⁰⁰

3.3.3.4. *Archaeological aspects of the supposed migrations in the Altai region*

The key factor in the shaping of nomadic cultures was played by the domestication of horse in 3-4th millennium in Pontic Caspian steppes, but only around ca 1500 BC a significant improvement of riding techniques and associated metallurgy occurred. The subsequent increase of human and animal population was influenced by other factors too, especially by the drying out of the steppes since the 2nd millennium BC (end of the Karasuk period), which caused the extensive transition to nomadic pastoralism and great population changes – military conflicts and massive migrations of tribes in search of good pastures. These events also had serious social, political and cultural implications. These changes were perhaps, in the beginning, born by the Indo-European groups (the Scytho – Saka cultural community is one most significant in Iron Age Eurasia horizon) but their deep interaction with Siberian populations caused fast adoption and spreading of advanced riding techniques and new skills. These processes are only hardly reconstructable if ever and in frame of this work should be mentioned just as reminder of the complexity of the history of this area, which, however difficult to document, grasp and comprehend, nevertheless played the important role in the formation of the Turkic society. Regardless the geographical origins of the Turks, the Altai

¹⁰⁰ „The Chinese sources connected them with one of the descendants of Xiongnu confederacy, calling them *Huibe*, *Gaoche*, *Tiele* or *Chile*. „The Gaoche migrate in search of grass and water. They dress in skins and eat meat. Their cattle and sheep are just like those of the Juan-Juan, but the wheel of their carts are high and have very many spokes..” according to Book of Wei (More about these relations in: Duan, Lianqin (1988), Dingling, Gaoju and Tiele; Pulleyblank, Edwin G (2002). Central Asia and Non-Chinese Peoples of Ancient China; Li, Jihe (2003). A Research on Migration of Northwestern Minorities Between pre-Qin to Sui and Tang etc)

area was an important contact point where their history as an autonomous political entity begun.

3.3.3.5. *Turkic Khaganate as a model of nomadic expansion*

The Turks, called “the blacksmiths of Juan-Juan Khaganate” in Chinese sources, overthrew the Juan-Juans and established their own tribal federation, the First Khaganate (552 AD) which soon expanded to both East and West, starting from the northern borders of China and stretching to the lands north of the Amu Darya River. Due to its vast territory and ambitions of the rulers the empire subsequently broke up into two parts, the Western Khaganate with the centre in Kazakhstan (the “On-oq”/”Ten arrows” federation according to the number of ruling tribes) and the Eastern Khaganate with its headquarters in Ötükäń (the Orkhon Valley). The history of both states was full of social-political revolts and dynastic struggles, caused by inner polyethnic composition and supported from outside by the neighboring hegemones such as the Chinese empire, who wished to weaken the dangerous Turks. The inner composition of the khaganate population, as shown in the Chinese sources, was extremely heterogenous; among the Khaganate Turkic or Turkicized populations the names of the Az people, Basmyls, Bayırq, Čik people, Oghuzes, Karluks, Kurikans, Tardush tribes, Tokuz Oghuz tribes, Tatars and Uyghurs are mentioned, but part of the Turkic Khaganate was also formed by non-Turkic groups as the Sogdians, Kitans, Tatabi and others. Mentions of groups such as “skiing Turks” undoubtedly refer to the multiplicity of ways of life within the empire (although its core was formed by steppe nomads, the attested presence of Chinese and Sogdians shows that settled way of life must have been practiceable on the kaghanate’s territory). Continual ethnical unstability together with political pressure finally resulted in the disintegration of the Second Eastern Turkic Khaganate (682 – 744 AD) which was directly transformed into the Uyghur Khaganate (744 – 840 AD) which witnessed the period of unprecedented flourishing of the Turkic literature and culture. The Turkic domenance in the Mongolian steppes definitely ended when the Yenisei Kyrgyz tribes attacked their territory in 840 AD, destroying Ordu-Balyk and most of the Turkic sites.¹⁰¹ Undoubtedly within that time the inner ethno-social conflicts weakened the stability again. Many Uyghurs migrated to the Turfan region in Xinjiang where they gradually assimilated to the environment of rich city-states of Turfan

¹⁰¹ Also the final destruction and desecration of Khöshöö Tsaidam monuments is linked to these events.

Silk Road territory. Later part of them moved to Gansu. The Uyghur period was the final chapter in Turkic history of the Mongolian territory which later became linked with the history of the Mongolian population. The Western Khaganate consequently also lost its primal role in Central Asia and was replaced by the Arabian invaders who became a the dominant cultural and trade power in the 8th century AD. Numerous regions retained the Turkic political and administrative structure but they returned back to the tribal units with no more state-forming ambitions. However, the Turkic political and cultural influence left strong and lasting imprints in further history of Central Asia which were felt even centuries later, in spite of their assimilation with Iranian and Sogdian substrate. Besides the Central and Inner Asia also the steppe zones of Eastern Europe and Pontic Caspian steppes became one of the scenes of Turkic history. All nomadic communities were focused on the trade and predatory politics benefiting from the vicinity of rich major empires. While the Mongolian steppes were oriented to China, the tribes of Central Asia maintained contacts with Persian Empire and rich city-states of Middle East, and the Eastern European nomads (Avars, Bulgars, Onogurs, Khazars etc.) were focused on Byzantine Empire. The main nutritious artery of this contact zone from East to West was the long-distance and intensive trade along the Silk Road, the alpha and omega of conflicts, alliances and all events throughout the history. Nomadic states effectively used their flexibility and military-political advantages over the sedentary populations to control the important knots of the Silk Road in different ways ranging from open predatory conflicts, protection offers (in fact tribute or ransom) and direct domination to trade alliances. Trade and interaction with sedentary areas were crucial and indispensable for the existence and stability of nomadic economy. Such symbiotical relations were also conditional for nomadic expansion in history. The expansion of the Turkic khaganate was the period most extensive and systematic ethnic divergence process, which laid tracks for the later Middle and Modern Ages Turkic expansion of Seljuk and Osman Empires that permanently marked the ethno-political map of current world. The result of such extensive Turkic ethnogenetical processes is today large area of mixed europoid-mongoloid populations from Yakutia, the Tuva Republic, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tadjikistan, Azerbaijan to Turkey. Turkic ethnic minorities - sometimes in autonomous regions - are live in many countries of Eurasia; in China and Federal subjects of Russia (mainly in Tuva (82 %), Chuvashia (67 %), Sakha (Yakutia, 50%), Mongolia (88% population of Khazakh in the West) etc.) and also in Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Georgia etc.

3.3.4. The Göktürks and Ashina phenomenon

“Story and history”

When the blue sky above and the brown earth below were created, between them a human being was created. Over the human beings, my ancestors Bumin Kagan and Istemi Kagan ruled. They ruled people by Turkish laws, they led them and succeeded.

There were Kok Turks between the two boundaries, having neither rulers nor masters. Wise kagans were they. Great kagans were they. Their buyruqs (officials), too, were wise and brave, indeed. They were great too. Both the lords and people were straightforward and honest. For this reason, kagans were able to rule the state.¹⁰²

The Turkic memorials in Khöshöö Tsaidam rest in the centre of the Second Eastern Turkic Khaganate and as the inscriptions tell they belong to the ruling dynasty of khaganate, the Göktürk (also the Kök Türk, the “Blue” or “Heavenly Türks”). Meaning of this name¹⁰³ is usually interpreted as a “combat helmet”, a shape that should remind of the Altai Mountain.¹⁰⁴ The Göktürks at the dawn of their history nevertheless lived within the Juan-Juan Khaganate north of the Altai Mountains for generations and they renowned for their metallurgical skills and blacksmith works. All the Göktürk rulers, from the Bumin kaghan to the Bilgä-Khan and Kül-Tegin, is said to originate from the Ashina clan, a tribe of obscure origins who had lived in the northern corner of Inner Asia and is traditionally linked with the kaghan family. Also the name *Ashina* itself, connected with the legend of Turkic ancestors, given birth from a she-wulf and raised in some Altai cave, shows very close etymological and geographical relations. If the connection between the Göktürk and Ashina is real and not only artificial ideology supporting the supremacy of the Turkic kaghans, then it opens an interesting space for reflection; in history and archaeology either.

¹⁰² The Kül-Tegin inscription, lines 1-3.

¹⁰³ In Old Turkic form the name was spelled **𐰃𐰆𐰖𐰏** Türuk, **𐰃𐰆𐰖𐰏𐰆** Kök Türuk, or **𐰃𐰆𐰖𐰏** Türuk.

¹⁰⁴ According to Chinese sources, the meaning of the word *Tūjué* (Türk) was “combat helmet”, reportedly because the shape of the Jinshan (金山 jīnshān, Altai Mountains), where they lived, was similar to a combat helmet - hence they called themselves 突厥 (Tūjué / Tu-düeh); mentioned in: Linghu Defen et al., *Book of Zhou*, Vol. 50.; Wei Zheng et al., *Book of Sui*, Vol. 84.; Li Yanshou, *History of Northern Dynasties*, Vol. 99.

3.3.4.1. *Origins of Asina*

In 439 AD in Central Asia a distinctive clan called “Achina” or “Ashina” lived in the territory now located in north-west China, Xinjiang province or Eastern Turkestan. They spoke either a Turkic or proto-Mongolian or some Indo-European language and they were perhaps the remnants of the aristocracy of the steppes’ former Hsiung-nu Empire¹⁰⁵ which had been destroyed by the China Han dynasty in circa 100 AD. After the defeat, Ashina's 500 families fled to the Juan-Juan Khaganate.¹⁰⁶ The etymology of their name is rather complex question, but often translated in two possible lines based on Indo-Iranian (“worthy/noble”, “blue”) or proto-Mongolian origin (the Mongolian word for wolf “chono”, “china” or “shina” + Chinese prefix of “A” which means the respectful, elder, important. In combination it means *Noble Wolf* or simply “The” *Wolf*.¹⁰⁷ Both explanations and their combination are possible due to the strong cultural interactivity in the Sayano-Altai territory. As the Juan-Juan Khaganate also the early Turkic population was rather heterogeneous and many of the names of Göktürk rulers are not even Turkic.¹⁰⁸ All the main “protagonists” of the Turkic story are so far localized in the same time and same area.

¹⁰⁵ According to *Book of Zhou* and *History of Northern Dynasties*, Ashina was a branch of Xiongnu (Linghu Defen et al., *Book of Zhou*, Vol. 50, Li Yanshou, *History of the Northern Dynasties*, Vol. 99). According to *Book of Sui* and *Tongdian*, they were “mixed Barbarians” (雜胡 / 杂胡, Pinyin: zá hú, Wade-Giles: tsa hu) from Pingliang (Wei Zheng et al., *Book of Sui*, Vol. 84, Wei Shou, *Book of Wei*, Vol. 4-I.). *Book of Sui* reported that when Emperor Taiwu of Northern Wei overthrew Juqu Mujian's Northern Liang on October 18, 439, Ashina's 500 families fled to the Juan-Juan Khaganate (Wei Zheng et al., *Book of Sui*, Vol. 84).

¹⁰⁶ *Book of Sui* reported that when Emperor Taiwu of Northern Wei overthrew Juqu Mujian's Northern Liang on October 18, 439, Ashina's 500 families fled to the Juan-Juan Khaganate (Wei Zheng et al., *Book of Sui*, Vol. 84).

¹⁰⁷ The name of the ruling Ashina clan possibly derives from the Khotanese Sakā term for “deep blue”, *āśīna*; (Findley 39). According to Gumilev the name Ashina, meaning a „wolf“ points to the Xianbei or proto-Mongolian language background; Turkic expressions denoting the wolf are „buri“ or „kaskyr“ but Mongolian word „shono/dino“ (in modern Mongolian „chono“) is much closer to the term. The initial „A-“ prefix should come from the Chinese transcription. Obviously, the Ashina means „the noble wolf“ (Gumilev, 1993, p. 22). On the other hand Klyashtorny interprets the name *Ashina* as of either Iranian (*āšana* „worthy, noble“) or Tokharian origin (*āšām*, *ašām*), which is also not impossible due to intense relationships between them and thus a number of such loanwords in Turkic language (Golden, 1992, p. 121). Klyashtorny, based on the Chinese sources, links the early history of Ashina tribe with its Kansu-Gaochang and Altai period (the migration phase), when they were in close contact with Turfan communities and thus could be easily mixed. Later he also turns to the Khotan-Saka or Sogdian etymology and suggests the translation of Ashina (*asana*) as „blue“ which corresponds to the later connection of Ashina and Gök-Türk dynasties, the „Blue“ or „Sky Turks“ (Chudyakov, Tabaldiev, 2009, p. 11).

¹⁰⁸ Charles Holcombe, *The Genesis of East Asia, 221 B.C.-A.D. 907*, University of Hawaii Press, 2001

3.3.4.2. *Legends as the mirror of history I*

First of all it is necessary to turn attention to the ethnogenetic legends explaining the origins of Turks and namely their first rulers, responsible for the rise of Turkic Empire. These legends are preserved mostly in the Chinese dynastic annals,¹⁰⁹ deriving the origin of the Turks (*Tü'küe*) from the independent branch of Hsiung-nu originally living on the right bank of the "West Sea".¹¹⁰ Their family clan is noted there as *Ashina*.

According to the most popular legend this tribe is said to be wiped out by neighboring Lin state and only a ten year old boy survived, mutilated by enemies by cutting of his feet. The boy was cared by a she-wolf whom he later made pregnant. But the ruler of the enemies, when heard that the boy survived, sent his people to kill him. The she-wolf escaped and ran eastward to a mountain north of the Kao-chang state (Gaochang),¹¹¹ where in a cave she gave birth to ten sons; one of them bore the surname of *Ashina* (A-shih-na).¹¹² That *Ashina* became their ruler and placed a wolf's head on their standards to demonstrate their origin. Later their tribe was multiplied and after some generations they left the cave under the leadership of *A-hsien-shih* and declared themselves as vassals of Juan-Juan kaghan. They settled on the southern slope of the Chin-shan, which is said to be the Altai Mountain.¹¹³

The **Chou-shu** source offers also another version which derived the Turks from the state of *So*, to the north of Hsiung-nu.¹¹⁴ They are linked with the Tabgach (T'o-pa, Toba) part of the Xianbei (Hsien-pi) whose main group was probably Mongol-speaking.¹¹⁵ According to the legend these *So* were led by *A-pang-pu*, who had 17 (or 70) brothers and one of them, *I-chih-*

¹⁰⁹ *Chou-shu* (completed in 629 AD), *Sui-shu* (629-636 AD), *Pei-shi* (completed ca. 659 AD), *Yu-yang tsa-tu* (ca.860 AD), translations of which were brought mainly by Bichurin, Liu Mau-tsai and D. Sinor. (Golden, 1992, p. 117).

¹¹⁰ Liu Mau-tsai points to the fact that the „West Sea“ (*hsi-hai*) was a changing concept which denoted in different times - the Aral Sea, the Mediterranean, Koko Nor in the Qinghai province in West-Central China or Kaspian Sea, which Liu and others believe to be meant here. Kljaštornyj (1965) suggests that it was the delta of the Etsin Gol (Ruo He), an area of small lakes and marshes in Liang Province (including the Kansu and Turfan Depression). As P. Golden suggests this was the geographical usage of the term in 4th-5th century AD; he also points to the note of D. Sinor (1982) that *Hsi-hai* was thought to be adjacent to *Fu-lin* (i.e. the Byzantine Empire) in Sui times (581 – 617 AD). Golden, 1992, p. 118.

¹¹¹ Qoço, 30 miles east of Turfan (Sinor, 1982).

¹¹² According to some scientists all of them took the surname *Ashina* (Sinor, 1982).

¹¹³ Chin-shan „Golden Mountain“ corresponds to Turkic „*altun*“ or Mongolian „*altan*“, that means „gold, golden“ (Golden, 1992, p. 118)

¹¹⁴ D. Sinor connects the term „*So*“ with a meaning of „rope; to bind“ and according to him the *So* are called *So-t'ou*, i.e. „*So-heads*“ referring to their hair-style (Shiratori, 1929, refers to them as „Corded head“ and remarks they were so called „because of the likeness of their queues to cords“). Without doubt they wore their hair long, loose or braided (Sinor, 1990, p.287-288).

¹¹⁵ Sinor, 1990, p. 288.

ni-shih-tu, is said to be born from a wolf. He possessed the power to control the wind and rain¹¹⁶ and with the daughters of Spirit of Winter and Spirit of Summer he fathered four sons, who established separated polities.¹¹⁷ The oldest son *No-tu-lu-shi* (*Na-tu-liu-shih*, the shad)¹¹⁸ became the leader of the rest of tribes descended from *A-pang-pu* and he was given the title Türk. One of his sons *A-shih-na* (each had taken the surname of one of their ten mothers) became a ruler after *Na-tu-liu*'s death by winning the contest and got a title *A-hsien-shih* (shad).¹¹⁹ The first Kaghan of the Türks, Bumin (T'u-men, Tumen) was son of T'u-wu (bearing the title *Ta-ye-hu*, Great Yabghu), the grandson of *A-hsien-shi* and greatgrandson of *Na-tu-liu*. According to *Chou-shu* source they came to the Chinese borders for the first time to trade the silk.¹²⁰

A third tale is presented in **Yu-yang tsa-tu**; according to this source the Turks were descendants of a lake spirit *She-mo-she-li* who lived to the west of *A-shih-te* cavern. *She-mo* was at the behest of the daughter of lake spirit brought by a white deer into the lake. *She-mo* was forewarned in a dream by the daughter of the lake spirit, that in order to maintain their relationship, he must hit with his arrow a "white deer with golden horns" that will emerge from the *cavern where his ancestors were born*. But *She-mo*'s men killed the deer instead what made him angry enough to cut off the head of tribal leader *A-erh*, the killer of the deer. Henceforth there would have to be human sacrifices to heaven from *A-erh*'s tribe. The daughter of the lake spirit, disappointed with the *She-mo*'s behavior and spilling the human blood, broke with him.¹²¹

Beside the Turkic "fairy-tales" Chinese sources also mention some historical accounts on their origin. The **Sui-shu** notes that Turks are said to be mixed Hu from P'ing-liang (in

¹¹⁶ Which is actually a familiar characteristic of Turkic and Mongolian shamans (cf. „*yat*“, a divination with stones to bring the rain or wind, „*yat'it'*“ or „*yada tas'*“, the „rain stone“ in Turkic). Golden, 1992, p. 119.

¹¹⁷ One of them changed into white swan, the others created separated polities, Ch'í-ku (one of the Chinese terms for Qirgiz/Kyrgyz) between the A-fu and Chien rivers (some believe the Chien is identified with upper Yenisei), second on the Ch'u-dih river (Middle Yenisei?) and the oldest son lived on the Chien-hsi-ch'u-dih-shih mountain (Western Sayan?). Golden, 1992, p. 119.

¹¹⁸ *Shad*, the prince, was a title equivalent to *Yabghu* (Western Turkic counterpart?) and roughly equivalent to governor, he was the representative of the Kaghan and usually a member of the royal dan, responsible for entrusted tribe or tribes. While awaiting their turn to rule, the various Ashina princes usually functioned as governors of different areas.

¹¹⁹ The term „*hsien*“ appears among the Hsiung-nu titles with a meaning of „wise, sage“, which resembles the later Turkic term „*bilgä*“ (Bilgä-Khan etc). Golden, 1992, p. 119.

¹²⁰ Golden, 1992, p. 119. This likely remarks the moment, when the Turkic tribes entered the the Chinese historical scene; figuratively they left the anonymous hords of barbarians and „touched“ the northern border of China.

¹²¹ As Sinor notes the *A-shih-te* is the name of famous Türk dan, that of Tonyukuk and An-lu-shan (Golden, 1992, p. 120.)

Kansu)¹²² who bore the clan name *Ashina*. When T'ai-wu-ti Emperor (Northern Wei, 424 – 452 AD) beat the Tsü-ch'ü clan of Hsiung-nu (Northern Liang state in Kansu, 397 – 439 AD) the *Ashina* clan with some 500 families left to the Juan-Juan territory.¹²³ They settled in the southern slopes of Altai Mountain, engaged in iron-working and achieved the name “*türk*”, transcribed in Chinese the *T'u-chüeh* or *Tujue* which is later used in wide general context to designate the people of Turkic khaganates. The term *türk* is translated in different ways as it was already differently understood within the Middle Age sources; usually it is linked with a word for a “helmet” which shall resemble the shape of some Altai Mountain.¹²⁴ But some researchers also translate the word as “strong, powerful” based on Old-Turkic language connotations.¹²⁵ The Arabian historiographer *Mahmúd Kashgári* noted that the word *türk* designated the “troops”.¹²⁶ Obviously neither the ethnonym itself is easy to be interpreted.

According to these accounts showing a number of traditions and different alternatives it seems very likely that the Turkic entity were a complex grouping of different elements, united and ideologically catalyzed by a foreign (partly mythical) feature.¹²⁷ Chinese sources actually mention more than one Türk people.¹²⁸ The *Ashinas* obviously played an essential role in this process. But actually who were the *Ashinas*? What were their origins? And what was their actual role in frame of Turkic ethnogenesis? Despite the fact that these questions are hard to be solved considering the current state of research, there are few firm points that should be regarded. *Ashina* is very likely a foreign feature entering the Altai environment in 5th century.¹²⁹ Whether the Altaic local population consisted of more Turkic or Proto-Mongolic tribes and

¹²² *Hu* was originally a term used for the „Northern Barbarians“ such as the Hsiung-nu, but later it designated „Barbarians“ in general or other specific groups of them (Golden, 1992, p. 120). Term *Hu* can also designate the Sogdians (Sinor, 1990, p. 288).

¹²³ According to Gumilev (1993, p. 22) they must not have been ethnically homogenous and this amount is rather to be seen metaphorically in a sense of „not many“. Actually it may assume 2500 people (Chudyakov, Tabaldiev, 2009, p. 14) .

¹²⁴ Golden, 1992, p. 120.

¹²⁵ Gumilev, 1993 p. 22

¹²⁶ Chudyakov, Tabaldiev, 2009, p. 10; Bernshtam, 1935, p. 46.

¹²⁷ Mythical origin of a foreign leader coming from outside and having salvational powers is quite usual feature encountered in many cultures. Founding dynasties – both foreign and native - often create or exploit tribal myths to fashion an ideology that should declare their sanctity and grant them – or legitimize - the right to govern the land and people. This is the important moment in shaping the ethnicity (Golden, 1992, p. 120)

¹²⁸ Sinor, 1990, p. 289.

¹²⁹ According to Klyashtorny's interpretation in 439 AD the Hsiung-nu state of Northern Liang (Northern China) led by Mugañ was defeated by Toba Wei and the 500 families of Ashina dan moved to Kaochang (Gaochang), where they get into close contact with Iranian and Tokharian speaking ethnics. In this time, especially in the area of Eastern Turkestan were set the close Turko-Sogdian relationships, that had had an essential impact on the culture and economy of Turks. Here they had come under the rule of expanding Juan-Juan and ca. 460 AD moved to

whether the coming Ashina were of whatsoever origin (if they were non-Turkic but Xianbei, Hsiung-nu or Sogdian features as considered in current research), they obviously got turkicized very soon and took an important place in political processes in the Altai area. These Turks in the area of Upper Altai (as before in Gaochan) were surrounded by polyethnic groups, partly of Bulan-kobe and Pazyryk cultural origin and perhaps of Iranian language background. *Ashina* undoubtedly became a head of Turkic revolt against Juan-Juan and under their command the Turkic tribes unified in the frame of early Turkic state formation. The *Ashina* clan became a ruling royal clan of both later Turkic Khaganates. In this context *Ashina* appear as a connecting element and leading power, perhaps not because of their amount (they were not numerous) but rather due to their origin, organization and military skills. They might possibly represent some noble branch of warriors of Hsiung-nu formation, searching for a new territory after the decline of their mother state.¹³⁰ Then also the creating of ideologically tinted legends of origin, enthroning the *Ashina* as a leading power and legitimizing their place amongst the early settled tribes would give a perfect sense. They were politically self-confident enough to claim the primal position in the newly-born tribal formation, which speaks for their previous experiences.

Whatever language the Ashina may have originally spoken¹³¹ – leaving aside the philological discussions - in time they ruled, all of them and their people would speak Turkic, that became the official language (though perhaps of different dialects), and created a common homogenous culture at least in linguistic and political sense.¹³² The Bumin kaghan (*T'u-men* in Chinese transcription) was the first leader as the authentic historical person of *Ashina* origin, responsible for overthrowing of Juan-Juan Khaganate and establishing of the First Turkic Khaganate in 552 AD. All his ruling followers belonged to his gender until the

Altai, possibly as a military arm of Juan-Juan to control the local tribes and exploited the iron ore in the southern slopes of Altai; in that time they took the name *türk* (Chudyakov, Tabaldiev, 2009, p. 14).

¹³⁰ If considering the „500 families“ and Kashgári's translation of *türk* as „troups“, the Ashina could be seen as a military retinue (Gumilev, 1993, p. 22); (?). According to some researchers (Chudyakov, Tabaldiev, 2009, p. 14-15) Juan-Juan themselves even settled the Ashina clan on the Altai to obtain the direct military control of the local Turkic population and tribes; actually they might become something like the political arm of Juan-Juan, responsible for the situation in Altai. This political authority manifested itself as a double-edged weapon.

¹³¹ The Türks in the area of Upper Altai (as before in Gaochan) were surrounded by polyethnic groups, partly of Bulan-kobe and Pazyryk cultural origin and perhaps of Iranian language background. Türks had kept

¹³² In this context also the tribal designation *Türk* includes an interesting connotations since *Ashina* is said to „achieve or accept“ this name after they had settled in Altai. Whether is this a sign of assimilation or is it to be connected directly with *Ashina* people as the term *türk* is newly arrived in the historical sources within this time, is another interesting question to be solved. But the fact, that all the early Turkic terms and kaghan names are of non-Turkic origin should not be neglected.

decline of Turkic khaganates; and this genealogical continuity is confirmed both by Chinese and Turkic sources.

3.3.4.3. *The myth, symbols and signs*

“Wolves, deers and goats”

Another interesting reflection of early ethnogenesis of the Göktürks can be seen in frame of the symbols and their transformations within the area. The “wolf” feature, foreign to the Altai region of the “Deer Age” before,¹³³ became to be closely tied to the Turkic iconography and acquired a high symbolic importance, it is a symbol linked to the upcoming Turkic period.¹³⁴ Turkic kaghans were in Chinese sources often designated as “wolves” and their holy persons were surrounded by a comitatus called “böri” (wolf).¹³⁵ Golden wolf heads were used as decorations for their standards and flags. Besides the historical accounts also one iconographical monument is often linked with their lupine ancestry, the stele of Tatpar kaghan in Bugut, Mongolia (581/2 AD), the earliest turtle-stele with inscription yet in Sogdian script.¹³⁶ On the upper part of the monument there is said to be a scene depicting a wolf and human figure, perhaps the representation of the mythical origin of Turkic tribes and the *Ashina* clan, which kaghan Tatpar belonged to. On the other hand some later opinions see this interpretation as wrong one, arguing that the scene depicts a dragon, an imperial symbol of kaghan’s rule.¹³⁷ This explanation in fact fits better to the royal iconography of Turkic kaghans that is often represented by dragon symbols on many later monuments of this type (Khöshöö Tsaidam, stone stela from Kharabalgasun, etc.). These are actually reflecting the close contacts with the Chinese environment and influences of the Chinese royal symbolics infiltrating into the Turkic iconography and architecture; the

¹³³ Cultures of Bronze and Iron Age in Central and Inner Asia developed under the sign of deer, that used to be depicted on many artefacts of material culture (remember for example the „deer stones“ scattered all over the steppe territories from Sayan to the Black Sea). But regarding the multicultural conception of the Altai region, there is a strong probability that the deer sign might be linked even with the earlier Turkic population, possibly living in Altai before the Ashina arrival (perhaps the *Tiele* tribes).

¹³⁴ „The Turks' neighbours were also familiar with the all-Turkic wolf-totem. In the epitaph of Kyrghyz man Ter-apa (or Terpa) there are the following words: "I have not killed seven wolves. I have not killed snow leopards and fallow-deer"; Seven wolves were seven Turkic warriors killed by Ter-apa. That were the Turks who were named as wolves in Chinese chronicles. Snow leopards implied the Kyrghyzes, as to the fallow-deer, the tribes of the Sayan-Altay were probably meant, e.g. in this case the totems were used as common nouns“ (Nesterov, 1996).

¹³⁵ Golden, 1992, p. 147.

¹³⁶ Use of Sogdian script clearly shows that the origins of the Turkic runic inscription are to be linked with the Sogdian cultural influence.

¹³⁷ Voitov, 1996, p. 102; Chudyakov, Tabaldiev, 2009, p. 13

stela of Bugut is probably one of its earliest examples. From this point of view the wolf symbol might be seen as Turkic counterpart of the Chinese dragon, the royal mark.

The *Wei-shu* reports that the Kao-chü (Gaoche), which are connected with the Uyghurs, also had had a lupine ancestry¹³⁸ and wolf origin mythology is to be observed also by Mongolians (ancestor of Genghis Khan is said to be a grey wolf).¹³⁹ The same important common feature is the cult of ancestral cave, worshiped among the Turkic tribes in Altai and Mongolia and still known among the current Mongolian people from Xing'an (Hingan forests in the East China, Inner Mongolia) to Mongolia. These serious iconographical metamorphoses might indicate some deep social, political and ethno-cultural changes in the steppes of Inner and Central Asia of the early historical period, at least on the ideological level. Whether this feature may give also a sign of some possible connections between the Turkic and Proto-Mongolic ethno-cultural backgrounds is to discuss. On the other hand the "ancient" deer symbolics had not completely vanished from the Turkic milieu; two silver deer figures with golden antlers appeared for example among the artefacts of treasure from Bilgä-Khan monument, hence yet during the dusk of Second Eastern Turkic Khaganate some three hundred years later from the early Turkic period. Together with deer's presence in some myths as in *Shemo's* cave for example¹⁴⁰ it may figuratively suggest the cultural (and possibly also ethnogenetical) continuity, mixture and complexed interactions which accompanied the early medieval state forming.

In connection with the Khöshöö Tsaidam there is also another significant mark to be mentioned; in the heading of the inscription beside the dragon symbols there is a carved *tamga*¹⁴¹ in shape of mountain goat, the ibex. The same type of pictogram occurs in both

¹³⁸ Golden, 1992, p. 119. This note might also reflect deeper ethno-cultural connotations considering the Bilgä-Khan inscription where Kaghan turns to the Tokuz-Oghuz („nine tribes“, the component of Eastern Turkic Kaghanate, consisting from Uyghurs and others) as to „his own people“. Despite the ruling Göktürks (Ashina) were not Uyghurs, early kinship of any kind can not be excluded.

¹³⁹ Sinor interprets similarity of this motifs as evidence of Iranian component in the shaping of the Türks (Golden, 1992, p, 119). It is a question whether the Mongolian wolf symbol was assumed from the Turkic milieu or if it appeared earlier as a proto-mongolic feature already in Xianbei period; that would again point toward the common or dose origin of these two entities.

¹⁴⁰ The legend about *Shemo* actually reflects these two mixed features; the *cavern* of his ancestors and the holy *deer* with golden antlers that emerged from inside. Obviously this is a metaphore joining these different cultural traditions together.

¹⁴¹ Tamga or tamgha "stamp, seal" (Mongolian: *tamga*, Turkish: *damga*) is used by Eurasian nomadic peoples and by cultures influenced by them. The tamga was normally the emblem of a particular tribe, dan or family. They were common among the Eurasian nomads throughout Classical Antiquity and the Middle Ages (including Mongols, Samatians, Scythians and Turkic peoples). Among modern Turkic and Mongolian peoples, the tamga is a design

monuments and numerous sites in Mongolia; memorial complex Shiveet Ulan of unknown kaghan (5th -6th centuries AD, border of Bayan –Agt sum, Bulgan aimag/Hairhan sum, Arkhangai aimag), Mukhar memorial complex of Turkic kaghan (“Ulkhyn bulan”, Altanbulag sum, Töv aimag; pictogram on the turtle sculpture), memorial complex of Altyn Tamgan Tarhan (in relief perhaps depicting the seal holder of Turkic kaghan, 732 AD, Mogod sum, Bulgan aimag), stela with inscription from Ordu-Balyk II (9th century AD, Khotont sum, Akhangai aimag) etc (*Fig.18*). With strong probability this identical sign points to some connection between the Göktürk clan and ruling strata, despite this issue requires further and deeper investigation. If the connection was proved then it might confirm the proclaimed continual genealogical line of Göktürks through the khaganate history and it would also indicate that the descendants of Göktürks were present in Orkhon Valley even during the Uyghur Khaganate yet in 9th century AD. Nevertheless still should be regarded that the sign might simply belong to general khagan symbolics, a royal mark of ideological value that could be even abused for political purposes if necessary.

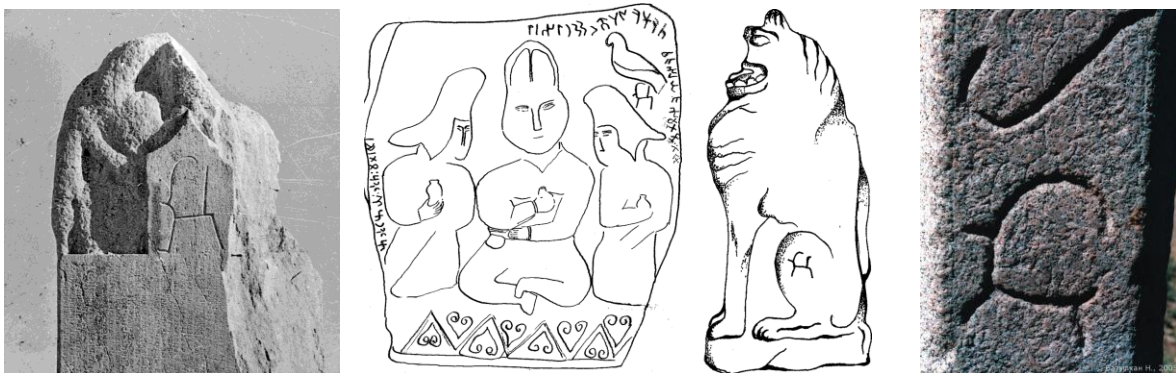


Fig.18: *Ibex tamga* in Kül-Tegin inscription (FT20811, Kleibl 1958), Altyn Tamgan Tarkhan, Shiveet Ulan and Ordu Balyk II.

identifying property or cattle belonging to a specific dan or family, usually as a cattle brand or stamp. Compared to ethnographical parallels it can be assumed that its purpose stayed unchanged.

3.4. Politics

Much of the Turkic political system undoubtedly came from Juan-Juan, but elements of it ultimately go back to the Xianbei and Hsiung-nu heritage as well as other unknown sources. The title of Kaghan or Qaghan was first attested among the Xianbei.¹⁴² Profusion of titles with different functions clearly shows that the Türks had a fully developed nomadic state. It is unclear if it was more or less centralized than that of Hsiung-nu. The later Genghis-Khan's Mongol Empire was in many respects a re-creation of the Turkic state on a grander scale. Peter B. Golden points out that there is the possibility that the leaders of the Göktürk Empire, the Ashina, were themselves originally an Indo-European-speaking (possibly Iranian) clan who later adopted Turkic, but inherited their original Indo-European titles.¹⁴³ German Turkologist W. E. Scharlipp writes that many central terms are Iranian in origin, including almost all titles.¹⁴⁴ The political structure, development and international relations of Turkic Khaganate is a complexed issue which deserves an individual study not easy to be solved. The interrelations with Chinese empire and other neighbours are rooted in the Hsiung-nu heritage and affected by complexed diplomacy and war conflicts, often overlapping.

Turkic memorials in Khöshöö Tsaidam are exceptional due to its localization, conception and historical information they carry. Besides the kaghan self-presentation and description of historical events, the inscriptions also reflect some interesting aspects of political attitudes of the Göktürk rulers, although perhaps unilaterally seen and propaganda aimed.

3.4.1. Foreign politics

The description of interrelations with the Chinese neighbour, the Tang dynasty, is not very flattering. Nevertheless their contacts were intensive and constructive. The external politics played an important role in vitality of Turkic khaganate, which stability - as any other steppe empire of federacy - was very sensitive to the changes in the contemporary international political scene. China was of course a strong adversary for the early medieval nomadic state

¹⁴² Many of the ruling titles (*kaghan, katun, yabgu, šad, tegin, irkin, tarxan, išbara, šadpät, tudun, čor, totoq, beg..etc.*) were of Iranian origin (*šad, beg* from Persian through Sogdian or perhaps even Juan-Juan, *išbara* comes from the Toxarian environment (P. B. Golden, 2009, p.146-8).

¹⁴³ P. B. Golden, *An Introduction to the History of the Turkic Peoples*, O. Harrassowitz, 1992, p. 121-122

¹⁴⁴ Wolfgang-Ekkehard Scharlipp in *Die frühen Türken in Zentralasien*, p. 18

formations and its influence on the northern areas was eminent and utterly intended. The economical instability of the nomadic states, addicted to many internal and external factors, presented a continual danger for the Chinese empire which therefore built numerous defense mechanisms. Except the physical defense on the base of construction features as was the Great Wall of China (built since the 2nd century BC) the main defensive strategy focused to the diplomatic level and intensive intervention politics toward their northern neighbours. Emergence of the strong and homogenous nomadic tribal unity or empire that would be able to concentrate its powers and effectively practice the expansive and predatory politics towards the developed neighbours was always extremely dangerous moment for the stability of Chinese economics. The northern steppes were always too large, too ethnically diversified and too fluctuating to be dominated, long-term controlled and ordered. As the stability of the nomadic state was closely related to the authority of kaghan and tribal unity, China intensively focused on the constant nomadic tribal conflicts and using a skilful diplomacy of business and marriage politics manipulated their mutual rivalry and stired up their conflicts. The main target was to keep the nomadic society unstable despite the fact there was still a risk of nomadic invasions but their impacts were diminished. Seen from the point of view of military strategy the nomadic tribes had a great advantage in the mobility. Also the core of the nomadic empire was practically imperishable; partly due to the distant and hardly accessible location for the Chinese troops, partly due to its mobility. Many of prominent nomadic personalities in history saw this as an essential assurance of prosperity of nomadic state and endeavour to maintain this status despite the attractive gains of sedentary civilization (Tonyukuk being one of those, see in inscription in the chapter below). Reflections of these conservative tendencies can be reflected in numerous notes in the Khöshöö Tsaidam runic texts, warning against the Chinese temptations.

The lords and people went unfair. Since they give way to Chinese people, since they were defrauded by them, younger and elder brothers became revengeful and enemy to each other. Turkish people were exiled.

The kagans were exiled. Chinese people made your kind sons slave; made your beautiful daughters servant. The Turkish lords forgot their Turkish titles. Those lords held Chinese titles and obeyed the Chinese emperor for fifty years,..¹⁴⁵

...

¹⁴⁵ Kül-Tegin inscription, 2nd side, 1-2 line.

..The words of Chinese people, who give us gold, silver, alcohol and treasures in abundance, have always been sweet and silks have always been soft. Deceiving by their sweet words and soft silks, they attract people to come from remote places. After people have settled close to them, they made people be addicted to them even more.

They do not let wise men and brave men come close. They corrupt beginning from a single man up to his whole family and clan. Having been deceived by their sweet words and soft silk, you Turkish people, died! In order to survive Turkish people intended to settle at the Čuyay mountains in south on Tügeltin plain. They deceived so much, that led Turkish common people to death. They lied that they would give bad silk if be afar, and would give good silk if they would be close to them. Unwise people followed that words, went close and all died.

If you go toward those places, O Turkish people, you will die! If you stay in the land of Otukan, and send caravans from there, you will have no trouble. If you stay at the Otukan mountains, you will live forever dominating the countries! O Turkish people, you always regard yourselves as satiated. You do not think of being hungry or satiated...¹⁴⁶

Victorious battles of the Turkic khaganate with China greatly strengthened the authority of the kaghan and political status of the Turkic empire. After the long period of Chinese domination after the decay of the First Khaganate during the reign of so called „puppet kaghans“ the Second Khaganate became again the equal neighbour and adversary of the Tang empire since 680 AD. Although their relations were a complex issue interwoven with intricate diplomacy and perhaps always conditioned by mandatory exchange of gifts (that should be perhaps understood as paying tributes) the Turkic kaghans somehow achieved the respect of Tang dynasty, which is reflected also in the Khöshöö Tsaidam construction.

¹⁴⁶ Kül-Tegin inscription, 3rd side, line 1-4

3.4.1.1. *Khöshöö Tsaidam conception - mirror of relations with the Tang Dynasty*

According to the historical sources and Orkhon inscriptions the Kül-Tegin and Bilgä-Khan memorials were built with contribution from the Chinese emperor, who “..had a funeral inscription carved into a grave stone and had a shrine and temple built and on its four walls battle scenes were painted; for that purpose the emperor sent 6 famous painters; they painted the pictures with such skill and natural manner that (The Türks) thought they had never seen the like before...”¹⁴⁷ Khöshöö Tsaidam royal memorials were built and decorated by the Chinese craftsmen and artists as confirmed the research of both sites and the runic inscriptions either:

Udar Sejün came. From the Chinese emperor, Isije Likeņ came. He brought immeasurable quantity of silk, gold and silver in abundance. From the Tibet kagan Bülin came. Inek Sejün and Oyal Tarkan came from Sogdians, Persians and Bukhara people in west.

Čan Sejün, the nephew of the Chinese Emperor, came in order to build the mausoleum, to make sculptures, to paint and to prepare inscription stone inscriptions.

Kultegin passed away (lit.: 'flew away to Tengri') on the seventeenth day of the Sheep Year. We held (his) funeral on the twenty-seventh day of the ninth month. We finished his mausoleum, the statues and paintings, and his inscription stone on the twenty-seventh day of the seventh month, in the Monkey Year.¹⁴⁸ Kultegin was at age of forty-seven. The Tuyyun Elteber brought all of these sculptors and painters..¹⁴⁹

I got painters from the Chinese emperor, and ordered them to inscribe. They put all my words on the stone.

The court painters of the Chinese emperor took part. I got them to build an extraordinary mausoleum. They decorated the inside and outside with wonderful paintings and sculptures. They inscribed all my word on the stone, I had all the words in my mind recorded. See these inscriptions and get lessons, all of you from my On-Ok descendants to slaves. I had the memorial stone inscribed.

¹⁴⁷ Liu Mau-tsai, 1958,p. 258-259; in Jisl, 1997, p. 54

¹⁴⁸ Dated to the 1st August 732 AD (Jisl 1959 a: p. 90).

¹⁴⁹ Kül-Tegin, 2nd side, line 11-12

This is plain place to live. I had the memorial stone erected for the brave man in this country and inscribed on this place. See this memorial and learn its contents. ... The one who inscribed these inscriptions is nephew (Prince) Yolluytegin.

In order to take care of Kultegin's gold and silver, his treasures and possessions, his four (thousand?) horses.... Tengri ... I inscribed the stone. (Prince) Yolluytegin...¹⁵⁰

Building elements, architectural conception, scale, construction methods and last but not least, the decoration style, show clear Chinese influence and resemblance with the Chinese imperial tomb architecture in Xi'an.¹⁵¹ Tang imperial ancestor's tombs were used to express Tang power and political legitimacy, continuing the tradition of Han dynasty tombs. Tomb statuary and external layout came to be well standardized under the Tang in the late seventh century. So far Tang tombs became grand statements about the Chinese empire and the Tang dynasty, its rulers and members of the ruling class and aspects of Tang society.¹⁵²

Tombs of Chinese emperors were rather complicated complexes of buildings surrounded by walls and following strict geomancy rules, but their basic segments were as follows. The gate was usually guarded by two sculptures¹⁵³ of animal beings. Analogical pair of stone sheep or rams is to be observed for example before the inner gateway of Li Xian's tomb in Qianling (706 AD) and according to the Eckfeld this is a sign normally consistent with a tomb of nobility member (*Fig.26*).¹⁵⁴ In front of the entrance occurs an artificial water obstruction,¹⁵⁵ a symbolic transition from the world of the living to the world of the dead. The same formula is to be observed in the Khöshöö Tsaidam, namely in the Kül-Tegin memorial, where a water basin in the gate was uncovered during the excavation 1958. According to the Jisl's report in front of the entrance was a slightly elevated paved doorstep with two embedded stakes beside from which went a paved path to the east between the ditch terminals. Although this situation could not be interpreted it might perhaps indicate some outpost roof construction or even an

¹⁵⁰ Kül-Tegin inscription, 3rd side, line 11 -14.

¹⁵¹ In the vicinity of Tang capital Chang'an (Xi'an) were since 1950's excavated ca 50 tombs of Tang dynasty, mostly dated to the 7th – 8th century AD (Eckfeld, 2005, p. 2).

¹⁵² Eckfeld, 2005, p. 11.

¹⁵³ Like in the case of Khöshöö Tsaidam, in the Li Xian's tomb there was a pair of stone sheep -- a sign normally consistent with a noble's tomb (Eckfeld, 2005, p. 56).

¹⁵⁴ Eckfeld, 2005, p. 56.

¹⁵⁵ Olivová, 2008, p. 75.

existence of a small bridge, another Chinese feature we encounter in funeral precincts. Unfortunately missing information of the Bilgä-Khan context disables the comparison.

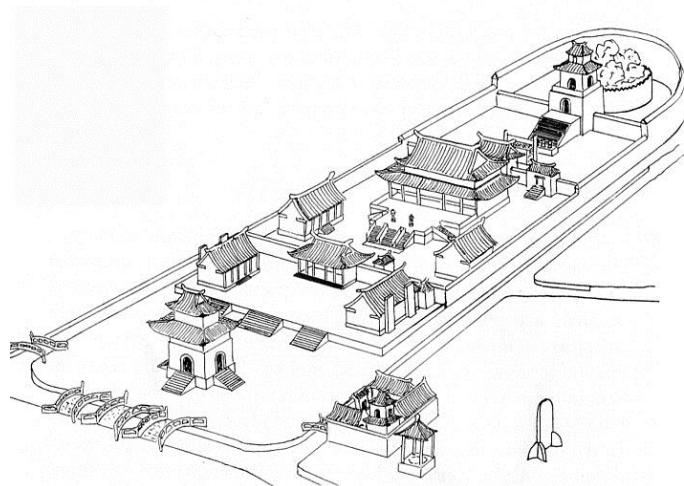
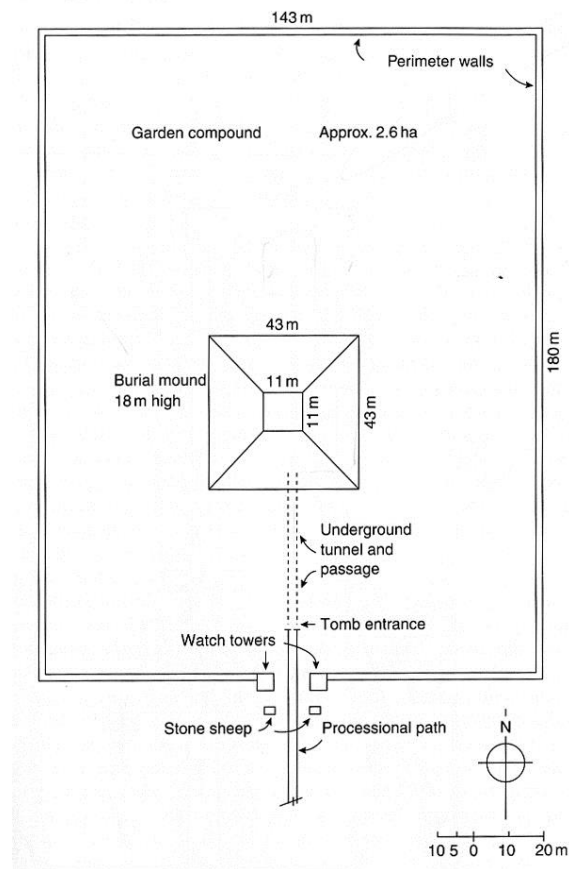


Fig.19: Chinese imperial tombs (Li Xian's in Qianling, Tang, 706 AD, and Yongzheng tomb, Qing, 17th cent.AD). According to Eckfeld and Olivová.

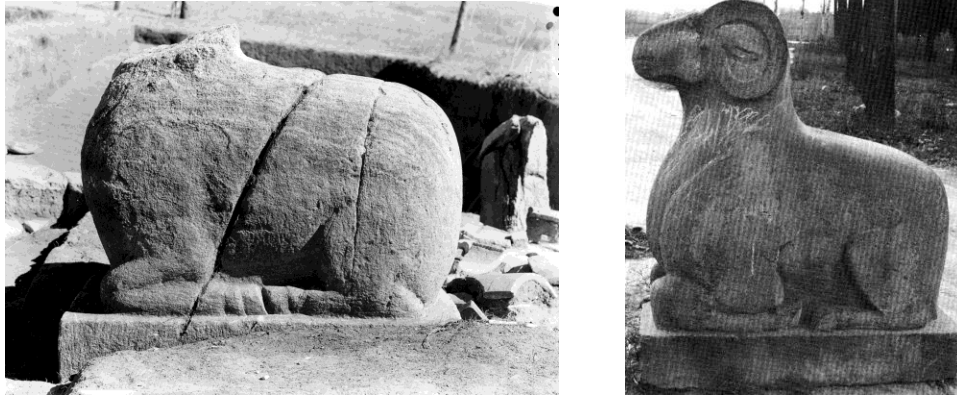


Fig.20: One of the ram statue from the Kül-Tegin gate (foto Kleibl 1958) and Qianling analogy.

Crossing the “dead river” visitor is entering the square pavillion protecting the stela, often set on the back of stone turtle symbolising the longevity.¹⁵⁶ As we know from the archaeological evidence, also the Kül-Tegin’s turtle and stela were originally covered by a small pavillion, perhaps of similar square shape according to the postholes and mortar remnants. The Chinese stone epitaphs served among others as a historical monument, what is a phenomenon observed in the Turkic royal memorials as well.



Fig. 21: Wu Zetian empress funeral stele in Qianling and typical Chinese pavilion of turtle with stela.

Also the passage of worshippers repeats the model of Chinese funeral architecture. Long processional paths of imperial tombs were flanked by a series of large stone sculptures of men, animals and mythical beasts. This processional path occurs for example at the mausoleum complex Maoling (Han Emperor Wudi, 140 – 157 BC) and later became a standard feature at all Tang emperors’ tombs. Some of these statues represented usually

¹⁵⁶ Olivová, 2008, p. 78.

foreign vassal chieftains, who had submitted under Tang and perhaps joined the funeral to pay homage to the emperor.¹⁵⁷ Then also the row of worshippers guarding the Kül-Tegin monument might represent some real persons, vassals or dignitaries, who participated in the funeral according to the inscription:

*From my On-Ok descendants, from the Turgesh kagan, seal-keepers Maqarač and Oyuz Bilge came. From the Kirgiz kagan, Tardush Inanču Čor came. Čan Sejün, the nephew of the Chinese Emperor, came in order to build the mausoleum, to make sculptures, to paint and to prepare inscription stone inscriptions.*¹⁵⁸

It is necessary to supply that all Kül-Tegin sculptures¹⁵⁹ (statue of Kül-Tegin and his wife, kneeling officials, men with sword etc.) are undoubtedly Chinese work comparing the art style; only the material (grey marble) is probably of local Orkhon provenance.¹⁶⁰



¹⁵⁷ For example in the Zhaolin tomb some of the figures are marked on pedestals as king of Qarashar, Tibetan leader or the Turkic khan (Eckfeld, 2005, p. 17).

¹⁵⁸ Kül-Tegin inscription, 2nd side, line 12.

¹⁵⁹ Except the row of babals in front of the monument, which is a Turkic feature.

¹⁶⁰ According to oral information of Mgr. Jindřich Kynický, PhD. who was engaged in many geological expeditions in Mongolia, quarries of such stone material were detected in different places of the Orkhon Valley.



Fig. 22: One of the Kül-Tegin official compared to foreign emissaries and processional path in Qianling.

The central shrine in Kül-Tegin precinct perhaps also partly corresponds to the Chinese mortuary temples, although the conception of the underground tomb chamber and artificial mound is different. Perhaps the granite stone with central circular opening might symbolically represent the circular feature of mound, abode of the dead, as a counterpart to the rectangular shape of the whole precinct, representing the Earth according to the principles of geomancy.¹⁶¹ The wall paintings mentioned in the inscription nevertheless were reserved for the highest social elite tombs and their quality corresponded to the high status of deceased. The Kül-Tegin murals were as beautiful and realistic, that “*..Bilgä-Khan always cried when watching them..*”,¹⁶² what indicates not only the significant skill of Chinese craftsmen but indirectly also tells about the high status of Kül-Tegin personality. This part of Chinese imperial precinct was also a sacrificial place what also corresponds to the sacrificial pits uncovered inside the Kül-Tegin shrine and the sacrificial stone behind. At this place, at the usual position of Chinese imperial tomb, however, no burial was detected.

¹⁶¹ Olivová, 2008, p. 75.

¹⁶² Liu Mau-tsai, 1958.



Fig. 23. Li Xian tomb Tang paintings, Qianling, 706 AD.

Fragments of mortar, scattered elsewhere in the Kūl-Tegin's monument (around the surrounding wall, inside the gate, around the shrine and sacrificial stone) indicate, that most of the walls were painted with the red colour. The Chinese imperial tombs used to be red painted aswell – red colour was significant for the funeral precincts.¹⁶³ Also the small decoration details as the fragments of clay dragon head decorating the facade of pavilion and shrine, roof tile types and their disc shaped finials are undoubtedly made by Chinese artists or at least inspired by Chinese art.¹⁶⁴



¹⁶³ Olivová, 2005, p. 75.

¹⁶⁴ Nevertheless the stamped decoration used on roof tiles is close to the pottery decoration and thus is very probable, that technology of manufacture comes from China, but building materials were produced in the Orkhon site from the local material and decorated in local style. Chinese craftsmen were perhaps in charge of technologically difficult processes, the massive production of building material was made by local workshops and local people.



Fig. 24. Kül-Tegin gutter tile finial and Tang gutter tile finial with lotus motif. Gutter tile and roof structure.

Building of such precincts in China was strictly reserved for the close members of emperor's family or the highest officials what also tells a lot of the status of Turkic kaghan. The main reason is perhaps not the fact, that Bilgä-Khan's wife Pofu was the daughter of Chinese emperor, because even other Turkic kaghans before were married to the Chinese princesses without their final resting place having parameters of imperial tomb.¹⁶⁵ The reason is rather the extraordinary significant position of Bilgä-Khan and his brother Kül-Tegin.

On the other hand leaving aside the Chinese architectural features we shall also consider the basic congeniality with the standard traditional types of Turkic fences, which the Khöshöö Tsaidam undoubtedly stems from. E-W orientation¹⁶⁶ clearly follows the basic Turkic schema and observing the details we can detect some further analogies. Row of *balbals*, leading from the east and ending in front of the entrance of the memorial, is definitely a Turkic feature. In the place of the common Turkic sarcophagus or simple fence, there is a built-up area, which could be understood as a sophisticated form of simple fence with central shrine and sacrificial stone behind. Compared to these general features the character of Khöshöö Tsaidam monuments seems to be a sophisticated transition form between the Turkic noble fence and the Chinese imperial tombs. This two-sided resemblance may also indicate that Turkic funeral architecture in general is based on Chinese funeral traditions and the exceptional form of Kül-

¹⁶⁵ Also the founder of the First Turkic khaganate, the Bumin Kaghan (552 AD, Tu'men in Chinese sources) achieved the Chinese princess for example.

¹⁶⁶ Chinese imperial precincts used to keep North-South orientation.

Tegin a Bilgä-Khan's sophisticated design and technical perfection is just a result of direct involvement of Chinese architects and builders.¹⁶⁷ Such imitation of Chinese imperial architecture and extreme synthesis of Turkic and Chinese features may reflect ideological attempt to cope with the position of Chinese emperor, whom the kaghan felt to be equal:

*"..The place from which the country can be controlled is the Otukan mountain. Having stayed in this place, I ruled the Chinese people..".*¹⁶⁸

Another question is why the Chinese emperor himself intervened and participated on the project to such an extent as never happened before,¹⁶⁹ especially when such constructions were limited to the imperial family circle. Undoubtedly the interrelations between the Chinese imperial court and Turkic rulers were always oscillating between power conflicts and trade contacts, often based on "gifts" exchange and tributes¹⁷⁰ within the Second Turkic Khaganate and namely during the reign of Bilgä-Khan reached unprecedented level. Whether the precinct was built at the instigation of Chinese emperor or at the request of Bilgä-Khan, sending the Chinese court craftsmen, artists and emissary with *immeasurable quantity of silk, gold and silver* was no doubt an expression of respect for the Turkic kaghan and his brother.

3.4.2. Internal politics

Internal politics were not only under the pressure of foreign affairs, but also constantly and significantly influenced by inner dynastic relations, power ambitions, economics and ethnic or social rivalries, which grew into the conflicts and wars. Bilgä-Khan often complains on the instability and disunity of Turkic tribes in numerous passages of the epitaph:

¹⁶⁷ The usual row of balbals that occurs on the East side of the Turkic memorials, which are actually a new element in steppe funeral rite strictly linked with the Turkic traditions, might be a parallel phenomenon to the Chinese environment, a simplified form of processional paths entering the imperial tombs. Also the stone stelae with inscription, often accompanied with stone turtle (sites of Bugut, Mukhar and others) closely resemble the Chinese epitaphs.

¹⁶⁸ Kül-Tegin inscription, 3rd side, line 4-5.

¹⁶⁹ Sending his craftsmen, officials and gifts and according to the sources personally prepared the epitaph texts.

¹⁷⁰ According to Chinese sources regular Turkic emissaries were visiting imperial court to exchange their „gifts“ (mostly horses, fish glue etc) for silk, jade and other luxurious goods. Sometimes the Chinese rulers complained that they are coming too often or asking too much. Although the Chinese sources usually avoid calling this diplomatic missions as tribute paying, many cases speak for that because the good exchange was mostly disadvantageous. In one of the personal letters to the Bilgä-Khan's son in 735 the emperor Xuanzong points to the fact that he sent too many horses (14 000) to be paid in silk and highlights that it is a „barter trade between two countries“; i.e. not a tribute. (Liu Mau-tsai, 1958, p. 378).

We had such well-acquired and well-organized state and power. You, Turkish and Oguz lords and peoples, hear this! If the sky above did not collapse, and if the earth below did not go away, what could destroy your state and power? O Turkish people, regret and repent!

Because of your unruliness, you yourselves betrayed your wise kagan, who had (always) supported you. And you yourselves betrayed your good realm, which was free and independent. And you (yourselves) caused discord. Where did the armed (people) come from and dispersed you? Where did the lancer come from and carried you away? You, people of sacred Otukan mountains, it was you, who went away...¹⁷¹

..For the name and fame of the Turkish people would not perish, (that Tengri) enthroned (me). I did not become ruler of wealthy and prosperous people at all; (on the contrary,) I became a ruler of poor and miserable people, who were food-less inside and cloth-less outside. I and Kultegin, my younger brother, consulted together. For the name and fame of people, which our father and uncle had ruled, would not perish, and

For the sake of Turkish people, I did not sleep at night and I did not relax by day. Together with my younger brother, Kultegin, the two šads, we worked to death and I won. Having won and gathered in that way, I did not let people split into two parts like fire and water. (When) I (succeeded to the throne) in all countries people, who had gone (in almost all directions)

vagrant people came back utterly exhausted, without horses and without clothes came back. In order to nourish people, I, with great armies, went on campaigns twelve times, northwards against Oguz people, eastwards against the Qitan and Tatabi, southwards against Chinese, (and I fought ... times).

After (that), since I had fortune and since I had good luck – my Tengri was gracious! – I brought people to life, who were going to perish, and nourished them. I dressed naked people with clothes and I made poor people rich and few people numerous. I made them superior than people, who had great states and (esteemed rulers).¹⁷²

According to these parts, creation of united Turkic state of increasing prosperity was the main purpose of the Turkic kaghan. *Ups and downs* of Second Turkic Khaganate were also linked with the prominent person, emissary and counselor of the Turkic throne, the Tonyukuk, who played a major role in the history and politics of this period.

¹⁷¹ Kül-Tegin inscription, 1st side, line 22- 23.

¹⁷² Kül-Tegin inscription, 1st side, line 26- 29.

3.4.2.1. *Tonyukuk's affair*

Tonyukuk (646 – 726 AD)¹⁷³ was at the birth and re-establishment of the Göktürk state, the Second Eastern Khaganate since the very beginning as one of the main protagonists. Being brought up in the Chinese court he first served the Tang Empire as an emissary. During the Göktürk rebellion against the empire he was sent to negotiate with the Turks; however he joined the rebels and helped the later Il-Täris kaghan to fight against the Chinese and restore the Turkic state in 682 AD. Tonyukuk was a "guardian of Türk values" and a great advisor; he rejected Taoism and Buddhism as unsuitable to warrior tribes, discouraged the kaghans from building cities and accepting civilization advantages, advising the Turks to "*follow the water and the grass*" (i.e. to adhere to their nomadic lifestyle) to avoid annexation by the Chinese Empire, as they numbered "*less than a hundredth part of the Chinese*".¹⁷⁴ Tonyukuk stood side by side to Il-Täris kaghan when he succeeded stabilize the state and stopped the long-termed decay, caused by dynastic conflicts and intensively interventional politics of China. He was also one of the Turkic commanders during the battle on the Tola River against the Uyghurs, and led the Göktürk campaigns against the Kyrgyz Khanate in 708-709 and against the Turgesh Khanate and Arab Qalifate in 711-712 AD. The stability of Second Eastern Turkic Khaganate was firmly tied with the strong authority of the Il-Täris, after his death the dynastic struggles again emerged. Two sons of Il-Täris – princes Mogilien (Mojilian) and Kül were too small to succeed the throne thus the brother of Il-Täris Mochuo, later Qapaghan kaghan, took the government. Meantime the Il-Täris's sons earned reputation for their military prowess in many victorious campaigns against Kyrgyz, Turgesh, and Karluks, extending the Khaganate territory all the way to the Iron Gates (modern day Derbent in Dagestan). They also subjugated all nine of the Tokuz Oghuz tribes. But after the death of Qapaghan kaghan (716 AD) his own sons, although not entirely under the law, made claims on government. One of them Bögü took the throne but in the very same year (716 AD) Kül-Tegin overthrew him, exterminated the rest of his family to avoid further dynastic struggles and enthroned his elder brother Mogilien; now the Bilgä-Khan, Il-Täris's legitimate successor. This internal political game was not a happy moment for the Tonyukuk, who being now the Qapaghan's chamberlain did not support Kül-Tegin and Mogilien in their struggle against the power of Qapaghan's sons. Perhaps Tonyukuk was mainly interested in the

¹⁷³ In the Old Turkic script variously interpreted as *Tunuquq, Tonuquq, Tuj-uquq, Tony Yuquq, Tujun-oq, Tojuquq*.

¹⁷⁴ Denis Sinor (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia*, vol.1, Cambridge University Press, 1990, 312-313.

stability of the khaganate rather than results of dynastic skirmishes but this was a serious misstep. Whether his motivation was based on personal sympathies or objective state interests his authority had been seriously shaken. Perhaps due to his previous lifetime merits, respectable age of 72 years, friendship with Il-Täris and family ties with the kaghan family, he survived the dynastic purge but he was discharged from ruling the Khaganate. Subsequently Bilgä-Khan decided to rehabilitate him and Tonyukuk remained in respect and enjoyed the role of worthy patriarch. However, his dominant political position was curtailed and he probably never achieved the same status and trust as before; he was maybe forgiven but not forgotten. The Tonyukuk's inscription in Nalaikh seems to reflect these events through more or less subjective filter. Let the Tonyukuk himself, the old man and eminent chamberlain, reminisce his merits and comment on those events, as he actually nicely illuminates the history and political accents!¹⁷⁵

Tonyukuk inscription¹⁷⁶

(initial numbers marking the text lines on the stela)

1. ***I myself, wise Tonyukuk, lived in Tabgach (Chinese) country. (As the whole) Turkic people was under Tabgach (China) subjection.***
2. *Turkic people not being with their kagan, separated from Tabgach (China). (Then) having left their kagan, joined Tabgach (China) again. Tengri told the following: "I gave you the khan!*
3. *You, having left your khan, entered China (litr. subjected to China)!" because of this subjection Tengri was stricken (litr. killed). Turkic people became weak (died), exhausted. On noble Turkic land*
4. *there was no any alive person left. Those who had survived (among stones and sockets) joined together, and (they) were seven hundred people. Two parts of them were horsemen, and other part was footmen. He who seven hundred people*
5. ***Made follow him – was I – "shad", the eldest among them. He said: "Gather!". It was I who gathered! I, wise Tonyukuk, wanted to explain my kagan and thought: whether (the***

¹⁷⁵ Although the Tonyukuk's text is rather long and comprehensive, I decided to leave it here in full version as it provides complex information as a whole and its fragmentarization would seriously damage its predictive value and impression. Most of researchers consider that inscriptions on both steles of Tonyukuk's memorial have been written by himself. Due to easier orientation I only highlighted some passages related to the Tonyukuk personal role as seen by himself.

¹⁷⁶ The complete transcription and translation of main Turkic inscriptions is available on websites of Language Committee of Ministry of Culture and Information of Republic of Kazakhstan; <http://irq.kaznpu.kz/?lang=e&mod=1&tid=1&oid=17&m=1>

future kagan) distinguishes the difference between greasy and gaunt bulls?" I thought long: "A gaunt bull can not contest with

6. *a greasy one!" as Tengri gave me intelligence, I was the one who rose (put, announced, acknowledged) the kagan! I, the Wise Tonyukuk Boila Baga Tarkhan,*

7. *In alliance with Elterish kagan, killed a lot of Tabgaches (Chinese) in the south, in the east a lot of Kitans, in the north – Oguzes. It was I who became his wise advisor! (At that time) we had chosen the place (lived in) Kuz Chugai kara kumyk ("Black sands")*

8. *Our main food were deer and hears. People were full. (But) our enemies were very strong (litr, like three arrows). We were light bags for them. A messenger came to us from free Oguzes.*

9. *The messenger's words were as follows: "A kagan came to the throne of Nine Oguzes people. He sent Kuny Sengun to Tabgach (China). He sent Tonra Semik to Kitan. He sent them with the following words: Turks are few now,*

10. *They used to go to wars! Their kagan was great and as an advisor he was wise. If these two are alive they would kill their neighbours Tabgaches (Chins). They would kill Kitan in the east. And us, Oguzes*

11. *Would kill. (Let) Tabgach (China attacked from the south, Kitan – from the east, I (i.e.Oguz) attacked from the north. Do not let their master give orders (litr. go) in the land of noble Turks! Let us fall upon them (from three sides)!"*

12. *When I heard these words I could not sleep nights and could not be calm by days. I prayed for the sake of our kagan after that. I judged as follows: "Tabgaches (China), Oguzes, Kitans decided to join together and attack us.*

13. *Each of us protects only his own horde. To crush the "thin" – is an easy (matter)! But to become "thick" from "thin" – is not difficult! If to gather "thins"*

14. *into "thicks", then it is necessary to have great force to crush! We have two – three thousand spear-bearers at Kitans in the east, at Tabgach in the south, in Kurudun in the west, at Oguzes in the north. We need to recall all of them!"*

15. *I, Bilge Tonyukuk, asked my kagan to listen to (my this advice). He listened to and did, what he thought to be right. I was ordered (to pitch a camp) in Otuken near the lake Kekung. Oguz advanced along the Togla river in the lake Ingek*

16. *They had six thousand spear bearers. We were two thousand. We fought. Tengri was gracious to us. We scattered and threw them into the lake. On the way of pursuit some more were died. After this Oguzes (gave up) joined us in great numbers.*

17. *Having heard that I brought the Turkic people to Otuken land and that I , wise Tonyukuk, had settled in the land of Otuken, the people from south, west, north and east joined us.*

18. *We became two thousand. Since the Turkic people became strong and Turkic kagan mounted the throne, they did not go with war to Shantung towns and the seas. I asked my kagan and moved the army.*

19. *I reached my army to Shantung towns and the seas. Twenty three town were destroyed. All of them had left on Usyn-bundatu land.(?). Tabgaches' kagan (China) was our enemy. The kagan of "Ten Arrows" was our enemy.*

20. *But our first enemy was the strong Kyrgyz kagan. These three kagans joined and agreed to gather their forces on the Altun mountain. Having formed an alliance they told: “we went on campaign against the Turkic kagan to the east! If not we then he would (kill) us!*
21. ***Their (i.e. Turks) kagan is great and advisor – is wise.** If we look back, do not join in alliance and do not struggle (with them), then they will go away (without punishment)” then the Turgesh kagan told: “There is my people there!*
22. *And Turkic people is in confusion (now)! And Oguzes” - said he “are also in discord!” having heard these words I could not sleep at nights, and lost quietness by days. **Then I decided...***
23. ***We shall fight ... said I. When I heard that the road to Kegmen is (only) one and it had been blocked (by snow), I told: that won't do to go this way. I look for a person who knew that place...***
24. *...(There) was a stopping place, he brought us there. “if to start then there would be one horse's speed before lodging for the night”, - he said. I said: “if to go that way then it might be”. **I thought over, and asked my kagan***
25. *“Bring cavalry troop!” Having gone across the river Ak-Termel I left rear camp. I made a road up through the snow, walking the horses, leaning on wooden staffs. While two soldiers raised in the east*
26. *we crossed Ybar Bashi. We went down on the slope. We reached Togbery on the slope in ten nights. A guide was slaughtered, having lost the way. The kagan caught us.*
27. *...We swam across the river, stopped several times. On the slope of the mountain we went at a trot day and night. Brought down arrows on Kyrgyz people.*
28. *...fought with their army. Their khan gathered the army. We fought them, killed their kagan. Kyrgyz people surrendered our kagan.*
29. *We came back from Kyrgyz people. A messenger came from Turgesh kagan. The word of his was as follows: “we go on campaign to kagan from the east. If we do not attack, then their (i.e. Turkic) kagan is great, his advisor – is wise, this or that way, he might kill us ”*
30. *“So the Turkic kagan started out” – he said. “All “Ten Arrows” people started out” – he said. – “(among them) there is also Tabgaches’ (China) army”. Having heard these words my kagan said: “I will be a kagan*
31. ***(My) wife died, I want to organize funeral ceremony for her”. “sent the spear bearers!” – (the kagan) said. – “Let them pitch a camp in Altun mob!” Tunyukuk told me the Bilge (wise):***
32. ***“Lead the army! Tell me what are the difficulties? What else can I suggest? If (somebody) comes (i.e. joins us), then the number of (brave men) will increase, if (nobody) comes, then gather different news (lit. words, “tongues”). We were in Altun mob.***
33. *Three messengers came, their words were similar: “One kagan with his army went on campaign. The army of “Ten Arrows” people went on campaign too. They told that they would gather in the step of Yarysh”. Having heard these words I told them the kagan. What to do?! With the reply (from khan)*
34. *a messenger came: “Sit! – it was said. – “Do not hurry to go, keep the guard as good as possible! Do not allow to crush yourself!” – he said. Begyu kagan ordered me to tell this. I sent a message to Apa-tarkhan (Commander-in-chief): “**Wise Tonyukuk – is cunning, he himself ...***

35. offered to me to send the spear bearers. Having heard these words, I sent the spear bearers. I crossed the Altyn mod through absence of roads. We crossed without the ford the Irtysh river. We reached Bolchu early in the morning without stops for night.
36. They brought a tongue, his word was: "Ten Tyumen army gathered in the Yarysh step (100 thousand)". Having heard these words the beks consulted and
37. Said: "We retreat! We must keep our honour". And I said the following: -"I am Tonyukuk the wise! We crossed Altyn mod on the absence of roads. Went across the Irtysh river
38. Without the ford. We came as the greats! We were not tired. When Tengri Umai, Sacred land and water are gracious to us, why do we need to retreat?!"
39. **Why should we be afraid of their number? Let us attack them as if they are few!" I told: "Advance!" and we advanced and overthrew them. The second day**
40. They came down with great force (lit. like fire). We fought. They were twice more than we. Due to Tengri
41. We were not afraid of their number. We fought. We won the Tardush Shad. We captured their kagan. And their yabgu and shad
42. Killed there. We took to prison about fifty persons. **That night we sent (messengers) to every nation. Having heard these words, beks and people of "Ten Arrows" all**
43. **came and subdued. When I was settling down and gathering the coming beks and people a few people ran away. I led to campaign the army of "Ten Arrows" people.**
44. We were still fighting and pursuing them. Having swimming cross the Pearl river, crossing the Binlik mountain – where Tinsi's son lived...
45. we pursued (the enemy) till Temir-kapyg (Iron Gates). We made (them) return back. Inel kagan... tadhiks and tokhars ...
46. **The whole sogdian people leading by Asuk came and obeyed... those days the Turkic people reached the Iron Gates.**
47. **There was no master in the mountains where Tinsi's son lived. When I, Wise Tonyukuk, reached that place,**
48. **he presented me yellow gold, white silver, girls and women, treasury, silk on camels in huge number. For the greatness of Elterish kagan, Bilge kagan**
49. we fought thirteen times with Tabgaches (China). Seven times fought with Kitans. Five times with Oguzes. An advisor then...
50. **Only I was powerful. I was Elterish kagan's advisor. Turkic Byegu kagan, Turkic Bilga kagan...**
51. When Kapagan kagan was thirty three ... wasn't sleeping at nights
52. Did not have calmness by days. Shed red blood and perspired. **I served and gave all my force. Directed long (far) military forays.**
53. **I raised Arkur guard. Led army to capture the enemy. We fought with their kagan. Due the Tengri**
54. **I did not allow the supremacy of the strong enemy over the Turkic people. I did not allow enemy's horses to trample down (our land). If Elterish kagan did not rule the country,**
55. **And if I myself did not rule (the country), there would not be neither country nor people! For kagan was in power, I myself was in power too, the country**
56. **became the country, people became people. I got older. I reached old age. If in some place people, having a kagan**
57. Bentegi (?), it would be sad!

58. *In Bilge kagan's country I ordered to write (this). I am – The Wise Tonyukuk.*
59. *If Elterish kagan did not rule (the country) and if he was young, I, The Wise Tonyukuk would not rule (the country), or if I was not here,*
60. *then on the land of Kapagan kagan, on the land of gracious Turks, neither a family nor a single person would not have a ruler.*
61. *Due to ruling of Elterish kagan (and) Bilge Tonyukuk, the noble Turks, the people of Kapagan kagan,*
62. *Turkic Bilge kagan, the people of noble Turks, Oguzes lived and raised!*

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This text, largely reminding Tonyukuk's merits, clearly demonstrates not only the Tonyukuk's personal attitude to the historical events and his role in establishing of the Turkic Khaganate, but also the ideological roots of nomadic empire and its political background. From the archaeological point of view is also very significant the localization of Tonyukuk's memorial in Nalaikh ("Tsagaa Ovoo" district in northwest from Bayan-Zurh mountain, in 65 km southeast from Ulaanbaatar, Khentii aimag),¹⁷⁷ far to the East from Orkhon Valley and the memorial site of Turkic aristocracy. Despite to his eminent position in the history of Khaganate and close family ties with the kaghan family, Tonyukuk was buried in the land of his origin. He was born on the coast of Tuul river (in old Turkic Tuγula or Toyula) in 646 AD. Whether he wished to be buried in a distant Nalaikh region or whether it is a sign of alienating of the relationships between him and the kaghan family, is hard to tell. Nevertheless, his name is not even mentioned in the Orkhon inscriptions. The defensive tone of his own inscription and also the fact, that his death in 731-2 (in the same time as Kül-Tegin's) is ignored in both Turkic and Chinese sources, indicate some serious changes in the inner politics, another interesting issue for further research based on Tonyukuk personality.

¹⁷⁷ D.A.Klements and E.A.Klements have published the complex of Tonyukuk in 1897 (Клеменц Д.А.Археологический дневник поездки в Среднюю Монголию в 1891 г. // Сборник трудов Орхонской экспедиции, II, Санкт-Петербург, 1895 С.48-59). Specialist of Turkic philology W.Radloff received a paper copy of the steles and made the first translation in 1898. The Mongolian expedition led by N.Ser-Odzhav (Сэр-Оджав Н.Эртний Түрэгүүд .Улаанбаатар, 1970, 46-р тал.) conducted archeological excavations on this complex in 1957. Mongolian archeologist D.Bayar researched stone sculptures of the complex and made architectural measurements and scientific descriptions (Баяр Д.Монголын төв нутаг дахь түрэгийн хүн чулуу. Улаанбаатар, 1997 . 83 х, Таблиц - 1-5.)

3.5. Some questions on Turkic funeral rite

3.5.1. The “Altai cultural matrix” again

The burial rite of Turkic tribes is not a homogenous integrated practice. As the Turkic cultures cover a large rank in geographical and historical sense they keep archaeology facing a huge variety of possibilities and theses to interpret the original customs and information they bore. The individual differences might be caused by different reasons to be considered. Some of them could be explained as locally practised traditions, possibly growing up from the deep historical and cultural roots; for example the Turkic skeleton burials with horses and horse equipment in mounds of Altai¹⁷⁸ could follow some older tradition already linked with the older Iron Age cultural milieu of the area (the Hsiung-nu and Scytho-Saka environment).¹⁷⁹ However, while in Altai area the Turkic burials with horses in mounds prevail, in Mongolian territory – according to available sources - they are scarcer,¹⁸⁰ unlike the memorial types with fences which are dominating.¹⁸¹ Another phenomenon to be observed within the wide scale of Turkic burials is the variability of rites. Except the skeleton burials (the Altai group) we record many types of memorials, the Turkic stone fences without any trace of body remains inside. May this variability reflect polyethnic features in Turkic community?

¹⁷⁸ Turkic skeleton burials with horses occur in the 6th -7th century AD on the territory of Gorny Altai (burial grounds of Katanda /kurgan 1/, Kurota 1 /kurgan 1/, Tuekta /kurgan 7/, attributed to the Kudyrgenian type) and Tuva (the Ulug-Khorum burial shares a similarity with the Altai burials of the Ust-Edigan, Bely Bom II, Bulan-Koby IV burial grounds). Later in the period of the Second khaganate of 7th – 8th century AD burials with horses still persist (Altai; Katanda II, kurgan 5; Uzuntal VI, kurgan I; Uzuntal VIII, kurgan I, and others. In Gorny Altai the following burial sites are attributed to the so called Katandian period: Katanda II, kurgan 5; Uzuntal V, kurgan I; Uzuntal VI, kurgan I; Borotal, kurgans 6, 50; Uzuntal VIII, kurgan I. In Tuva these are Arzhan II; Kokel, kurgans 2) (S.P. Nesterov, *The Old Turks in the Central Asia and Southern Siberia*, 1995).

¹⁷⁹ The concentrations of huge mounds with wooden chambers and rich equipment points to a strong community led by local rulers, who perhaps shielded this autonomous region and relied their power on local deposits of gold and other ores. (Rudenko 1960, 1970; Molodin, 1992; Polosmak 1995 and others)

¹⁸⁰ Turkic skeleton burials with horses were found in various regions of Mongolia for example in Khairkhan Uul, Jargalant, Khar Jamaat, Tögsiin Övdög, Shanagan Khev and some of them also in the Orkhon Valley (Gol Mod, Ugey-nuur, Övör Khavtsaliin Am by Khotont and one in Khöshöö Tsaidam vicinity). Törbat, Odbaatar, 2012, p.139 – 145.

¹⁸¹ Turkic burials with horses were excavated in Jargalanty by the river Orkhon, in Orkhon Del' (these are often linked to the *Kuraiskaia culture* of the Tiele tribes) and Naimaa-tolgoi by the Hunii-gol river, all in Central Mongolia. In Northern Mongolia Turkic burial was found in Ubgunt (wrongly dated due to a laboratory mistake to the Hsiung-nu period, but belongs to medieval Turkic culture 6th- 10th century AD (Chudyakov, Ceveendorj, 2004, p. 318).

The problem of ethnic affiliation of people bearing the tradition of burying a human corpse together with a horse is highly debated among the scholars; some suggest that they were the Turks (L.P. Kyzlasov, Yu.S. Khudiakov, S.P. Teplouhov, S.I. Vainstein, D.I. Grach, L.P. Potapov, Ya.A. Sher, B.B. Ovchinnikova, S.P. Nesterov); another group takes the view that they belonged to the *Tiele* or other Turkic speaking tribes (L.N. Gumilev, A.A. Gavrilova, Yu.I. Trifonov, D.G. Savinov, G.V. Dluzhnevskaya).¹⁸² Although there is any evidence that the Sayan-Altai tribes entered the *Tiele* group, the Old Turkic genealogical legends nevertheless situated the Turk tribal unit in the Altai, formed before the middle of the 5th century AD when the Ashina clan (probably practicing the ritual of corpse cremation with horse)¹⁸³ migrated to the southern part of the Altai and accepted the name of "Turk." In the Altai the rite of burying a human corpse together with a horse was already known at the previous periods.¹⁸⁴ These differences are undoubtedly related to the complicated ethnogenesis of Turkic tribes. We also have to consider that the Altai Turks were famous for their smith skills (fariery) and so it is told about the Altai Scythians and possibly even Huns (*Hsiung-Nu*), who had spread out the use of iron to the broad steppes of Central Asia. The legends are locating origin of Turks to Altai; the centre of metallurgy. Could it be understood that we have to count with some general, common above-cultural feature (the "*local cultural matrix*")", continually followed and exploited by different local nations whether their origin was whatsoever? Then the Altai environment might become the key factor playing a dominant role in long-term process of formation of cultures and traditions that all incoming features must accept and assimilate.¹⁸⁵

3.5.2. The Turkic funeral customs in Chinese written sources

Chinese written sources quite numerous recorded some interesting notes on Turkic customs, as for example the Zhou-shu (629 AD), Sui-shu describing the burial rite of Eastern Turks:

¹⁸² S.P. Nesterov, *The Old Turks in the Central Asia and Southern Siberia*, 1995.

¹⁸³ S.P. Nesterov, 1995.

¹⁸⁴ Burials with horse of the first half of the 1 millennium have been discovered in Belyi Bom II, kurgans 12, 14; Bulan-Koby III, IV; Ust-Edigan, kurgan I, burials 3, 15, 22, 23 (S.P. Nesterov, 1995).

¹⁸⁵ In the middle of the 5 century when "500 families" of the Ashina dan headed by Asyan-shud were moved by the Juan-Juans from Gaochang to the southern part of the Altai. Here the migrants joined the ranks of the Turk tribal unit. Probably it was a peaceful migration of the Ashina dan being cognate in language (though L.N. Gumilev considered them to be Mongolian speaking) and similar in the type of economic activity (nomadic cattle-breeding) to aborigines of the Altai. This is proved by the fact that the Ashina "500 families" also assumed the name of Turks.; S.P. Nesterov, *The Old Turks in the Central Asia and Southern Siberia*, 1995).

“If one of them dies, his body is laid out in the tent. Each of the relatives of the deceased kills a sheep and a horse (cattle and horses) and places them in front of the tent as a sacrifice. Then they ride seven times around the tent on their horses, crying and mourning, and they cut their face with a knife.¹⁸⁶ They are weeping until their tears mix with blood running from their faces. They do this seven times and then (only) cease. They choose the day and then take their horses and garments and objects of daily use of the deceased and burn it with the body (..place the corpse on the horse and burn it). Then they gather up the ashes and bury it at the appropriate time: if somebody dies in spring or summer time, they wait until the grass and leaves on the trees turn yellow; if somebody dies in autumn or winter, they wait until the steppe covers with flowers blooming. They dig a grave and bury (the ashes). The day of the funeral his relatives again bring sacrificial gifts, ride their horses and cut their faces. The entire ceremony is the very same as on the day of death. After the funeral they pile up stones and set up a pole; the number of stones depends on the number of people the deceased had killed during his life (if the deceased had ever killed a man, they place a stone, i.e. for each man killed they erect a stone). The number of stones sometimes amount to hundreds or thousands. Then they place the heads of the sacrificed sheep and horses on the pole. That day men and women gather dressed in fine clothes and with lots of jewellery.(In the grave they make a space where they place a painted portrait of the deceased and battle scenes in which he had participated).¹⁸⁷

Sui-shu (636 AD)

Later they bury the ashes and set a wooden pole on the mound as a memorial mark. On the mound they construct a space inside which they paint a face of deceased and battle scenes,

¹⁸⁶ The same act of cutting faces is mentioned in many sources from different sides. According to Menander the Byzantine embassy led by Valentinus visiting the kaghan Turxanthos were asked to cut their faces like the others (the Türks) for kaghan's father Dilzibul, who had just died. Similar episode had happened to the Chinese imperial envoy in 565 AD, who refused to submit such a barbarian custom and so he was told: „Hitherto all the envoys that came to us and participated on the burial ceremony had cut their faces to express their sorrow, just as we do. Now, when our nations are united by marriage, how can you not participate?“ (Jisl, 1997, p. 53- 54). One of the most interesting mentions describes the children's game of Tang prince Chengqian, son of Taizong Emperor, as follows: „Chengqian imitated the kaghan funeral. All his people had to weep loudly and cut their faces, then they galloped increasingly closer to him.. (Liu Mau-Tsai, 1958, p. 283). According to this note it is obvious, that such a custom was generally known to the Chinese court, and some of its members (officials, envoys, etc.) probably must have had once participated on such a ceremony to retell the story. One of the authentic mentions that confirms such a custom even from the Turk side, comes from the Bilgä-khan inscription, saying that „all participants of the funeral „shaved their heads and cut their ears and faces“ (Jisl, 1997, p. 54, according to Thomsen, 1924, p. 158).

¹⁸⁷ Jisl, 1997, p. 53, Liu Mau-tsai, 1958, Bd I, p. 10

*which he participated in. Whether he had ever killed an enemy, they put a stone in front of the mound. The number of such stones may reach hundred or thousand.*¹⁸⁸

Wei-shi (659 AD)

*They had placed a (memorial) pole on the mound. On the mound they also build a space inside which they painted a face of the dead and also the battle scenes of his life. Whether he had ever killed one man, they erected one stone. So far it is usual to erect hundreds or thousands of such stones.*¹⁸⁹

3.5.3. Turkic commemorative monuments – the memorials

Beginnings of scientific examination of the Turkic monuments in Southern Siberia are linked with the research of D.G. Messerschmidt in 1720's, but first monuments has been excavated by V. Radlov in Altai 1865. Untill today hundreds of monuments have been explored and their individual types are present on the wide territory of Southern Siberia from the Inner Mongolia in the East to the Urals in the West. The most significant concentration can be found in the maternal area of Western and Eastern Turkic khaganate, i.e. Central Mongolia, Tuva, Altai and Tian-shan mountains. The increasing systematic research of these areas creates ever more integrated archaeological units, necessary for explanation of hitherto unknown importance, function and mutual relations of the monuments. For long time it has been paid attention, though not complexed one, which was focused mostly on its epigraphic or iconographic character than its conception.¹⁹⁰ Therefore the Khöshöö Tsaidam monuments in Orkhon and other significant sites stand in the forefront of historical, archaeological, philological and epigraphic attention because of their historical informative value. Nevertheless these “noble” sites are just on the sophisticated top of the pyramid of thousands of simple types of Turkic memorials. The Turkic commemorative monuments are basically

¹⁸⁸ Liu Mau-tsai, 1958, Bd I, p. 42

¹⁸⁹ Liu Mau-tsai, 1958, Bd II, p. 500.

¹⁹⁰ For example the research of the 20th century in the Tian-shan area was mainly focused on the typology of the stone statues often accompanying the memorials. During the late 70's and early 80's most of them were moved to the local museums without proper research of the original context which is so far lost; only in remote and unaccessible mountain areas, where these statues are to be found still in situ, their relationship to the nearby memorials can be still examined (Chudyakov, Tabaldiev, 2009, p. 71).

classified into two groups according to their structure and appearance as "common memorials" and "noble memorials" belonging to the Turkic nobility or ruler strata. The common types are not surprisingly much more numerous while the noble types are scarcer; the majority of them is situated in the Khangai area in Mongolia, in „*the sacred Ötüken*“, the heart of the Turkic Khaganate. Many of them show very similar conception as the Khöshöö Tsaidam though in the simplified form; rectangular area surrounded by an earthen wall and ditch, accesible from the east with a stone plate fence inside the west part (the typical Turkic sarcophagus, sometimes with a stone statue, the so called “*kamennaya baba*”) and often accompanied by the stone stela or even turtle in the eastern entrance part.¹⁹¹

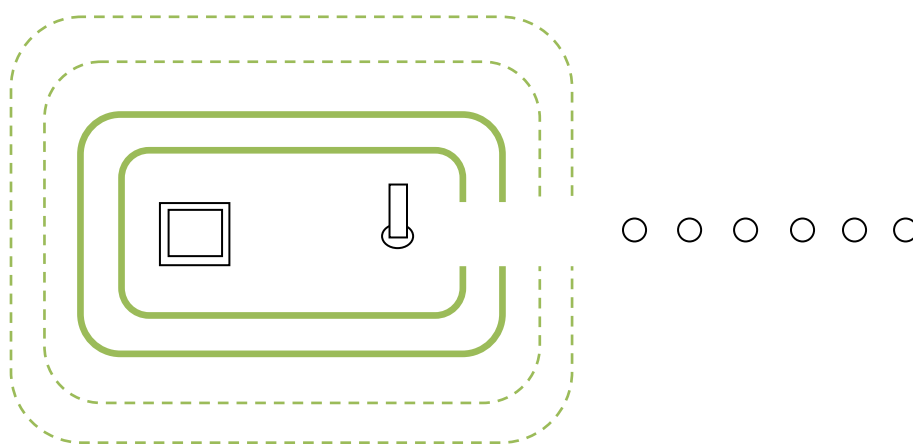


Fig.25: Schematic picture of the noble memorial type(ditch, earthen wall, stela and stone fence, balbals).

The most comprehensive summary, typological, chronological and semantic description of the commemorative monuments of the noble Turks in Mongolia was accomplished by V.E. Voitov and D. Bayar.¹⁹² According to the typology of V. D. Kubarev¹⁹³ such type of fences

¹⁹¹ Among the most famous examples of this type in Central Mongolia belongs the already mentioned monument of Taspar kaghan in Bugut (582 AD) or the Tonyukuk monument in Nalaikh, memorial in Bayan Ovoо (nearby Bayankhongor), Ikh Khoshoot, Mukhar (“Ulhyn bulan”, Altanbulag sum, Töv aimag) and many others. Some of them are even accompanied by the stone turtles (Bugut, Mukhar, ..). Unfortunately the complete summary and comparative analyses of older and current researches of the Mongolian Turkic monuments have not been implemented yet.

¹⁹² Войтов В.Е., Баяр Д. Новые археологические открытия в Хангае / Информационный бюллетень. Международная ассоциация по изучению культур Центральной Азии. М., 1989. Вып. 16 ; Войтов В.Е. Древнетюркский пантеон и модель мироздания в культово-поминальных памятниках Монголии VI-VIII в. М., 1996. С. 39.

¹⁹³ According to V. D. Kubarev are the fences excavated in the Altai divided into 5 types: the *Kudyrgenian type* (5.-6th century AD, groups of multiple adjacent fences); the *Yakonurian type* (9th-10th century AD, one beside the other dosely adjacent fences with sculptures or anthropomorphic stelas); the *Yustydian type* (8th-9th century AD, single four-slabled fences with sacrificial vessels and remains of tree trunks inside); the *Ulandrykian type* (with a stela or a boulder in the center of fence); the *Ayutian type* (7th-8th century AD, fence ringed with bank and ditch). A.S.

ringed with bank and ditch belong to the Ayutian type and the same objects with stone figures have been studied also in the Altai in southern Siberia¹⁹⁴ and Tuva.¹⁹⁵ One such a monument is to be found even in the Minusinsk Hollow nearby the Znamenka Village.¹⁹⁶ It is important to note that this “noble” type occurs at least from the 6th century until the end of the Khaganate (*Fig.24*).

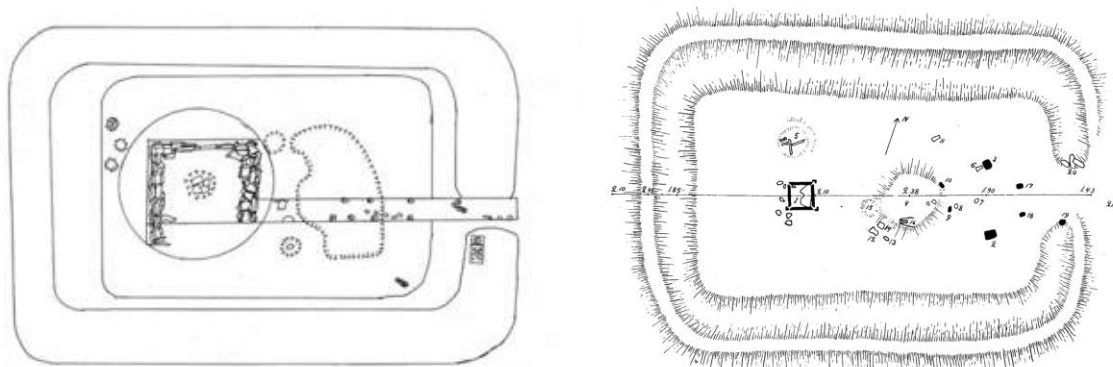


Fig.26: Memorial complex of Tatpar kaghan (Bugut, 582 AD) and Tonyukuk (Nalaikh, 730/1 AD).

The most frequent monuments are the "common" types, the Turkic fence of a squared shape made of stone slabs (plain or engraved) vertically sunken into the ground (*Fig.25*). They are usually accompanied by an antropomorphic stela or sculpture, often placed in the eastern side or inside the fence. As a rule it stands in front of the long row of balbals, stone stelas, running from the fence eastwards. Their number differs and may reach sometimes several tens and even hundreds; they perhaps indicate the number of defeated enemies, killed by the deceased.

Vasyutin later added three more types Kubarev's typology: the Kok-Pashian type (fences with adjacent walls and balbals); the Kokorian type (structures with remains of wooden poles in the center); the Kupchegenian type (fences with stelae in the center). It should be noted that the Kok-Pashian type is close to the Kudyrgenian one not only spatially, but also structurally: there are fences with adjacent walls and balbals in the Kudyrgenian burial-ground too. The same may well be said about the Kupchegenian and Ulandrykian types. Presently the classification of commemorative structures of the Altaian Turks proposed by V.D. Kubarev is admissible for records of the Minusinsk Hollow, Tuva and Mongolia. (Bobrov, V. V. - Vasjutin, A. S.; *Vostochnyj Altaj v epochu Velikogo pereselenija narodov (III-VII vv)*, 2003, Novosibirsk. S. P. Nesterov, *The Old Turks in the Central Asia and Southern Siberia*).

¹⁹⁴ On the Kypchyl Plateau by the Ayut River, Jumaly River, Jezator River, in Koxsu River Valley, at the rivers of Buguzun, Yan-Gobo, near the Ulagan Village, in the Kuraiskaya steppe at the Akstru River etc.

¹⁹⁵ For example Kyzyl-Mazhylyk, Saryg-Bulun etc. In Tuva isolated fences or groups of fences were described by L.R. Kyzlasov, A.D. Grach, S.I. Vainstein, Y.S. Khudiakov, and others.

¹⁹⁶ Grach A. D.; *Drevnieturkskie izvaianiia Tuvy: Po materialam issledovaniia 1953 – 1960 gg*, MVA 1961

The total amount of such fences in southern Siberia is yet unknown and deserves an actual complex revision.¹⁹⁷



Fig.27: Typical common type of memorial in Mongolia; fence of stone plates and row of balbals towards east (Nalaikh somon).

3.5.4. Portrayal of the dead

Chinese descriptions more or less correspond to each other and also to the archaeological observation in the Turkic territory. Despite the painted battle scenes in Kül-Tegin shrine mentioned in Khöshöö Tsaidam inscriptions, we mostly meet with engraved scenes and stone portraits of deceased. It can not be excluded that even the painted portraits originally accompanied the ceremony, but probably could be done on some organic materials and thus could not be preserved. Thus these sculptural portraits represented by whole figures or just carved heads (so called “kamennye baby”) are accompanying the stone fences and often being placed inside. These stone sculptures are mainly representing sitting men with wide Turko-

¹⁹⁷ V.D. Kubarev counted 2000 of the statues in the Altai, but he notes that their real number "is much higher - perhaps many thousands", though only 160 of them have been excavated (Кубарев В. Д. Древнетюркские изваяния Алтая. Новосибирск, 1984; S. P. Nesterov, 'The Old Turks in the Central Asia and Southern Siberia, 1995).

Mongoloid face ¹⁹⁸ with slanting eyes, mustaches and beard. Some of them are wearing earrings and necklaces, daggers, sabers or broadswords, bags and other accessories fastened to belts, often decorated with plates of different forms.¹⁹⁹ These belts girdle robes and caftans with flaps on front, tight or wide sleeves and cuffs. Clothes were usually done up on the right, so the left lap was on the top. Almost all sculptures hold vessels in the right hand, while the left one rests on the weapon or belt. Sometimes a vessel is held by both hands. In Sayan-Altai and Mongolia there are several hundreds of such sculptures, only in the Minusinsk Hollow stone sculptures are scanty (about five samples).²⁰⁰ The majority of the Old Turk sculptures in Sayan-Altai is dated to the periods of the Second Turkic, the Uyghur and the Kyrghyz Khaganates. Sculptures of this time are distinguished by images of objects of the Katandanian type: belts with rectangular plates and ear-rings of the Saltovian type; broadswords and vessels on stands of the Kuraian type. Sculptures with a vessel held in two hands are probably dated back to this time. These two groups are united by the presence of vessels on stands, belts with additional pendulous gratings and lyrate pendants. Absence of weapon in the hands of vessels kept in both hands is rather a social than chronological aspect; the men with weapons are perhaps representing warriors, while figures with vessels are rather closer to the ruling strata.²⁰¹ The sculptures types of K l-Tegin, his wife and worshippers undoubtedly belong to this group as they represent the whole figures with all these features (belt with decorated plates with pendants, weapons and vessels attribution). Nevertheless their stylistic execution and unique portrait features is closer to the Chinese art (fine draperies, cloth details, etc.), what corresponds to the fact they were made by Chinese sculptors, send by the emperor and working according to the taste of Turkic nobility.

¹⁹⁸ Their faces are wide, but the shape of eyes, eye-brow and more pronounced nose make them different from the later Mongolian sculpture.

¹⁹⁹ Sculptures with images of cutting weapon but without composite belts of plates-rims, which are absent in the burials of that time, might belong to the 6th – 7th century AD to the period of First Turkic khaganate (D.G. Savinov, 1984).

²⁰⁰ S.P. Nesterov, 2005.

²⁰¹ S.P. Nesterov, 2005.

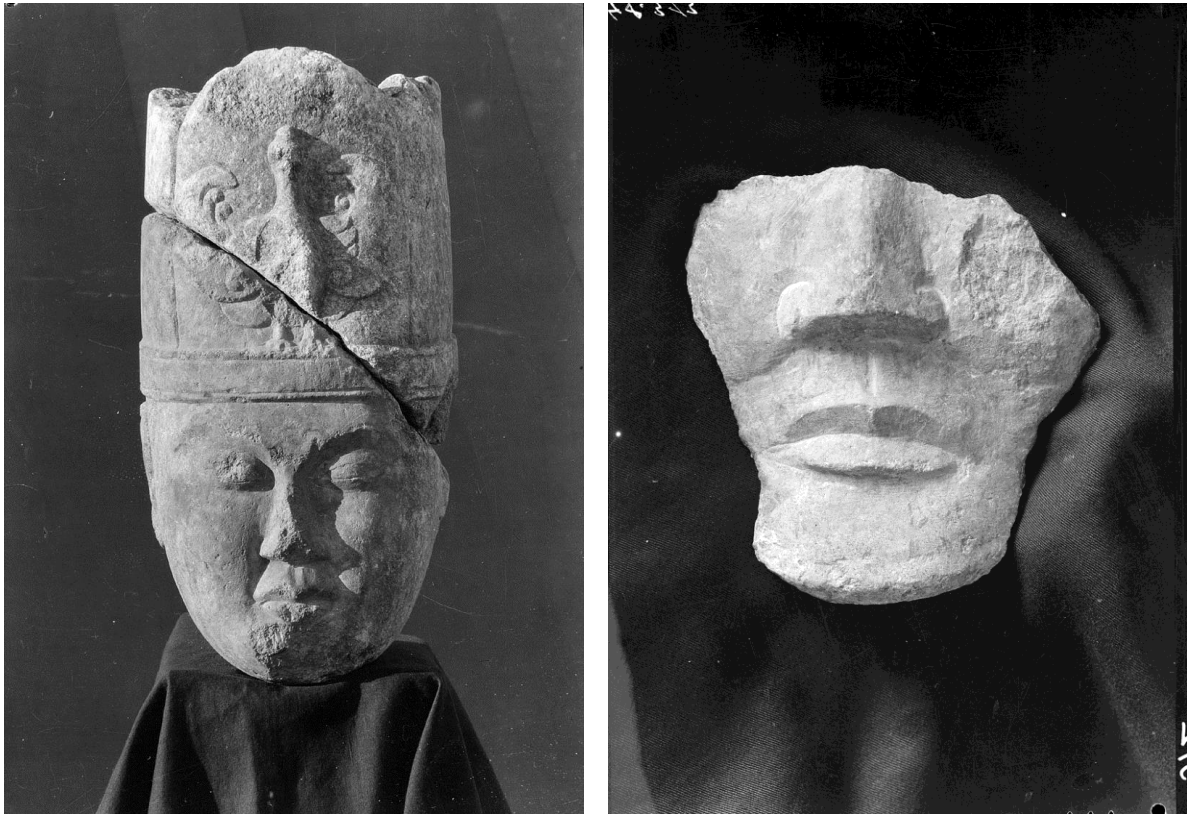


Fig.28: *Kül-Tegin and his wife, torsos of statues found in shrine (FP 48285, 48313). Man with sword, kneeling man with segmented belt and woman with scarf – details of garment, Kleibl 1958.*

In the Turkic territory there are also stone fences without portraits but just simple stelas and sometimes even the typical row of balbals is lacking.²⁰² The reasons for such variability might be of course different, but on my opinion also the social and economic aspect of the matter

²⁰² Chudjakov 1985, p 179.

should be considered. The social status of deceased himself and financial circumstances of the family, available bearings of raw materials for construction (may have not been transported from too distant places), the stonemason's skills and other factors may affect the construction of monument. We can not either rule out the possibility that the deceased could be perhaps also a noble woman, wives of kaghans or tribal chieftains, princesses or shamans, whose social status was undoubtedly significant even inside the patriarchal community. Such funerals would probably lack the balbal rows, if these truly represent the warrior's career and number of killed enemies, and their monuments could have less complicated construction. The same situation might occur also in the case of noble children burials. Stone sculptures of women are known for example from the Tian-Shan area²⁰³ and we could expect them also in other Turkic territories, as the statues of Kül-Tegin's and Bilgä-Khan's wife suggest. These issues and correlations might be probably clarified only by complete comparative analyses of memorial types, inventories and their territorial expansion, yet the studying of Old Turkic stone sculptures and fences is carried out regionally.

3.5.5. Was Kül-Tegin *buried* or not?

The real role of the memorials is very difficult to reconstruct. On the one hand the Chinese sources indicate that its construction is closely related to the funeral act ("*They dig a grave and bury (the ashes)*" according to Zhou-shu source above), on the other hand the archaeological situations do not confirm this fact and the monuments usually do not contain any traces of burial. Therefore most of the scholars agree that these monuments served as memorials, where according to the finds only offerings and rituals were held, rather than a burial places themselves. The cremation ritual practised by Turks is yet not fully clarified – whether the ashes could be dispersed or somehow stowed on surface, it would also likely left no trace. However, given the current state of knowledge and processing neither of the hypotheses can be excluded. The complexity of this issue suggest some vague findings as for example the monument in Dadga Khoshoot (northern shore of the lake Terchijn-Tsagaan-Nuur, nearby Tariat-Jargal road), where human bones were found.²⁰⁴ Since the time of first

²⁰³ Chudyakov, Tabaldiev, 2009, p. 75.

²⁰⁴ Excavation inside the stone fence Nr.2 in Dadga Khoshoot uncovered in the depth of 0.4 m brown sandy loam with a circular spot in the middle. Its filling contained human femoral epiphysis beside the reddish pottery piece located in the NW corner of the sarcophagus. Inside the pit of diameter 1-0.5 m (bottom) and depth of 1 m was

explorations of Khöshöö Tsaidam monuments, big discussions are held to solve the problem, what was the real purpose of these funeral complexes, whether they were built as a tombs or just memorial places, where only anniversary rituals and offerings were given. Neither Kül-Tegin's nor Bilgä-Khan's grave was found until today. In common Turkic fences with balbals, spread all over the Mongolian steppes, there is usually a sarcophagus from stone slabs in place of the Kül-Tegins and Bilgä-Khan sacrificial stone. As like under the sacrificial stone also under these sarcophaguses use to be found pits of burnt coils, but usually no bone remnants, which might indicate the cremation burial. On the other hand Kül-Tegin monument corresponds with some features to the analogical composition of Chinese imperial tombs with sculptural passageway and a grave; so far the existence of a burial was here expected aswell.²⁰⁵ This possibility might be supported even by the results of TIKa excavation in Bilgä-Khan monument – despite the fact, that neither in this case any burial traces was found, the presence of golden treasure, parts of garment and khan personal insignia speaks for personalisation of this site. The question is, why the precious khan's property should be buried somewhere else than his body itself? And where else the khan should be buried than in his memorial complex imitating the Chinese imperial tombs? Even the ancient robbery trenches indicate the importance of the place - some of the trenches are probably not much later than the Kül-Tegin time, which means that the medieval and later grave robbers knew what to search.

But the fact remains, that no graves were explored until today. Interesting parallels may be observed within other nomadic empires. A special precaution was uncovered in the Scytho-Saka environment as for example in Arzhan 2, Tuva, where the main royal burial was not placed in the centre of the mound, as it was usual, but somewhat aside, what made it escape the attention of robbers, who focused on the central part of the burial. The most famous is the case of Genghis Khan and members of his family: Their bodies were buried secretly on a hidden place (which has not been identified despite the continuing endeavour of researchers) but a mobile commemorative complex consisting of gers, horse equipment, live horses sacrificed to Heaven, standards and other relics, was established by Genghis Khan's successor Ögedei Khan. 500 families chosen from various tribes were assigned to perform regular sacrifices to all included relics. This memorial complex, which subsequently moved to Ordos

uncovered a piece of quarry stone, wooden remnants and fragments of wooden column. Beside some coal pieces in the SE part of the area there were no other finds detected (Chudyakov, 1985, p. 177).

²⁰⁵ Jisl 1959 a: 99.

where it continues to function as the central “shrine” of Genghis Khan’s cult, may offer some interesting hints regarding the function of nomadic memorial complexes.

If the Turkic kaghans (or even some local leaders and aristocracy) were not buried in their luxurious funeral complexes to avoid robbery and outrage of their memory,²⁰⁶ the question arises where they should be buried? And what does this change in ritus mean exactly? Nomadic steppe rulers are famous for their rich equipped tombs, buried with all the pomp, their temporality and treasures to show their power and success. And this image is quite logical in the hard process of getting and keeping the power in floating nomadic society. Such a change in ritus from now on— secrecy of burials - would point also to some big changes in human mind and society, but when, how and why this happened? Nevertheless more probable explanation of this “body absence” is that we are not yet able to properly reconstruct the funeral ritual of the Göktürks and identify its remnants in the archaeological context.

3.5.6. Funeral affiliation – *Ashina*?

When regarding the archaeological remnants (the funeral context) we come to interesting contrasts. Meanwhile in Altai and other western parts of Khaganate the skeleton rite predominates (perhaps a residuum of previous Iron Age cultural processes), the Mongolian territory, the centre of the Eastern part of Turkic Khaganate, is quite different. The most typical features are the stone fences, the Turkic memorials, often accompanied by a long row of balbals, rather small stone stelas. According to Chinese reports the original burial rite of the Türk (*Tujue*) involved cremation. Zhou-shu (629 AD), Sui-shu sources describing the burial rite of Eastern Turks; let’s follow these two informational lines (the archaeological and historiographical) to compare them.

If the cremation custom was not a new arrival feature in Altai region, the Chinese would perhaps neither pay so much attention on it nor comment this tradition in such a detailed way. Briefly, if it had followed some older Hsiung-nu or Juan-Juan traditions, already famous to the Chinese observant, then perhaps would not be so necessary to make a detailed description of the rites. Although this feature is simply connected with the *Tujue* (*Türks*), we shall

²⁰⁶ The Genghis khan and his descendants practised secret funerals on hidden places to avoid the robberies and desecration of the grave. Similar precaution can be observed also in the Scytho-Saka environment as for example in Arzhan 2, Tuva – the main royal burial was not placed in the centre of the mound, as it was usual, but somewhat aside, what made it escape the attention of robbers, focused on the centre.

consider that this term is often generally used to designate the Turkic tribal unity and thus it shall be linked with the most “visible” group. Actually, with that part of the Turkic environment who had been in close contact with Chinese, rather than some marginal tribes with less famous customs.²⁰⁷ Thus apparently the Chinese talking about “Türks” actually meant the representative group of Turkic tribes, very possibly the ruling Göktürks and the Ashina clan society. Moreover if we notice the mention from Tang chronicles about children’s game of the Tang prince Chengqian, who imitated the death of kaghan, we shall notice and emphasize that it speaks clearly about the Turkic kaghan and not *some* nomadic ruler or *some Türk* neither. Thus this custom is to be linked with the imperial clan – the *Ashina*. Moreover Ashina, though perhaps turkicized, kept some own traditions from earlier as it is quite usual in nomadic tribes and clans. Thus we approached to the comparison of two synchronic foreign elements in Altai; Ashina and cremation. If we consider these arguments as possible, then *Ashina* might be quite possibly linked together with the cremation rite and responsible for its spread.

The archaeological finds indicate that the “noble” kaghan memorials and their “common” types with simple fences prevail in Mongolia - in the Holy land of Eastern Khaganate, The Ötüken mountains, the legendary seat of *Ashina*. The skeleton burials in Mongolia are rare while predominate in the area of Western Khaganate. Such variability of rites in the west points to the varied ethnic composition undoubtedly caused by the historical background and also contemporary influenced from the nearby cosmopolitan and polyethnic Tarim basin. Thus in the East – Mongolia - mainly cremation rite could be perhaps practiced, what would correspond to legends connecting the ruling Göktürk dynasty and the Ashina clan. Interesting is also the fact, that after decline of the Turkic Khaganate and onset of the new Uyghur Khaganate the skeleton burials occur again more often.²⁰⁸ To shed more light on these connections and interactions between the ruling clan (and Göktürk identity) and burial rites based on the tribal affiliation needs a deeper study of the monuments across the whole Khaganate area (East and West). The only sure point is that the Orkhon monuments are to be

²⁰⁷ At this point should be reminded, that when Chinese describing some interesting and not really usual feature among the Turkic tribes, they usually add some national or geographical specification, trying to identify them with a certain group; thus we learn about the *Mu ma-Tujue* who were riding the wooden horses (ski), living far in the Northern areas, *Gaoche* riding the high-wheeled wagons, linked with Uyghurs, or *Ox-booved* Turks... These notes make the understanding of the mentioned funeral customs as universal more probable.

²⁰⁸ Archaeological researches uncovered skeleton cemeteries in the Orkhon Valley nearby Khotont, that might have some connection with the Kharabalgasun city. For example the Uyghur cemetery 8th-9th century AD in Olon-dov, Khotont sum 2010 (Results published in *Arheologijn sudlal* XXX, Fasc. I-IV, Ulaanbaatar 2011).

linked with the Göktürk rulers Bilgä-Khan and Kül-Tegin, the Ashina clan members, according to both historical sources and runic inscriptions. That turns our attention back to the historical value of legends and oral history.

3.5.7. Legends in the mirror of history II

The history shows that burial rite is a changeable matter and its variability is dependent on a number of trigger mechanisms and their combination. Committed to the idea that families and clans tend to keep their traditions and customs, as may be based on current ethnographic observations, then these characters can be considered as conscious manifestations of cultural belonging. Keeping traditions is a natural social phenomenon providing healthy development of the society (the “pack behaviour”, defining the boundary, demarcation towards other groups and ethnics etc.). Based on the available archaeological, historical and ethnographic experience it can be assumed that burial rite is one of the key manifestations of cultural belongings - a conscious manifestation – what is of special importance. Factors affecting may be divided into two groups: the natural factors (based on the inner rivalry within the clan or ethnics) and intentional (political, religious, socio-economic factors often caused by serious social changes).²⁰⁹ Natural changes are slower, stealth and less traceable but fundamentally, however, affects the expression of material culture. These are usually the dominant elements that are confronted in the context of cohabitation of various clans, tribes or cultures and that may or may not have the ethnic fundament. This process is then manifested as cultural assimilation (might be direct change caused by marriage between clans or by simple taking over of some features due to long-term neighbouring and blending of traditions). Very interesting example of such a development inside one family clan is the current and long handed legend retelling the history of the Monguor clan Ha.²¹⁰ As the legend says the clan

²⁰⁹ Such an example might be the process of christianization of Europe unifying the burial rite in the form of standard inhumation, respecting the rules of new religion, limiting the grave inventory and burying beside the churches. Also the contemporary cremation, solving the economical and hygienical impacts of population increase in large parts of the today world., is such a intentional factor. Ban on burials outside the determined space nad temporary function of the graves that are canceled after a certain time – these are modern economically and socially driven changes of serious nature, which are shaping the face of today’s society nad deforming its traditions. But similar example may be found even deep inside the Turkic milieu; the Kyrgyzstan territory kept its funeral tradition including the horse and sheep burials and erecting of the stone babas even after the dedine of Turkic khaganate untill the 10th century AD, when the Islam arrived. Then a change of rite had come, sometimes even causing the damaging of the older monuments and stone statues, because of the newly prohibited of representation of human figures (Chudyakov, Tabaldiev, 2009, p. 74).

²¹⁰ A part of Ha Mingzong’s grandfather’s narration about the family customs. The Mongghuls, the Monguor or Tu, is the ethnic group of supposedly Turkic-Mongolian origin with its own dialect, living in the province of Gansu and Qinghai, China. In China there are two theories about the origin of Monguors/Tu. The more popular one

originates from two Tatar brothers, prominent figures of the Genghis Khan troops, who married into families from two different cultural circles. The two main branches of the clan Ha are since that time practising different burial rites:

“.. In the time of Mongolian invasion into Zhongyuan (中原),²¹¹ two Tatar brothers had stayed here and settled in today's Huzhu region. Later, one of the brothers married to a Mongghul girl, while the other married a Chinese one. The descendants of brother, who married the Mongghul girl, now form the Eastern clan Ha. They had accepted the Mongghul culture. Descendants of the second brother, who married the Chinese woman, are now the members of the Western family Ha. They adopted some Chinese traditions. For example in our village (the Western Ha) when someone dies, people always put his body in a coffin and bury it, though elsewhere the real Mongghuls always cremate their dead..“

Both family branches however reports to a common family origin and call themselves as Mongghuls (Monguors), speaking with the same Mongolian dialect. In the story of the second brother there was also some mutation of dominant elements; although he married into the Chinese family, he became a founder of the Western Ha family, what indicate that he had had a significant position and perhaps a higher status than the rest of the family. On the other hand the Chinese customs survived at least in form of burial rites. This is not a case of different ethnicity, as it could be considered by comparing of the archaeological contexts only without the knowledge of the family history, but rather a cultural differentiation in frame of one clan respecting the ancestor's tradition and their dominant characters. It is very likely that this ancestral history records in a certain way the general reflection of the very usual assimilation processes in the nomadic society – and that such phenomena were not particularly rare. This uniquely documented but not an isolated case suggests that similar events could significantly

links this ethnic group with Tuyuhuns, who had separated in 3rd century AD from the original tribal federation Xianbei 卑 from the Eastern z východní části from the Eastern part of today's Mongolia and left to the West. They settled around the lake of Qinghai, the homeland of contemporary Monguors, and therefore the Chinese scholars consider them to be the ancestors of Monguors/Tu. Nevertheless current researches had not detected any Monguor historical legends, that would link their origin with Tuyuhuns. The second theory, however, is based on local Monguor legends and linguistic evidence, that Monguors are mostly the descendants of Mongolian soldiers, who came into the land in 14th century AD with the Genghis Khan troops under General Gereltai, who had settled in the vicinity of current Mongghul autonomous district of Huzhu 互助土族自治县. This theory is generally supported and accepted by the Western scholars either. (Ha Mingzong, 2010). Ha Mingzong devoted his bachelor's thesis to the research of oral history and chronicles for study of his own family dan history. One of his grandfather's narration concerns the family customs and burial rite, which is surprisingly biritual.

²¹¹ The Old Chinese district inhabited by Chinese population (Ha Mingzong, 2010).

affect – and probably really affected – the archaeological context on a large scale. Due to the great variability of Turkic burial rite at the wide range of Turkic Khaganates it is necessary to take into account besides the polyethnic factors also these assimilation internal processes that could take place at different levels of society. Unfortunately such a synthesis of cultural elements is archeologically undetectable. The illustrative story above indicates that the question of possible funeral affiliation of ancient cultures should not – and must not - be examined without parallel ethno-linguistic studies of contemporary cultures.

This complexed issue might be also seen from the opposite end. Granted, that each tribe or clan has its own specifics and traditional practices defining its role and status in the social system. If such clan within its dynastic development does not meet with another dominant cultural impulse from outside, there is no reason to change its customs and so far keeps its own intact traditions. This applies especially to socially and politically prominent families, such as the ruling dynasties, whose historical role is so dominant that external and foreign elements affecting their genealogies usually have only marginal character and can't disrupt their internal structure and ancestral cults.²¹² In such case it can be assumed that family habits and traditions may persist for a very long time unchanged.

Archaeological map of Mongolian territory in the period of Second Turkic khaganate with dominance of fence memorials and cremation rite might represent similar example. The long lasting and widespread funeral tradition possibly linked with the centre of Ötükan, Göktürk and Ashina²¹³ as has been already considered should be somehow archaeologically reflected also in the original legendary homeland of the Ashina, the Altai area. Although in the concerned territory of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Altai the skeleton burials with horses prevail, the stone fences (memorials) also occur. The oldest fences are dated to the 5th and 6th century AD what interestingly corresponds to the arrival of Ashina - or at least some new tribal group - who according to the historical sources came to Altai ca after 460 AD. The oldest memorials (as

²¹² An interesting example of such an assimilation in frame of high status families is perhaps the Scythian burial in the Pazyryk 5 mound (Plateau Ukok, Altai, 3th century BC). According to the rich inventory, which contained a four-wheeled Chinese chariot, mirrors and other artefacts, the Scythian ruler was accompanied by his wife, possibly of Chinese origin. Nevertheless the burial respects all the Scythian customs with the scythian artefacts, horses and wooden timber chamber. Most likely it is by no means unusual marriage between the nomadic ruler of Pazyryk elity and the woman of Chinese imperial family, who became the member of Scythian ruler family and therefore was buried according to Scythian customs. (Rudenko 1953, pp. 232-235; Rudenko 1970, pp. 189-193, pl. 129, 131).

²¹³ Whether the genealogy line between the Ashina and Göktürk is true or not, the Göktürk regraded themselves as the Ashina heirs and this fact is essential from the aspect of the dan kinship and cultural affinity. As they consciously proclaimed themselves the Ashina, they followed the Ashina tradition and customs and so they really were the Ashinas.

Kok-pash A-I and small fences of Kudyрге) might perhaps reflect the process of relocation of the *Tü'küe /Tujue* tribes (the considered *Ashina*) to the Altai and their possible assimilation with the local *Tiele*, which resulted in the formation of early medieval Altai Turkic culture. The skeleton burials with horses are rather the element of local and original settlement of perhaps the *Tiele* groups, following the longlasting tradition of the Pazyryk and Majemir Iron Age culture crystalizing into the early Turkic phase in 4th -5th century AD in the monuments of Berel' type. In the Middle Altai the fences are dated to the 6th -7th century AD and follow the circular stone enclosures sometimes accompanied with the horse burials (Kara-Koba I, Ker-Kechu), which yet perhaps reflect the rounded mounds of Pazyryk culture but which are rather to be already linked with the rituals of early Altai *Tiele* tribes.²¹⁴ Whether these early Turkic memorials are to be linked with the beginnings of *Ashina* population then the theory of S. P. Nesterov, who placed the primal *Ashina* settlement and their mixture with autochthonous population to Upper Altai, could be true. Although the written sources do not allow to locate the area of Turkic relocation accurately, the typical monuments linked with the early shaping of Turkic culture in the 5th - 6th century AD in the Upper Altai and its eastern and southern parts might witness for these events.

In the half of the 5th century AD emerged two new elements in Altai – a new tribe and a new type of burial rite with expressive funeral architecture, contrasting with the older Altai tradition of horse burials. Despite the lack of researches, these potential relationships with the *Ashina* immigrants should be taken into account. Not without interest is also the fact that meanwhile the memorial stone fences appear elsewhere on the territory of the Western khaganate ruled by the *Asina* dynasty, they are completely missing in the area of Upper Yenisei which is a marginal (provincial) part of the Khaganate, historically linked with the territory of the Kyrgyz tribes. This territory was not under the direct rule of Turkic aristocracy but under local leaders, sometimes subjected and sometimes revolting against the Turkic kaghans – the absence is so far not striking.²¹⁵ Meanwhile the Western Khaganate is archaeologically multicultural and polyethnic, what is caused by its position, background and intensive contacts with the other cultures of Central Asia, the Eastern Khaganate is relatively homogenous and isolated. Thus

²¹⁴ Mogil'nikov, 1996, p. 28-29

²¹⁵ Kyrgyz tribes played important economical and military-political role inside the Turkic khaganate due to their armourer skills and mining of iron ores, frequently found on their territory. As more or less autonomous region the area of Kyrgyz tribes was politically unstable and often initiated revolts against the Turkic khaganate. This longtermed power rivalry perhaps also contributed to the destruction of Turkic monuments during the Kyrgyz invasions into the Turkic territories and namely the demolition of the Khöshöö Tsaidam memorials can be attributed to such the settling of scores.

the local traditions and cultural features keep easier its continuity and manifest its dominance. The change of the burial rite from cremation to inhumation after the decline of the First Khaganate (630 AD) is so far related to the cultural varied environment of the Western Khaganate, where the assimilation processes were more tumultuous from the very beginning – the area of Eastern Khaganate stayed untouched.²¹⁶

The last indicia connecting the tradition of Turkic memorials with the royal clan and its tribal background is the later Uyghur attitude after the establishment of the Uyghur khaganate in 740 AD. Notwithstanding the Uyghur rulers presented themselves as the legitimate Göktürk heirs, their succession was more probably just ideological, not only ethnically but also culturally. Uyghur burial rite was skeletal and also the funeral architecture is different. The descendants of the Göktürks and Eastern Khaganate, however, most likely stayed in the territory of former empire and neither the tribal spectrum has changed. Only after the fall of the Uyghur empire and following migration processes ends the stage of Turkic culture in Mongolian steppes and also the Turkic memorial fences disappear.

Given the lack of research results and comparative analyses of Turkic funeral precincts these considerations are balancing on thin ice of hypotheses, based on the random confrontation of known and published facts. To shed more light on these connections and interactions between the ruling clan (and Göktürk identity) and burial rites based on the tribal affiliation needs a deeper study of the monuments across the whole Khaganate area (East and West). The only sure point is that the Khöshöö tsaidam monuments themselves are to be linked with the Göktürk rulers and probably the Ashina clan members, Bilgä-Khan and Kül-Tegin, according to both historical sources and runic inscriptions. Whether we could consider the memorials in Khöshöö Tsaidam for a royal, sophisticated and advanced form of the numerous simple “common” fences with identical cremation rituals, then the funeral affiliation of the area to the Göktürk/Ashina tribal territory quite possible.

²¹⁶ This process might be compared to the story of above mentioned two Tatar brothers whose marriages divided the dan into two branches. When the royal dan Ashina divided into two branches ruling the Eastern and Western khaganates, each followed its genealogical development. The Western Ashina branch was intensively confronted with many dominant influences of neighbouring ethnics in Central Asia included the original Altaic cultural component. Facing so many influences On the contrary the Eastern branch of Göktürk was dominating its Mongolian territory and thus had a better chance to stay more or less culturally orthodox.

3.6. Pottery and roof tiles

The question of pottery, found in Kül-Tegin site, is one of the most interesting as well as the most complicated one to answer. Since the excavation in 1958 brought to light just small amount of pottery, in number of around 30 pieces; such a limited collection disables to make any generally valid statement on this problem. Considering the current stage of Turkic pottery research, which is still mostly understood as a marginal aspect of archaeological context and in many cases an underestimated issue, no convenient typology is set until today. From this point of view it is necessary to observe the term “pottery” in wide frame of historical, cultural and ethnographical context. Following chapter shall rather outline possibilities and questions based on the Kül-Tegin collection that should encourage the further research on this topic.

Due to the way of the material storage in opened boxes in the depository, the material was contaminated by recent intrusions during the last fifty years. Because of lack of original inventory numbers and other discrepancies, caused by the long time gap, I had re-labelled the material by my own “inventory” numbers, auxiliary operational system later completed and identified with the original Jisl’s notes.²¹⁷ By careful sorting and comparing with the original documentation I had eliminated the pottery collection into three subgroups according to the certainty degree of its affiliation to the original Kül-Tegin context. The first and biggest group (*KE 1- 31, 33-36, 49-53, 58, 71-94, 96-132, 134-176*) bears either no inventory number or completely different kind of inventory numbers that together with the character of the pottery itself indicate intrusive origin of the shards, erroneously mixed in the boxes.²¹⁸ This group was therefore completely excluded from further analyses. Second group (*KE 32, 46-48, 64, 66 – 70, 95*) is labelled with inventory numbers that may or may not belong to the original context; hard to distinguish because the numbers are close to the numerical series and font style as well.²¹⁹ Despite the fact that Jisl’s list does not register these pieces, the group is considered at least marginally within the following analyses, because the material character might fit to the context and there is no certainty to determine.

²¹⁷ Both numerical series are further given side by side in all documents to prevent possible confusion.

²¹⁸ Some of these pottery pieces are recent or High Middle Ages, some belong to the Kitan Ware, all of unknown original context.

²¹⁹ The Kül-Tegin material is sometimes marked with double numbers, first is evidently Jisl’s system, the second – usually but not necessarily beginning with the *N* capital – is of later date. Unfortunately there is no evidence to explain that re-inventing.

Finally the third group (*ST 3-4, ST 6-8, ... KE 37-45, 54-62, 65, 95, ...ST 30-31,*) represents the Kül-Tegin context with full certainty, based either on the corresponding inventory numbers or – if missing – on the original documentation, that confirmed the identification. This group creates the main platform for further analyses, questions and investigations. Most of the pottery had been originally made at least partly in hand, partly finished on the wheel (traces of turning can be sometimes detected from the inner side of the vessels). Among the fragments of pottery there are some main types clearly distinguishable that might be classified as follows.²²⁰

First type is represented by a *grey-ware* types made of hard-burnt grey clay. One type is „black-painted“ pottery, which presents a simple plain hard-burnt grey ware with strips of dark engobe on the surface, made of rough opening material, represented by two fragments that might possibly belong to the context (*KE 32, 64*) but I doubt it. Another probably intrusive group represents very simple hand-made „*kitchen-ware*“ shapes, made of rough crumbly material consisting of bigger pieces, not very well burn-out of black-reddish colour. Sometimes they might carry a slight white engobe or the traces of fire on the surface (*KE 69, 70, 95*). These are probably common utensils for cooking of everyday use. Both groups are included at the end of the catalogue.

There were also some recent types of pottery found in the surface layers, some „*glazed ware*“ of unknown origin, mostly small fine shapes (*KE 43, 133*) and also one piece of reddish engraved pottery of unknown datation (*KE 45*).

3.6.1. Stamped pottery. The "Orkhon vases"

Probably the most interesting group is the „*stamped pottery*“, decorated with rhomboid patterns (*KE 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 44, 59, 60, 61-62, 65, 81*). The material is very well burnt of yellow or greyish colour, compact and smooth. Sherds are quite thick (cca 1 cm) what indicates some bigger shapes of vessels – flasks or vases. It is probably some finer sort of pottery or at least a pottery that should imitate some fine ware, perhaps of Chinese type, as the shapes are noble in contrast to the material, which is obviously coarser.

²²⁰ The further classification represents only temporary processing terms since there is no official terminology for the Turkic pottery so far.



Fig. 29: KE 38 (Kult 54/58), stamped pottery found nearby the sacrificial stone and reconstructed vase (lost).

The stamped pattern of concentric rhomboid shapes is spread on the shoulders of the vessels while the pulled neck and body is plain and smoothed. Stamping was made perhaps by a cylindrical tool of positive matrix running around the vessel body and leaving a regular pattern of imprint, in places overlapping the previous row of the motif. According to the careful observation of the pattern, there is constantly repeating segment of four rhomboid shapes as the small defects clearly show. The fragments of stamped pottery are not numerous therefore it is hard to say to how many vessels they originally belonged to.



Fig. 30: Matrix A. Drawing of the basic segment of the stamped pattern

According to the Jisl's description, it's production technology corresponds to so-called "Kyrgyz vases", where the neck and body were produced separately and consequently glued together, as it can be clearly seen when the vessel is broken. The plastic ring at the base of the

neck of the Orkhon types shall cover and protect the place of seam.²²¹ Taking into account the “Kyrgyz vases” and “Uyghur vases” which are the close typological relatives to this stamped pottery, Jisl entered the pottery discussion with “Orkhon vases”, which is actually very suitable term.

Beside another find of *Orkhon vase*, made by Czechoslovak-Mongolian expedition in a Turkic grave on the Chuluut Mountain in Khöshöö Tsaidam in 1958²²² and the same type pottery found within the Bilgä-Khan monument excavation,²²³ there were also another fragments of similar types uncovered during the excavations in Uyghur Kharabalgasun in Orkhon,²²⁴ in lower layers of Karakorum²²⁵ or another Uyghur sites in Mongolia (Orkhon) and Tuva, for example the fortress of Shagonar (i.e. the “Uyghur vases”). The typical technology of separate neck and body production, observed by all these examples, connects Chudyakov with the Central Asian influence and Sogdian role in the Uyghur society,²²⁶ which is actually obvious when observing the architecture and infrastructure of the Kharabalgasun City.

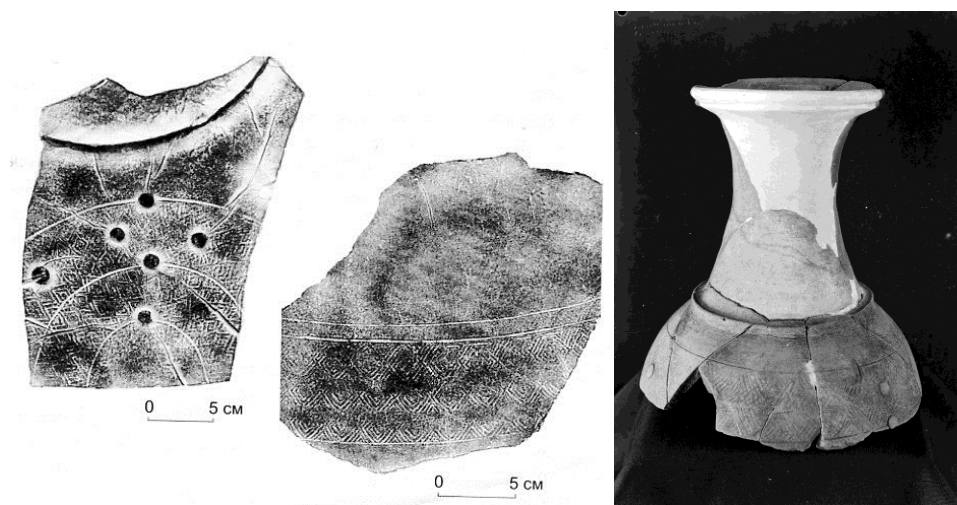


Fig.31: Bilgä-Khan pottery and the “Orkhon vase.”

²²¹ Jisl, 1963, II, p. 94.

²²² dtto

²²³ Баяр Д., 2004, с. 76.

²²⁴ S.V. Kiselev, 1949; Худяков Ю.С, Цевецдорж Д., 1982, с. 85- 94, Dähne B., 2010, p. 70-71. Ju. S. Chudyakov connects among others the Kharabalgasun pottery patterns with the Uyghur wall-painting motifs of Eastern Turkestan, what presents an interesting link to the western (Sogdian) traditions of Turkic culture (Ceveendorj, Chudyakov, 2003, p. 276)

²²⁵ Евтюхова Л.А., Керамика Кара- Корума in: Древнемонгольские города. Москва 1965, с. 271- 273

²²⁶ Ceveendorj, Chudyakov, 2003, p. 276.



Fig.32: Uyghur pottery from Kharabalgasun (after B. Dähne, 2010).



Fig. 33: Kharabalgasun pottery (After B. Dähne 2010, Cevendorj-Chudyakov 2003)

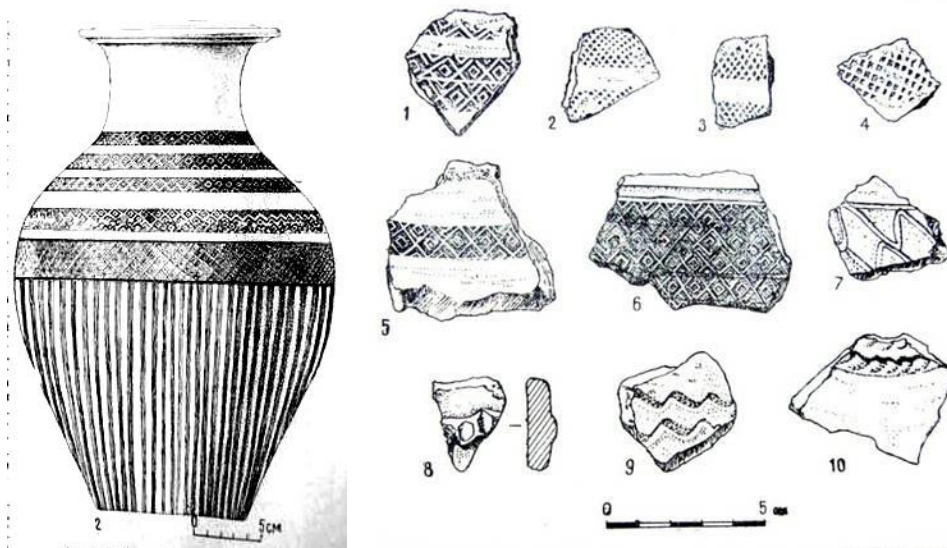


Fig.34: Uyghur pottery from Shagonar I, Tuva.

Also in recent times there are new findings of similar pottery in the Orkhon valley area, coming both from excavations and surface prospection of different places and of different dating.²²⁷ Some of the sites belong to the Uyghur archaeological context as for example the Olon-dov cemetery near the Khotont city.

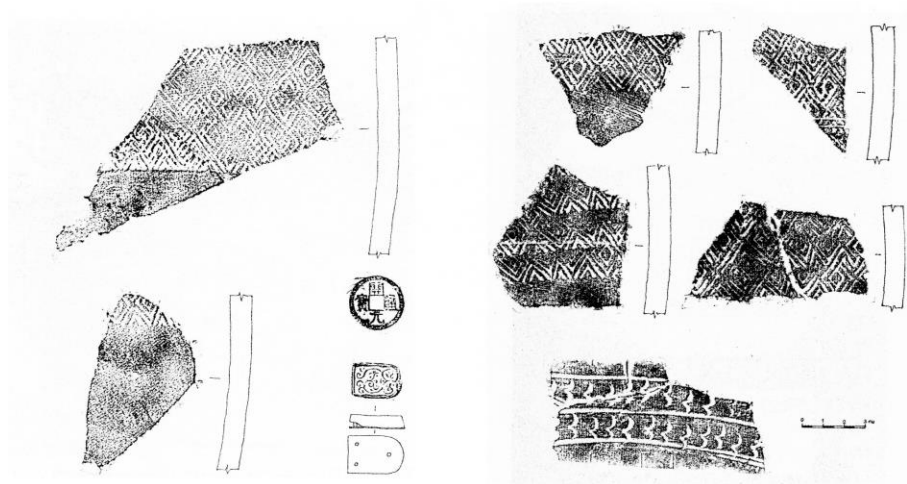


Fig.35: Uyghur pottery (Olon-dov cemetery, Khotont sum, 8th- 9th century AD)

Other sites in the vicinity of Kharabalgasun, detected by the Mongolian-German Geo-archaeological prospection of Orkhon valley, provide mixed material from different periods, among them also the *Turkic/Uyghur type*.²²⁸ All these fragments come from both Turkic and Uyghur sites what makes the cultural affiliation and dating of this type of ware not easy to distinguish. On the other hand such an interesting collection provides space for numerous considerations.

²²⁷ The most interesting material comes from the surface prospection of the Orkhon Valley made by the German-Mongolian expedition in 2008- 2011 (project „Geo-archaeology in the Steppe – Reconstruction of Cultural Landscape in the Orkhon Valley, Central Mongolia“ headed by the Bonn University) and from the archaeological research of the Uyghur cemetery in Olon-dov, Khotont sum 2010 (Mongolian National University and Institute of Archaeology in Ulaanbaatar). Results published in *Arheologijn sudlal XXX*, Fasc. I-IV, Ulaanbaatar 2011.

²²⁸ Bemmann J., Ahrens B. et al., 2011, p. 76.

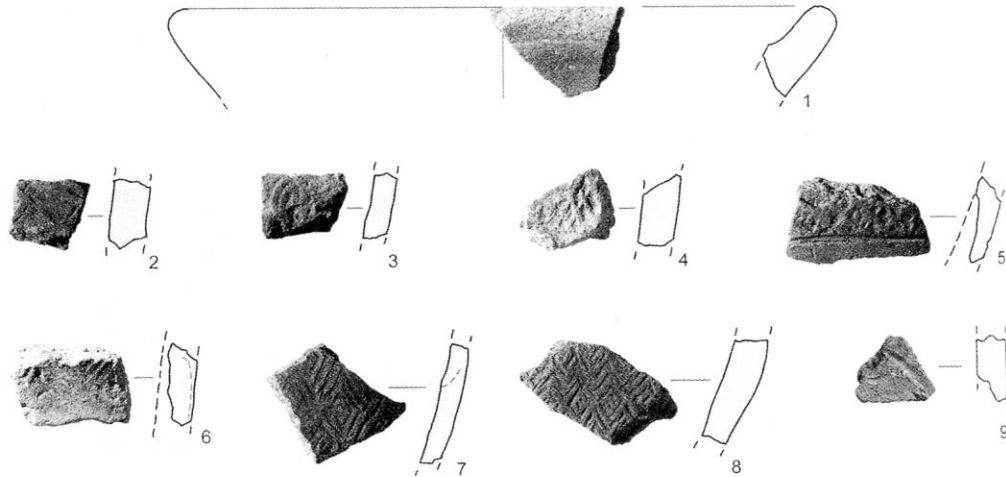


Fig.36:Turkic/Uyghur finds, Orkhon Valley prospection German-mongolian geoarchaeological survey.

3.6.2. Pottery/roof-tile subgroup note

According to Jisl’s photodocumentation there are also another stamped fragments described by Jisl as pottery. Their observing is nevertheless puzzling because of the character and surface treatment. First of all during my elaboration I marked them as “black-tiles” considering them as roof tiles with slightly different stamped decoartion and dark engobe that are different from the common types of grey roof tiles and gutter tile finials (see the Jisl description in the preliminary report and catalogue 7.3.). These are thick shards of more compact well- washed material with rough crumbles, with yellowish inner surface, sometimes smooth as being originally made or fastened on some hard material. Their outer surface is blackish glossy or matted with stamped decoration which is actually very close to the stamped pottery above but little bit different. The pattern was perhaps made in the same way by some cylindrical tool as the imprints are overlapping in places, but the original matrix corresponds to following types:



Fig.37: Matrix B1 and B2 observed on the pottery and “black rooftiles”.

At first I saw this as a production kinship of roof tiles and pottery what seemed to me logical. According to U. Broesseder (personal consultation) this feature appears also in the context of Hsiung-nu border settlements where typical local decorative elements are applied on the Chinese type of roof tiles. The problem is that I would expect a higher amount of them on the site if they should represent some roof covering, although it is difficult to assess their numerosity due to limited collection of materials in general. Among them are also some fragments with the same decoration that are closer to the pottery sort (brown-yellowish, slightly thinner shard without engobe). According to Jisl's documentation some fragments of the same pattern seem to be undoubtedly coming from the *Orkhon vase* types due to its profilation and plastic rim (photo FP 48367 for example), but these are missing today. As I am not able to distinguish the purpose of these fragments due to the lack of comparative material I have decided to leave this question yet opened. Respecting the coarse photodocumentation from 1958 I let them together with the stamped pottery group of *Orkhon vases* (catalogue 7.2.); but these fragments are marked with *ST* letters. For drawing comparison of both matrix types applied on the fragments of both groups see the catalogue of pottery 7.2. named as "*Orkhon vases stampage*" and "*Pottery/roof tiles stampage*" in the end.

3.6.3. Pottery context and dating

The stamped pottery Kül-Tegin monument comes from different contexts, but most of them were found within the central shrine area and in the sacrificial pit. According to the context they are related to the period of active use of the precinct what could be actually linked with the Turkic Khaganate as well as with the Uyghur period. Due to the identical ethnic composition of both khaganates could be presumed that Turkic descendants or even the Uyghurs worshipped and respected the place of Kül-Tegins and Bilgä-Khan memorials. For this possibility speaks also the fact that the Kül-Tegin monument had been probably renovated during the Uyghur period, as was detected within the excavation in 1958. Any other representative type of pottery was not found, if we do not count the grey ware, which probably belong to the common utensils. Compared to the other Orkhon Turkic/Uyghur finds, also the Kül-Tegin context suggests that the stamped pottery might be used during both periods as an undifferentiated cultural element of Turko-Uyghur oikumens.

Another issue concerns the provenance of the pottery. It is probably some finer sort of pottery being used as sacrificial vessels, but not a Chinese ware, although its shape might be inspired by the Chinese production. The character of material and rough admixtures speak rather for the local origin and also the spread of the stamped pottery throughout the Orkhon Valley points to the existence of at least one workshop. Such massive pottery production also indicates existence of developed settlement of permanent nature – perhaps older than the Kharabalgasun horizon.

What we can say for sure, that the monument was definitely destroyed by the Kyrgyz attack in 9th century AD and all activities had to happen within the period from 732 n.l. to this date. Until the final destruction and probably even burn-out of the site, the precinct was somehow used, because in the time of destruction sacrificial pits were still opened – this is proved by finds of fragments of Kül-Tegin's head and tiara thrown inside as a result of violent destruction. Whether the worshippers were the descendants of Turks or rather Uyghurs is so far uncertain. The final solution of pottery provenance, production and distribution might be solved only by complexed analyses of the all Orkhon finds that could also help to decipher, whether this stamped pottery belongs to the Turkic or Uyghur environment or if it is some Turko-Uyghur feature in general.

3.6.4. Pottery and building materials as possible indicia of the settlement

Interesting collection of pottery, roof tiles and other building materials partly discussed in above chapters (catalogue 7.2 – 7.4) indicate that some production background of permanent character had to exist in the vicinity of Khöshöö Tsaidam site perhaps connected only with the Chinese building activities, but more probable even earlier. Especially the pottery dispersion across the Orkhon Valley region speaks for existence of some local permanent manufactures producing this type within the Göktürk period which is nevertheless undetected by now. The problem of detection of archaeological context is outlined below in the chapter 4.2.1. considering the prospection methods of nomadic settlement. But there are some more facts that should be taken into account. The precincts of Chinese imperial tombs were constructed in the vicinity of the capital, the city of dead thus neighbored with the city of living. Comparing the parallels with Turkic royal memorials it could be presumed, that the kaghan capital might be also located somewhere close to the Khöshöö Tsaidam. Also the sudden emergence of Uyghur city Kharabalgasun and its proximity to the site is little bit suspicious.

Considering the facts that the Orkhon valley is said to be a centre of the Eastern Turkic Khaganate and extremely fast construction of the Uyghur capital shortly after the fall of Second Khaganate on the other hand, might point towards the possibility, that Kharabalgasun could have arisen on the basis of some Göktürk centre (perhaps of less advanced character) instead of being built on the “green lawn”. The presence of partly settled population in the Orkhon Valley is also indicated by some agricultural mentions in the Chinese sources. Such a breaking point into our knowledge of the Turkic settlement infrastructure, might be confirmed or denied only within the nowadays excavation results in the Kharabalgasun and Orkhon Valley.

3.6.5. Role of the pottery in nomadic environment

Question of pottery is also one of the most interesting aspects of nomadic archaeology in general. The ratio of pottery finds in nomadic environment is considerably lower compared to the regular context of sedentary cultures, whose stratigraphic horizons are often distinguished just due to the pottery material.²²⁹ This is partly caused by the limited number of sites, mostly of burial type, but even in the case of settled areas the finding material is also significantly poorer.²³⁰ The main difference is surely based on the economical aspects shaping both type of societies. Meanwhile the settled cultures repeat the same infrastructural patterns, the nomadic society is (except some firm centres concentrated on politically or commercially strategic points on border-lines) embodiment of flexibility, instability and variability – understandable territorial, political or ethnic level. The factor of instability is reflected also in material culture. Nevertheless in the range of current research based on the lack of excavated settlement contexts this situation might be meanwhile considered only on a hypothetical level. The first possible explanation is the already mentioned lack of sedentary areas that could offer satisfactory comparative material. Underestimating of nomadic settlements in general historical context is still very actual problem of the steppe archaeology due to its difficult identification. On the other hand this fact could be accessed by another, albeit somewhat pragmatic reasons. In terms of intensive nomadic way of life the pottery due to its fragility is

²²⁹ Compared to material situation in Europe, the ordinary settlement sites – prehistorical and medieval villages – usually provide a rich pottery files comprising even hundreds or thousands pottery sherds each. On the contrary for example the research of Kharabalgasun city, the eminent cultural centre of Uyghur khaganate, bring just a fraction of this amount, while its significance and size is unmatched.

²³⁰ See for example the lack of pottery material from the research of Kharabalgasun.

not as practical utility material as for example the wood or metal, and therefore not very useful for regular migration and the herdsmen everyday life. Also its production requires suitable clay sources, specialized kilns construction and other specific conditions difficult to fulfill within common seasonal migration; this could make the pottery quite a precious commodity.

Related to this is also the problematic issue of typology. Environment of settled cultures usually provides enough material to set chronological patterns and mutual relations between regions. Thus the pottery is often understood as a measure unit of acculturation degree, reflecting interrelations among different close or distant cultures and also one of the main cultural-geographical features reflecting spatial differentiation of each cultural group. In the area of nomadic cultures, however, these symptoms are not entirely conclusive. Namely the Turkic pottery of the Orkhon Valley in Mongolia offers a nice illustrative example.

Briefly summarized the sacrificial pit inside the Kül-Tegin shrine offers the pottery collection of a closed context.²³¹ The Kül-Tegin monument was in use for cca hundred years since 732 AD to 840 AD, covering the period of Turkic and Uyghur khaganates. The pottery from the site does not reflect any cultural change what actually corresponds to the similar ethno-cultural composition of both khaganates. On the other hand the considerable ethnic variability of both khaganates, given by the large territorial and time expanse and by the complex ethno-cultural development, is apparent in other artefacts of material culture. But similar pottery types with analogical decoration appear on a wide area come from the Uyghur fortress of Shagonar in Tuva and also from different sites of Orkhon Valley of Turkic or Uyghur origin (8th- 9th century AD).²³² This dispersion indicates that the pottery of Kül-Tegin monument is not necessary Turkic (in the sense of Göktürk affiliation), but it is rather usual type of widespread ware, used for a long time on a wide area without distinctive differentiation features.

These observations might point to the different understanding of question of ethnicity or at least to a different cultural attitude than in the settled areas. Such a point of view indicates the

²³¹ If the broken head of prince Kültegin's statue, found in the upper part of backfilling of the sacrificial pit, was thrown into the pit as a result of Kyrgyz attack in 9 cent AD (the horizon of destruction), then the layers consisting the pottery beneath represent the activity of Turkic or Uyghur period.

²³² Material coming from the surface prospection of the Orkhon Valley made by the German-Mongolian expedition in 2008- 2011 (project „Geo-archaeology in the Steppe – Reconstruction of Cultural Landscape in the Orkhon Valley, Central Mongolia“ headed by the Bonn University) and from the archaeological research of the Uyghur cemetery in Olon-dov, Khotont sum 2010 (Mongolian National University and Institute of Archaeology in Ulaanbaatar). Results published in *Arheologii sudlal* XXX, Fasc. I-IV, Ulaanbaatar 2011

pottery plays a different role in the nomadic society, thus we have to consider if it is a reliable source of information- its predictive value is different. Observing the pottery pieces from Kül-Tegin site further shows that the decoration was made by one stamping matrice rotating, as the defects are repeated on all the pieces. That proved, that the pottery comes from one hand or one workshop. To understand the role of pottery in nomadic environment would be very useful to make petrographical and typological analyses, that would help to identify, where does this pottery come from, how many workshops were working in the area and what were the distribution mechanisms of pottery within the Turkic cultures.

4. Conclusions

4.1. Ethno-cultural context in the nomadic environment

In this work I also attempted to draw the contours of the set of questions posed by the current state of research concerning the „ethnogenesis“ of the Turks.. The term ethno-genesis as used in the historical science, is derived from the conception of an ethnicity in the sense of common descent, religion, culture and language. The attempts to treat the nomadic empires as ethnic groups has long been the basic hindrance in the understanding of nomadic cultures. „Classical“ modern works about Central Asian history, while admitting the specifics of the nomadic state formations, mostly do not make use of this awareness in describing the overall course of nomadic history, thus creating the well-known image of suddenly emerging „tribes“ creating short-lived centralized empires and then migrating south-and westwards and disappearing, leaving the steppes deserted until the emergence of another „tribe“. Certain „prejudices“ about nomads seem to have been persisting due to the character of written sources we in our possession, which were often intended as political and ideological tools rather than descriptions of reality. This concerns, for example, the widespread image of steppe empires consisting exclusively of nomadic herders. Sometimes, unfortunately, older sources and studies present us with a more realistic picture which has been hardly mentioned in modern scholarly literature, such as the statement of V.Ya. Bichurin, that the ethnic groups behind various steppe empires have had always the same composition and only the names of their states kept changing following the names of the ruling dynasties.

In recent years historians have been working hard to change this chimerical image and bring it with the help of various methods – combining archaeology, written sources, anthropology or religious studies, but also such fields as natural sciences – closer to a realistic picture of history. Unfortunately, to my knowledge, this work, which requires interdisciplinary approach, has been still in the stage of searching ways and postulating working theories.

As mentioned by Sinor, the Turk empire puzzles researchers by the fact that, although a great amount of rather detailed information is found in Chinese, Byzantine and other sources, the facts upon which the „ethnogenesis“ of the Turks should be built do not match and are often contradictory. This may be partly due to the complexity of the ethnic composition which may be conceived, for example, in the parallel of the well-described situation of the ethnogenesis of the Mongols, partly due to our erroneous conceptions of the reality behind the descriptions, which complicate our use of the rich material. In order to receive a more detailed knowledge about the ethnic composition, customs related to settlement, use of the land and division of territory, ethnogenetic processes including assimilations, intermarriage, dealing with captives and defeated groups in military conflicts, relations with vassal groups, frequency and scale of migrations, family and kinship customs, use of language and languages and other aspects of the everyday life in the steppes, multiple disciplines should be used simultaneously. The main fields of study which may induce a step forward, are religious studies, anthropology, ethnography, contact linguistics and study of oral history. These fields, if used in a live dialogue with „traditional „ disciplines such as history, philology, archaeology and historical linguistics, may yield a large corpus of material about the general character of nomadic societies and the important principles that would facilitate our interpretation of extant sources. The ethnogenesis of the Turks, conceived with the help of some additional sources of the abovementioned character, may be interpreted in the following way:

The ethnic core of the Turk empire may have been formed by the nomadic herders of Mongolia, the descendants of the Hsiung-nu empire and members of the Juan-Juan confederation, who may well have been speakers of a variety of languages and dialects, but the main language may have been close to Old Turkic, the language of the runic inscriptions. These nomads used various names to refer to themselves. On the fringes of the steppe ethnic groups of forest hunters, fishermen, taiga reindeer breeders, settled agriculturalists speaking different languages were living. The Sogdian merchants were frequently settling and living permanently among the nomads, and so were Chinese merchants and artisans. The nomadic

religion – veneration of Heaven and the sacred Earth, earth and water spirits and ancestral cults, were accompanied by the diverse cults of the Siberian taiga dwellers, similar to those described from more recent times. Buddhism, Manichaeism and Nestorian Christianity was practiced by the incomers in cities and settlements. Priests of the various religions lived along with shamans and sorcerers. In general, a great variety of local cults were practiced.

To the west from the nomadic core of Mongolia, in the Altai, mixed Turkic (tribes speaking various dialects of Common Turkic, which was slightly different from the eastern idiom of Old Turkic, lived intermingled with Indo-European peoples, both nomadic, hunting and semi-agricultural. Those peoples were probably also vassals of the Juan-Juan.

Frequent migrations were taking place, one of them being the flight of the group of several hundreds of families of the Iranic speaking Ashina people from Gansu. Those people settled in the Altay region where they found favorable conditions and, mixing with the local population and acquiring their metallurgic skills started calling themselves the Turks. Metallurgy also played a central role in their religion. By their Juan-Juan masters they were valued as blacksmiths. Having become powerful, they provoked conflict with the Juan-Juan and overthrew them, replacing them in the central headquarters of Mongolia, and, perhaps, adopting the state language – Old Turkic. In the following period, along with the conquest of their western neighbors, the use of their state language spread to the conquered areas. As a result, the state, composed of a whole scale of languages, religions, cultures and ways of life expanded over other, equally complicated territories but gradually caused their Turkicisation.

4.2. Archaeological context in the nomadic environment

(from the point of view of European archaeologist)

Into the complicated ethnogenetic, philological and historical debates enters also the archaeology facing to difficult interpretation or even identification of the archaeological situations. By working with Kül-Tegin materials and observation of nomadic environment during my field studies at the same time I came to a break when my previous experiences in the branch were confronted with slightly different mechanisms that also formed my dealt Turkic questions. Regarding some basic principles of archaeological work, that are forming

the current common methodology in the environment we are mostly working with (i.e. the archaeological context of settled cultures), we could summarize the main criteria of defining and evaluation of archaeological situation as highlighted below:

- 1) Archaeology of settled cultures is based mostly on research of sunken features (huts, houses, postholes, storage pits, waste pits, graves etc.).
- 2) Main impact on interpretation and dating has the *closed archaeological context* (i.e. the activity had been stopped in certain moment and situation stayed conserved).
- 3) Pottery plays a significant role in dating the contexts as the most common find.

These basic principles have been long-term tested in environment of settled cultures and are considered to be valid for the settling context in general. The settlement and funeral areas are the essential sources for archaeological research and learning the history, when assuming the fact that almost any human intervention or activity to the ground leaves indelible imprints. But compared to the environment of nomadic cultures in the steppe areas we come to some striking differences and certain specifics of archaeological context. In following lines I would like to present some typical examples and their aspects using an illustrative case of Khöshöö Tsaidam and Mongolian territory in general.

4.1.1. Settlement context in the steppe

“Hut versus Ger”

The nomadic cultures (in the frame of this work let it be the Turkic society in the Mongolian territory) are representing a fluctuating settlement model that is being developed for thousands of years already and so far is perfectly accommodated to the steppe environment. Despite the fact we can observe some contextual analogies in the Neolithic period, comparable to “our environment”,²³³ during the Bronze Age the climatic conditions seriously influenced the existing environment, what meant a dramatic change not only for the pre-

²³³ In Mongolia we can detect the very similar situation to the usual settling context within the Late Stone Age (The Neolithic period), when the population was still settled and the Mongolian territory was covered with a rich net of Neolithic settlements. On these sites the houses and pits so as traces of farming and cultivation were found. The agricultural phase was so far not much different from the for example European or Middle Eastern context.

historical cultures, but also for the archaeologists, researching the history. Drying out of the steppes²³⁴ meant a new lifestyle of until settled people, who had to refocus from primal farming to cattle-breeding and nomadic way of life. This moment is considered to be a breaking point in forming the culture, mentality and also nationality understanding, which in fact are playing a hidden but crucial role in the story of archaeology. But this moment was also breaking for the character of the settlement. The steppe environment is comparable for example to European circumstances within the last Ice Age approximately 15 000 years ago; the same *oolithic* processes removing loess by wind persist in the steppe region until today. The Mongolian landscape is a very specific space; it is a high plateau with an average of altitude around 1500 m above sea level, open space exposed to a changeable weather conditions and covered by poor soil layer. Its inhabitants have to be very flexible and constantly in motion to make a living; and so it was within the past. They had adapted their dwellings to such a life-style and developed a „ger” instead of using houses.²³⁵ These *gers* came to a massive spread and it became a majority dwelling type in the steppe from at least Iron Age (if not earlier) until nowadays. Its light construction enables fast dismantling and easy transport to any preferable place, where it can be again easily re-erected;²³⁶ the construction is perched on the wooden platform, which does not interfere the ground. After abandoning the settlement place nothing except the circle of fade grass remains and within a short time no trace is readable any more.²³⁷ Concerning the archaeological context there is hardly something to be detected by standard prospection methods.

²³⁴ The process had started around 1300 BC.

²³⁵ The *ger* (*yurt*) is a typical nomadic dwelling of rounded shape, made of wooden construction covered by felt. Despite the light construction it is surprisingly windproof and stabile with excellent insulation properties. The very origin of the *ger* is hard to trace and this topic would offer a nice comparative material for an individual thesis based on the ethnographical, historical and archaeological material either. On my non-professional opinion one of the early mentions about *ger* could be possibly found in the Herodotus History, describing the Scythian lands. He noted – probably about the inhabitants of Altai (?) - that „... the people there are living under the trees which use to cover by a white felt tent during the winter time.” (Hist.,IV,23) This description strikingly resembles a *ger* that is definitely documented in the Hun period (*Hsiung-nu*, *Xiongnu*) some three hundred years later (!). Despite the fact Herodotus had perhaps never seen such a construction, being reliant only to some narrator source, his description perfectly fits to such item.

²³⁶ Packing or erecting the *ger* takes approximately one hour and all its construction features can be carried by a wagon (or in a small van).

²³⁷ These observations are based on my personal experience that had been made during my last years travels to Mongolia, when I had focused (except my main dissertation tasks) on the environment of today breeders and their settling customs during the season. In the case of regular seasonal migrations some families build a simple wooden stable for cattle manipulation in dose neighbourhoods of the *ger* place; but even in this case of „stable constructions“ due to the weather conditions and other damaging factors, the stable construction comes very fast in ruins when not in regular use – expiration of such a building is maximum few years.



Fig.38: The abandoned seasonal ger place.

Food storages

Analogical situation can be observed in the waste treatment or storage system, that usually provides another source of important archaeological material in standard settlement context (the storage pits, waste pits etc.). This kind of sunken features is mostly simply missing in the environs of settling places; there are many reasons for its absence. To find an explanation of this phenomenon it is again necessary to turn attention to the current nomadic settlement that offer an outstanding comparative material. Nomadic life-style with all its variable aspects is strongly limiting all activities that require a long-term effort fixed to certain place; therefore some obvious signs of material culture are different or even missing. There are many factors interacting together. Absence of massive farming or cultivation eliminates the need of grain storage, but storage pits themselves in any way lose its sense due to continual mobility of the inhabitants.²³⁸ Hence the storage system of the herdsmen has to meet the demands of their floating lifestyle. Usual products of cattle-breeding can be stored in a different way. Due to an extremely dry climate and high number of sunny days the meat and milk products can be easily dried outside with any special preservation methods. On the other hand as the cattle-

²³⁸ Based on my own observations I can say, that nomadic families have to be ready to move anytime – and they can move even several times during one season; for example, if drought strikes, they have to move their herd immediately to aware of impending death of animals, which would seriously harm their economical situation and thus their own being.

breeding provides their main livelihood, pastoralists keep their stocks “on hand” and fresh all the time.²³⁹ Therefore the usual storage system of settled cultures is not much effective in the steppe region.

Waste treatment

Pits versus Recycling mounds

Waste treatment in Mongolian territory also has its own specifics. Today cattle-breeders use the worldwide favourite everlasting materials such as plastics and metal, so we can easily observe the process of disposal of the waste.²⁴⁰ As in the case of storage system, there are no pits for gathering the litters but all the waste use to be gathered in one place - an open area close to the *ger* location. When the family abandons the living area, only the mound of litters indicates the recent settling activity.²⁴¹ In the past (and even recent past) all waste was of organic origin and thus fully recyclable; therefore it left no visible traces and no noticeable archaeological context could come into being. Instead of concentration of the waste in waste pits, the material is naturally recycled. Unstable and short-term settlement activity together with natural conditions also prevents the concentration of waste material in cultural layers as is common with conventional settlement stratigraphy.

²³⁹ Milk and meat products are essential component of food of the Mongolian nomads in countryside; completed by some vegetables and flour. Their enzymatic equipment is well adapted on the meat and milk digestion which is actually given by the millennial development.

²⁴⁰ In fact this is one of the biggest environmental problems of today Mongolia (and not only Mongolia), which is also very interesting from the archaeological point of view. Waste treatment in current steppe reflects long-term habits of cattle-breeders, who were obviously used to work with organic materials only and simply threw them out anywhere. But suddenly they have to face the problem that the new materials are not easily decomposable; and mostly they do not realize.

²⁴¹ Plastic containers, metal artefacts, worn shoes are the most often current „finds“ on the spot of rubble. The rest as bones and other organic materials are soon drag out by animals or decayed; so far recycled.



Fig.39: Waste disposal site nearby the ger place.

Existence of other sunken features as postholes and other constructional features is predictable with high probability compared to current nomadic settlement as some light constructions occur in the steppe (stables, fences, mooring poles). The problem is how to identify them in terrain. Due to low intensity of industrialization and urbanization processes in the Mongolian landscape, there is almost no request of the wide and systematic prospection or rescue researches that could provide some systematic mapping of the character of the ancient nomadic settlement and types of archaeological context.

Question of prospection

Now as we have set the main specifics of the nomadic settlement in the steppe regarding the conventional methods, there arises a big problem how to identify the ancient settlement context in terrain. Needless to say, that in frame of current research targeting this issue is often neglected. Except the bigger centres (cities, noble residences, monasteries and other sites of cultural concentration), the common nomadic settlement - which in fact represents the majority population in fact - is in terms of present research unrecognizable and immeasurable. Its role is hence a bit unjustly left aside. The question should not be therefore asked “*Why is not possible to detect the settlement context on the basis of current standard methodology?*”, but rather “*How to modify current methods?*” and “*What other symptoms the nomadic settlement context offers to be recognized?*”

Regarding the Mongolian countryside we could presume that the form and principles of current settlement might be analogically applied on the older structures as well. In the Mongolian landscape there are always some places more preferable for seasonal settlement migration than other; some areas are ideal for summer pasture while other provide better conditions for winter camping.²⁴² These settlement models respect geomorphological, hydrological, climatic and weather conditions according to pastoral needs. During my research journeys through Mongolian countryside I have noticed, that in the places of seasonal settlement there are different types of plants unlike the „pure“ steppe beside. These anthropophilic plants (*anthropophytes*), for example the family of *Urticaceae* (also called as nettles), are strictly bound to the settled area with human waste.²⁴³ That means that the historical nomadic settlement areas could be possibly detected on the basis of cropmarks²⁴⁴ combined with paleobotanical analyses, which are also successfully used as additional research methods in common settlement structures. But in nomadic context these analyses might have extraordinary importance as being often the only indicating factor of human presence.



Fig.40: *Anthropophilic plants on the ger sites; Potentilleae, Lamium (deadnettle) and Urtica cannabiana L. below.*

²⁴² For example in the Orkhon valley, that had played an important role in the whole history as we know from both archaeological and historical sources, the migration structure can be very clearly defined.

²⁴³ In Mongolia it is the *Urtica hyperborea*, but the family of nettles is globally widespread and its affection for the human activity is a well known phenomenon.

²⁴⁴ First the cropmarks persistence in the steppe environment has to be examined on some comparative samples of current and already detected ancient settlement context. Question of the viability of such plants and the factors for their remaining in one place are to be answered before setting a vegetation model; that should say whether such methods might be useful only for paleobotanical analyses or for current surface prospection either.



To understand the settling models would be very helpful to set a schema of current situation emphasizing the historically significant regions; such a map supplemented by another philological, ethnological, paleobotanical and other analyses might become an analytical settlement matrix, that could help to decipher the principles of ancient settlement net and to predict their concentration points.

Nomadic centres – sedentary points

The real cities or stable centres of the nomadic empire are also known although less frequent. They occur from time to time since the Hsiung-nu period, but the most important and largest ones in Mongolian territory are the Uyghur fortress Kharabalgasun (Ordu-Baliq, 8th-9th century AD) and later Genghis Khan's capital Karakorum (12th century AD), both situated in the Valley of Orkhon. While the Karakorum fell victim to construction of the Erdene-dzuu,²⁴⁵ the oldest Buddhist temple precinct beside its southern side (*Эрдэнэ-Зүү хууд*, 16th century AD), the Kharabalgasun still dominates the Orkhon steppe some 30 km northwards. But its main part, the massive fortress of dried bricks with gates and inner department clearly visible from afar, is just a central part of huge settlement, taking approximately 40 km². The background

²⁴⁵ Karakorum, located behind the northern gate of Erdene-dzuu, occupies a flat area approximately 2 km², densely covered by cropmarks. All aboveground structures had been recycled and used in the construction of the neighbouring monastery as is still visible on its walls.

4.1.2. Funeral context in the steppe

In principle we could say, that the archaeology of nomadic areas is mainly based on survey of funeral sites, which meet the parameters of sunken features and closed context together, and moreover they can be clearly detected in the terrain by simple visual prospecting, what is actually very specific.²⁴⁸ That means that our informational source is very limited and except the burials we can rely on the study of inscriptions and historical sources only when examining the ancient cultures.

In the case of Turkic memorials in Mongolia however the situation is even more delicate. As the Eastern Turks in Mongolia²⁴⁹ practiced mostly cremation, we are not able to reconstruct the funeral rites and the function of memorials themselves based on archaeological research only. Surface activities (ceremonials) are hardly detected, but one must assume some as the cult of ancestors plays a very important role in the nomadic culture and mentality even today. This spiritual factor causes many obstacles but on the other hand opens a wide space for constructive comparisons in ethno-cultural terms. The role of strong traditionalism in nomadic society is eminent for understanding the history. Comparing the situation in European historical context, we observe the prehistoric cultures although as an integral part but still only a part of our history; as separate and closed chapters. But for the nomadic society is the ancestral cult a very wide and vivid term which actively embraces different ethnics and groups.²⁵⁰ Such an approach might reflect even in some aspects of archaeological context.

²⁴⁸ Compare to our Middle-European environment (or any heavily urbanized area, typical for settled civilizations), that is densely inhabited and continually disturbed by numerous industrial interventions, the Mongolian steppe scarcely meets a railway or other industrial subject. Network of infrastructure is sparse, urbanisation is not expansive and so the monuments in the steppe are mostly threatened just by the ravages of time and grazing herds.

²⁴⁹ Unlike the other Western Turkic cultures (Altai, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan) where the skeleton graves often with horse burials are usual.

²⁵⁰ For example in Czech Republic we feel strictly bound to a Slavic history which can be directly related to our nationality; Slavs are our forefathers, ancestors, but the older tribes and cultures inhabiting our territory before the „Slavic break“ are perceived as historical episodes with no direct link to our current status, although some relationship might be considered (for example the Celtic element etc). Different view of history in the steppe area might be caused due to a wide variety of ethnic composition and continual tribal rivalry that is typical for the formation of nomadic society. This unstable environment fundamentally changes the understanding of question of national or ethnic identity.

“Famous Ancestors Syndrome”

This nomadic phenomenon might be illustrated on the example of Kül-Tegin monument in Orkhon, which historical context is very well known thanks to inscriptions – and mainly thanks to inscriptions in fact. The block of stone in the westernmost side of the monument was intended as a sacrificial place, where offerings were thrown into its central opening – obviously for ages. During the Jisl’s excavation in 1958 there were many consequential layers detected and excavated inside the central opening and under the stone that covers a long period from the Turkic until the recent times. The sacrificial stone was then cleaned and moved to its present position, but within the next fifty years the stone opening was again filled up with money and other offerings.²⁵¹ That means that this monument is perceived as a sacred place of ancestral cult, worshipped more or less continually from Turkic times to modern days.²⁵² Thus its archaeological context had never been closed and the place is vivid.

Such cultural coherence in the nomadic environment is by no means unusual. Nomadic society does not place too much emphasis on ethnicity in terms of historical perspective; considering the complexity of ethno-cultural processes in the steppe from prehistory to medieval periods there is large variability not only within each tribal confederation or state system but also at the primal level of individual tribes or families.²⁵³ The name of each federation is usually derived from the most significant and therefore ruling tribes or families. Historical value of each federation is measured by success and achieved respect on the international political scene and thus later nations always point to their famous predecessors as ancestors and thereby legitimize their inherited right to rule.²⁵⁴ Therefore Mongols like to derive their origin from Turks and Huns, Turks refer to Huns etc.²⁵⁵ Understanding such a

²⁵¹ Describing the state in 2007/8 during my visit on the site.

²⁵² The current Mongolian breeders bring offerings to monuments of Turkic kagans because they understand the place as an altar of forefathers, undistinguishing their ethnicity to the Mongol or Turkic; for them it is just an ancient strong spiritual place, belonging to their ancestors. Another interesting case of such a continuity can be observed in the Altai region, where are some sacred places (caves, springs) with a long-term tradition of worshipping, some of them supposedly known from the Bronze Age.

²⁵³ The so called ethnicity might be changed according to external circumstances even during the history of one family dan as it turns out on the basis of current research of Ha Mingzong (Mongolistic Studies, Faculty of Arts, Charles University), who is studying the history of his own family dan, presenting results in his bachelor thesis (Ha M.; *Orální historie mogghulského rodu Ha*, 2010).

²⁵⁴ A nice example of intentional continuity might be represented by the foundation of the Mongolian capital of Karakorum in Orkhon valley. Genghis Khan, the ruler and unifier of Mongolian tribes, had established his city (1220 AD), the symbol of Mongolian Great Empire, in the Valley of Orkhon, the centre of earlier steppe empires (Turk, Uyghur) to legalize his right to govern. This act was in fact a „cross-branding“ of traditional ancient ruling territory, which raised him to the heir of the imperial power.

²⁵⁵ Mongolian nation does not consist only of Mongolian ethnics as well as the Turks were not only the Turkic tribes and the confederation of Huns consisted of many tribes whose ethnicity is still not reliably determined, though

multicultural or multiethnic tolerance in spiritual level is simply the natural result of continual blending of cultural influences, so typical for the steppe areas. From time to time the uniform appearance of some organized structures is rather to be understood as a political and economic unity formed by many social factors more than a pattern of ethnic affiliations. Hence these ancestral worship places or sacred sites are the public cultural heritage in the very sense of it.²⁵⁶

“Funeral affiliation”

That was just one aspect of some distinguished places of funeral character, demonstrating an interesting excursion into nomadic mentality - on the other hand the steppe is full of common burials and monuments without special cultural overlaps and regular ceremonies. Basic typology and chronology is mostly known though not seamless, especially regarding the issue of Turkic monuments. There are many types of Turkic monuments or burials in the territory of Central Asia with certain regional differences and specific features; their comparison deserves its own comprehensive study. But basically the archaeological remains of the Old Turks in Southern Siberia are represented by burials with horses and appropriate categories of inventory, memorial structures (stone fences) often accompanied by sculptures and images of mountain goat of Churuktug-Kyrlan type.²⁵⁷ According to D.G. Savinov all these features form the specific "Turkic triad".²⁵⁸ Petroglyphic drawings of warriors and runic inscriptions

continually examined by philologists and ethnologists together. It is nothing unusual in fact; such a multi-ethnic appearance can be observed also in the previous Saka-Scythian cultural complex of Eurasia in the Iron Age period. On the other hand we can not exclude the real relative links among these ethnics either.

²⁵⁶ This conclusion implies an interesting philosophical question with religionistic connotations, namely why the European area despite the same long-term cultural development lacks such an „old-fashioned“ traditions, let's call them „active historical memories“. Absence of ancient places or customs might be caused due to massive Christianization in Early Middle Ages that had denied all pagan traditions and cults, inherited from the prehistoric cultures. This breaking extraction from ancient cultural ties formed a new development of society towards the centralization, uniformity and also consumerism of current time. Weakening of traditions and values might be one of its aspects (comparing the current environment of settled and nomadic societies - see in another chapter). This view might be supported by cultural models in some remote areas (for example Lapland, Latvia, Bretagne, Ireland ..) where the ancient heritage is still a full part of contemporary culture; due to strong traditionalism, nationalism or another interacting social factors that resisted the religious and political pressure. In these regions we still can trace some ancient reflections (for example the *Latviešu Tautas Dziesmas*, Latvian traditional songs and rhymes mostly sharing the pre-Christian themes and legends, some of them said to be of Bronze Age origin).

²⁵⁷ Images of mountain goat were named by A.D. Grach as images of the Churuktug-Kyrlan type after the place of their first discovery in Tuva (1961). Their classic form is represented by the marks on stelae of the Turkic monuments in Orkhon (Nesterov, 1995)

²⁵⁸ D.G. Savinov, 1984.

may also be attributed to the figurative record.²⁵⁹ The most of current classifications is usually based on more or less regional observations with some wider overlaps. Due to the still insufficient number of systematic researches (though hundreds of sites had been excavated already) and lack of published files is very problematic to set a complex typological preview of Turkic monuments, which is essential for asking further questions. If we consider the term *Turkic* as rather a heterogeneous entity including a wide variety of Turkic and non-Turkic tribes in the vast area stretching from the Bolshoi Hingan to the Volga River, then the polyethnic composition of Turkic society (supported on the basis of written sources) poses one of the biggest problems in the cultural identification of each site. Especially the localization of individual tribes and their archaeological identification is extremely complicated. Clarification of the interrelations between ethnicity and local funeral customs, necessary for understanding the inner structure of Turkic society, can be however observed just in terms of archaeological context. Whether the funeral affiliation can reflect the ethnic nuances and self identification of each tribe or family – and how to identify the ethnicity itself – is a question that requires a complex comprehensive study of archaeological data, touching the contemporary ethnological research as well.²⁶⁰ Regarding this issue is necessary to take into account the psychosocial processes of interaction of Turkic tribes on the acculturation background within one state unit (the khaganate) - i.e. which cultural aspects are more or less dominant in frame of each ethnic unit.²⁶¹ In brief, if the model of tribal concentration under “*one flag*” takes place rather in form of integration (when old traditions are mixed with the new ones), or assimilation (if rather new is accepted at the expense of old customs), or separation (if old customs are kept and the new establishment has only superficial political and economical status). Perhaps such integration might be individual, depending on various circumstances, but one should not lose sight of these possible influences on the material culture, caused by political or kinship relations. Nevertheless the funeral rites and customs can be understood to some extent as true reflection of cultural affiliation,²⁶² based not on observation of archaeological context but on the study of contemporary ethnic patterns that

²⁵⁹ S.P. Nesterov, 1995.

²⁶⁰ Summarizing the Turkic monuments into a database according to the regional and chronological classification and its confrontation with the current ethno-regional database and map of migrations in frame of the selected territory might then help us to set up a model of a nomadic social system and regularities of its cultural and tribal interrelations.

²⁶¹ Such a dominant feature can be traced for example in the burial ceremony preserved in the Altai and Tuva till the 20th century, when an animal carcass was placed into grave. This custom directly follows up on the tradition of the Altaian and Tuvian burials with horses of the Turkic Middle Ages (Nesterov, 2005)

²⁶² As defined in the current sense of cultural belonging of each group

indicate a real and conscious self-identification of tribes or clans with certain cultural and ethnic identity. Although this might be variable, as shows the Ha Mingzong story mentioned above (chapter Legends in the mirror of history), indicating that the question of possible funeral affiliation of ancient cultures should not – and must not - be examined without parallel ethno-linguistic studies of contemporary cultures and their own perception of cultural competence.

4.1.3. Notes on pottery

As it was already outlined in one of the above chapters, pottery is one of the essential issues of nomadic context. Pottery finds are compared to sedentary societies quite rare or even missing. Frequent absence of dating materials causes many problems also in frame of funeral context, which are often robbed due to its easy detection in the terrain. Thus the archaeology is often reliant on organic materials which perhaps dominated in the original inventory, but not always maintain.

Kül-Tegin monument provides some thirty pieces of pottery what represents a nice collection compared to another nomadic funeral sites. On the other hand it is not really much compared to common sedentary context for example in European sites that usually provide hundreds of pottery fragments. Such disproportion may be of course affected by insufficient number of excavated nomadic settlement but nevertheless this fact indicates some cultural specifics.

While in the European settlement area we are accustomed to associate certain types of pottery with certain cultural groups and territorial definition, the Turkic environment is facing more or less the same type of pottery as in later Uyghur period. The Turkic pottery is neither much respecting the territory nor potential (and supposed) ethnicity what indicates that pottery in nomadic environment perhaps plays slightly different role than in the sedentary communities. The reason might be even technological; pottery is quite a fragile ware which is not really practical for nomadic way of life, for herdsman and horsemen. From the funeral contexts we know that vessels were mostly produced of metal or wood. Pottery production also requires adequate technological background (furnaces, clay sources) and maybe even for these reasons did not become a common ware with an aspect of cultural identity. However, this is mere hypothesis requiring detailed cultural-anthropological and ethnographical study. The pottery in nomadic milieu has clearly different predictive value and thus the usual criteria should be applied very carefully.

The corner stone of this thesis became the archive materials of the First Czechoslovak-Mongolian expedition and excavation of the Kül-Tegin monument in Khöshöö Tsaidam, led by PhDr. Lumír Jisl in 1958. Beside the preliminary report and some important articles the main results of the excavation had never been carried out comprehensively due to Jisl's premature departure. The long-term need to disclose these results to the international scholarly public, who have been dealing with this topic and awaiting the outputs for already fifty years, was the main motivation to enclose this unique and unfinished Czech project. Khöshöö Tsaidam monuments in the Orkhon Valley take an extraordinary position in the historical, archaeological and philological investigations for last hundred years and each piece of knowledge is a major contribution to solving of the Turkic historical context. Namely the intensive prospection and research of the Orkhon Valley in last twenty years, carried by joint Mongol-German and Mongol-Turkish expeditions, requires comparative materials to reconstruct and interpret the current issues.

Primary goal of this thesis was therefore to gather the old documentation from 1958 kept in the archive of the Institute of Archaeology CAS in Prague, provide its scanning, ordination and translation into English. This part is included in the chapters 8 and 9 (Jisl's report translation, photodocumentation, plans and lists of findings). Another important part was the elaboration of finds from 1958 stored in the depositories of Institute of Archaeology MAS and in the National Museum of Mongolian History in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. These materials were refound, arranged, drawn and photodocumented within my journeys to Mongolia and its evidence is included in chapter 7 (catalogues). Although not all materials were available to me and some of them are even missing today (see the lists), the confrontation with the Jisl's old photodocumentation helped me to reconstruct the most part of the original collection from 1958. Interpretation of some finds and original archaeological situations is sometimes difficult without seeing them in their original context nevertheless I believe that they present very valuable comparative material especially after the reasearch of identical Bilgä-Khan's monument in Khöshöö Tsaidam. All these elaborated materials are gathered in the attachments of II. Part.

The first part of this thesis, represented by the main text, is fully based on the elaboration and interpretation of the materials of part II. and should complete the historical, political and ethnocultural context of the excavated site. As L. Jisl already largely described the basic problems of the Second Eastern Turkic Khaganate in his thesis (partly published in Annals of the Náprstek Museum Praha, 1997 by J. Šíma and V. Jislová), I have dealt with the general topics, as the history, politics, social-economic system etc..only briefly, and rather focused on some partial issues in the light of current stage of research and actual questions solved by contemporary Turkological studies.

Understanding of the unique historical aspect of the Kül-Tegin monument would not be possible without large introduction and specification of the Orkhon Valley region that played a significant role in early medieval nomadic state-forming processes, indicated also by the emergence of the eminent and very first nomadic cities of Uyghur Kharabalgasun and Mongolian Karakorum in the vicinity of Khöshöö Tsaidam. Chapter 2.1 – 2.6 is therefore focused on the historical development, environment and also to the current research of this region that should not be neglected in considering the archaeological context of Khöshöö Tsaidam. The site is to be understood not as an individual and separate object of study but rather as an integral part of deep and long lasting ethno-cultural processes in the Orkhon Valley region that should be carefully regarded.

In the course of my work I deal in detail with several important questions connected to the finds, context and original situation from 1958. Some of them were already opened in 1958 (see the Jisl's report and its short resume in chapter 2.5.), namely the issue of the missing burial in the monument solved in **chapter 3.5** or the extraordinary mixture of Turkic-Chinese construction features that reflect many interesting aspects of the inner and foreign politics of the Turkic Khaganate outlined in **chapter 3.4**. In the present work these questions are viewed in the broader context, therefore some chapters reach far beyond the scope of the archaeological competence. Namely the large excursion into the problem of ethnogenesis and formation of the Turkic groups from the point of view of current linguistic studies in **chapter 3.3** helps to illustrate the complexity of the Turkic ethno-cultural development and is necessary to understand the processes that formed the divergence of Turkic cultures and their archaeological manifestations in general context. I postulate the working term of "*Altaic*

cultural matrix” to point out to the eminent role of this territory in ethno-forming and state-forming processes, although not fully clarified yet. I argue that some common cultural features as rich burials with horses, iron manufacturing or art manifestations point towards some common cultural development and continuity despite the heterogenous ethnic character of populations. In this I also point out the importance of legends related to the origins of the Turks and Altai region and their interesting artificial synchronization of “local” and “foreign” features implanted into their state ideology, declaring their divine origin and sovereignty power of the ruling Ashina clan of the Göktürk dynasty (**chapter 3.3.4.**). Although these inner ethno-cultural mechanisms are not fully understood, I have attempted to show how they illustrate the complex ethnic and historical events in this area, observable also in the diversity of the funeral rites. Parallels of this legendary legitimization of the sovereignty of certain clan or ethnic group appear also in other historical periods (Hsiung-nu federation, Mongol Empire). They represent an interesting phenomenon of nomadic state forming factors that should be on my opinion seriously regarded when interpreting the archaeological contexts aswell as the term of ethnic identity that might be strongly misleading in the nomadic environment.

These considerations were used to form the initial framework for some serious questions on Turkic funeral rite (**chapter 3.5**) that represent one of the most difficult issues of contemporary Turkology. L. Jisl already came across the problem when dealing with the absence of Kül-Tegin burial in Khöshöö Tsaidam. Despite the Chinese and Byzantine descriptions of Turkic funeral ceremonies we face to inability to detect the cremation rite in terrain and interpret the context properly. Another big problem is also the considerable diversity of Turkic funeral rites from the skeleton burial mounds with horses dominating in Altai and Western territories to their more “architectonical” counterparts in form of monuments or memorials with stone fences and perhaps cremations, prevailing in Mongolia. Except the unclear context itself we are facing one of the most burning questions of the ethnic affiliation of these types. Due to the significant and confusing ethnic heterogeneity of Turkic Khaganate it is hardly distinguishable between territorial or tribal specifics that could affect the archaeological situation. Before any complex typology and database of Turkic mounds and memorials comprising the large territories of Mongolia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tuva and adjacent Russian areas is carried out it is hard to suggest any interpretation. While being aware of the mentioned problems I still attempt to outline some possible guidances based on

the Mongolian territory and sources that were available to me. I have focused on the Kül-Tegin monument (and Khöshöö Tsaidam) as the only firm and historically identified point declared by the inscriptions and other written sources. Following the previous ethno-cultural considerations about very possible and perhaps not only artificial connection between the Ashina and Göktürks, I pointed towards the high concentration of the monuments in Central Mongolia, the core of the Khaganate, and also the remarkable appearance of the first cremation stone fences in the 5th/6th centuries in Altai that might correspond to the appearance of new elements in Altai and at the same time the beginnings of the early Turkic state formation. The Ashina and the Göktürks, their relationship to the “Altaic cultural matrix”, the status and affiliations of the memorials and interpretation concerning funeral rites – these are matters of further considerations and future research. While the common aspects and differences found in this complex may have some interpretational value, it seems problematic to conceive them within any framework of an “ethnic identity”, as has been frequently done. Using the inspiring example of Ha Mingzong’s work based on family chronicles and oral history of a Mongghul clan, I have also shown how funeral rites may differ even within one family. (**chapter 3.5.7.**).

Last chapters of the thesis are devoted to the predictive value of some materials and especially pottery (**chapter 3.6.**) that represents a nice collection although not numerous. Due to the lack of comparative material from the Turkic Khaganate territory I had to focus only on the recent and current finds in the Orkhon Valley. I took over the Jisl’s term of “Orkhon vases” that I still found suitable for describing of the type. The most interesting problem of the interpretation is the fact that this type of pottery appears both in Turkic and Uyghur Khaganate contexts what indicate the same composition of the population, which is not surprising. On the other hand it disables to detect the activities in the Khöshöö Tsaidam monuments and the character of their social role after the decay of the Göktürk Khaganate. Another interesting aspect to be considered is the existence of pottery and building material manufactures that indicate existence of some stabile settled background. This indicia together with the sudden emergence of advanced nomadic capital of Kharabalgasun few years later on my opinion indicate the possibility of existence of some earlier stabile seat in the close vicinity of Khöshöö Tsaidam (and perhaps under the ruins of Kharabalgasun), already within the Göktürk period although not detected.

Regarding the excavation context of Kül-Tegin monument and dealing with the problems associated with the material analyses, I also came to some serious questions concerning the basics of fieldwork methodology and attitudes of archaeological research in general, discussed in **chapter 4**. Our traditional (European) view is based on the long-term developing process applied on the European milieu represented by the settled societies, which are determining our studies and ideas about particular aspects of the historical and cultural development..²⁶³ From this point of view we are facing to a different space and different cultural model in the steppe, given by the character of natural conditions, historical context, socio-economic factors etc. Interaction of these had fatal impact not only on material culture itself and its archaeological expressions (the main subject of our observations) but also on the formation of mind and mentality of the human beings, the real cultural “groundswell” or matrix, which in fact plays the main role in “writing” the history although often underestimated. The Orkhon Turkic monuments may and should serve as the example of the confrontation and clash of the deep differences between the sedentary and nomadic worlds, and feature the problems of research approaches shaped on the sedentary societies, and the subsequent effort to grasp nomadic history and interpret its regularities through the prism of archaeological and historical “dogmas”. Their confrontation leads us to re-examine some of the traditional “western” dogmas, which – applied on the environment of the nomadic culture in the steppe- turn out to be invalid or not fully valid in its original sense any more.

As the outlined issues above show, the archaeological context in nomadic environment has its own specifics and regularities which require different methodological approaches than common and well-known sedentary context. Especially essential today is the cooperation among the humanities and natural sciences which have a lot to say to the issue. The actual archaeology works in the steppe with a very limited supply of information whose interpretation is possible only on the basis of wide ethnographical, ethnolinguistic, cultural-anthropological, historical and paleobotanical analyses. Intensive interdisciplinary cooperation might have a crucial contribution not only to the research of Khöshöö Tsaidam and Turkic Khaganate environment, but it represents one of the major challenges of the current research of nomadic cultures in general. On the other hand it is necessary to say that

²⁶³ Author of this thesis is regarding the problematics from the position of representant of „western view“ of archaeology as being the disciple of Middle-European school. From this point of view , rather subjective, is tending to open the dialogue and also questions, that she found as basical when applying the western methods on the steppe environment.

Khōshōō Tsaidam monuments represent an unique informational source and still untapped scientific potential due to its funeral and settlement background which requires further large investigation. Deep multudisciplinar study of the monuments could undoubtedly help to clarify many current and long-term opened turkological issues and represents a huge challenge of further research.

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