NINE NOTES ON THE TES INSCRIPTION

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In the summer of 1976, the epigraphical group of the Joint Soviet-Mongolian expedition of History and Culture, headed by S. G. Klyashtorny, S. Kharjaubai and A. Ochir, found a monument piece covered with inscriptions in Turkic runic script in the valley of the upper reaches of the Tes River (Tesin gol) belonging to the Khöwsöögöl Aimak of the Mongolian People’s Republic. The stone, a red rectangular granit block, is the lower part of a larger monument. The monument piece is 86 cm. high. The width of the piece is 32 cm. on the two wider sides, and 22 cm. on the narrower sides. Four sides of the piece are covered with inscriptions. There are 6 lines on the wider sides, and 5 lines on the narrower sides, but two lines of the inscription are completely lost. The length of the surviving text is about 76 cm. The lines are separated from one another by engraved channels. The height of the engraved runic letters is about 3.5-4 cm. The letters are engraved in the same manner as those of the Terkh (Tariat) and Shine Usu inscriptions, i.e., their shapes are almost identical. In the lower part of one of the narrower sides there is a tamga resembling the tamgas found in the Terkh and Shine Usu inscriptions.1

The Tes inscription was first published by S. Kharjaubai.2 Kharjaubai’s article contains a handmade copy of the runic text, its transcriptions in the Latin and Cyrillic scripts, and the translations of the text into Kazakh, Classical Mongolian, Khalkha and Russian.

The Tes inscription was secondly published by the late Mongolian scholar M. Shinekhüü.3 Shinekhüü’s article contains a handmade copy of

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the runic text, a transcription in the Latin script and a translation of the text into Khalkha.

The most recent publication of the Tes inscription has been accomplished by S. G. Klyashtorny. Klyashtorny’s article contains an excellent handmade copy of the inscription, a Latin transcription and an English translation of the runic text. It also contains photographs of the four sides of the monument piece and a survey of the Uigur history.

There is no doubt that the best of these three editions of the Tes inscription is the one carried out by the well-known Soviet scholar S. G. Klyashtorny. First of all, Klyashtorny renders the runic text in four parts, each corresponding to the one side of the monument piece. Secondly, he reads the lines in the right order, i.e., from the bottom to the top. Thirdly, he identifies the sides of the monument in terms of the four directions and puts them into the order of West-North-East-South.

In spite of all these merits, however, it cannot be said that Klyashtorny’s text is coherent throughout and makes more sense than the two previous texts as far as certain passages are concerned. As a matter of fact, the author himself is aware of the weakness of some of his readings and interpretations, for at the end of his paper he states that “The present publication contains only a most preliminary explanation of the reading and translation of the Tes inscription.” He also states that “the possibility of a different decipherment and understanding of certain passages of the text are evident for the author of this paper. It is hoped that in a later and more detailed study, he will be able to give a satisfactory solution to many problems now under discussion.” (p. 155).

While waiting for a better edition of the Tes inscription promised by Klyashtorny, in this paper, I would like to make some suggestions as to the readings and interpretations of certain words and passages which, I believe, are not very convincing and satisfactory. Let it be stated beforehand that my aim is not to criticize anyone, especially my dear colleague and friend Klyashtorny. My sole aim is to offer some help, if any, to a better edition of this extremely fragmentary inscription.

1. Line 7 (North 1): bʰkʰü uʰr unchecked rm’s “They were wise and great Qaghans.”

The first word is spelled ČKw in Kharjaubai’s and Shinekhüü’s texts. In spite of this spelling, however, they both read it ĉik! Kharjaubai takes it to be a title (p. 124) and Shinekhüü regards it as the ethnic name ĉik (p. 41). These readings and interpretations cannot be accepted, for a word like ČKw can only be read čok, čük or (ă)čük.

According to Klyashtorny, the first letter is not Ĉ, but B2. He reads this b(ü)kü and translates it as “wise”. But the letter group B2Kw cannot be read b(ü)kü, because the runic sign Kw at the end of a word represents the sound group ŏk or ūk (Clauson’s türkü is a misreading for tüürkü!). Besides, Old Turkic word for “wise” is not bükü, but bügu or bögü (cf. Mongolian böge, Khalkha böö “shaman”).

If Klyashtorny’s reading is correct, the letter group B2Kw can be read in three different ways: bök, bük and (ă)bük. Consequently, I can think of the following possibilities for the interpretation of this word:

1) It is an adjective meaning “high, exalted, sublime” and should be read bök; cf. Mahmud of Kashgar bök “the protuberance or elevation on the side of an anklebone (Clauson erroneously bög), Kirgiz Turkish bök “hill, height, elevation”, etc.

2) It is an adverb meaning “certainly, surely” and should be read bük (cf. Yakut Turkish bük “absolutely, certainly”).

A third possibility would be to read it bök(ă), but the final vowel is not there.

I prefer the first alternative and incline to read the sentence as follows: bök ul(u)γ q[(a)γ (a)n (ă)rm(i)s] “They were high and great kagans”.

2. Line 8 (North 2): b’n ‘li üč yüz yil ‘l tutmiš “For three hundred years they ruled over many (lit.thousand) eks.”

Klyashtorny’s b(i)n “thousand” cannot be accepted, for a sentence like bin eli üč yüz yil el tutmiš is a grammatical. It is obvious that here the word is going on the reign of an early Uigur kagan whose dynasty ruled about three hundred years. The second word of the sentence, i.e., (e)li (el + 3. p. possessive suffix -i) also suggests that the preceding word is (a)n(i)n “his”. As a matter of fact, Shinekhüü’s text has N’N (aniñ) for Klyashtorny’s B’N (p. 38). The runic sign B’ as used in this inscription resembles the sign N’. It seems that Klyashtorny took the letter N’ here for B’.
Consequently, the sentence should be read and understood as follows: 

\((a)n(i)n \ (e)l\ \overset{\text{üç}}{\text{yüz}}\ \overset{\text{yıl}}{\text{yıl}}\ (e)l\ \overset{\text{tutm(i)ş}}{\text{tutm}}\) “His state lasted three hundred years”.

3. Line 9 (North 3): 

\(\overset{\text{buzuq}}{\text{büşin}}\ \overset{\text{q’za}}{\text{üç}}\ \overset{\text{kül}}{\text{kül}}\ \overset{\text{üç}}{\text{kül}}\ \overset{\text{m(i)ş}}{\text{m}}\) “Revolted by the instigations of the leaders of the Buzuq (their people?) perished, because of the incitements of the petty Kül and of the Distinguished Two.”

Both the reading and interpretation of this line are unsatisfactory. In the first place, the third word cannot be read \(q(i)za\), for the narrow back vowel \(I\) is not written. Secondly, the word \(tükä\) cannot be regarded as a gerund of the verb \(tüka\), because the verbal stem itself has this shape.

I read the letter group \(K\overset{\text{Z}}{\overset{\text{A}}{\text{a}}}(a)q(i)za\) and regard it as a gerund in \(-a\), for after a phrase like \(boz\ \overset{\text{öq}}{\text{b(a)şin}}\ “the leader of the Boz-Ok (people)”\) (acc.) we need a transitive verb. Thus, \(boz\ \overset{\text{öq}}{\text{b(a)şin}}\ (a)q(i)za\ “having let the leader of the Boz-Oks raid ...” makes better sense.

Secondly, I read the last two words \(töka\ \overset{\text{b(a)r(m(i)ş)}}{\text{b(a)r}}\ “poured out”, for \(tükä\ cannot be a gerund of the verb \(tüka\” “to perish”.

Thirdly, the last letter of Klyashtorny’s ‘\(k\)i looks like \(A\) rather than \(I\) in the photograph. If it is really \(A\), we may then read the letter group \(K\overset{\text{W}}{\overset{\text{L}}{\overset{\text{K}}{\overset{\text{A}}{\text{a}}}}}\) as \(kööl-kä\ and translate it as “into the lake”.

Depending on the above discussion, I offer the following reading and interpretation: 

\(boz\ \overset{\text{öq}}{\text{b(a)şin}}\ (a)q(i)za\ \overset{\text{uç(u)z}}{\text{uç}}\ \overset{\text{kööl-ka}}{\text{kööl}}\ (a)\overset{\text{ř(i)n}}{\text{ř}}\ \overset{\text{töka}}{\text{töka}}\ \overset{\text{b(a)r}}{\text{b(a)r}}\ [m(i)ş]\ “Having let the leader of the Boz-Oks raid, (he/they) poured (the enemy’s) cavalry into the Lake Uchuz.”

In connection with this, it should be reminded that a passage similar to this occurs in the Terkh (Tariat) inscription: ... \(bod(\overset{\text{u}n}{\text{u})n} \overset{\text{K}}{\overset{\text{f}}{\text{Z}}}(a)rm(i)ş\ \overset{\text{uç}}{\text{uç}}\ ... \overset{\text{K}}{\text{f}}\overset{\text{I}}{\text{(a)ř(i)n}}\ \overset{\text{T}}{\text{T}}\overset{\text{K}}{\text{m}}\overset{\text{A}}{\text{A}}\overset{\text{b(a)rm(i)ş}}{\text{b(a)rm}}\) (East 2). In my articles dealing with the Terkh (Tariat) inscription I interpreted the letter groups \(K\overset{\text{Z}}{\overset{\text{A}}{\text{a}}}\) and \(T\overset{\text{K}}{\text{m}}\overset{\text{A}}{\text{A}}\) differently. Now, I believe that \(K\overset{\text{Z}}{\overset{\text{A}}{\text{a}}}\ should be read \(a)q(i)za\ “having raid” and \(T\overset{\text{K}}{\text{m}}\overset{\text{A}}{\text{A}}\ should be read and interpreted as \(tökät “having poured out”. I also believe that the lacuna between \(uç\) and \(K\overset{\text{I}}{\text{f}}\) could be filled and corrected to read \(uç(u)z\ \overset{\text{kööl}}{\text{kööl}}\ “into the Lake Uchuz”. This correction depends of course on the assumption that the final \(I\) is a misreading for \(A\).

4. Line 10 (North 4): \(ol\ \overset{\text{bod}}{\text{bod}}\overset{\text{n}}{\text{m}}\ \overset{\text{kēn}}{\text{kēn}}\ \overset{\text{kēršdi}}{\text{kēršdi}}\ “That people of mine widely quarreled with each other.”
Klyashtorny who translates the word k(a)n as “widely” here, interprets it as “enmity, hatred, ill will” in the “Notes” section of his article (p. 154, note to Line 10). He gets this meaning from Kononov’s Grammatika Jazyka Tjurtskich Runičeskich Pamjatnikov VII-IX vv, Leningrad 1980, p.182. Let it be said right away that this information is wrong. In Turkic, the word meaning “enmity, hatred” is not kän, but kak (cf. Clauson, G., An Etymological Dictionary of Pre-Thirteenth Century Turkish, Oxford 1972, p. 707: Mahmud of Kashgar kek “hatred, malice”, Komanisches Wörterbuch kek “hatred”, Kirgiz Turkish, Kazak Turkish etc. kek id.). Kononov subtracted this kän from the verb kensūr- or kinśūr- occurring in Kül Tigin, East 6. I myself read this word kinsūr- and translated it as “to create a rift between” (A Grammar of Orkhon Turkic, p. 350). But I did not derive this verb from kän “hatred, enmity”; I drove it from the adjective kūn “wide”. Today I believe that it was a mistake. The verb in question should be read kiksūr- and understood as the causative stem of kik-i-荪- “to incite one another” (cf. Mahmud of Kashgar kikčūr- “to incite one against another”; cf. Clauson, G., op. cit, p. 714).

The final letter of Klyashtorny’s k(a)r(i)sdi is read not I, but A by Kharjaubai and Shinekhüü. If their reading is correct, we could read the letter group K<sup>N</sup>K<sup>R</sup>S<sup>D</sup>A as k(ā)r(ā)sđä and interpret it as the locative form of känkārās. This känkārās could be a slightly different form of the tribal (or geographical?) name kānkarās occurring in the Kül Tigin inscription: (a)n<sup>a</sup> kisra q(a)ra türĝ(i)s bod(u)n y(a)yi bolm(i)s, k(ā)r(ā)s t(a)pa b(a)rđi (East 39).

This word is generally regarded as an ethnic name, i.e., the name of an ancient Turkic tribe (cf. Thomsen, Inscriptions de l’Orkhon dechiffree, p. 110; Radloff, Alttürkische Inschriften der Mongolei. 1897, p. 170). In my Orkhon Turkic grammar I took it to be a geographical name. The occurrence of the word with the locative suffix here may testify to my assumption. Kānkarās or Känkārās must be the name of a place in the Altai region, close to the border separating the realms of the Türgish and the Uigurs.

5. Line 11 (North 5): [ōn]rā ḫbyeṭqa qizā ūnm’s “Earlier, they rose against the Tabghach, but they were annihilated.”

This reading is not very satisfactory, for the verb qiz- has never possessed a meaning like “to rise”. Besides, the letter group K<sup>1</sup>Ż cannot be read qiz(a), for all final vowels are written in the runic script.
For Klyashtorny’s $K'$ $Z'$ $S'$ $N'$ $M'$ $S'$ Shinekhüü and Kharjaubai have $B'$ $Z'$ $L'$ $N'$ $M'$ $S'$, i.e., $b(a)z(l)z(a)n(i)m(i)s$ “subjugated” which makes a better meaning. It is obvious that Klyashtorny took the letter $B'$ for $K'$ and the letter $L'$ for $S'$.

The verb bazlan- “to be subject, be subjugated” occurs for the first time in an Old Turkic text. It is a regular derivative derived from the adjective baz “dependent” which occurs several times in the Orkhon inscriptions: $b(a)z$ qil- “to subjugate”, $b(a)z$ q(a)y(a)n “the dependent kagan, vassal kagan”. The adjective baz also occurs in Uigur in the expression $tuz$ baz qil- “to pacify.”

Thus the sentence should be corrected to read: [$o'n$ $r(a) l(a)b(y)a$ $e$ $k(a)z(l)z(a)n(i)m(i)s$ “The Uigur kagan) was first subjugated to China.”

6. Line 13 (East 2): $qgamma ... 'kt (?) 'rmis $ntad $q(a)n $od $k'an 'qgamma 'rm $is “The Qaghan ... were two (?). Then Öd Känč became the Qaghan.”

The word $(a)n$ $tad(a)n$ “then” is rather strange here, for such a word is attested nowhere in Turkic.

Secondly, $od$ $k(a)n$ $q(a)y(a)n$ $(e)rm(i)s$ cannot be understood as “Öd Känč became kagan”, because Old Turkich $ar$- means “to be”, not “to become”.

Klyashtorny believes that ®d $k(a)n$ is the name of an Uigur kagan. According to him, this ℄d $k(a)n$ could be identical with İdî Känč, i.e., Bögü kagan’s name before his enthronment (p. 155). He also states that Öd Känč could be the original form of the name T‘é-chien which occurs in Chinese sources as the name of the first ruler of the second empire of the Uigurs (ibid.).

Let it be known that none of these identification is satisfactory. İdî = ®d, and ®d känč = T‘é-chien are impossible.

I would like to suggest an entirely different reading and interpretation. The letter group $NTAD'N$ could be read $(a)nta$ (a)d(i)n “other than that, besides, furthermore”. As for the letter group $WDK2$ NÇ, I read it $ödk(ü)n$ and interpret it as “false, fake”. The word $ödk(ü)n$ is a derivative of the verb $ödkün$- “to imitate”. The verb has not so far been attested in the Old Turkic texts, but $ödkün$ does occur in Karakhanid Turkic. It occurs twice in Qutadgu Bilîg (couplets 874 and 877). Arat read this word with $t$ and $g$, i.e., $ötgün$, and Clauson followed Arat (Clauson,G., An Etym-
ological Dictionary of Pre-Thirteenth Century Turkish, Oxford 1972, p. 52). Arat’s reading should be corrected as ötkünç and this should be regarded as a secondary form going back to an original ödkünç (cf. Ottoman Turkish, Chagatay Turkish öykün- “to imitate”, Türkmen Turkish öykün- id., Anatolian dialect öykün- id.). The form ötkünç in Qutadgu Bilig and Mahmud of Kashgar are due to the assimilation of syllable final d to the following k. Shor, Sagay öktän- and Teleut öktön- are metathetical forms. So is Chagatay Turkish öktän-. Yakut Turkish ütügün- goes back regularly to an earlier ödkün-.

Thus, I believe that what we have here is a phrase like ödk(ü)nç q(a)y(a)n “false kagan, fake kagan”. This phrase probably refers to Tay Bilgä Tutuk, the elder son or a close relative of Kül Bilgä Khan, who was appointed yabgu by him before his death in 746/747 and fought against Moyun Čor for the Uigur throne. Bearing the title of yabgu, Tay Bilgä Tutuk probably proclaimed himself kagan in 747. Consequently, there were two kagan in the Uigur realm and a civil war began. Thus, the whole line reads, in my opinion, as follows: ... q(a)y(a)n ... (e)ki (a)rm(i)s (a)nq(a)y(a)n (a)rm(i)s “... thus there were two kagans ...

Furthermore, (one of them) was a fake kagan”.

7. Line 16 (East 4): q(ay)n umlgüs’n üc(ü)n "my Qaghan for the (glory) of his sign (campaigned) ..." This phrase does not make sense. For Klyashtorny’s letter group B2L2G2WS2N2, Shinekhüü has B2L2G2AS2N2, i.e., b(i)lgas(i)n “for his being wise” which is more meaningful and logical. I believe that Shinekhüü’s reading the runic text is correct and what we have here actually is b(i)lgas(i)n üc(ü)n “for his being wise”. This type of expression is quite common in the inscriptions: ilteris kayan bīlgasin ućun alpin ućun ... “İlteris kagan for his being wise and brave” (Tunyukuk II, South 4-5), [b]īlgasin ućun alpin erdemim ućun “for his being wise, brave and virtuous ...” (Küli Čor, West 7), etc.

8. Line 17 (East 5): ... [b]ol qiyya b’ši olw(å)l)m’s “Praising him they let him sit (on the throne) as the head (of the el). ...” This reading and interpretation cannot be accepted for the following reasons:

1) The spelling of the initial a- in aya is unusual;
2) *aya* cannot be taken as a gerund in -a, because the verbal stem itself is *aya-*;

3) Old Turkic *aya-* does not mean “to praise”, but “to show respect, to honor”;

4) A noun modifying the word *b(a)ši* “its head” is lacking;

5) Klyashtorny’s *qi'iy* is meaningless; *the only qi'iy* I know means “animal dung”.

For Klyashtorny’s [b]ol *qi'iy* both Kharjaubai and Shinekhüü have *yoll(u)y*, a word more probable and suitable than [b]ol *qi'iy*. The name *yolluy* also occurs in the Terkh (Tariat) inscription: *yol(lu)y q(a)y(a)n ol(u)rm(i)s* (East 1). *Yolluy* mentioned in these two inscriptions is undoubtedly the name of an early Uigur kagan.

Klyashtorny’s *AYA* is read *II'S* by Kharjaubai and Shinekhüü. They both read it *iyasi*. Kharjaubai translates *yolluy iyasi* as “the successors of Yollug” (p. 123) and Shinekhüü takes it to be *iya* “owner, master” having the 3rd p. possessive suffix -si! (p. 41). The interpretations cannot be accepted for obvious reasons. In my opinion, what we have here is actually *AYA*, i.e., *iya*, the gerundial form of the verb *iy*- “to suppress”.

Finally, Klyashtorny’s *B'S'I* (bašš) is spelled *B'S'P*, i.e., *b(a)s(i)p* in Kharjaubai’s and Shinekhüü’s texts. This reading seems to be more probable than Klyashtorny’s *b(a)ši* “its head”. As is known, the verb *iy-* is generally used together with the verb *bas-* “to suppress”, forming a verbal binary with it: *törttin siňar yir orunuy iyşi basmiš* (Altun Taruk, p. 607: 14), *tinişlar öpkä nizvanlarin iya basa umadin og* (Türkische Turfan-Texte II, p. 17), *ayiy qilinčiý tosun yawlaq muyya tinliyliariy iyyar basar* (Türkische Turfan-Texte VI, p. 254), *iyin- basinc- “to be suppressed, subjugated”, iyinč basinc- “oppression, suppression”, etc. (the forms with *i* in Drevneturkskıy Slovar’, Leningrad 1969, should be corrected).

In the light of above discussion, I strongly believe that the letter group in question is either *B'S'P* (basıp) or *B'S'A* (basa). Thus, the sentence should be corrected to read as follows: ... *yoll(u)y iyà b(a)s(i)p* (or, *basa* ol(u)rm(i)s)*“Yollug (kagan) reigned suppressing (all his subjects)’’.

9. Line 19 (South 2): ... *zi'q qş's' şor'ç yənşiti “...he settled in Qasar Qorugh”*. 
Klyashtorny interprets q(a)s(a)r qoor(u)y as the name of Böyük kagan's western camp (p. 155). According to him it corresponds, in all probability, to Qasar Qordan in the Shine Usu inscription (ibid.). This is possible. But what is Qordan? A place name? This is rather doubtful. Here, I would like to remind that the late Sir Gerard Clauson read this word kurn:di:n and translated the phrase q(a)s(a)r qur(i)d(i)n as "to the west of Kasar" (Clauson, G., op. cit., p. 645). I prefer this reading and interpretation to Klyashtorny's Qasar Qordan. Thus, the whole sentence in the Shine Usu inscription reads, in my opinion, as follows: ... [t](å)z b(a)sî (a)nţa q(a)s(a)r qur(i)d(i)n orgyin (a)nţa it(i)td(i)m cît (a)nţa lòqîtd(i)m y(a)y (a)nţa y(a)ył(a)d(i)m "I had (my) throne erected there, at the head of the Tez (River), to the west of Kasar, and I had a stockade driven into the earth there, and I spent the summer there." (East 8).

Now, I think the passage in the Tes inscription narrates the same event with the same words but from the mouth of the third person, with the exception that we have, in the Tes inscription, t(å)z(i)g "the Tez" (acc.) instead of t(å)z b(a)sî, and qur(i)y "the west" instead of qur(i)d(i)n. Thus, I believe that the whole sentence in the Tes inscription reads as follows: ... [t](å)z(i)g q(a)s(a)r qur(i)y qoontı cît tikdi orgyin y(a)r(a)tdi y(a)ył(a)dı "... he settled down in Tez, west of Kasar, erected the stockade, built the throne and spent the summer (there)."
Fig. 5