

Sources of Pre-Islamic Turkish History

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Abstract: There are not too many sources about the historical events of the periods before the adoption of Islam of the Turks. Given the thousands years of the Turkish history, the fact that adequate written and archeological materials have not been left may be criticized. However, it may be understood if the role played by the Turks in the formation of a crucial stage of history is taken into consideration. Even though the number of the written sources left by the Turks, who achieved dominance in many geographical regions from Asia to Europe, is not high it is possible to shed light on the pre-Islamic history of the Turks thanks to the obtained archeological materials, oral sources and the information given by the people they were connected. In this study, we shall try to introduce Orkhon Inscriptions, which are the most significant written sources of the Turks, after giving brief information about the oral sources, archeological materials and written sources of the Turkish history.

All scientific studies on history should be based on a source. Sources may be defined as materials of any kind providing us with information about historical events or we may call any data guiding and aiding scientists to write out historical events as sources. Sources of the Turkish history are evaluated under three titles: Oral Sources, Archeological Materials, Written Sources.

A- Oral Sources: It is widely known that in the political and social life of the Turks there are many oral sanctions which are not written yet agreed. The body of oral laws which we may call usage at the present day and the Turks called “Töre” (*traditional law*) is the most important of oral sources. As a matter of fact, it is much more appropriate to regard Töre as the basic establishment of the political philosophy, mentality and lifestyle of the Turks rather than just a body of laws. Coming into existence as result of a process based on centuries, Töre is an essential element, the irresistible law, the constitution that should be abided by and a body of sanctions and senses keeping national reflexes alive of the community life. For the Turks, the primary practices of Khagans are to protect and glorify the state and Töre (*traditional law*). Thus, it is possible to find tens of examples in Orkhon Inscriptions in this regard:

a- “My ancestors Bumin Khan and İstemi Khan dominated over the humankind. Following this dominance, they maintained and arranged the state and Töre (made usage dominant)”. (Kül Tigin, East, 1)

b- “My uncle khagan dominated over that Töre” (Kül Tigin, East, 16).

c- “...created and brought up in accordance with my ancestors’ Töre..” (Bilge Khagan, East, 12) (Ergin, 1988a).

As is seen, for the Turks Töre is considerably alive and has a significant value of source for a historian as it enters into all realms of life.

In addition, epics and legends which maintain their liveliness for centuries constitute another part of oral sources. They have spread over different geographies by being talked about. In Chinese sources, stories in which the adolescence and fights of Mo-Tun are told are the materials having the characteristics of the first epic of the Turkish history. Since his father does not announce Mo-tun (B.C. 209-174) as the successor of the throne, he revolts against his father together with the soldiers under his command. He kills his father and takes the throne of Hun Empire (A. Onat, S. Orsoy- K. Ercilasun, 2004, p. 6).

Epics about the creation and reproduction of the Turkic people provide historians with information having essential value of source. Epics may be defined as a total of heroic stories of nations, a kind of national history (Gömeç, 2009, p. 26), the most important source of motivation in indoctrinating rising generations with the idea of loyalty to their origins and a significant element in the increase of pride and esteem against other nations. Being the literary reflections of the steppe culture, these epics and legends are the best oral sources which tell the claim of Turkic nation their place in history, their fights against the enemies and their struggles for life and existence in the best way. Numerous tragic and pleasant events have been experienced during the travel in the historical scene of the Turks, who have a special place among the deep-rooted nations. As a result of the fact that these events developed in the form of story and were talked about, several epics came into existence. It is possible to list these basic epics which are among the important oral sources of the Turkish history without going into particulars as follows:

1- *Epic of Creation (Yaradılış Destanı)*: The subject is the creation of the world, sources of good and evil and the order of the world. This epic was edited among Altay Turks by W. Radloff in the 19th century. (Ögel, 1993, p. 451)

2- *Alp Er Tonga Epic*: According to Mahmud al- Qashqari, writer of “Divan ü Lûgat-it Türk” (“Diwan Lughat at-Türk”) and Yusuf Has Hajib, writer of “Kutadgu Bilig”, “Alp Er Tunga” is the great and legendry Turan emperor of the Iranian epic “Şehname” (“Shahnameh”) named Efrasiyab (“Afrasiyab”). There are three different versions of the epic. (Gömeç, 2009, p. 247).

3- *Oghuz Epic*: Oghuz Epic took form around the life of Hun emperor Mo-tun, who reigned between 209 and 174 B.C.. (Togan, 1981, p. 68). Oghuz Epic has very different versions. Besides, narratives which have the characteristics of an epic are encountered in the works of numerous authors under the title of “Oghuz-Nâme”.

4- *Ergenekon Epic*: The variance identified in Chinese sources is known as “Bozkurt” and the variance identified in History of the Turks (Şecere-i Türk) by Abu'l-Ghazi Bahadır Khan is known as “Ergenekon”. The epic is named after Ergenekon, which is a sacred place surrounded by impassable mountains and where the Turks lived and reproduced for centuries by ploughing, hunting and processing mine. Ergenekon Epic was written out by a Mongolian historian named Rachid-al Din for the first time in the 13th century. The epic has five different versions.

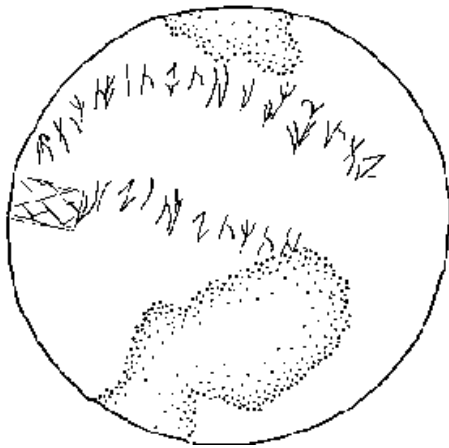
5- *Reproduction and Migration Epic of the Uyghur (Türeyiş ve Göç Destanı)*: Two epic parts were identified named Reproduction and Migration of the Uyghur. The part called Reproduction exists in Chinese sources and the part called Migration exists both in Chinese and Iranian sources.

6- *Şu Epic*: Telling the life and experiences of a Turkic emperor called Şu, who lived in 400 B.C, and being combined with the march of Alexander the Great of Macedon to the Turkic countries, this epic lived among the Turks until the 11th century and recorded by Kaşgarlı Mahmud (Mahmud al- Qashqari) in that century.

7- *Epic of Manas*: Epic of Manas, which came into existence among Kyrgyz Turks, still endures with all its vividness within Kazak-Kyrgyz Turkic cultural circle. This epic is thought to have been formed between 11th and 12th centuries. The hero of the epic named Manas is regarded as a hero struggling for spreading Islam like Satuk Bugra Khan in the Islamic version of Oghuz Epic.

8- *Dede Korkut Stories*: Dede Qorqut Epic comprises of twelve stories. It is possible to find information about numerous Turkic tribes in these stories as well as the traces of Oghuz people. In this regard, it is stated that the formation of the epic coincides with the period when the Turks mostly came to the west. The epic is thought to have been written out in late 16th century. (Ergin, 1988b, p. 12).

B- *Archeological Materials*: Archeological materials are the base of the material cultures left by tribes. It is of essential to indicate primarily balbals (kurgan steales), inscriptions, tombs, burial vaults and tombstones, cooking utensils, guns, coins and clothes among those remnants. Thanks to these materials, social, cultural and financial life and military powers and materials of societies are understood much more easily. Additionally, it is possible to determine the development, activities, migrations, cultural backgrounds and civilizations of societies. As is known, the Turks had to emigrate from their native lands to the west for some reasons. Due to these emigrations, the archeological materials remaining from the Turks extend over a large area from Baikal Lake to Danube Basin. The number of archeological excavations has increased especially as of the 19th century in parallel with the increase of the interest in the characteristics of the Turkic people and the states they established. As a result, very rich materials belonging to the Turks have been brought to light rapidly. (Mangaltepe, 2008, p. 121). The inscription on a pot which takes the first written source of the Turks back to a period before Christ is the most significant source of the Turkish history. The most valuable historical document in terms of the Turkish history and civilization is an inscription comprising of two lines and 26 letters on a pot broken in half which is stated to belong to 5th-4th B.C (Kafesoğlu, 2003, p. 337) and was found in the tomb of a Turk Tigin (son of a sovereign or prince) (Donuk, 1988, p. 48) in Kazakhstan in 1969. This inscription is a treasure that sheds light on and guides the Turkish historical science, language and culture and takes the written history of the Turks to 25 centuries back. In this tomb, which has not been identified in terms of the Tigin yet, famous golden garments were found and thus these findings were recorded as “Golden Man” in the scientific world. The most ancient Turkic inscriptions which had been known until that day were the inscriptions on Yenisey and Orkhon inscriptions yet these date fourteen centuries back from our days. This inscription on the document says “*Tigin died at the age of 23, May the life of Esik people be spared*”.



Esik Inscription



Picture of Khagan and Hatun on a coin

It is possible to list the archeological materials obtained from excavations and are of essential in terms of the Turkish history, culture and civilization as follows:

1. Casual dresses, military uniforms
2. Coins: may be called as the most important archeological material.
3. Ornaments: mirror, comb, earrings, hairpin, belt, necklace
4. Fighting tools: Arrow heads, spear, sword, knife, axe, mace
5. Harnesses, bridle, stirrup
6. Cooking utensils
7. Tamga (stamps)
8. Small structures: sacred stones, sculptures.

C- Written Sources:

a- Library Materials: Until the 19th century, Chinese almanacs, Byzantine sources, Travel Books and the works written by Arabian and Mongolian historians in the 12th and 13th centuries were used as sources for the Turkish history in the scientific world. Information in Chinese sources made use of in the Turkish history writing are placed under the chapters titled “Turks” of the almanacs called Shih-Chih, Han-Shu, Hou-Han-Shu, San-kuo-chih, Chin-Shu, Sung-Shu, Nan-Ch’i-Shu, Liang-Shu, Ch’en-Shu, Wei-Shu, Pei-Ch’i-Shu, Chou-Shu, Nan-Shih, Pei-Shih, Sui-Shu, Chiu T’ang-Shu, Hsin T’ang-Shu (there are 26 Dynasty Histories). Almanacs are divided into different chapters: Emperor Almanacs, Noble Families, Chronological Tables, Scientific Tracks and Biographies. The most important and detailed information about the Turks are in “Biographies” sections of the almanacs (Taşağıl, 1996, p. 116).



Chinese Almanac

There are many Byzantine sources giving information about the Turks. Of these sources, the ones giving the most important and detailed information are as follows: Priskos (Ahmetbeyoğlu, 2001, p.1), Jordanes,

Ammianus Marcellinus, Eunapios, Olympiodoros, Zosimos (İplikçioğlu, 1997, p. 446) Prokopios, Ioannes Malalas, Agathias, Paschale Chronicle Menandros, Euagrios, Flavius Corripus, Maurice-Strategicon, Theophylact Simocatta, Sergios, Georgios Pisides, Theodoros Synkellos, Theophannes, Nikephoros, Konstantin Porphyrogennetos, Anna Komnena, Niketos Akominotos and Ioannes Kantakuzenos.

As indicated before, the Turks established states in different geographies and contacted with different nations. Thus, it is very natural that they are mentioned in the works of those states. Furthermore, Arabic and Islamic sources which are the elements of a different geography and speak of the Turks should be mentioned as well. Geographical works and other sources evaluated under the name of Islamic sources are as follows: İbn Havkal, El-İstahrî, İbn Hurdazbih, El-Ya'kûbî, İbn Fakîh, İbn Rûsteh (Yörük, 2004) İbn Kesir, Makdisî, İdrisî, Gerdizî, Mesudî, Kazvîni and Birûnî (Şeşen, 1998) are the most significant authors.

Russian almanacs comprise a part of written sources. Of these almanacs where quite detailed information about the period between the 9th and 13th centuries of the Turkish history may be found thanks to the studies carried out especially recently, it is possible to list the ones where particularly the Turks are the subjects as follows: Povesti Vremennih Let (Story of Previous Years), İpatiyevskaya Letopis (İpatyev Almanac), Lavrentiyevskaya Letopis (Lavrentev Almanac), Radzivilovskaya Letopis (Radzivilov Almanac), Troitskaya Letopis (Troits Almanac), Voskresenskaya Letopis (Voskresen Almanac), Nikonovskaya Letopis (Nikonov Almanac), Novgorodskoye Pervoye Letopis Sinodalny Spisok (1st Novgorod Almanac Sinodal Version), Novgorodskoye Pervoye Letopis Komissionny Spisok (1st Novgorod Almanac Commission Version) and Novgorodskoye Pervoye Letopis Akademiçeski Spisok (1st Novgorod Almanac Academy Version) (Uydu-Yücel, 2007).

Eastern and Western travelers stopped by the Turkic states during their travels. Having mentioned the things they saw, experienced and learned among the Turks in their works, authors made significant observations on the Turkish social, military and economical structure. These works are of essential in consequence of being the impressions written out by a person from a different culture and community. Giving information about the Turkic communities, Chinese Hsüan Tsang Travel Book, Wang Yen-Te Travel Book, İbn Fazlan Travel Book, Plano Carpini Travel Book, William Rubruck Travel Book, Marco Polo Travel Book, İbn Batuta Travel Book and Ruy Gonzales de Clavijo Travel Book have gone down in history as the most crucial ones of these works.

The fact that the Turks, who had a steppe culture, gradually adopted a sedentary life and established cities after Gokturk Empire brought along important changes and developments in the social life. Furthermore, the Turks started to write large-volume works by making significant contributions to educational activities and science as a natural result of this process which accelerated upon the adoption of Islam. It is seen that two important works which are as valuable as a treasure for the Turkish history were created in this period.

1) Yusuf Has Hajib - Kutadgu Bilig

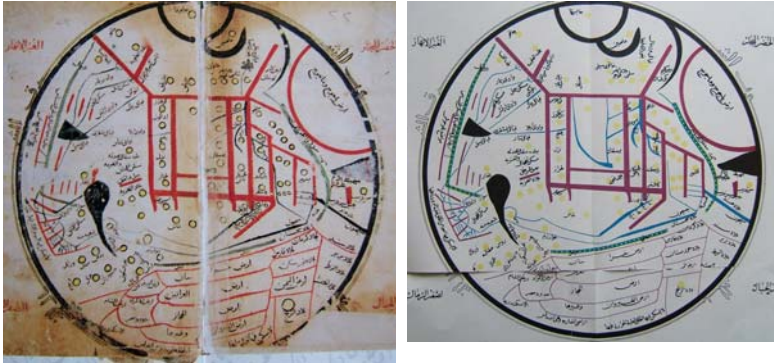
The work named Kutadgu Bilig written by Yusuf Has Hajib is the leading of the most important works created in this period. The famous work of Yusuf Has Hâjib written between 1069 and 1070 is a political treatise which can be ignored neither by the history of the Turkic Culture nor by the Turkic Language and Literature in the Islamic period. The word “Kutadgu” was formed by adding the infix “+ad-” making verbs from names and then the suffix “-gu” making names from verbs to the word “*kut*” which means “*happiness, bliss*” and together with “*bilig*”, *Kutadgu Bilig* it means “*the wisdom/science which brings happiness, bliss*”. The entire work comprises of 6645 couplets. Apart from those couplets, there is a poem of 77 couplets added to the book later on. This poetic prologue provides information about the work itself and its author. Consisting of 88 sections in this manner, the work includes 173 quatrains (Yusuf Has Hacip, 1994). Has Hajip chose the form of dialogue in the text section of the work. It added both a different characteristic and a theatrical style to the work. For the purpose of expressing his ideas and thoughts, the author wrote his work as a discussion or stage writing with dialogues among four important people. The names and roles of the said four people are as follows:

- 1- Kün-Toğdı: He is the sovereign and represents justice and law.
- 2- Ay-Toldı: He is the vizier and represents happiness and state.
- 3- Ögdülmiş: He is the son of the vizier and represents wisdom and knowledge.
- 4- Odgurmış: He is the devotee and a relative of the vizier and speaks of conviction and fate.

Kutadgu Bilig is a significant work giving information about the general knowledge, religious and world views and social lives of the Turkic intellectuals in the period of Karakhanids State, including such true and realistic ideas and advices that most of them are applicable even today and being exemplary in all respects. Yusuf Has Hajib identified most of the social and political problems of his time and offered prescriptions for the solution of these problems in his book.

2) Kaşgarlı Mahmud (Mahmud al- Qashqari) - Divanü Lûgat-İt Türk (Diwan Lughat at-Turk)

Having been written in the 466th year of the emigration (1072-1073), Divanü Lughat-it Türk (Diwan Lughat at-Turk) is a significant source of information with respect to the Turkic language, culture, civilization and art. The work was written for the purpose of demonstrating the greatness of the Turkic nation and teaching the Turkic language to Arabic people. It is a work where the Turkic words are listed in accordance with Arabic principles and their meanings are explained. It is a kind of Turkic-Arabic dictionary. The manuscript version comprises of 638 pages and includes quite detailed Arabic explanations of approximately 9000 Turkic words. Additionally, it contains information interspersed in the text and a brief introduction about the history, geographical spread, tribes, dialects and lifestyles of the Turks (Kaşgarlı Mahmud, 1998). The work is not only a dictionary but also a grammar book indicating the language properties and throwing light upon the morphology and phonology of the Turkic language in the 11th century and a source of personal names, tribe names and place names. Furthermore, it is an encyclopedic work containing rich information about the Turkish history, geography, mythology, folklore and literature as well as giving information about the medical and therapeutic methods of that time.



Map drawn by Mahmud al- Qashqari

b- Inscriptions: There is no doubt that inscriptions are the most significant cultural richness and sources left by the Turks as written sources. Until two centuries ago, the Turkish history had generally been written based on the information acquired from foreign sources. However, a new leaf was turned over for the Turkish history in the 17th century and the scientific world was informed about the inscriptions. There are not many sources for the Turkish history before Christ. Yet the cultural stages identified provide us with an idea about those periods. It is possible to point out the remnants taken out of the tomb of the above mentioned “Golden Man” as the first written source for Hun period in spite of the fact that they are not in the form of an inscription. In addition, it is witnessed that wide range of materials were left especially in Gokturk period. The unearthing of the inscriptions having Gokturk letters which Cüveyni (Djuvaini) reported for the first time in the 13th century is a landmark (Ergin, 1988a, p.11). Being an orientalist and an envoy of Romanian origin and known as Nikolay Gavriloviç Mileski Spafariy, Nicolaie Milescu was sent by the Russian Tsar Aleksi Mihayloviç to China as an envoy and saw and described the stone inscriptions in the canyons of Yenisei River in the summer months of 1675. Later on, in his Siberian Cartography published in 1697, S.U. Remezov made use of the said information and informed the Swedish scientists about Yenisei inscriptions thanks to his writing called “Runic Stones in Russia”. In 1721 and 1722, D.G. Messerschmidt and P.J.T. Strahlenberg found out new inscriptions on the shores of Uybat, Erba and Tes rivers in Yenisei. On the other hand, new inscriptions were unearthed by P.S. Pallas in Uybat in 1793. In 1818, G.I. Spasskiy published the pictures of Yenisei inscriptions (Öztürk, 1996, p. 15). N.A Kostrov discovered Açura inscription in 1857 in Koybal steppe on the left shore of Abakan; E.F. Korçakov discovered Altın Köl inscriptions in 1878 on the shore of Golden Lake on the right side of Abakan; A.V. Adrianov discovered Kaya Uçı inscription in 1879. A museum was established in Minusinsk city as a result of the discovery of several ancient works in the vicinity of Yenisey River and its tributaries. Finnish Archeology Association charged O.H. Appelgren in 1887 and J.R. Aspelin in 1888 with transcribing those stones. Aspelin published the results of these researches in 1889 under the title of “Yenisei Inscriptions”. In the course of the studies on Yenisei Inscriptions, N.M. Yadrintsev who was sent to Mongolia in 1889 in order to carry out researches in the name of Russian Geography Association unearthed Köl Tigin and Bilge Khan Inscriptions in the vicinity of Koço-Tsaydam Lake and the shore of Orkhon River, 60 km from Karakum and Kara Balgasun Ruins and 400 km to Urga (Ulan-Bator). Then Fin-Ogur Association sent a committee under the presidency of A.O. Heikel to Koço-Tsaydam region in 1890 and had the inscriptions transcribed (O, Sertkaya- C. Alyılmaz- T. Battulga, 2001).

O. Donner presented the album including the pictures and tablet copies of Köl Tigin and Bilge Khan Inscriptions prepared by Fin-Ogur Association in 1892 in London (Thomsen, 1993, p. 1). Upon these

developments, Petersburg Academy of Sciences sent a committee under the presidency of Radloff to Orkhon region in 1891. Radloff published the information obtained in series. After the stones located in Orkhon had been published in Finnish and Russian cartographies and it had been understood from the Chinese texts of these stones that these inscriptions belonged to Turkic Khans and Tigin, experts started to compete for deciphering the alphabet on the inscriptions. The deciphering of the inscriptions was accomplished for the first time by Danish V. Thomsen (1842-1927) who thought that the texts were in Turkish (Thomsen, 1993). It is stated that Thomsen deciphered the inscriptions within one hour on November 25, 1893. Thomsen sent to Radloff a letter stating that he had managed to read the inscriptions and the solutions. Having deciphered 11 letters of Gokturk alphabet, Radloff succeeded in reading the texts with the help of the alphabet sent by Thomsen and published his famous work in 1895. V. Thomsen published his translations in 1896 under the title of Orkhon Inscriptions. This study is much more valuable than the work of Radloff due to the fact that Thomsen introduced his work containing a more accurate translation of the texts together with highly valuable explanatory notes.

New inscriptions were found in the course of these studies. While examining the flora of Northern Mongolia, botanist N.Z. Klements discovered Tonyukuk inscriptions in Bain-Tsokto region which is 66 km from Ulan-Bator. Radloff prepared a preliminary report on Tonyukuk inscriptions in 1898 and published the transcriptions and translations of the inscriptions in 1899. Radloff became a guide who read, translated and prepared the dictionaries and grammars of a total of 56 inscriptions, namely 40 Yenisei inscriptions, 10 Hoytu Tamir inscriptions and 6 inscriptions in Mongolia (Köl Tigin, Bilge Khan, Ongin, İhe Aşete, İhe Hanin Nur and Tonyukuk) between 1894 and 1899 and evaluated new inscriptions from different aspects. (O, Sertkaya- C. Alyılmaz-T. Battulga, 2001)

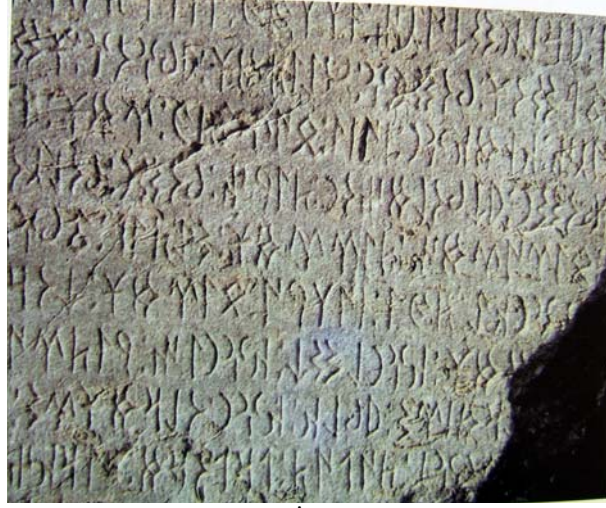
On the other hand, the first study on the texts with Gokturk letters was carried out by Şemseddin Sami who made use of the work of Thomsen in Turkey yet it was not published. In his publication called "The Most Ancient Turkic Writing" comprising of 35 pages, Necib Asım (Yazuksuz) who was a lecturer of "History of Turkish Language" in İstanbul Darülfünun (University) introduced Gokturk letters in 1897. Furthermore, N. Asım published his work "Orkhon Inscriptions" in 1925. Later on, valuable studies were performed on Orkhon and Yenisei Inscriptions by Ragıp Hulusi Özdem, then in 1990s by Nihal Atsız and Hüseyin Namık Orkun. Recently, Osman Nedim Tuna, Talat Tekin, Muharrem Ergin, Osman Fikri Sertkaya and Cengiz Alyılmaz have published new works on the inscriptions.

Of the inscriptions discovered during the studies that have been conducted over the last centuries and created especially in Gokturk, Uygur and Turgesh periods, important ones are as follows. Bilge Khan Inscription, Köl Tigin Inscription, Tonyukuk Inscription, Ongin Inscription, Köl-İç Çor Inscription, Bugut Inscription, Çoyr Inscription, Hoyd-Tamir Inscriptions, Aru-Han Inscription, Sevrey Inscription, Şine-Usu (Moyun Çor) Inscription, Taryat Inscription, Karabalgasun Inscriptions, Suci Inscription, A-çor Inscription, Altın Köl Inscription, Uybat Inscriptions, Nagy-Szent-Miklos Treasures of Pechenegs and inscriptions of Bulgarian Turks written in Ancient Greek. Of these inscriptions which are called by the Turks as Bengü Taş (Eternal Stone) (Öztürk, 1996, p. 20), let us introduce Bilge Khan, Kül Tigin and Tonyukuk Inscriptions which include the most comprehensive information and are known as Orkhon Inscriptions as well.

1- Köl Tigin Inscription: Located in Kocho Tsaydam region of Arhangay Aymag in Mongolia, Köl Tigin Inscription was erected in 732 by Bilge Khan upon the death of his younger brother Köl Tigin in 731. Being a part of the külliye (social complex) constructed in the memory of Köl Tigin, the inscription has a height of 331 cm and a width of (eastern and western façades) 138 cm and (southern and northern façades) 41 cm. Of the inscription having four façades, 40-line and 13-line Turkic texts in Gokturk letters appear in the eastern façade and southern and northern façades respectively (Alyılmaz, 2005, p. 9). In Köl Tigin Inscription, events belonging to Gokturk history are narrated by Bilge Khan and a message of unity and integration is conveyed. In the inscription, whose author is Bilge Khan, it is stated that the Chinese deceive people by means of presents and pleasant words and do evil and emphasized that people should get hip to such things. In the western façade of the inscription, the Chinese message which was sent by T'ang Emperor of that period due to the death of Köl Tigin speaks of the order of the universe, the esteemed personality of Köl Tigin and the importance of peace. In the western façade of the inscription, except for the Chinese writings, there are two lines in Gokturk letters added afterwards. The author of the eastern, northern and southern façades of the inscription is Yollug Tigin. The inscription includes expressions of Yollug Tigin (southern façade, 13th line). On the other hand, the western façade was inscribed by Çang Sengün (General Çang), nephew of T'ang Emperor Hiuan Tsong. In the mausoleum complex of Köl Tigin some parts of the inscription, tortoise base, altar stone human sculptures, ram sculptures, balbals (kurgan steales), floorings, tiles, bricks and clay pipes were found.



Köl Tigin Inscription



A Detail From Bilge Khagan Inscription

2- Bilge Khagan Inscription: It was erected by Tengri Khagan in 735 after the death of his father Bilge Khagan. It has considerable similarities with Köl Tigin Inscription in terms of shape, structure and content. Probably Bilge Khagan prepared the texts of the inscription to be erected in the memory of himself before his death. Placed on a tortoise base, the inscription is approximately 369 cm high and 126 cm wide and comprises of four façades. 41-line and 15-line Turkic texts in Gokturk letters were detected in the eastern façade and southern and northern façades of the inscription respectively (Alyılmaz, 2005, p. 103). In addition to a Chinese text in the western façade, a Turkic text was inscribed in verse in the middle of the upper section. Furthermore, there are texts in Gokturk letters in the south-eastern, south-western and western façades. The one narrating the events and giving advices is again Bilge Khagan. Events which occurred after the death of Köl Tigin were included to the inscription as well. The sections in Gokturk letters were inscribed by Yollug Tigin. There are expressions of Tengri Khagan and Yollug Tigin in the southern and south-western façades respectively. Four blocks of the inscription were taken under preservation in Store-Museum-Excavation House building constructed in Koçho Tsaydam region by the Presidency of Turkish Cooperation and Development Administration (TİKA).

Bilge Khagan gives essential advises which the next generations may make use of as well as historical warnings to the Turkic nation: “Turkish nation, if you dwell in Ötüken forest you shall have a state forever”. “Turkish nation; who may disturb your state order unless the sky falls down at the top and the earth is worn through at the bottom? Turkish nation; come to your senses, turn to your origin!”. “Here, I have inscribed that the Turkish nation shall be a powerful state if unified as well as that it shall die if not unified and integrated.” (Ergin, 1988a)

3- Bilge Tonyukuk Inscription: Bilge Tonyukuk inscriptions are located in Bayn Tsokto (Bayn Çokto) region of Mongolia. The reason why this inscription is mentioned under the title of Orkhon Inscriptions together with Köl Tigin and Bilge Khagan Inscriptions in spite of the fact that it is not in the vicinity of Orkhon River is that it belongs to the same period and consists of the same subject matters. Located in Bayn Tsokto region in the upper bed of Tola River and approximately 360 km from Köl Tigin and Bilge Khagan Inscriptions, Tonyukuk Inscriptions comprise of two inscriptions with four façades erected by the great vizier, commander and advisor of Second Gokturk Khaganate Bilge Tonyukuk himself before his death. The first inscription is 243 cm high and the second one is 217 cm high. 35-line and 27-line texts in Gokturk letters were inscribed in the first inscription and the second inscription respectively (Alyılmaz, 2005, p. 182). The exact date of the erection of the inscriptions is not known. Some researches state this date to be between 720 and 725 while others point out between 732 and 734. Just like Köl Tigin and Bilge Khagan Inscriptions, historical events belonging to Gokturk period are narrated by Tonyukuk himself in Bilge Tonyukuk Inscriptions. While conveying the historical events, Tonyukuk gives the messages of unity and integration; he highlights that the rulers achieve great successes if they have wise advisors and work in harmony with those advisors.

As the fact that the Turks are an ancient civilization has been realized recently, especially as of the 20th century, thousands of research works have been introduced on the Turkish history, culture and civilization. The leaders of these works have been the westerners yet the Turkic scientists succeeded in creating sources including more reliable and accurate information by making use of these works.

Conclusion

If the sources of Pre-Islamic Turkish history are examined as a whole, the contribution of Turkic people to the social life, institutionalization, military developments and moral values may be seen explicitly. Even though the inadequacy of these sources is emphasized from time to time, it is possible to trace the three thousand years' historical process of the Turks wholesomely thanks to the works, inscriptions and archeological materials discovered. However, as may be understood from the text, most of these sources are Turks, Byzantine and Arabic sources. Even if those works of foreign authors contain historical facts, they should be made use of carefully due to some partial, wrong and imperfect information from time to time. Data should not be accepted as exact information without their accuracy is proven and the most accurate and healthy information should be obtained by means of comparison. The Turks have not left several library materials except for one or two high-volume books and inscriptions. The majority of our sources are based on oral and archeological materials except for the inscriptions.

The most significant characteristic of the inscriptions, which have an immense source value for us, is that they are the first Turkic texts where the name of Turkic nation is mentioned. They are the most important information treasures and sources in the history left by the Turks. In the inscriptions, Khans make their self-criticism and emphasize the mutual duties of the state and the nation. Being the evidences for the existence of order, töre (law), civilization and culture of the state, the inscriptions are the biggest documentaries of the history of the Turkic Literature. Furthermore, they are valuable treasures owing to the contents which have the power of making a civilization out of a tribe and where the written language, rhetoric and style are excellent.

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