

An Interpretation of Two Personal Names in the Ninth Line of the Tonyukuk Inscription (Toñ S2)

PAVEL RYKIN

INSTITUTE FOR LINGUISTIC STUDIES, RUSSIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

and

NIKOLAI TELITSIN

ST. PETERSBURG STATE UNIVERSITY

The paper deals with the etymology of the personal names *Qunī Sāñün* and *Toñra Simä* appearing in the ninth line of the Old Turkic Tonyukuk inscription (ca. 716). These names are borne by the envoys sent by the kagan of the Tokuz Oghuz to the Chinese and Khitan, respectively, to conclude a military alliance against the Turks. Both names have the same structure, a combination of an ethnonym (*qun(i)* vs. *toñra*), referring to a tribal unit within the Tiele 鐵勒 confederation, and a title of Chinese origin (*sāñün* vs. *simä*). Based on a thorough analysis of historical and philological data, the authors try to establish possible ethnolinguistic grounds for the Tokuz Oghuz mission, which have so far eluded researchers of the inscription and can be fully restored only in the light of the latest discoveries in the history and philology of Inner Asia of the Old Turkic period, e.g., the decipherment of the famous Khüis Tolgoi inscription from Mongolia.

The Turkic tribes that formed the basis of nomadic polities, spread over a vast territory from the Caucasus to the Yellow Sea between the sixth and eighth centuries AD, left behind a great historical legacy that did not begin to be properly studied until the late nineteenth century. The starting point of this study may be taken as the discovery in 1889 of memorial inscriptions written in Old Turkic runiform script as well as Chinese characters, found by the Russian traveler and archaeologist Nikolai Yadrintsev in the Kosho-Tsaidam valley of the Orkhon river (Mongolia). An investigation of the Chinese texts of these inscriptions showed that they were erected in honor of Prince Kül Tegin (684–731) and his older brother Bilge Khagan (683–734), who was the ruler of the Second Turkic Khaganate from 716 to 734. The decipherment of the Old Turkic runiform script by Vilhelm Thomsen in 1893 opened the way to a systematic study of the history, culture, language, and literature of the people appearing in the inscriptions under the name *Türk* (𐰉𐰺𐰽𐰸 ~ 𐰉𐰺𐰽𐰸) or in the Chinese transcription of its plural (?) form *tujue* 突厥 (Early Middle Chinese *tʰwət/dwət-kjwət*, Late Middle Chinese *tʰut-kyat*¹ ? < *Türküt).

Authors' note: This is a revised version of a paper presented at the 61st Meeting of the Permanent International Altaistic Conference, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, August 26–September 4, 2018. We would like to thank Mihály Dobrovits and Dieter Maue for their useful comments on the conference paper. A special acknowledgment is due to three anonymous reviewers for their helpful work that greatly improved the manuscript. Any remaining errors and other shortcomings are entirely our own.

1. Early Middle Chinese (hereafter EMC) and Later Han Chinese (hereafter LH) character readings are given here according to Axel Schuessler, *Minimal Old Chinese and Later Han Chinese: A Companion to Grammata Serica Recensa*, ABC Chinese Dictionary Series (Honolulu: Univ. of Hawai'i Press, 2009). Late Middle Chinese (hereafter LMC) readings are quoted from Edwin G. Pulleyblank, *Lexicon of Reconstructed Pronunciation in Early Middle Chinese, Late Middle Chinese, and Early Mandarin* (Vancouver: Univ. of British Columbia Press, 1991).

In 1897 in Bain Tsokto in the Tuul River valley, 66 km southeast of Ulan Bator, Elizaveta Klements found another stele with runiform inscriptions similar to those already deciphered. In 1898 Wilhelm (Vasily) Radloff first translated the whole text of the monument, which made it clear that it was erected in honor of Tonyukuk (ca. 646–ca. 726), the chief minister and counselor of Kutlugh (d. 691), the founder of the Second Turkic Khaganate, who took the throne name and title Iterish Khagan, as well as of two successive rulers: Kapaghan Khagan (ca. 664–716) and the above-mentioned Bilge Khagan.

The text of the inscription is a first-person account by Tonyukuk himself, which allows us to specify the authorship and dating of the monument. The inscription seems to have been drawn up by Tonyukuk when he fell into disgrace after a coup d'état against Inel Khagan, Kapaghan's son, and Bilge Khagan's ascension to the throne. By its content the text may be considered a kind of an exculpatory document that describes the merits and military achievements of Tonyukuk in the formation and expansion of the khaganate.² In all likelihood it can be dated to between 716 and 719, as in 716 Inel Khagan and all his attendants were killed by Kül Tegin as a result of a short throne struggle. Eventually, according to the "rules of succession," the throne was occupied by Bilge Khagan, who sent Tonyukuk back "to his horde" (*zu seiner Horde*).³ Later, on an unknown date prior to 718, Tonyukuk was forgiven and reinstated in his former position of councillor.⁴ Besides, the inscription makes no mention of the merits of Tonyukuk in the struggle against the Basmils in 720.

The inscription contains a number of ethnic, personal, and geographical names that have so far not been given overall and systematic consideration.⁵ A list of these names is given in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Proper names in the Tonyukuk inscription

Original orthography	Transcription	Line number(s)
↓ ↓ 𐰇 𐰆 𐰅 𐰄 𐰃 𐰂 𐰁 𐰀	<i>bilgä toñukuk</i> ⁶	1, 5, 6, 15, 31, 34, 37, 47, 58, 59
𐰇 𐰆 𐰅 𐰄 𐰃 𐰂 𐰁 𐰀	<i>türk bod(u)n</i>	1, 3, 9, 17, 18, 22, 46, 54
𐰇 𐰆 𐰅 𐰄 𐰃 𐰂 𐰁 𐰀	<i>t(a)vg(a)č</i>	2, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 30, 49,
𐰇 𐰆 𐰅 𐰄 𐰃 𐰂 𐰁 𐰀	<i>türk s(i)r bod(u)n</i>	3, 11
𐰇 𐰆 𐰅 𐰄 𐰃 𐰂 𐰁 𐰀	<i>türük[?]s(i)r bod(u)n</i>	(60, 61, 62)
𐰇 𐰆 𐰅 𐰄 𐰃 𐰂 𐰁 𐰀	<i>(ä)lt(ä)riš k(a)g(a)n</i>	7, 48, 50, 54, 59, 61

2. Cf. Mihály Dobrovits, "Textological Structure and Political Message of the Old Turkic Runic Inscriptions," *Türk Dilleri Araştırmaları* 18 (2008): 149–53.

3. Liu Mau-tsai, *Die chinesischen Nachrichten zur Geschichte der Ost-Türken (T'u-Küe)*, 2 vols., Göttinger Asiatische Forschungen, vol. 10 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1958), vol. 1: 171, 223. Cf. Sergeĭ G. Klīashtornyi, *Drevnetürkские runicheskie pamiatniki kak istochnik po istorii Srednei Azii* (Moscow: Nauka, 1964), 37–38.

4. Liu Mau-tsai, *Die chinesischen Nachrichten*, 1: 223.

5. The most detailed investigation of these names has been provided by Volker Rybatzki, *Die Toñuquq-Inschrift*, *Studia uralo-altaica*, no. 40 (Szeged: Dept. of Altaic Studies, Univ. of Szeged, 1997), in an extensive commentary to his German translation of the text. See also Li Yong-Söng, "Zu QWRDNTA in der Tuñuquq-Inschrift," *Central Asiatic Journal* 47.2 (2003): 229–41; Erhan Aydın, "Tonyukuk Yazıtı'nda geçen ek tag üzerine," *Belleteri* 70 (257) (2006): 83–94; idem, "Bulçu yer adı üzerine notlar," *Turkish Studies* 5.1 (2010): 118–26. Cf. also Aydın's monographs dealing specifically with place names in Old Turkic inscriptions, *Eski Türk yer adları: Eski Türk yazıtlarına göre* (Konya: Kömen, 2012) and *Eski Türk yer adları* (Istanbul: Bilge Kültür Sanat, 2016).

6. Our system of transcription of Old Turkic runiform texts is based on the principles set out in Marcel Erdal, *A Grammar of Old Turkic*, *Handbook of Oriental Studies*, Sect. 8: Central Asia, vol. 3 (Leiden: Brill, 2004). In particular, the voiced labial stop [b] is considered by us, following Erdal (pp. 62–63, 65), to be an allophone of the phoneme /v/ that appears only in word onset position.

ᠬᠡᠳᠤᠨ ~ ᠬᠡᠳᠤᠨᠠ	<i>küt(a)n̄</i>	7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 49
ᠬᠣᠭᠤᠵᠢ	<i>og(u)z</i>	7, 8, 10, 12, 14, 15, 16, 22, 49
ᠲᠣᠬᠤᠵᠢᠨᠠᠨᠲᠤᠨ	<i>tok(u)z og(u)z bod(u)n</i>	9
ᠬᠤᠨᠢᠰᠠᠩᠭᠢᠨ	<i>kunī s(ä)ḡün</i>	9
ᠲᠣᠭᠢᠰᠢᠮᠠ	<i>toḡra s(i)m(ä)</i>	9
ᠲᠣᠭᠤᠳᠢᠨ	<i>kur(u)d(i)n</i> [?]	14
ᠲᠦᠷᠬᠤᠭᠠᠨ	<i>türk k(a)g(a)n</i>	18, 20
ᠲᠦᠷᠬᠤᠭᠠᠨᠠᠨ	<i>t(a)vg(a)č k(a)g(a)n</i>	19, 20
ᠣᠨᠠᠬᠤᠭᠠᠨᠢ	<i>on ok k(a)g(a)nī</i>	19
ᠬᠢᠷᠬᠢᠵᠢᠬᠤᠭᠠᠨ	<i>kīrk(i)z k̄üčl(i)g k(a)g(a)n</i>	20
ᠲᠦᠷᠭᠠᠰᠢᠬᠤᠭᠠᠨ	<i>türg(ä)š k(a)g(a)n</i>	21, 29, 30
ᠬᠢᠷᠬᠢᠵᠢ	<i>kīrk(i)z</i>	27, 29
ᠲᠣᠬᠤᠵᠢᠨᠠᠨᠲᠤᠨ	<i>kīrk(i)z bod(u)n</i>	28
ᠲᠦᠨᠠᠨᠠᠨ	<i>in(ä)l k(a)g(a)n</i>	31, 45
ᠲᠦᠨᠠᠷᠳᠤᠰᠢᠳᠤ	<i>t(a)rduš š(a)d</i>	31, 41
ᠪᠣᠭᠬᠤᠭᠠᠨ	<i>bög k(a)g(a)n</i>	34
ᠠᠯᠠᠮᠠᠨᠠᠷᠬᠤᠭᠠᠨ	<i>(a)pa t(a)rk(a)n</i>	34
ᠲᠦᠷᠭᠢᠨᠠᠨᠠᠨ	<i>t(ä)ḡri um(a)y</i>	38
ᠶᠳᠣᠬᠤᠵᠢᠨᠠᠨ	<i>īdok y(ä)r suv</i>	38
ᠣᠨᠠᠬᠤ	<i>on ok</i>	42, 43
ᠲᠦᠨᠰᠢᠬᠢᠵᠢ	<i>tensi oḡlī</i>	44, 47
ᠲᠦᠷᠵᠢᠬᠢ	<i>t(ä)zīk</i>	45
ᠲᠣᠬᠤᠵᠢ	<i>tok(u)r (?tokr(i))</i>	45
ᠰᠣᠬᠤ	<i>sok</i>	46
ᠲᠣᠬᠤᠵᠢᠨᠠᠨᠲᠤᠨ	<i>sogd(a)k bod(u)n</i>	46
ᠲᠦᠷᠬᠤᠭᠠᠨᠠᠨᠠᠨ	<i>türk b(ö)gü k(a)g(a)n</i>	50
ᠲᠦᠷᠬᠤᠭᠠᠨᠠᠨᠠᠨᠠᠨ	<i>türk bilgä k(a)g(a)n</i>	50, 58, 62
ᠬᠠᠯᠠᠮᠠᠨᠠᠨᠠᠨ	<i>k(a)p(a)g(a)n k(a)g(a)n</i>	51, 60
ᠲᠣᠬᠤᠵᠢᠨᠠᠨ	<i>og(u)z bod(u)n</i>	62

The examination of the above-mentioned proper names makes it clear that most of them are either titles and ranks, or names of peoples or tribal confederations. Two of them, *kunī sāḡün* ᠬᠤᠨᠢᠰᠠᠩᠭᠢᠨ and *toḡra simä* ᠲᠣᠭᠢᠰᠢᠮᠠ, are especially interesting due to various interpretations that have already been proposed for them by a number of scholars.

These names are borne by the envoys sent by the Tokuz Oghuz khagan to the Chinese (Tabghach) and the Khitan respectively to conclude a military alliance against the Turks.⁷

7. This episode took place shortly before the battle on the Tola River between the Eastern Turks and the Tokuz Oghuz, which, according to Klišastornyi (*Drevneiūrskie runicheskie pamiātniki*, 33–34), may have occurred between 687 and 691, most likely in 688 or 689.

The names are attested in line nine (or line three of the south side) of the inscription in the following passage:⁸

ᠰᠦ᠋᠋᠋᠋ᠠᠭᠤᠳᠤᠷᠢᠭᠤᠰᠤᠬᠠᠭᠠᠨᠬᠠᠶᠤᠰᠤᠨᠶᠢᠳᠤᠰᠤᠨᠶᠢᠳᠤᠰᠤᠨᠬᠤᠶᠤᠰᠤᠨᠬᠤᠶᠤᠰᠤᠨᠬᠤᠶᠤᠰᠤᠨᠬᠤᠶᠤᠰᠤᠨᠬᠤᠶᠤᠰᠤᠨᠬᠤᠶᠤᠰᠤᠨᠬᠤᠶᠤᠰᠤᠨᠬᠤᠶᠤᠰᠤᠨ
 :ᠰᠦ᠋᠋᠋᠋ᠠᠭᠤᠳᠤᠷᠢᠭᠤᠰᠤᠬᠠᠭᠠᠨᠬᠠᠶᠤᠰᠤᠨᠶᠢᠳᠤᠰᠤᠨᠶᠢᠳᠤᠰᠤᠨᠬᠤᠶᠤᠰᠤᠨᠬᠤᠶᠤᠰᠤᠨᠬᠤᠶᠤᠰᠤᠨᠬᠤᠶᠤᠰᠤᠨᠬᠤᠶᠤᠰᠤᠨᠬᠤᠶᠤᠰᠤᠨᠬᠤᠶᠤᠰᠤᠨ
kür(ä)g s(a)vī (a)nt(a)g : tok(u)z og(u)z : bod(u)n üzä : k(a)g(a)n : ol(o)rti ter :
t(a)vg(a)čg(a)ru kunī s(ä)ṅün(ü)g : idm(i)š : kūt(a)ṅg(a)ru : tonra s(i)m(ä)g : idm(i)š :

The words of the deserter are as follows: “Over the Tokuz Oghuz people a khagan has sat [enthroned],” says he; “to the Chinese he is said to have sent Kunī Sājūn and to the Khitan Tonra Simä.”

In this passage, most of the previous researchers read k²wr²g²ᠭᠦᠳᠤᠷᠢᠭᠤᠰᠤ as *körüg* ‘scout, spy’.¹⁰ However, we accept the reading *küräg* ‘deserter, fugitive’, first suggested by James Hamilton¹¹

8. Our reading of the runiform text is based on the excellent photos made by Gustav John Ramstedt in 1909 and published in Pentti Aalto, ed., “Materialien zu den alttürkischen Inschriften der Mongolei, gesammelt von G. J. Ramstedt, J. G. Granö und Pentti Aalto,” *Journal de la Société Finno-Ougrienne* 60.7 (1958): 1–91, as well as on modern pictures of the stele from the Türk Bitig website; see “Tonyukuk’s Memorial Complex, The,” Türk Bitig, Language Committee of Ministry of Culture and Information of R[epublic of] K[azakhstan], accessed January 18, 2019, <http://bitig.org/?tid=1&oid=17&m=2&curi=0&lang=e&mod=1>.

9. In some publications of the text, a colon-like word separator is put between ᠰᠦ᠋᠋᠋᠋ᠠᠭᠤᠳᠤᠷᠢᠭᠤᠰᠤ and ᠶᠢᠳᠤᠰᠤᠨᠶᠢᠳᠤᠰᠤᠨᠬᠤᠶᠤᠰᠤᠨ, as, for example, in Jakob Taube, “Eine runentürkische Inschrift (Tonyukuk, 01–16) im Lichte von Jean Gebsters Geschichte der Bewußtwerdung (mit einem Nachtrag zu Tonyukuk 17–32),” in *Splitter aus der Gegend von Turfan: Festschrift für Peter Zieme anlässlich seines 60. Geburtstags*, ed. Mehmet Ölmez and Simone-Christiane Raschmann, Türk Dilleri Araştırmaları Dizisi, vol. 35 (Istanbul: Şafak Matbaacılık, 2002), 337, and Luvsandorzhiin Bold, *Orkhon bichgün dursgal III (Toniukukün bichêês)*, Shinzhlēkh Ukhaany Akademi Khêl Zokhiolyn Khürêêlên, Mongol Altaï Sudlaachdyn Kholboo 11 (Ulaanbaatar: Soëmbo printing, 2010), 27. But this is not supported by Ramstedt’s photos from Aalto, “Materialien,” 16, or by modern pictures of the monument from Cengiz Alyılmaz, *Orhun yazıtlarının bugünkü durumu* (Ankara: Kurmay Yayınları, 2005), 199, and from the Türk Bitig website, http://bitig.org/show_big.php?fn=sizes/2982.jpg, or by a 3D image of the text fragment published by Mehmet Ölmez, *Orhon-Uygur Hanlığı dönemi Moğolistan’daki eski Türk yazıtları: Metin-çeviri-sözlük*, 3rd ed. (Ankara: BilgeSu, 2015), 178. However, two diagonally arranged small round indentations in the stone surface are visible in this very place on the photos of the inscription, which may have misled some scholars. These indentations are very different from deeply cut and vertically arranged word separators, which do not cause any difficulties in identification.

10. Cf. W. Radloff, *Die alttürkischen Inschriften der Mongolei*, 2nd ed. (St. Petersburg: Buchdruckerei der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1899), 7; Hüseyin Namık Orkun, *Eski Türk yazıtları I* (Istanbul: Devlet Basımevi, 1936), 102; [M. Sprengling], “Tonyuquq’s Epitaph: Transliterated Text and New, Scientifically Annotated Translation,” *American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures* 56.4 (1939): 366; Sergeï E. Malov, *Pamiätniki drevnetürksoï pis’mennosti: Teksty i issledovaniia* (Moscow: Izdatel’stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1951), 61; Aalto, “Materialien,” 33; René Giraud, *L’inscription de Baïn Tsokto: Édition critique* (Paris: Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1961), 79; Talât Tekin, *A Grammar of Orkhon Turkic*, Indiana Univ. Publications, Uralic and Altaic Series, vol. 69 (Bloomington: Indiana Univ., 1968), 249; Gubaïdulla Aïdarov, *Īazyk orkhonskikh pamiätnikov drevnetürksoï pis’mennosti VIII veka* (Alma-Ata: Nauka, 1971), 325; Gerard Clauson, *An Etymological Dictionary of Pre-Thirteenth-Century Turkish* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 741b; Gerhard Doerfer, *Türkische und mongolische Elemente im Neupersischen: Unter besonderer Berücksichtigung älterer neupersischer Geschichtsquellen, vor allem der Mongolen- und Timuridenzeit*, 4 vols., Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur: Veröffentlichungen der Orientalischen Kommission, vol. 31 (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1963–75), vol. 4: 85; Muharrem Ergin, *Orhun Abideleri*, 13th ed. (Istanbul: Boğaziçi Yayınları, 1989), 92; Bold, *Orkhon bichgün dursgal III*, 52.

11. *Manuscripts ouïgours du IX^e-X^e siècle de Touen-houang*, vol. 1 (Paris: Peeters, 1986), 112.

and further substantiated by a number of later studies.¹² This reading is also accepted in most of the publications of the monument issued over the last twenty-five years.¹³

To begin with, let us consider the name *kunī sāñjün*. According to a tradition going back to Radloff,¹⁴ it is considered to belong to a former Chinese official who fled to the Turks and was given this title of Chinese origin.¹⁵ This kind of interpretation has been set forth in a recently published article by Mehmet Ölmez,¹⁶ who gives the reading *ko+nī* and identifies its first part with the family name of Gao Gongyi 高拱毅, a fugitive Chinese general who deserted to the Turks, and its second part with the pronominal accusative suffix *+nI*. However, this interpretation does not allow for the fact that if a Chinese official in the service of the Turks was sent back to China on a diplomatic mission, he would certainly be put to death as a traitor. Furthermore, there are insurmountable difficulties with identifying a Chinese name that might correspond to the whole Old Turkic form *kunī*.¹⁷ Probably in order to avoid these difficulties, Tekin divided it into the stem *ku* and the accusative suffix *+nI*, arguing that the noun phrase *kunī sāñjünüg* should have double accusative marking: *ku-nī sāñjün-üg* ‘Ku-ACC general-ACC’.¹⁸ This morphemic division has been largely accepted by Ölmez “until a more appropriate explanation is made.”¹⁹ However, the accusative suffix *+nI* occurs only with some pronominal stems in the language of the runiform inscriptions, as opposed to the later Old Uyghur sources, where it has a much broader distribution.²⁰ Besides, a much more reliable example of double marking of a direct object in an appositive noun phrase can be found in line 9 of the south side of the Bilge Qaghan inscription (735): *ku-g sāñjün-üg* 𐰽𐰺𐰍𐰆𐰏𐰚𐰇 ‘Ku-ACC general-ACC’, in which the nominal stem *ku* (indeed, most likely of Chinese origin) takes the regular accusative marker *+(X)g*.²¹

How, then, are we to interpret the mysterious form *kunī*? In our opinion, it may be derived from Xun/Kun (*hun* 渾, EMC *ɣwən*, LMC *xɦun*), an ancient name for one of the nine tribes that formed the tribal confederation known in Old Turkic inscriptions as the Tokuz Oghuz (*tokuz oguz* 𐰽𐰺𐰍𐰆𐰏𐰚𐰇 ~ 𐰽𐰺𐰍𐰆𐰏𐰚𐰇) and in Chinese sources as the Tiele 鐵勒

12. See Marcel Erdal, *Old Turkic Word Formation: A Functional Approach to the Lexicon*, 2 vols., *Turcologica*, vol. 7 (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1991), vol. 1: 196; Talât Tekin, *Tunyukuk yazıtı*, *Türk Dilleri Araştırmaları Dizisi*, vol. 5 (Ankara: Simurg, 1994), 32; idem, “Some Remarks on the Tonyukuk Inscription,” in *Beläk bitig: Sprachstudien für Gerhard Doerfer zum 75. Geburtstag*, ed. Marcel Erdal and Semih Tezcan, *Turcologica*, vol. 23 (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1995), 213; Árpád Berta, “Neue Lesungs- und Deutungsvorschläge für die Inschrift Toñuquq,” *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 48.3 (1995): 313–15; Rybatzki, *Die Toñuquq-Inschrift*, 90 n. 239.

13. Cf. Tekin, *Tunyukuk yazıtı*, 5; Rybatzki, *Die Toñuquq-Inschrift*, 47; Tekin, *Orhon yazıtıları: Kül Tigin, Bilge Kağan, Tunyukuk*, 2nd ed. (Istanbul: Simurg, 1998), 84; Taube, “Eine runentürkische Inschrift,” 337; Nathan Light, “An 8th Century Turkic Narrative: Pragmatics, Reported Speech and Managing Information,” *Turkic Languages* 10 (2006): 166; Ölmez, *Moğolistan’daki eski Türk yazıtıları*, 182; Aydın, *Orhon yazıtıları (Köl Tegin, Bilge Kağan, Tonyukuk, Ongi, Küli Çor)*, 2nd ed. (Istanbul: Bilge Kültür Sanat, 2018), 106.

14. *Die alttürkischen Inschriften der Mongolei*, 38.

15. Cf. Rybatzki, *Die Toñuquq-Inschrift*, 90–91 n. 241.

16. “About *qwy* and *qwni sāñjünüg* from Old Turkic Inscriptions,” *Türk Dilleri Araştırmaları* 28.2 (2018): 101–7.

17. Cf. Rybatzki, *Die Toñuquq-Inschrift*, 90 n. 241.

18. Tekin, *Grammar of Orkhon Turkic*, 130; cf. idem, *Tunyukuk yazıtı*, 32.

19. “About *qwy* and *qwni sāñjünüg*,” 106.

20. See Marcel Erdal, “The Chronological Classification of Old Turkish Texts,” *Central Asiatic Journal* 23.3/4 (1979): 151–75; idem, *Grammar of Old Turkic*, 170–71.

21. It should be emphasized that “General Ku” (*ku sāñjün*) of the Bilge Khagan inscription, a military commander of the Qay (Tatabi, or Kumoxi 庫莫奚), a Para-Mongolic ethnic group related to the Khitan, is not identical with “General Kuni” (*kunī sāñjün*) of the Tonyukuk inscription, as rightly noted by Rybatzki, *Die Toñuquq-Inschrift*, 90 n. 241, and Ölmez, “About *qwy* and *qwni sāñjünüg*,” 104.

(EMC *tʰiet-lək*, LMC *tʰiat-ləǰk*).²² An earlier form of the latter name, transcribed as Dingling 丁零 (LH **teŋ-leŋ*, EMC *tieŋ-lieŋ*, LMC *tiaŋ-liajŋ*), has been used since the Han dynasty (206 BC–AD 200) to denote a powerful Turkic people that originally was part of the Xiongnu confederation and later played an important role in the political history of barbarian dynasties in China in the fourth and fifth centuries.²³ The names Dingling and Tiele were most likely Chinese transcriptions of a foreign ethnonym that, according to Hamilton,²⁴ should be interpreted as **Tägräg* and identified with an Old Turkic word meaning ‘circle, hoop’. In Chinese sources the Tiele also appears under an alternative, genuine Chinese name Gaoche 高車, lit. “High Carts,” probably semantically related to their original Turkic name.²⁵ In the *Suishu* 隋書 (compiled in 629–636), an official history of the Sui dynasty (581–618), the following description of the tribal composition of the Tiele can be found, in which the Xun/Kun tribe is mentioned (all emphasis added by us):

鐵勒之先，匈奴之苗裔也，種類最多。自西海之東，依據山谷，往往不絕。獨洛河北有僕骨、同羅、韋紇、拔也古、覆羅並號俟斤，蒙陳、吐如紇、斯結、**渾**、斛薛等諸姓，勝兵可二萬。²⁶

Die Vorfahren der Tʼie-lê 鐵勒 waren Nachkommen der Hiung-hu 匈奴. Sie hatten sehr viele Stämme. Auf einem Gebiet, das sich vom West-See (Kaspisches Meer) aus nach Osten erstreckte, lebten sie überall in den Bergen und Tälern.

Nördlich des Flusses Tu-lo 獨洛 (Tola) sind die Stämme Pʼu-ku 僕骨, Tʼung-lo 同羅, Wei-ho 韋紇, Pa-ye-ku 拔也古 und Fu-lo 覆羅, (deren Häuptlinge) alle den Titel Sse-kin 俟斤 tragen; (ferner gab es) die Meng-tschʼen 蒙陳, Tʼu-ju 吐如, Ho-sse-kie 紇斯結,²⁷ **Hun 渾**, Hu-sie 斛薛 und andere Stämme. Sie verfügen über ca. 20 000 Elitesoldaten.²⁸

22. The identity of the Tokuz Oghuz of the Orkhon inscriptions with the Tiele of the Chinese sources was first suggested by the Japanese Sinologist Haneda Tōru in 1919 and is now generally accepted. See Edwin G. Pulleyblank, “Some Remarks on the Toquzoghuz Problem,” *Ural-Altäische Jahrbücher* 28.1/2 (1956): 35–36; K. Czeglédy, “Zur Stammesorganisation der türkischen Völker,” *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 36.1/3 (1982): 89–93; T. Senga, “The Toquz Oghuz Problem and the Origin of the Khazars,” *Journal of Asian History* 24.1 (1990): 58; Peter B. Golden, *An Introduction to the History of the Turkic Peoples: Ethnogenesis and State-Formation in Medieval and Early Modern Eurasia and the Middle East*, Turcologica, vol. 9 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1992), 155–56.

23. James Hamilton, “Toquz-Oğuz et On-Uyğur,” *Journal Asiatique* 250 (1962): 23–63; Edwin G. Pulleyblank, “The Consonantal System of Old Chinese, pt. 2,” *Asia Major*, n.s., 9.2 (1962): 230–31; K. Czeglédy, “Zur Stammesorganisation,” 89; Pulleyblank, “The Chinese and Their Neighbors in Prehistoric and Early Historic Times,” in *The Origins of Chinese Civilization*, ed. David N. Keightley, Studies on China, vol. 1 (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1983), 448, 455; idem, “The ‘High Carts’: A Turkish-Speaking People before the Türks,” *Asia Major*, 3rd ser., 3.1 (1990): 21–22; Golden, *Introduction to the History of the Turkic Peoples*, 93–95.

24. “Toquz-Oğuz et On-Uyğur,” 26.

25. Ibid.; Pulleyblank, “The Chinese and Their Neighbors,” 448; idem, “‘High Carts,’” 22; Peter B. Golden, *Studies on the Peoples and Cultures of the Eurasian Steppes*, ed. Cătălin Hriban, Florilegium magistrorum historiae archaeologiaeque Antiquitatis et Medii Aevi, vol. 9 (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române), 32.

26. Wei Zheng 魏徵 et al., comp., *Suishu* 隋書, 85 *juan* in 6 vols. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1973), 6: j. 84, 1879.

27. In the Zhonghua shuju edition (see the previous note), the original text of *Suishu* is provided with punctuation marks suggesting a different reading of these two tribal names, Turuhe 吐如紇 and Sijie 斯結, which is accepted by most scholars. Cf., for example, Dimitriï Pozdneev, *Istoricheskiĭ ocherk uġurov (po kitaġskim istochnikam)* (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia Imp. Akademii Nauk, 1899), 38; Hamilton, “Toquz-Oğuz et On-Uyğur,” 26; Golden, *Introduction to the History of the Turkic Peoples*, 156; Cheng Fangyi, “The Research on the Identification between Tiele (鐵勒) and the Oğuric Tribes,” *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 19 (2012): 105. However, Liu Mau-tsai’s reading is still used in some modern publications. See, for example, Mihály Dobrovits, “The Altaic World through Byzantine Eyes: Some Remarks on the Historical Circumstances of Zemarchus’ Journey to the Turks (AD 569–570),” *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 64.4 (2011): 375, doi: 10.1556/AOrient.64.2011.4.1.

28. Liu Mau-tsai, *Die chinesischen Nachrichten*, vol. 1: 127. Chinese characters in Liu Mau-tsai’s translation are added by us.

Another Chinese work, the *Tang Huiyao* 唐會要, lit. “Collection of essential material of the Tang” (presented to the Emperor in 961), containing unique information that is often missing from official dynastic histories, provides a list of the Tokuz Oghuz tribes (= Chinese *jiu xing* 九姓, lit. ‘Nine Surnames’), which also includes the Xun/Kun tribe:

其九姓一曰迴紇二曰僕固三曰渾四曰拔曳固即拔野古五曰同羅六曰思結七曰契苾以上七姓部自國初以來著在史傳八曰阿布思九曰骨崙屋骨恐此二姓天寶後始與七姓齊列²⁹

The Nine Surnames are: (1) Hui-ho 迴紇 (Uyghurs), (2) P’u-ku 僕固 (Buqu?), (3) **Hun** 渾, (4) Pa-yeh-ku 拔曳固 or Pa-yeh-ku 拔野古 (Bayırqu or Bayarqu), (5) T’ung-lo 同羅 (Tongra), (6) Ssu-chieh 思結 (Sikār?), (7) Ch’i-pi 契苾—these seven tribes appear in historical records from the beginning of the dynasty—(8) A-pu-ssu 阿布思, (9) Ku-lun-wu-ku 骨崙屋骨. I (i.e., the editor of the text) suspect that the last two surnames were first placed on an equality with the seven surnames after T’ien-pao (742–).³⁰

In 647 the Xun/Kun, along with other Tiele tribes, recognized vassal dependence on the Tang Empire, in consequence of which a special lesser prefecture of Eastern Gaolan 東臯蘭, nominally under supervision of Lingzhou 靈州 Area Command (*dudufu* 都督府),³¹ was created for them, with a total of 1342 families, 5182 people, but soon after abolished.³² They did not participate in the military conflicts of the Tiele with Tang China that occurred between 660 and 663,³³ while, on the contrary, repeatedly taking part in the wars of the Tang Empire with the Tibetans and rendering other services to the Chinese government.³⁴ By the period of the reign of Empress Wu Zetian 武則天 (690–705), after the subjugation of the Tiele tribes that lived north of the Gobi by the growing power of the Second Turkic Khaganate, the Xun/Kun and another three tribes (Huihe 迴紇 = the Uyghurs, Qibi 契苾, and Sijie 思結) moved to Ganzhou 甘州 and Liangzhou 涼州 prefectures.³⁵

A variant of the name Xun/Kun with the word-final vowel [i] seems to have been noted by Theophylact Simocatta as the name of the second of the two Oghur tribes, *Ováp* and *Xouvví*, which originally belonged to the Avar tribal confederation and later migrated to Europe under pressure of the Turks, where they became known under the collective name “pseudo-Avars.”³⁶ It can be assumed that some part of the Khounni (*Xouvví*) tribe could

29. Wang Pu 王溥, comp., *Tang Huiyao* 唐會要, Siku quanshu edition, 100 *juan* in 32 vols., available online at the Chinese Text Project website (<https://ctext.org/library.pl?if=en&res=239>), vol. 32: j. 98, 2b–3a.

30. Pulleyblank, “Some Remarks on the Toquzoghuz Problem,” 39. See also Liu Mau-tsai, *Die chinesischen Nachrichten*, vol. 2: 592; Senga, “Toquz Oghuz Problem,” 58; Ablet K. Kamalov, *Drevnie užury, VIII–IX vv.* (Almaty: Nash Mir, 2001), 66.

31. In the northern part of modern Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region.

32. Anatolii G. Maliavkin, “Taktika Tanskogo gosudarstva v bor’be za gegemoniiu v vostochnoi chasti Tsentral’noi Azii,” in *Dal’niĭ Vostok i sosednie territorii v srednie veka = Far East and Adjacent Region in the Middle Ages*, ed. Vitalii E. Larichev, *Istoriia i kul’tura vostoka Azii = History and Culture of the East of Asia* (Novosibirsk: Nauka, 1980), 114, 116, 118; idem, *Tanskie khroniki o gosudarstvakh Tsentral’noi Azii: Teksty i issledovaniia* (Novosibirsk: Nauka, 1989), 21–22, 26.

33. Maliavkin, “Taktika Tanskogo gosudarstva,” 119–20.

34. Monk Iakin, *Sobranie svedeniĭ o narodakh, obitavshikh v Srednei Azii v drevniia vremena*, 3 pts. (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia Voенno-Uchebnykh Zavedeniĭ, 1851), pt. 1, 435–36; Jonathan Karam Skaff, *Sui-Tang China and Its Turko-Mongol Neighbors: Culture, Power, and Connections, 580–800*, Oxford Studies in Early Empires (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2012), 190.

35. In the central part of the modern province of Gansu. See Friedrich Hirth, “Nachworte zur Inschrift des Tonjukuk: Beiträge zur Geschichte der Ost-Türken im 7. und 8. Jhd. nach chinesischen Quellen,” in Radloff, *Die alttürkischen Inschriften der Mongolei*, 132; Maliavkin, “Taktika Tanskogo gosudarstva,” 123.

36. Michael Whitby and Mary Whitby, trs., *The History of Theophylact Simocatta: An English Translation with Introduction and Notes* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1986), 188–93; Mihály Dobrovits, “‘They Called Themselves Avar’—Considering the Pseudo-Avar Question in the Work by Theophylactos,” in *Erän ud Anērän: Studies*

remain within the Tiele confederation after the migration of most of the Oghurs to the West. It is very tempting, despite Atwood's objections, to relate this ethnonym with some late versions of the name of the famous Xiongnu 匈奴 people that also contain the word-final [i], like Greek *Khōnai* and Chinese *huni* 忽倪 (EMC *xwət-ŋiei*, LMC *xut-ŋjiai*).³⁷ On the other hand, the very name Xun/Kun, probably passed into Turkic from Sogdian,³⁸ is regarded by Hamilton³⁹ as identical to those of the European Huns and the Far Eastern Xiongnu. This seems to be supported by historical evidence, particularly by the above-cited *Suishu* account that the ancestors of the Tiele were descendants of the Xiongnu.⁴⁰ The forms with or without the final high unrounded vowel may be taken as examples of $-\emptyset \sim -i$ alternation in proper names, typical for "Altaic" languages, as pointed out by Atwood.⁴¹

Thus, the name *kunī* can be interpreted as an ethnonim: 'the Xun(i)/Kun(i), a member of the Xun(i)/Kun(i) tribe', which calls into question the traditional "sinological" interpretation proposed by Radloff.

Now let us proceed with the title *sājūn* ~ *saḡun*. It is commonly accepted that Old Turkic borrowed it from the Chinese *jiānjūn* 將軍 (EMC *tsjaŋ-kjwən*, LMC *tsiaŋ-kyn*) 'general'.⁴² In Old Turkic sources of different areas, it occurs as a component of some proper names, for example, *bar sagra saḡun*,⁴³ *bars kan saḡun*,⁴⁴ *bayča saḡun*,⁴⁵ *čoči böri saḡun*,⁴⁶ *inanču alp saḡun*,⁴⁷ *isig saḡun*,⁴⁸ *kara sājūn*,⁴⁹ *körtlä saḡun*,⁵⁰ *kutlug bilgä sājūn*,⁵¹ *kutlug tarkan*

Presented to Boris Il'ič Maršak on the Occasion of His 70th Birthday, ed. Matteo Comparetti, Paola Raffetta, and Gianroberto Scarcia (Venice: Libreria Editrice Cafoscarina, 2006), 175–84. Cf. also Golden, *Introduction to the History of the Turkic Peoples*, 101; Christopher P. Atwood, "Huns and Xiōngnu: New Thoughts on an Old Problem," in *Dubitando: Studies in History and Culture in Honor of Donald Ostrowski*, ed. Brian J. Boeck, Russell E. Martin, and Daniel Rowland (Bloomington, IN: Slavica, 2012), 42–43.

37. Atwood, "Huns and Xiōngnu," 36–38, 42–44.

38. Cf. Sogdian *xwn*, most likely used to denote the Xiongnu and some of their descendants. See W. B. Henning, "The Date of the Sogdian Ancient Letters," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 12.3/4 (1948): 615, doi: 10.1017/S0041977X00083178; Étienne de la Vaissière, "Huns et Xiongnu," *Central Asiatic Journal* 49.1 (2005): 3–26.

39. "Toquz-Oγuz et On-Uyγur," 54 n. 19.

40. Liu Mau-tsai, *Die chinesischen Nachrichten*, vol. 1: 127.

41. "Huns and Xiōngnu," 36–38.

42. "Throughout history the most common term for the commander of a substantial body of troops, whether a regular officer of the standing army or the ad hoc commander of a special force organized for a campaign." Charles O. Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1985), 140a, no. 694.

43. Igor' V. Kormushin, *Türkische eiseiškije epitafii: Teksty i issledovaniia* (Moscow: Nauka, 1997), 176.

44. Vilhelm Thomsen, ed. and tr., "Dr. M. A. Stein's Manuscripts in Turkish 'Runic' Script from Miran and Tun-huang," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* (January 1912): 186.

45. Kormushin, *Türkische eiseiškije epitafii*, 208.

46. *Ibid.*, 183.

47. *Ibid.*, 72.

48. Thomsen, "Stein's Manuscripts," 209.

49. W. Radloff, *Uigurische Sprachdenkmäler*, ed. S. Malov (Leningrad: Verlag der Akademie der Wissenschaften der USSR, 1928), 37–38.

50. Kormushin, *Türkische eiseiškije epitafii*, 176.

51. Talat Tekin, "The Tariat (Terkhin) Inscription," *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 37.1/3 (1982): 48; Erhan Aydın, *Uygur yazıtları* (Istanbul: Bilge Kültür Sanat, 2018), 48.

sänjün,⁵² *külüg saṅun*,⁵³ *saču sänjün*,⁵⁴ *tarqan saṅun*,⁵⁵ *uruṅu saṅun*,⁵⁶ *ut saṅun*.⁵⁷ There is a view according to which the forms *sänjün* and *saṅun* go back to two different Chinese administrative terms,⁵⁸ but it can hardly be confirmed or refuted on the basis of Old Turkic language material alone.

From what has been said above, it can clearly be inferred that the noun phrase *kunī sänjün* is likely to be not a personal name, but a combination of an ethnicon and a military title meaning “military commander of the Xun(i)/Kun(i) tribe,” which is fully in line with the general system of names and titles as found in the Tonyukuk inscription. Furthermore, the fact that this very person was sent as an envoy to Tang China may serve as an additional evidence in support of our view. For the Tokuz Oghuz khagan, it was quite natural to send to the Tang court a high-ranking representative of the tribe that had a long-standing vassal relationship with China and participated in joint military campaigns with the Chinese troops.

Following this line of reasoning, the second name under discussion, *toṅra simä*, may also be considered not a personal name in the literal sense, but a kind of a title appropriate for the head of a diplomatic mission.

The term *toṅra* occurs as an ethnic name in the Kül Tegin and Bilge Khagan inscriptions in an account of the same historical event related to the war of the Eastern Turks with the Tokuz Oghuz:⁵⁹

:>𐰽𐰸𐰺𐰽:𐰸𐰺𐰾𐰸 𐰸𐰽 𐰸 𐰺:𐰽𐰸𐰾𐰸:𐰸𐰺:𐰸𐰺𐰾𐰸 𐰸𐰺:𐰸𐰺𐰾𐰸 𐰸𐰺𐰾𐰸:𐰸𐰺𐰾𐰸
:𐰸𐰺𐰾𐰸 𐰸𐰺𐰾𐰸 𐰸𐰺𐰾𐰸 𐰸𐰺:𐰸𐰺𐰾𐰸 𐰸𐰺:𐰸𐰺𐰾𐰸 𐰸𐰺:𐰸𐰺𐰾𐰸 𐰸𐰺:𐰸𐰺𐰾𐰸

oza k(ä)lm(i)š : süsin : kül teg(i)n : (a)g(i)t(i)p : toṅra : bir ug(u)š : (a)lp(a)gu : on (ä)r(i)g : toṅa teg(i)n : yogīnta: (ä)g(i)r(i)p öl(ö)rt(i)m(i)z :⁶⁰

Prince Kül drove away their army, which broke through [our ranks], and we killed ten champion warriors belonging to one family of the Toṅra [tribe], having surrounded [them] at the funeral of Prince Toṅa.

:𐰸𐰺 𐰸𐰽 𐰸𐰺𐰾𐰸 : 𐰽𐰾𐰸 𐰸𐰺 𐰸𐰺𐰾𐰸 : 𐰸𐰺:𐰸𐰺𐰾𐰸 : 𐰽𐰾𐰸 𐰸𐰺 : 𐰸𐰺𐰾𐰸 𐰸𐰺
:𐰽𐰾𐰸 : 𐰽𐰾𐰸 𐰸𐰺 𐰸𐰺:𐰸𐰺𐰾𐰸 𐰸𐰺𐰾𐰸 : 𐰸𐰺𐰾𐰸 𐰸𐰺:𐰸𐰺𐰾𐰸 𐰸𐰺𐰾𐰸 : 𐰽𐰾𐰸
:𐰸𐰺𐰾𐰸 𐰸𐰺

oza : y(a)ña : k(ä)l(i)gm[ä :] süsin : (a)g(i)t(t)m : ük(ü)š ölt(ä)či : (a)nta tir(i)lti : (a)nta : toṅra : yilp(a)gutī : bir : ug(u)š(i)g : toṅa : teg(i)n : yog[(i)nta :] (ä)g(i)rä : tokid(i)m :⁶¹

I drove away their army, which had broken through [our ranks] and spread. Many of those who were about to be killed there came to life [again]. There I beat one family of champion warriors of the Toṅra [tribe], having surrounded [them] at the funeral of Prince Toṅa.

52. Tekin, “Tariat (Terkhin) Inscription,” 48; Aydın, *Uygur yazıtları*, 48.
 53. Thomsen, “Stein’s Manuscripts,” 187.
 54. Radloff, *Uigurische Sprachdenkmäler*, 36, 38.
 55. Kormushin, *Türkские енисейские эпиграфи*, 115.
 56. Thomsen, “Stein’s Manuscripts,” 186.
 57. *Ibid.*, 187.
 58. Rybatzki, *Die Toṅnuq-Inschrift*, 91.
 59. This war may have taken place either in 716 or in 723/724. See Grigorii E. Grumm-Grzhimaïlo, *Zapadnaia Mongoliia i Uriankhaĭskii kraĭ*, 3 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1914–1930), vol. 2: 320; Klĭashtornyi, *Drevnetürkские runicheskie pamiatniki*, 41–42.
 60. The Kül Tegin inscription (AD 732), line 7 of the north side. Our reading is based on the publication of the runiform text in Ölmez, *Moĝolistan’daki eski Türk yazıtları*, 118, and Aydın, *Orhon yazıtları*, 66. Our transcription slightly differs from those of Ölmez, 91, and Aydın, 66. The English translation is our own.
 61. The Bilge Khagan inscription (AD 735), line 31 of the east side. Our reading is based on the publication of the runiform text in Ölmez, *Moĝolistan’daki eski Türk yazıtları*, 172, and Aydın, *Orhon yazıtları*, 91. Our transcription slightly differs from those of Ölmez, 142, and Aydın, 92. The English translation is our own.

In Chinese sources the Toṅra (*tongluo* 同羅, EMC *duŋ-lâ*, LMC *tḥwŋ-la*) are also described as belonging to the Tiele tribal confederation.⁶² According to the Tang dynastic histories, they lived east of the Duolange 多覽葛 and north of the Xueyantuo 薛延陀; they are also mentioned among the tribes staying at the Ötükan mountains.⁶³ In the above-cited *Suishu* account of the Tiele, it is stated that the Toṅra lived to the north of the Tola river, along with four other Tiele tribes, and their chieftains bore the title *irkin* (*sijin* 俟斤, EMC *dzi^B-kjən*, LMC *ṣḥj-kin*).⁶⁴ The encyclopedia *Cefu Yuangui* 冊府元龜, compiled under the Song dynasty in the early eleventh century, provides information on nine clans composing the Toṅra tribe.⁶⁵ In 646 the Toṅra participated in the defeat of the Xueyantuo by the joint forces of the Tang Empire and the Tiele tribes, and shortly afterward Guilin Area Command 龜林都督府 was specially created on their territory by the Chinese authorities.⁶⁶ Unlike the Xun/Kun, they took part in the military conflicts between some Tiele tribes and the Tang in 660–663, which probably ended with the cessation of the vassal relationship of (most members of) the Tiele confederation with China.⁶⁷ In 686 the Toṅra “rebelled” again, but were defeated by the Chinese troops; however, as early as the beginning of the eighth century, they actively supported the Tang in the struggle against the Second Turkic Khaganate, for which they received generous awards from the imperial court in 719.⁶⁸

The Tiele confederation comprised a large number of ethnic groups, both Turkic-speaking (including the Uyghurs) and those that may have spoken some Proto- or Para-Mongolic⁶⁹ or even Iranian⁷⁰ idioms. According to a recent study by Étienne de la Vaissière,⁷¹ during almost the whole of the seventh century, it was the Tiele that held power over most of the originally Turkic lands north of the Gobi Desert, including the “land of Ötükan” (*Ötükan yär*) glorified in the Orkhon inscriptions. Taking advantage of the political vacuum that emerged in the Mongolian steppes due to the collapse of the First Turkic Khaganate, the Tiele dominated virtually all the different tribes living there, until these territories were brought back under the control of the Eastern Turks as a result of the military campaigns led by Tonyukuk and Ilterish Khagan, probably in 685 or 686.

62. Édouard Chavannes, *Documents sur les Tou-kiue (Turcs) occidentaux* (Paris: Librairie d'Amérique et d'Orient Adrien Maisonneuve, 1903), 87, 89; Liu Mau-tsai, *Die chinesischen Nachrichten*, vol. 2: 591–92.

63. Chavannes, *Documents sur les Tou-kiue*, 87 n. 3; Liu Mau-tsai, *Die chinesischen Nachrichten*, vol. 1: 354; vol. 2: 721 n. 1793; Maliāvkin, *Tanskije khroniki o gosudarstvakh T'Sentral'noi Azii*, 143 n. 55.

64. Liu Mau-tsai, *Die chinesischen Nachrichten*, vol. 1: 127; Golden, *Introduction to the History of the Turkic Peoples*, 155–56; Dobrovits, “The Altaic World through Byzantine Eyes,” 375.

65. See Anatolii G. Maliāvkin, *Uġurskie gosudarstva v IX–XII vv.* (Novosibirsk: Nauka, 1983), 7.

66. Maliāvkin, “Taktika Tanskogo gosudarstva,” 113, 118; idem, *Tanskije khroniki o gosudarstvakh T'Sentral'noi Azii*, 25–26.

67. Maliāvkin, “Taktika Tanskogo gosudarstva,” 119–20.

68. *Ibid.*, 123–24.

69. Cf. Prokopii B. Kononov, *Ėtnicheskie aspekty istorii T'Sentral'noi Azii (drevnost' i srednevekov'e)* (Ulan-Ude: Izdatel'stvo BNTS SO RAN, 1999), 105–6; Golden, *Studies on the Peoples and Cultures of the Eurasian Steppes*, 32. Cf. also the hydronym Chile 敕勒 (*Tegreg), reflecting the same original form as the name of the Tiele confederation itself, which is attested in the famous Para-Mongolic (Serbi) song *Chile Ge* 敕勒歌 (*Tegreg Song). See Andrew Shimunek, *Languages of Ancient Southern Mongolia and North China: A Historical-Comparative Study of the Serbi-Mongolic Language Family, with an Analysis of Northeastern Frontier Chinese and Old Tibetan Phonology*, Tunguso-Sibirica, vol. 40 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2017), 44 n. 32.

70. Maliāvkin, *Tanskije khroniki o gosudarstvakh T'Sentral'noi Azii*, 203. Cf. Dobrovits, “The Altaic World through Byzantine Eyes,” 377 n. 36.

71. “Away from the Ötüken: A Geopolitical Approach to the Seventh Century Eastern Türks,” in *Complexity of Interaction along the Eurasian Steppe Zone in the First Millennium CE*, ed. Jan Bemmann and Michael Schmauder, Bonn Contributions to Asian Archaeology, vol. 7 (Bonn: Vor- und Frühgeschichtliche Archäologie, Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn, 2015), 453–61.

The well-known Khüis Tolgoi inscription, a sensational discovery of recent years, first presented in 2017 at the sixtieth meeting of the PIAC in Székesfehérvár, Hungary, by a group of renowned scholars consisting of Dieter Maue (Germany), Mehmet Ölmez (Turkey), Alexander Vovin (France), and Étienne de la Vaissière (France), is also attributed to the Tiele. The results of the study of the monument carried out by the international research team, which have been published recently⁷² but provoked a heated discussion on the internet even before their publication,⁷³ showed that the inscription, originally located at the very heart of the Ötükan land, is written in a special variety of the Brāhmī script in an unknown language with a significant number of Proto-Mongolic morphological and lexical elements.⁷⁴ According to de la Vaissière,⁷⁵ it may be a Tiele inscription, probably written in commemoration of the defeat of Niri Khagan (588–604) of the Western Turks by Bodhisattva Khagan of the Tiele. Since the inscription dates back to the very beginning of the seventh century, this seems to suggest that at least at that time one of the Proto-Mongolic varieties had a fairly wide distribution among the Tiele tribes, as well as a well-established official status, in order to be put into writing. But this also makes it possible to understand why a person from the Tojra tribe belonging to the Tiele confederation was sent as an envoy to the Khitan, which spoke a Para-Mongolic (Serbi) language, collaterally related to Proto-Mongolic.⁷⁶

As for the second component of the name of this person, its interpretation poses some difficulties. It is written as $s^2mg^2 \text{ € } \gg |$, which, according to the rules of Old Turkic phonotactics, can be read either *sämig* or *simäg*. The coda consonant in either form can be identified with the accusative suffix $+(X)g$ and then only the stem *säm(i)/simä* is left. As this stem cannot be etymologized on the basis of Turkic, the question naturally arises whether it may have had a contact-induced origin. Giraud⁷⁷ suggested that it can be derived from Mongolian: “*säm*

72. See Mehmet Ölmez, “The Khüis Tolgoi Inscription: On the Discovery, Whereabouts, Condition of the Stones, and On-the-spot Visit,” *Journal Asiatique* 306.2 (2018): 287–89, doi: 10.2143/JA.306.2.3285619; Dieter Maue, “Signs and Sounds,” *ibid.*: 291–301, doi: 10.2143/JA.306.2.3285620; Alexander Vovin, “An Interpretation of the Khüis Tolgoi Inscription,” *ibid.*: 303–13, doi: 10.2143/JA.306.2.3285621; Étienne de la Vaissière, “The Historical Context to the Khüis Tolgoi Inscription,” *ibid.*: 315–19, doi: 10.2143/JA.306.2.3285622.

73. Draft versions of the research papers written by the group members are available online. See Dieter Maue, “The Khüis Tolgoi Inscription—Signs and Sounds,” published online September 16, 2017, https://www.academia.edu/34589694/The_Kh%C3%BCis_Tolgoi_inscription_-_signs_and_sounds; Mehmet Ölmez, “Hüis Tolgoi Inscription: On the Discovery, the Whereabouts, Condition of the Stones, and Our Expedition,” accessed June 25, 2019, https://www.academia.edu/34765961/Hüis_Tolgoi_Inscription_On_the_discovery_the_whereabouts_condition_of_the_stones_and_our_expedition; Alexander Vovin, “Interpretation of the Hüis Tolgoi Inscription,” accessed June 25, 2019, https://www.academia.edu/34550816/Interpretation_of_the_H%C3%BCis_Tolgoi_Inscription; Étienne de la Vaissière, “The Historical Context to the Hüis Tolgoi Inscription,” accessed June 25, 2019, https://www.academia.edu/34569840/The_Historical_context_to_the_H%C3%BCis_Tolgoi_inscription.

74. The same also applies for the language of the Bugut Brāhmī inscription of ca. 581, dated even a little earlier than the Khüis Tolgoi inscription, as convincingly shown by Dieter Maue, “The Brāhmī Script on the Bugut Stele,” *Journal Asiatique* 307.1 (2019): 109–19, doi: 10.2143/JA.307.1.3286343, and Alexander Vovin, “Groping in the Dark: The First Attempt to Interpret the Bugut Brāhmī Inscription,” *ibid.*: 121–34, doi: 10.2143/JA.307.1.3286344.

75. “The Historical Context to the Khüis Tolgoi Inscription,” 317–19.

76. See Juha Janhunen, “Para-Mongolic,” in *The Mongolic Languages*, ed. Juha Janhunen, Routledge Language Family Series, vol. 5 (London: Routledge, 2003), 391–402; Daniel Kane, *The Kitan Language and Script*, Handbook of Oriental Studies, vol. 19 (Leiden: Brill, 2009); Wu Yingzhe and Juha Janhunen, *New Materials on the Khitan Small Script: A Critical Edition of Xiao Dilu and Yelü Xiangwen*, Corpus Scriptorum Chitanorum, vol. 1/ Languages of Asia, vol. 9 (Folkestone: Global Oriental, 2010); Shimunek, *Languages of Ancient Southern Mongolia and North China*, 197–281.

77. *L’inscription de Bāin Tsokto*, 151.

«muet» (mongol?).⁷⁸ However, despite the fact that there seem to have been a number of early Mongolic borrowings into Old Turkic,⁷⁹ this point of view cannot be accepted for pragmatic reasons, as it is hard to imagine that the envoy sent on an important diplomatic mission bore the nickname “Quiet, Silent.”

The etymology of the word in question was treated by Rybatzki,⁸⁰ who proposed two alternative hypotheses concerning its origin. According to the first one, it may come from Sanskrit *śimhā* ‘lion’, attested in the names and titles of some Khotanese rulers. However, such a comparison appears unconvincing on phonological grounds, at least if we take into account later Old Uyghur transcriptions of this Sanskrit word, in which the medial *h* is always retained and rendered by *k* <K/Q>,⁸¹ while the anusvara *m̐* is regularly replaced by *n*; cf., for example, Sanskrit *śimha* : Old Uyghur *sinke* / SYNKY, Sanskrit *śimhapāle* : Old Uyghur *śinkapali* / SYNK’P’LY, Sanskrit *śimhaladvīpa* : Old Uyghur *śinkadvip* / SYNQ’DVYP.⁸² In view of this, instead of *sām(i)/simā* we would expect in the Tonyukuk inscription something like **śinka* 𐰽𐰺𐰍* ~ 𐰽𐰺𐰍*.

The second hypothesis looks much more persuasive. It suggests that the Old Turkic form derives from the Chinese title *śima* 司馬 (EMC *śi-ma*^B, LMC *sz-ma*), which in different historical periods denoted various positions within the Chinese administrative system but under the Sui and Tang dynasties specifically referred to the office of Adjutant, “a 2nd- or 3rd-level executive officer found in most military Guards (*wei*) stationed at the dynastic capital.”⁸³ A certain complication seems at first glance to be caused by the fact that the syllable *ma* 馬 in Old Uyghur transcriptions of Chinese is regularly rendered as *ba* <P’>,⁸⁴ but in this case we are dealing with a reflection of the so-called denasalization of **m*- that

78. Cf. Middle Mongol *sem* ‘silent’, probably also in the sense of ‘taciturn’ (*The Secret History of the Mongols*, mid-thirteenth century; see Igor de Rachewiltz, tr., *The Secret History of the Mongols: A Mongolian Epic Chronicle of the Thirteenth Century*, 2 vols. [Leiden: Brill, 2006], vol. 1: 238), *sem baḡba* ‘stoial spokoino’, *sem bayilyaba* ‘zastavil ego stoiať tikh’, *sem bayilyaqsan ere* ‘zastavlenñy byt’ tikhim muzhchina’, *sem bi* ‘tikh’ (the *Muqaddimat al-adab*, fourteenth century; see Nikolai N. Poppe, *Mongol’skii slovar’ Mukaddimat al-Adab*, 2 pts. [Moscow: Izdatel’stvo AN SSSR, 1938], 320a); Preclassical Written Mongol *sem* ‘quiet, silent’ (the Mongol version of the *Subhāṣitaratanidhi*, late thirteenth or early fourteenth century; see György Kara, *Dictionary of Sonom Gara’s Erdeni-yin Sang: A Middle Mongol Version of the Tibetan Sa skya Legs bshad. Mongol–English–Tibetan*, Brill’s Inner Asian Library, vol. 23 [Leiden: Brill, 2009], 257); Written Mongol *sem* ‘quietly, without noise, silently; secretly, by stealth, furtively’ (Ferdinand D. Lessing, ed., *Mongolian–English Dictionary* [Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1960], 687a).

79. See, for example, Gerhard Doerfer, “Mongolica im Alttürkischen,” in *Bruno Lewin zu Ehren: Festschrift aus Anlaß seines 65. Geburtstages*, vol. 3: *Korea*, ed. Michael Kühl and Werner Sasse (Bochum: Brockmeier, 1992), 39–56; idem, “The Older Mongolian Layer in Ancient Turkic,” *Türk Dilleri Araştırmaları* 3 (1993): 79–86; Alexander Vovin, “Some Thoughts on the Origins of the Old Turkic 12-Year Animal Cycle,” *Central Asiatic Journal* 48.1 (2004): 118–32; Volker Rybatzki, “Mongolische Lehnwörter bei Maḥmūd al-Kāšgarī?” in *Maḥmūd al-Kāšgarī’nin 1000. doğum yıldönümü dolayısıyla Uluslararası Divānu Luğātī’-Turk Sempozyumu 5–7 Eylül 2008, İstanbul = The Divānu Luğātī’-Turk International Symposium: In Commemoration of Maḥmūd al-Kāšgarī’s 1000th Birthday, 5th–7th September 2008, İstanbul*, ed. Hayati Develi et al., *Türk Dilleri Araştırmaları Dizisi*, vol. 63 (İstanbul: Eren, 2011), 367–80.

80. *Die Toñuquq-Inschrift*, 92.

81. Cf. Klaus Röhrborn, “Zur Darstellung der Gutturale in den indischen Fremdwörtern des Uigurischen,” *Central Asiatic Journal* 32.3/4 (1988): 233–35, 238–39.

82. See Eddy Moerloose, “Sanskrit Loan Words in Uighur,” *Journal of Turkish Studies* 4 (1980): 61–78.

83. Hucker, *Dictionary of Official Titles*, 452b, no. 5713. An anonymous reviewer of our paper has kindly drawn our attention to Tocharian B *simā* ‘[executive] adjutant, marshal’ (?), most probably also borrowed from an Early Middle Chinese form of this title (Douglas Q. Adams, *A Dictionary of Tocharian B: Revised and Greatly Enlarged*, 2 vols., Leiden Studies in Indo-European, vol. 10 [Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2013], vol. 2: 758).

84. Mehmet Ölmez, “Uygurca Xuanzang-Biyografisindeki Çince alıntılar (Chinesische Lehnwörter in uigurischer Xuanzang-Biographie),” *Türk Dilleri Araştırmaları* 4 (1995): 125; Masahiro Shōgaito et al., *The Berlin*

occurred in the northwest Chinese dialects of the Tang period and resulted in the development of a prenasalized voiced stop [ʰmb] in syllables with non-nasal finals.⁸⁵ The inscription of Tonyukuk could well reflect an earlier (Sui-Tang) pronunciation of the syllable *ma* 馬 as *mä with the nucleus vowel *ä, whose phonetic nature is uncertain and disputed.⁸⁶ Based on these considerations, the form in question may be read as *simä* or *sima/sima*. In Old Turkic transcriptions of foreign words, fluctuations between front-vowel and back-vowel forms (cf. above, *sāñün* ~ *sañun*), as well as violations of the vowel harmony rules in suffixation, are commonly observed.⁸⁷ The presence of the accusative suffix spelled with a front g² Ğ allows us to opt for the reading *simä*, but the variant *sima/sima* cannot be excluded.

To sum up, it can be noted that the names of both persons mentioned in line 9 of the Tonyukuk inscription have the same structure, which consists of an ethnonym (*kun(i)* vs. *toŋra*) denoting a tribal unit within the Tiele confederation and a military title of Chinese origin (*sāñün* vs. *simä*). In fact, they simply refer to the ethnic identity and the high social status of their bearers, the most or even the only significant factors for the successful performance of an important diplomatic mission. The very choice of the tribes from which the envoys were selected does not seem accidental: the Xun/Kun tribe had long-term close relations with China, so a military commander of this tribe was sent on a mission to the Chinese court, while the dispatch of a military leader of the Toŋra tribe to the Khitan is most likely to have been conditioned by a degree of linguistic proximity (or at least mutual intelligibility) between the languages of these two ethnic groups. The events described in this passage are to be explained by ethnolinguistic and historical reasons that have until now largely escaped scholarly attention and can be fully determined only in the light of the latest discoveries in the history and philology of Inner Asia of the Old Turkic period.

Chinese Text U 5335 Written in Uighur Script: A Reconstruction of the Inherited Uighur Pronunciation of Chinese, Berliner Turfantexte, vol. 34 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015), 171.

85. W. South Coblin, *A Compendium of Phonetics in Northwest Chinese*, Journal of Chinese Linguistics Monograph Series, no. 7 (Berkeley, CA: Project on Linguistic Analysis, Univ. of California, 1994), 58.

86. *Ibid.*, 76, 135, no. 0044b.

87. See Marcel Erdal, "On the Frontness Opposition in Loanwords in Old Uygur," *Nairiku Ajia gengo-no kenkyū* 内陸アジア言語の研究 = *Studies on the Inner Asian Languages* 17 (2002): 3–24; *idem*, *Grammar of Old Turkic*, 133–36.