

Issues of Concern of Orhon Script Studies

L. Bold

One of the major contributions of Asian nomads to the world civilization phonetic script is often called in scientific works as ancient Turkish rune script or Orhon-Enisei rune script, or Orhon-Enisei script and so on. However, from a scientific point of view, neither of these is very precise. It is more relevant to call them by the name of the place where monuments mainly written in these letters were preserved, like Orhon-Tuul script, or in short, Orhon script, and to call the monuments Orhon script monuments.

At the end of last century, Orhon script monuments were disclosed by scientists and explorers from Europe to the academic world. The findings attracted the attentions of many researchers on Altai and Turkish studies and were followed by numerous discoveries of monuments on the territory of Mongolia, thus contributing to scientific researches in this area. Following explorations of famous scientists like N. M. Yadrintsev and V. V. Radlov in late last century and at the wake of this century, Mrs E. N. Klements discovered the Monument of Tonyukuk, the Wise, V. L. Kotlovich discovered the Monument of Kulichur, G. I. Rawstedt discovered the monument called Mojuchur or Scenga Rock, and the Monument of Guuge Hill or the Monument of Jaklakar, who is the Khan of Uigurs, botanist N. P. Levin discovered the Monument of Xol Asgat or Altan Tamgan Tarhan, and B. Ja. Vladimirtsov discovered the writings on Zuun Ovoo.

The discoveries were known world-wide and their studies not only allowed researchers to penetrate into the secrecy of these writings considered at their times as cryptic, but also furnished an opportunity to initiate and develop one of the subjects of Eastern studies, namely ancient Turkish studies. These works published in foreign countries are well known to distinguished scholars, so here, the author focuses on some works done in the country on the issue.

The first work which put a start to Orhon script studies in Mongolia was a translation of writings of the monuments to Tanyukuk the Wise, wise state advisor of three khans of ancient Turkey, and the monument to Kul-tegin, a famous military man. From that time on, the

exploration, decipherment, and scientific study of the Orhon script monuments were given considerable attention.

Positive results of initiatives undertaken on the issue in 1970s and 1980s are worth to be stressed here. The most significant among all these results are Orhon writing on a monument known among scholars on Turkish studies as the Monument of Tariat (some scholars call it of Teph, L. B.) and writing on a monument found at the Tes River (thus named the Tes Orhon script monument). Thanks to the efforts of Mongolian explorers, all these valuable findings reached the researchers, and these sacred literary monuments built with the intelligence of the Mongolian people themselves telling their own stories were published. Besides, B. Bazyghan, S. Harjaubai and J. Bold deciphered a number of Turkish writings and re-deciphered some previously known writings.

There is no doubt that the proliferation of development in ancient Turkish studies on the basis of however small achievements in ancient Orhon script monuments studies will be of great importance to the development of Mongolian language, literature and historical science, and will significantly contribute to the development of Altai studies. On the other hand, this is our solemn duty. It should be carried out among all of us, our honoured counterparts in Turkish study. There are strong need to widen the scope of research and to improve its methods and techniques. That makes our work scope clearer. On this very issue we believe that there is an urgent need to develop and publish an atlas covering all the Orhon script monuments on the territory of Mongolia, which will become a reliable mean in further studies.

This should be done very soon, since the writings on some monuments are wearing out and being erased. Under these circumstances, there are a lot to do to save and protect the writings. This causes in recent day of transition to democracy and great renewals. This can only be done by giving up old methods and taking new ways of thinking.

These literary monuments of ancient Turkey and Yugur found in basing of Orhon and Selenge rivers might become inexhaustible resources for versatile studies. Along with historians, linguists there are great opportunities for anthropologists, ancient historians, cultural scientists and experts from other subjects to co-operate with one another. Scientists from

other countries with advanced ancient Turkish studies are very welcome. We believe that in this co-operation we will deeply respect their research directions and subjects, which are formed in a long time, and their personal views and desires. By no ways there will be even a hint to enforce them to study certain themes or to group them. For sure we understand each other.

The trend of Orhon script studies is to widen its scope of studies by incorporating the results achieved.