

On *ulug oglum agrip yok bolča* in the Bilgä Kagan Inscription^{*,**}

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ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to give new explanation for the expression *agrip yok bol-* occurring in 9th line of the south side of the Bilgä Kagan Inscription. After a thorough survey of former research and several Chinese sources, the authors came to the conclusion that this expression must be a euphemistic expression for being beheaded in a battle. The authors found also that *kog säñün* was Guo Yingjie 郭英傑. In sum, the sentence in question is to be read as *ulug oglum agrip yok bolča kog säñünüg balbal tikä bertim* ‘When my oldest son died of a disease, I readily erected General Kog as a *balbal* (for him).’ The expression *agrip yok bol-* is to be regarded as a euphemistic expression for being beheaded in a battle.

KEYWORDS

Bilgä Kagan Inscription, Dushan [Mountain], euphemistic expression, Guo Yingjie, *Jiu Tangshu*, Orkhon Turkic, *Quan Tangwen*, *Xin Tangshu*

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** Due to a mistake entered during the typesetting process, the quotation by Park (2019: 34–35) on page 547 was published with a textual error. In this version of the article the mistake is corrected.

I. INTRODUCTION

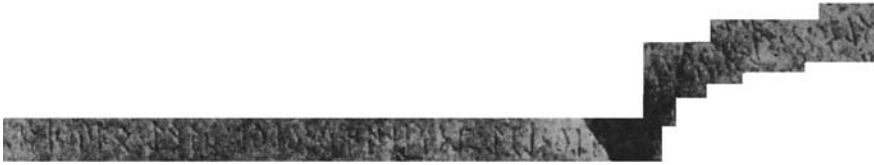
Orkhon Turkic is the oldest Turkic dialect whose written records have come down to us (Tekin 1968: 7). It is known to us through the inscriptions found in present-day Outer Mongolia, mainly in the basin of the Orkhon River, thus being conveniently called ‘the Orkhon inscriptions’. These are the Kül Tegin, Bilgä Kagan, Tuñukuk, Išbara Tarkan (Ongi), and Küli Čor (Ikhe-Khüshötü) inscriptions (Tekin 1968: 9).

The Kül Tegin and Bilgä Kagan inscriptions were about a kilometer away from each other. Many parts of these two inscriptions are almost identical with each other. The Bilgä Kagan inscription is in a worse state of preservation than the Kül Tegin inscription (Tekin 1968: 10). Severely damaged, these two inscriptions are now preserved in the museum. The replicas of these inscriptions are in their original places.

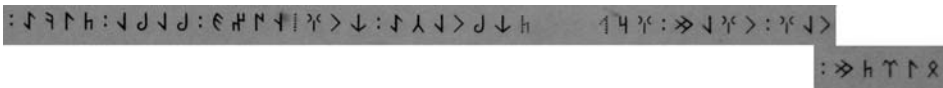
Although many parts of the Bilgä Kagan inscription are now well understood, the south side is heavily damaged and there are many illegible / incomprehensible words and sentences on this side.¹ Moreover, on this side there are sentences whose context is not understood. One of them is the first sentence in the 9th line.

II. RESEARCHES UP TO PRESENT

The sentence in question is as follows:



the picture in the Finnish edition (1892: Tab. 29)²



typeset in the Finnish edition (1892: 20)



the untouched rubbing in the Radloff's edition (1893: Tafel XXIV)

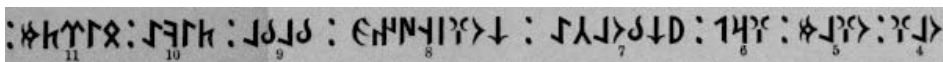
¹ In this connection, Alyılmaz (2005: 115) reports as follows: ‘The south side of the Bilgä Kagan inscription contains Turkic text with 15 lines. In the course of elapsed time, however, most of the written surfaces on this side of the inscription swelled/laminated and flaked off in layers. It is not possible to encounter an intact line on this side of the inscription [Bilge Kağan yazıtının güney yüzü, 15 satır Köktürk harfleri Türkçe metni içermektedir. Ancak yazıtın bu yüzünde yer alan yazılı yüzeylerin büyük bölümü, geride kalan süreçte kabarıp / yapraklaşıp tabakalar hâlinde dökülmüştür. Yazıtın bu yüzünde sağlam bir satırla karşılaşmak mümkün değildir].’

² The images of this paper were all scanned by the first author at the Seoul National University Library.





the touched rubbing in the Radloff's edition (1893: Tafel XXV)



typeset in the Radloff's edition (1896: Tafel CI)

The sentence in question is transliterated according to the Radloff's edition (1896) in Latin script as follows:

WLГ : WGLm : GRp : YwKBWLčA : wKWGsñWñg : BLBL : tIkA : bIrtm :

This sentence has been read so far as follows:³

(1) Radloff (1894)

улуз оџлым аџрып јок болча куң сәнўнни тикә бәртим. (p. 69)

'Als mein ältester Sohn an einer Krankheit gestorben war, benachrichtigte ich den Kung-sängün.' (p. 69)

аџры (v) [Uig., Abak. und südliche Dial.]

krank sein, 147 (Ха 7,3) оџлым аџрып јок болча als mein ältester Sohn an einer Krankheit gestorben war. (p. 86a)

бол [alle nördl. Dial., die südl. Dial. ол]

...; 11111111 (Ха 7,4) аџрып јок болча da er an einer Krankheit gestorben war. (p. 140b)

(2) Radloff (1895)

улуз оџлым аџрып јок болча куң сәнўниг балбал тикә бәртим (p. 199, 201)

'... mein ältester Sohn starb an einer Krankheit und ich stellte dem Kung-Sängün zu Ehren den Steinpfeiler auf, ...' (pp. 199–200)

(3) Thomsen (1896)

ul^uγ oγ^um aγ^up joq_bolča quγ_s^anün'ig blbl tikä birt'm. (p. 129)

'Mon fils aîné étant mort de maladie, je fis mener le deuil(?) à Kou-sengun.' (p. 129)

(4) Radloff (1897)

улуз оџлум аџрып јок болча куџ-сәнўнўг балбал тикә бәртим. (p. 147)

'Als mein ältester Sohn an (einer) Krankheit¹⁾ gestorben war, stellte ich den Kug-Sengün als Balbal auf.' (p. 147)

1) Wunde?

аџры (v) krank sein 86a, 411. (p. 160a)

³ Researchers have used different languages and transcription/transliteration systems. The authors tried to give the reading of each researcher chronologically and just as it is. The interpretation of each researcher is arranged in the following order: (1) the transcription of the text; (2) the translation of the text; (3) the words in question given in the glossary by the researcher.



(5) Radlov & Melioranskij (1897)

улуџ оџлум аџрып јок болча Куџ-сәнџүнџ балбал тикә бәртим. (p. 34)

‘Когда мой старший сынъ умеръ отъ болѣзни²⁾, я поставиль (ему) бальбаломъ Куџъ Сенџуна.’ (p. 34)

2) Отъ раны?

(6) Thomsen (1924)

‘Nachdem mein ältester Sohn an Krankheit gestorben war, ließ ich Quj sänjün als *balbal* aufstellen.’ (p. 158)

(7) Orkun (1936)

ul^ug oĝl^m aĝr^p y^ok bolça kuĝ sⁿünⁱĝ b^alb^al tike birt^m. (p. 70)

‘Büyük oğlum hastalanıp yol olsa [= ölse] Ku Sengünü balbal dikiverdim [When my eldest son fell ill and disappeared [= died], I readily erected Ku Sänjün as a *balbal*].’ (p. 70)

ayrı- *hastalanmak* [to fell ill]

-p II C [S] 9 (I, 70) (Orkun 1941: 6)

(8) Malov (1959)

улуџ оџлым аџрып јок болча. Куџ сәнџүниĝ балбал тикә бiртим. (p. 18)

‘Когда мой старший сын умер от болезни (от раны?), я поставил (ему) бальбалом Куџ-сенгуна.’ (p. 23)

аџры- ‘хворать’ Мор. (Ха 9). (p. 89a)

(9) Tekin (1968)

uluĝ oĝlum ayır^p yoĝ bolça quĝ sänjünüg balbal tikä birtim. (p. 246)

‘When my oldest son died of a disease, I readily erected Qu, the general, as a balbal (for him).’ (p. 279)

ayrı- to become sick

a.-p BK S9 (p. 300a)

(10) Ergin (1970)

Uluĝ oĝlum aĝrıp yoĝ bolça Kuĝ Senĝünüg balbal tike birtim. (p. 70)

‘Büyük oğlum hastalanıp yol olunca Ku’yu, generali balbal olarak diki verdim [When my eldest son fell ill and disappeared, I readily erected Ku, the general, as a balbal].’ (p. 29)

aĝrı- aĝrımak [to ache], hasta olmak [to fell ill] (p. 85)

(11) Ajdarov (1971)

улуџ оџлым аџрып јок болча. Куџ сеңүниĝ балбал тике бiртим. (p. 314a)

‘Когда мой старший сын умер от болезни [от раны?], я поставил (ему) бальбалом Куџ-сенгуна.’ (p. 314b)

Аџры — творить⁴ [Мор., Ха 9] (p. 355a)

⁴ An editorial error for хворать.



(12) Clauson (1972)

ağrı-/-ağru:- Den. V. fr. **ağır**; lit. ‘to be, or become, heavy’ but usually ‘to be in pain or painful’; ... **Türkü VIII uluğ oğlum ağrıp yok bolça**: ‘when my eldest son fell ill and died’ *II S 9*: ... (p. 91a)

(13) Tekin (1988)

: *ul(u)g : ogl(u)m : (a)gr(ı)p : yok bolça : kuug : s(e)ñün(ü)g : b(a)lb(a)l : tike : birt(i)m* : (p. 52)
 ‘Büyük oğlum hastalanıp ölünce Ku’yu, generali, *balbal* (olarak) dikiverdim [When my eldest son fell ill and disappeared, I readily erected Ku, the general, as a *balbal*].’ (p. 53)
agrı- hastalanmak [to fell ill]
a.-p (BK G [S] 9) (p. 117)

(14) Tekin (1995)

Uluğ oğlum ağrıp yok bolça Kuğ, Señgünüg, balbal tike birtim. (p. 78)
 ‘Büyük oğlum hastalanıp ölünce Ku’yu, Generali, balbal (olarak) dikiverdim [When my eldest son fell ill and died, I readily erected Ku, the general, as a *balbal*].’ (p. 79)
ağrı- hastalanmak [to fell ill] (p. 97a)

(15) Tekin (2000)

uluğ oğlum agrıp yok bol-ça kug säñünüg balbal tikä birtim ‘Büyük oğlum hastalanıp yok olunca, General Ku’yu (onun kabrine) taş heykel olarak dikiverdim [When my eldest son fell ill and disappeared, I readily erected General Ku as a stone sculpture (to his grave)]’ (p. 179)
uluğ oğlum agrıp yok bolça... ‘Büyük oğlum hastalanıp ölünce... [When my eldest son fell ill and died ...]’ (p. 207)
agrı- hastalanmak [to fell ill] (BK G [S] 9) (p. 237a)

(16) Berta (2004)

ulwy oylwm ayrıp yoq bol’ça quy säñwnw’ğ balbal tikä bernim (pp. 174–175)
 ‘[Aztán] legidősebb fiam (tkp. nagyfiam) megbetegedvén meghalt. [Neki] *Kug szengün* balbalját szúrtam le (tkp. szúrva adtam) [[Then] my eldest son (actually, my great son) died of an illness. [For him] I sticked (actually, stabbing I gave) *Kug sengün’s balbal*].’²⁵ (p. 201)

(17) User (2009)

ul(u)g : ogl(u)m : (a)gr(ı)p : yok bol(u)ça : kug : s(ä)ñ(ü)g⁶ : b(a)lb(a)l : tikä : birt(i)m : (p. 140, 179, 243, 252, 348, 402, 414, 460)
ul(u)g : ogl(u)m : (a)gr(ı)p : yok bol(u)ça : kug : s(ä)ñün(ü)g : b(a)lb(a)l : tikä : birt(i)m : (p. 350)
agrı- hastalanmak [to fell ill] (p. 348, 517a)

⁵ This sentence was translated into Turkish as ‘[Sonra] en büyük oğlum (kk. büyük oğlum) hastalanarak öldü. [Ona] *Kug sengün* balbalını diktim (kk. dikip verdim) [[Then] my eldest son (literally, my elder son) got ill and died. [For him] I erected (literally, I erected and gave) the balbal of *Kug sengün*].’ (Berta 2010: 199).

⁶ An editorial error for s(ä)ñün(ü)g. This error is corrected later in Şirin 2016: 261, 636.



(18) Aydın (2012)

ulug oglum agrip yok bolça kug senünüg balbal tike bértim (p. 98)

‘Büyük oğlum hastalanıp ölünce General Ku’yu balbal (olarak) dikiverdim [When my eldest son fell ill and died, I readily erected General Ku as a *balbal*].’ (p. 98)

agri- hastalanmak [to fell ill]

a.-p **BK G** [S] 9 (p. 151a)

(19) Ölmez (2012)

ulug : oglum : agrip : yok bolça : k^uug : senünüg : balbal : tike : bértim : (p. 131)

‘Büyük oğlum hastalanıp vefat edince General Ku’yu balbal dikiverdim [When my eldest son fell ill and died, I readily erected General Ku as a *balbal*].’ (p. 145)

agri- hastalanmak [to fell ill] (p. 307a)

III. DISCUSSION

As seen above, all of the researchers translated *agriip yok bolča* literally and did not notice the context of this expression. The word *balbal* means ‘a stone pillar erected on a grave in token of an enemy killed by the deceased and occasionally inscribed with the name of the enemy’ (Clauson 1972: 333). Therefore, the verb *agri-* ‘to get sick, to fall ill’ has originally nothing to do with the word *balbal* at all.

Besides the sentence in question, there are following examples of *balbal* with a verb in the Orkhon inscriptions⁷:

(1) *karjim kaganka başlayu baz kaganig balbal tikmiş* ‘(my uncle, the kagan,) first erected Baz Kagan as a *balbal* for my father, the kagan.’ (KT E 16; BK E 13)

(2) *başlayu kirküz kaganig balbal tikdim* ‘First I erected the Kirgiz kagan as a *balbal* (for him).’ (KT E 25; BK E 20)

(3) *alp ärin ölürip balbal kilu bertim* ‘I killed their brave men and I readily made them *balbals*.’ (BK S 7)

(4) *alp ärin balbal kişdi* ‘(The Turkish people) let their brave men become *balbals*.’ (O F 3)

Considering these examples of *balbal*, Bilgä Kagan’s eldest son who died of a disease, must have something to do with General Kog. As far as we know, Park Won Kil (2019), a Korean expert for Mongolian history, is the first researcher who noticed the context of the expression *agriip yok bolča*. In *Wèi Yōuzhōu zhǎngshǐ Xuē Chūyù pò Qidān lùbù* 爲幽州長史薛楚玉破契丹露布 [Announcement of victory on Xue Chuyu’s, the *zhangshi*⁸ of Youzhou [You Prefecture], defeating the Khitans] of the 352th scroll of *Quán Tángwén* 全唐文,⁹ Park (2019: 40, 53, 59–60) found the following information, which is related to this expression¹⁰:

⁷ The English translations are according to Tekin 1968: 266, 267, 279, 291, respectively.

⁸ *Zhangshi* was an official post under *cishi* 刺史 ‘feudal provincial/prefectural governor’ of a prefecture (*zhou* 州) during the Tang period.

⁹ *Qinding Quán Tángwén* 欽定全唐文 [All of Tang writings made by imperial order] or briefly *Quán Tángwén* 全唐文 is a general anthology of almost 18,500 pieces of prose by ca. 3,000 authors of the Tang Dynasty (*Tángcháo* 唐朝, 619–907) and the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period (*Wudài Shíguó* 五代十國, 907–960 [or 979]). It was compiled by Dong Gao 董誥 (1740–1818) et al. in 1814 under the edict of the Jiaqing Emperor (*Jiaqing di* 嘉慶帝, r. 1796–1820), the 7th emperor of the Qing Dynasty (*Qingcháo* 清朝, 1636–1912).

¹⁰ This text was quoted from Dong et al. 1972: 4516.



其突厥分兵，助為聲援，官軍既會，萬弩齊發。逆順不敵，[左]賢王失陣 (...) 而西連匈奴，東構渤海 (...) 我行軍七千，乘天假威靈，黜之碓石，斬單於之愛子，燔契丹之積卒，眾虜奔逃，扶傷不暇。.....

‘Hence, the Turks divided [their] forces and helped [the Khitans] for showing support. The government troops gathered already and shot a great many crossbows at once. On the contrary, they could not resist. The [left] wise king ([左]賢王) [of the Turks] lost the formation. (...) And (the Khitan military chief Ketuyu 可突于¹¹) united with the Xiongnu to the west and allied with Bohai to the east. (...) We (or I) dispatched 7,000 troops. They (= 7,000 troops) took advantage of heaven’s lending its divine power (to themselves), expelled them (= the enemies) from Xiashi, **be-headed the beloved son of the Chanyu**, and routed many soldiers of the Khitans. Many enemies (= the Khitans) fled away and had no time to give aid to the wounded.’

Several terms related to the Xiongnu are used for the Turks in this text. *Xianwang* 賢王 [wise king] can be amended as *Zuo xianwang* 左賢王 [left wise king]. As is well known, 左賢王 was second to the supreme ruler, i.e. *Chanyu* (單于), and this position was taken by a successor to the throne. Therefore, the [left] wise king ([左]賢王) in this text must be the eldest son of the kaghan (= Bilgä Kagan) of the Turks as Park (2019: 57, 66) concluded. The Xiongnu and *Chanyu* (單于) refer to the Turks (*Tūjué* 突厥) and the kaghan of the Turks, respectively. Bohai (or Balhae in Korean, 698–926) was a successor state of the Korean kingdom of Goguryeo (高句麗, 37 BC–AD 668).

This battle is mentioned in the *Jiù Tángshū* 舊唐書 [Old Book of Tang] and the *Xīn Tángshū* 新唐書 [New Book of Tang] as follows¹²:

(1) *Xuánzōng běnji* 玄宗本紀 [biography of Xuanzong] of vol. 5 of *Xīn Tángshū*:

[二十一年]閏[三]月癸酉，幽州副總管郭英傑及契丹戰于都山，英傑死之。

‘On (the day of) *guiyou* of intercalary [March in the 21th year (of Emperor Xuanzong)]¹³ Guo Yingjie, the vice-*zongguan*¹⁴ of Youzhou [You Prefecture], fought with the Khitans at Dushan¹⁵ [Mountain]. [Guo] Yingjie died.’

(2) *Xuánzōng běnji* 玄宗本紀 [biography of Xuanzong] of vol. 8 of *Jiù Tángshū*:

[二十一年]閏[三]月，幽州道副總管郭英傑等討契丹，為所敗於都山之下，英傑死之。

‘In the month of intercalary [March of the 21th year (of Emperor Xuanzong)] Guo Yingjie, the vice-*zongguan* of Youzhou Province, and others launched a punitive expedition against the Khitans and were defeated around Dushan [Mountain]. [Guo] Yingjie died.’

¹¹ This name occurs also as Ketugan 可突干.

¹² For the texts in Chinese script of these four examples see <http://viewer.nl.go.kr:8080/main.wviewer> (retrieved on February 7, 2019).

¹³ The 21th year of Emperor Xuanzong corresponds to the year 733.

¹⁴ *Zongguan* [manager] was an official post renamed from *dudu* 都督 [military governor].

¹⁵ This mountain is located at the junction of the northwestern part of the county town of Qinglong Manchu Autonomous County (*Qīnglóng Mǎnzú zìzhìxiàn* 青龙满族自治县) in Qinhuangdao 秦皇島 City and the Kuancheng Manchu Autonomous County (*Kuānchéng Mǎnzú zìzhìxiàn* 宽城满族自治县) of Chengde 承德 City. The main peak is 1846.3 meter above sea level.



(3) *Qidān zhuàn* 契丹傳 [biography of the Khitans] of vol. 199 of *Jiù Tángshū*:

明年可突于又來抄掠。幽州長史薛楚玉遣副將郭英傑、吳克勤、鄔知義、羅守忠率精騎萬人，並領降奚之眾追擊之。軍至渝關都山之下，可突于領突厥兵以拒官軍。奚眾遂持兩端，散走保險。官軍大敗，知義、守忠率麾下遁歸，英傑、克勤沒於陣，其下六千餘人，盡為賊所殺。

'In the next year (= AD 733) Ketuyu came again and plundered. Xue Chuyu, the *zhangshi* of Youzhou [You Prefecture], sent [his] vice commanders – Guo Yingjie, Wu Keqin, Wu Zhiyi, and Luo Shouzhong – and let them lead 10,000 elite cavalymen together with the crowd of the surrendered Xi people and give chase to them. As the troops reached around Dushan [Mountain] of Yuguan¹⁶, Ketuyu resisted the government troops by commanding the Turkic troops. In the end, the crowd of the Xi people played a double game. They scattered and fled. They relied on the ruggedness [of the mountains]. When the government troops sustained a crushing defeat, [Wu] Zhiyi and [Luo] Shouzhong fled and came [back] by leading those under their command. [Guo] Yingjie and [Wu] Keqin died in battle. More than 6,000 people under their command were all killed by the enemy [troops].'

(4) 郭英傑傳 *Guō Yīngjié zhuàn* [biography of Guo Yingjie] of vol. 103 of *Jiù Tángshū*:

開元二十一年，幽州長史薛楚玉遣英傑及裨將¹⁷吳克勤、烏¹⁸知義、羅守忠等率精騎萬人及降奚之眾以討契丹，屯兵於榆¹⁹關之外；契丹首領可突干引突厥之眾拒戰於都山之下。官軍不利，知義、守忠率麾下便道遁歸。英傑與克勤逢賊力戰，皆沒於陣。其下精銳六千餘人仍與賊苦戰，賊以英傑之首示之，竟不降，盡為賊所殺。

'In the 21st year of Kaiyuan²⁰ (= AD 733), Xue Chuyu, the *zhangshi* of Youzhou [You Prefecture], sent [his] vice commanders – [Guo] Yingjie, Wu Keqin, Wu Zhiyi, Luo Shouzhong, and others – and let them lead 10,000 elite cavalymen together with the crowd of the surrendered Xi people and launch a punitive expedition against the Khitans. [They] stationed troops outside Yuguan. Ketuyu, the Khitan leader, fought against [the government troops] by commanding the crowd of the Turks around Dushan [Mountain]. When the government troops were at a disadvantage, [Wu] Zhiyi and [Luo] Shouzhong fled and came [back] by a shortcut and by leading those under their command. [Guo] Yingjie and [Wu] Keqin encountered the enemy [troops], fought with all their might, and all died in battle. More than 6,000 elite people under their command fought still with the enemy [troops] bitterly. The enemy [troops] showed them the head of [Guo] Yingjie in the end. [However, they] did not surrender and were all killed by the enemy [troops].'

As seen above, this battle broke out in the month of intercalary March in 733. This battle is mentioned in the 7th–9th lines of the South side of the Bilgä Kagan Inscription, too. The (surrendered) Xi 奚 people corresponds to *tatabi bodun* 'the Tatabi people' in the Bilgä Kagan Inscription. As Park (2019: 3, 33, 66) insists, Dushan 都山 [Mountain] must refer to *tönkär* (or *tünkär*) *tay* 'Tönkär (or Tünkär) Mountain' in this inscription. In connection with this battle, Park (2019) writes:

¹⁶ Yuguan (渝關 or 榆關) is today's Shanhaiguan 山海關.

¹⁷ *Fùjiāng* 副將 in *Qidān zhuàn* 契丹傳 [Biography of the Khitans] of vol. 199 of *Jiù Tángshū* 舊唐書.

¹⁸ *Wū* 鄔 in *Qidān zhuàn* 契丹傳 [Biography of the Khitans] of vol. 199 of *Jiù Tángshū* 舊唐書.

¹⁹ *Yú* 渝 in *Qidān zhuàn* 契丹傳 [Biography of the Khitans] of vol. 199 of *Jiù Tángshū* 舊唐書.

²⁰ *Kaiyuan* is the second era name of Emperor Xuanzong.



(1) ‘The battle of Tōŋkār Mountain, which took place in the intercalary month (March) of AD 733, was an international war in East Asia, in which the Turks, the Khitans, and Bohai were allied forces [on the one hand], and the Tang army and the Xi people were tied together as allied forces [on the other hand]. This battle was also indirectly linked to Silla and Japan.’ (p. 33);

(2) ‘In other words, it is revealed that the Battle of Dushan 都山 [Mountain] consisted of the Western front against the cavalry of the Turks and the Khitans and the Eastern front against the Balhae (Bohai 渤海) troops.’ (p. 58)

The Chinese commander mentioned in this inscription must be Guo Yingjie 郭英傑, as Park (2019: 34) identified. The letter group 𐰉𐰺𐰽 wKWG corresponds to Guo 郭. The reconstructed pronunciation of 郭 is *kuak* in Late Middle Chinese and *kwak* in Early Middle Chinese.²¹ Cf. *oŋ totok* ‘military governor Wang’ (< 王都督 *Wáng²² dūdū*) in the Kül Tegin and Bilgä Kagan inscriptions for the vowel *o* of a Chinese loan-word in Orkhon Turkic corresponding to *wa* in Chinese. Therefore, the letter group 𐰉𐰺𐰽 KWsŋW̄n in BK S 8 which is typeset in the Finnish edition (1892: 20) must be corrected as 𐰉𐰺𐰽 KWGsŋW̄n. This letter group is typeset as 𐰉𐰺𐰽 KWG : sŋW̄n in the Radloff’s edition (1896: Tafel CI).

As to the succession of the throne after the death of Bilgä Kagan, Park (2019: 34–35) writes:

‘First of all, there are so many assumptions about the succession of the throne from Inäl Kagan to Ozmiš Kagan (*Wūsūmīshī Kèhán* 烏蘇米施可汗, r. 742–744) after the death of Bilgä Kagan that every scholar has different opinions [about it] due to the inconsistency between basic historical data and because of their own contradictions. However, it is not impossible to judge when we use as the basis of our research those [historical data] with certain dates and contents such as imperial messages and victory reports. I believe that among the scholars’ arguments the view of 薛宗正 Xue Zongzheng²³ is appropriate, who summarized the names, reigns, and achievements of the kaghans, centering on the imperial edicts (*zhàochiwén* 詔敕文) or the memorials to the emperors (*shàngzòuwén* 上奏文). I accordingly arranged the succession of the throne after the death of Bilgä Kagan as in the order of Tǎnri Inäl Kagan (*Dēnglì Yīrán Kèhán* 登利伊然可汗, r. 734–March 740), Bilgä Kutlug Tǎnri Kagan (*Bìjiā Gǔduōlù Dēnglì Kèhán* 苾伽骨咄祿登利可汗, r. March 740–July 741), Kutlug Yabgu Kagan (*Gǔduōlù Yèhù Kèhán* 骨咄祿葉護可汗, r. 742)*, and Ozmiš Kagan. And based on this, I developed an argument.’

In connection with the expression *agrip yok bol-*, Park (2019) writes:

(1) ‘Taking all of these arguments into account, it is clear that [Bilgä Kagan’s] son who died of an illness is not Tǎnri Inäl Kagan. Therefore, it is highly probable that the person who is recorded to have died of an illness in this inscription is a euphemistic expression for [Bilgä Kagan’s] eldest son who was beheaded in the Battle of Dushan 都山 [Mountain] in the intercalary month (March) of AD 733 as I presume.’ (p. 38);

²¹ The reconstructed pronunciation of 郭英傑 is *kuak-ŋiajŋ-khiat* in Late Middle Chinese and *kwak-ŋiajŋ-giat* in Early Middle Chinese. ‘... Early Middle Chinese is the language of the *Qieyün* [切韻] rhyme dictionary of A.D. 601, which codified the standard literary language of both North and South China, the preceding period of division. ... Late Middle Chinese is the standard language of the High Tang [唐] Dynasty, based on the dialect of the capital, Chang’an [長安]. ...’ (Pulleyblank 1991: i); *j* represents *y*.

²² The reconstructed pronunciation of 王 is *waŋ* in Late Middle Chinese and *wuaŋ* in Early Middle Chinese; *y* represents *ü*.

²³ Xue 1992.

* The type-setting error in parentheses was corrected on 19th of February 2021.



(2) Although there are no specific records about the view of the soul or the execution manners of the [Orkhon] Turks, it can be said that [the expression] *agríp yok bol-* in BK S 9 is certainly a euphemistic expression for [Bilgä Kagan's eldest son's] being captured and beheaded by the Tang 唐 troops in the Battle of Dushan 都山 [Mountain] in the intercalary month (March) of AD 733. His death ... is a state where [his] neck was cut off and [his] skull was stolen by the Tang troops. Such a death is like being in a situation where “he exists as a wandering soul and can not go to the next world” in terms of the later Mongolian manners and customs. If we infer from this, it is safe to say that the expression *agrî-* ‘to fall ill’ in the inscription can be regarded as a contemporary euphemistic expression for “not to be able to go the way of the soul” (pp. 41–42).

In sum, we read the sentence in question as *ulug oglum agríp yok bolča kog sänjünüg balbal tikä bertim* ‘When my oldest son died of a disease, I readily erected General Kog as a *balbal* (for him).’ and regard the expression *agríp yok bol-* as a euphemistic expression for being beheaded in a battle.

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