

Central Asian Law: An Historical Overview

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The Ninetieth Birthday
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Customary Law in the Ancient Turkic States of Central Asia: the Legal Documents and Practical Regulations

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“When the Blue Sky emerged above, and below – the Brown Earth, between the two human kinship appeared. And my ancestors – Bumyn-qaghan, Istemi-qaghan mounted the throne over the people. After mounting the throne, they founded the *El* (State) and established the *Türü* (Law) of the Turkic people!”

In such a way, Yollyg-qaghan tells about the former centuries, about the start of the Turkic *el* and its first qaghans – his ancient ancestors. He was the “prince of the lucky fate,” herald of the qaghans’ house and the first Turkic chronicler, whose name and work has come to us down through the centuries. On the “eternal stone” – two steles decorated by the dragon figures – he wrote in Turkic runic script the funeral paragraphs in honor of his two buried kinsmen – Bilge-qaghan and Kül-tegin – and also did not forget to mention the founders of their great power. He repeated this text twice – in 732 and 735. The two stone steles with the inscriptions telling about the dynamic history of the Turkic people lie now in one of the hollows in the Hangai Mountains near the river Orkhon, at the place where the rulers of the powerful nomadic Empires put their yurts and built their palaces.

Both of these inscriptions formulated the paradigm *qaghan – El – Türü*, the *Ruler – State – Law*. In this way, the three main bases of the social life and political thought of the Central Asian nomadic Empires were proclaimed. In addition, these inscriptions for the first time named the documents that fixated and proclaimed, reflected and preserved in the memory of the generations the norms of this life – the *eternal stone*, the *eternal stele* (*bengu tas*), the *eternal letters* (*bengu bitig*).

In the next three parts of my paper, I will try to illustrate how the legal relations and the legal concepts of the Turks were reflected in the inscriptions on the stone steles that were created by the Turkic intellectual elite, and also in the evidence given by the foreign observers, whose information significantly adds to and clarifies the short formulas of the Turkic peoples. The most important of the archaic nomadic state legal concepts were the laws on the *grazing* lands, the status of the qaghan domain and the norms of social inter-relationships. In the first part, I study the epigraphic documents that regulated inter-tribal relationships on the winter pastures, the main *grazing* territory of the nomadic community. In the second part, I publish and interpret the epigraphic inscriptions that were recently discovered in the central part of the Tian shan 天山 mountains and, in addition, the evidence from the Arab sources of the same period, which contain the information on *kukuruk* – the Khan domain, the protected territory, which was meant for preparations for war and guarded by the representative of the Khan. The inscriptions precisely fix the territory of the domain and its boundaries. The third part views the forms of social dependency that were regulated by custom and law in the ancient Turkic states.

The Forms of Social Dependency in the States of the Central Asian Nomads (from the end of the first millennium B.C. through the first millennium A.D.)

Social dependency is one of the most important manifestations of social relations. It encompasses all the forms stipulated by economic, political and other systems (in the framework of structural-functional ties), and not less is connected with the dependencies derived from moral standards, determined by the common law rules that regulate social relations. The state produces the most developed and progressively-complicated structure of social dependencies.

The social structure of the states that existed in the epicenter of the ancient civilizations has been studied relatively comprehensively and leaves the scholar with less uncertainty as compared with the social structure of the states that appeared on the peripheries of the ancient world, but that also revealed solid forms of social dependency. The relationship between the elite and the dependent social groups in these states, as well as the forms of suppression produced by them, seem to have been eroded, smoothed away or deformed. The institutions of the former formations and even some features of the archaic society remained, creating the obstacles for introducing the norms and processes that existed in historically more developed states.

This situation is fully descriptive of one of the largest regions of the Old World – Central Asia, where at the end of the second and beginning of the first millennium B.C. the economic-cultural type of extensive nomadic cattle-breeding formed and defined the historical fate of the steppe zone of Eurasia for several thousands years¹

At the beginning of the first millennium B.C., the tribes that inhabited Central Asia created the nomadic culture of the Scythian type. They developed bronze and iron metallurgy, metal working and wheeled carriages and mastered horse riding. Their house was a semi-spherical nomad tent with a conic top, which they fixed on a big carriage when they moved on. The Scythian types of armament and horse dress, the typical Scythian clothes, and the animal style in arts have been certified by the excavations in the Altai, in Mongolia, as well as in the Black Sea area.²

¹ On the term economic-cultural type, see Левин М.Г., Н.Н.Чебоксаров. Хозяйственно-культурные типы и историко-этнографические области.// Советская этнография. 1955, № 4, с. 3-17. [M. G. Levin and N.N. Cheboksarov, *Hoziastvenno-kul'turnye tipy i istoriko-etnograficheskie oblasti*] (Economic-cultural Types and Historical-ethnographic Areas) and Марков Г.Е. История хозяйства и материальной культуры. Москва: Издательство Московского университета, 1979: 22-25 [G. E. Markov, *Istoriya hoziastva i material'noi kul'tury*] (The History of Economy and Material Culture). On the forms of the cattle-breeding economy in Central Asia, see Вайнштейн С.И. Историческая этнография тувинцев. Проблемы кочевого хозяйства. Москва: Наука, 1972: 11-37 [S. I. Vainshtein, *Istoricheskaya etnographiya tuvintsev. Problemy kochevogo obschestva*] (The Historical Ethnography of the Tuvinians. The Problems of the Nomadic Economy).

² Грач А.Д. Древние кочевники в центре Азии. Москва: Наука, 1980 [A. D. Grach, *Drevnie kochevniki v tsentre Azii*] (Ancient Nomads in the Centre of Asia); Руденко С.И. Культура населения Центрального Алтая в скифское время. Москва-Ленинград: Издательство Академии Наук, 1960 [S.I. Rudenko, *Kul'tura naseleniya Tsentral'nogo Altaia v skifskoe vremya*] (The Culture of the Population of the Central Altai in the Scythian Epoch)].

The features of the Scythian culture in Central Asia reconstructed from the archaeological data are insufficiently supported by the written sources. The nomads themselves might have mastered writing in the early 6th – 4th centuries B.C., as the mystical inscription on the silver vessel from the Scythian burial in Issyk (5th – 4th centuries B.C.) shows.³ However, the discovery of the steles of this probable Scythian writing, as well as its decipherment must be left for the future. Today, very little evidence on the Central Asian inhabitants of those times is preserved and that solely in the Chinese written records.

Sima Qian 司馬遷 collected the early stories about the northern barbarians in his *Records of the Grand Historian* (*Shiji* 史記) dating from 135–67 B.C.⁴ All of his information on this topic is fragmentary, extremely limited and in no way reminds one of the broad narrations about the Black Sea Scythians by Herodotus. Sima Qian names the nomads that inhabited Mongolia in the 7th – 5th centuries B.C. Rong 戎 and Di 狄; later they were called Hu 胡. At the same time in the steppes of Inner Mongolia, Southern Manchuria and in the spurs of the Great Xingan mountains, the Shan-rong 山 (the Mountain Rong) and the Dong-hu 東 (the Eastern barbarians) lived. The northern tribes permanently took part in the political life of the ancient Chinese states by struggling against them or joining with them in union against each others kingdoms and receiving benefits from this.⁵

Sima Qian expressively describes the barbarian way of life and the social structures of the northern tribes. The Rong and the Dong-hu were not politically united, and “always were dispersed in the mountainous valleys, had their own leaders and although often brought together more than one hundred [tribes] of the Rong, they failed to unite into a single unit.”⁶ The sources note that the Rong and the Dong-hu sowed millet, but their main occupation was nomadic cattle breeding: “They move with their cattle from a place to a place, dependent on the supply of water and grass. They do not know any permanent place. They live in round tents, the entrance of which faces the East. They eat meat, drink koumiss, and make clothes from colored woolen materials. . . Those who are courageous, strong and able to manage controversial cases are made the elders. They do not have inherited possessions. Each nomad camp has the lowest boss. From one hundred to thousand tents make a community. . . . From the eldest to the last dependent member each person grazes his own cattle, takes care of his possessions and they do not use each other as servants. . . In every matter they follow

³ К. А. Акишев. Курган Иссык. Москва: Искусство, 1978 [К. А. Akishev, *Kurgan Issyk*] (The Kurgan Issyk).

⁴ *Shiji* 史記 110; Burton Watson, trans. *Records of the Grand Historian*, vol. II. Columbia University Press: New York, 1961: 155-192.

⁵ Н.Я. Бичурин. Собрание сведений о народах, обитавших в Средней Азии в древние времена. Москва-Ленинград, Издательство Академии Наук СССР, 1950, V. 1, с. 39-45, issue 1, с. 34-37. [N. Ya. Bichurin, *Sobranie svedenii o narodah, obitavshih v Srednei Azii v drevnie vremena*] (The Collection on the Peoples Inhabiting Central Asia in Ancient Times).

⁶ В.С. Таскин. Материалы по истории сюнну. (По китайским источникам). Вып. I. Москва: Наука, 1968; Вып. II. Москва: Наука. Главная редакция восточной литературы, 1973 [V. S. Taskin, *Materialy po istorii siunnu (po kitaiskim istochnikam)*] (Materials on the History of the Hsiung-nu (from the Chinese sources)).

the opinion of the women, and only the military affairs do they manage themselves. War is an important activity for them.”⁷

It is difficult to draw a more vivid picture of the life of the clan-tribal society that did not have social division. According to the Chinese historiographer, among the Rong “the higher members of the society preserved the simplicity in relations with the lower members, and the latter served the former (the elected elders and the leaders – S.K.), who thus gained their sincerity and loyalty.”⁸ War and raiding with the aim of capturing loot was an important part of their lives. However, the Rong never threatened to conquer the Chinese kingdoms, even when those kingdoms were very weak. Military measures, gifts, paying bribes to the leaders, and trade prevented or restricted the raids of the nomads. The Chinese were much impressed by the barbarian horse cavalry in battle and sometimes imitated the clothes and weapons of their opponents.

A radical change in the situation took place in Central Asia, according to Sima Qian, during the period of the Warring States (Zhan-guo 戰國 403–211 B.C.). In the north and west, instead of the former Rong, a strong union of nomadic tribes called the Xiong-nu 匈奴 (the Huns) and the Yüe-zhi 月氏 appeared, and it is said of the Dong-hu that they achieved the height of prosperity under a strong ruler. The Chinese for the first time called the Xiong-nu their opponents; when in the 4th century B.C., these latter started the brutal struggle for the Ordos region against the Latter Zhao kingdom. The war went on with variable success; in this period the previously independent Xiong-nu tribes came to be integrated into the Xiong-nu confederation. In the West, the Xiong-nu neighbors were the Yüe-zhi – the Eastern-Scythian tribes (Saca) that together with the kindred Usuns occupied the large territory from the Tian Shan mountains to central Mongolia. The *tamgas* (heraldic symbols) of the Yüe-zhi leaders that were found not long ago on the rocks of the Tsagaan-gol canyon in the Gobi Altai mark the southern border of the Yüe-zhi lands.

In the last decade of the 3rd century B.C. the Xiong-nu tribal unit led by their military leader, the shan-yu, went through an unprecedented destruction of traditional relations that resulted in emergence of an archaic barbarian state. The founder of the Xiong-nu state, Maodun during the victorious wars managed to force the Han Empire not only to recognise his sovereignty, but also to pay an annual tribute. In 203–202, Maodun subdued the tribes of the Sayan, Altai and the Upper Yenisei; in 174–165, his son and successor Ji-zhu 稽粥, the Lao shang 老上 Shan-yu, after the victory over the Yüe-zhi forced them to move to the eastern part of Central Asia and established his control over the rich oasis cities of the Tarim river basin.

Until today, the social structure of the Xiong-nu state has remained a subject for discussion. According to A.N. Bernshtam, the main military-democratic institutions were formed already under Maodun and experienced an increasing impact of developing slavery institution.⁹ L.N. Gumiliov characterized the social structure under the first Xiong-nu ruler (*shan-yu* 單于) as a “gerontocracy – the

power of the elders in the clan,” and the Xiong-nu state as a clan empire.¹⁰ According to L.N. Gumiliov, by the 1st century B.C. this clan structure transformed into the *orda* or military democracy. However, this happened only in one part of the Xiong-nu society – the northern Xiong-nu from a clan state became a military-democratic state.¹¹ So far, according to L.N. Gumiliov, the development of the Xiong-nu state came in the framework of primitive communal formation.

The Xiong-nu state emerged from the military democracy of the Xiong-nu tribes in the 5th – 4th centuries B.C., and was formed in the fierce struggle against the neighboring tribes, the tribal unions and the Chinese states. The goal of its founders and their successors was to be supreme over all the peoples drawing the bow (the nomads) and to dominate the people living in earthen houses (the sedentary peasants).¹² Such a state could exist only as a centralized empire established by military-administrative principles.

The shan-yu was the head of the state and his power was strictly hereditary and enlightened by the heaven authority. He was called the Son of Heaven and officially titled as having been “born by Heaven and Earth, elevated by Sun and Moon, the great Xiong-nu shan-yu.”¹³ His power was determined by his rights and functions: a) the right to be in charge of the whole territory belonged to the Xiong-nu and the function of protecting this territory; b) the right to declare war and peace and the function of commanding the troops himself; c) the right to concentrate in his hands all the foreign relationship of the state and function to determine the course of foreign policy; d) the right over the life and death of each citizen and the function of supreme judge.

The shan-yu might have been also a focus of sacral power; in any case all the mentions by the source of acts to observe the cult came from the shan-yu, who “in the morning went out of his tent and worshiped the sun and in the evening worshiped the moon.”¹⁴ The shan-yu was surrounded by a numerous group of assistants, advisers and commanders; however, it was the shan-yu himself who always made the decision, even if he made it against the common opinion of his court.

The principal authorities in the state after the shan-yu were the left and the right (the Western and the Eastern) Wise Nobles – the sons or the close relatives of the shan-yu. They administered the western and eastern territories of the empire and at the same time were commanders-in-chief of the left and right wings of the army. Below them were other relatives of the shan-yu and they were in charge of particular territories. They had various titles and were called Heads over Ten Thousand Soldiers (*tumen*). Their number was strictly fixed – 24 top commanders distributed among the left and the right wings of the army, the western and the eastern parts of the empire. This or that position was occupied according to the degree of kinship ties with the shan-yu. The shan-yu himself appointed *tumens*. He also charged each *tumen* with a territory together with its population; any migration of the population without the shan-yu’s order was

⁷ Bichurin, *Central Asia in Ancient Times*, 1: 142-143.

⁸ Taskin, *History of the Hsiung-nu*, issue, 1: 123.

⁹ А.Н. Бернштам. Очерк истории гуннов. Ленинград: Издательство ЛГУ им. А.А. Жданова, 1951: 51-54. [A. N. Bernshtam, *Ocherk Istorii Gunnov*] (Essay on the History of the Hsiung-nu).

¹⁰ Л.Н. Гумилев. Хунну.. Срединная Азия в древние времена. Москва, 1960, с. 82 [L. N. Gumilyov, *Hsiung-nu. Sredinnaya Aziya v drevnie vremena*. Moskva, 1960, с. 82] (*Hsiung-nu. Central Asia in Ancient Times*).

¹¹ Gumilyov, *Hsiung-nu*, 215.

¹² Taskin, *History of the Hsiung-nu*, issue. 1: 43, 46.

¹³ Taskin, *History of the Hsiung-nu*, issue. 1: 45.

¹⁴ Taskin, *History of the Hsiung-nu*, issue. 1: 40.

strictly prohibited. The number of people was much more important in determining the status of the commander than the territory itself. The fixed number of ten thousand fighting men under the command of the tumens was ended. Sima Qian points out that each of the 24 commanders had from 10 thousand to several thousand of fighting men.

Within the boundaries of his territory the tumen acting as a shan-yu appointed the commanders over the thousand, hundred and dozen fighting men, and charged them with the land and the population grazing on it. Only the shan-yu could discharge and punish the tumen. The tumens, in their turn, participated in elevating the shan-yu to the throne without possessing, however, the right to choose: that power was transferred according to a strict system of inheritance which lost its meaning later in the period of total weakness of the Xiong-nu state.

Military service was the main duty of the whole male population in the state. Every Xiong-nu was seen as a fighter and the slightest evasion of military duties was punished by death. Each from childhood until death was attached to a particular military detachment and fought under the leadership of its tumen.

Nevertheless, the military-administrative character of the Xiong-nu state structures absolutely did not eliminate the clan-tribal relationship. The top of Xiong-nu society was represented by the four aristocratic clans tied together with each other by marriages (men from any of those clans took wives from the other three). The shan-yu could be only from the Liuandi clan, the most noble of the four. Later sources mention other noble clans as well. The hierarchy of clans and tribes must have played an important role in Xiong-nu society, and the conquered tribes who adapted to the Xiong-nu clan-tribal system were at the bottom of this hierarchy. Even lower were the subdued tribes not included into the Xiong-nu tribal system; they were exploited in a particularly brutal manner.

The representatives of the four aristocratic clans as usual occupied the highest posts in the system of state rule. Three times a year they gathered at the Shan-yu's palace to "make sacrifices to the ancestors, heaven, earth, the spirits of humans and heaven," to discuss state affairs and, once a year, in autumn, for "calculating and checking the amount of people and the households' cattle."¹⁵ All the participants of these meetings were the relatives or stepbrothers of the shan-yu.

So far, the ruling elite of the Xiong-nu Empire was formed from the clan-tribal nobles. Clan relationships determined the social position and political role of everybody belonging to the higher strata of the Xiong-nu society. At the same time, the Xiong-nu nobles preserved the internal clan and tribal ties as a patriarchal top circle of the society connected with the other members of the tribe by blood.

The military structure of the Xiong-nu society, the conquering raids and campaigns, the rule over the subdued tribes and countries opened the opportunities for the Xiong-nu nobles to obtaining material goods by means of exploiting the dependent or conquered populations. The main forms of this exploitation were robbery, forced contributions and tribute. Other forms of exploitation were commonly practiced within the Xiong-nu society; these were determined by the unvarying ways of the economic activity and by the stagnant social relation-

ships. It was the military character associated with obtaining material goods not produced in the Xiong-nu economy that made the higher layers of the society preserve the clan-tribal traditions. These united the society and determined the military power of the state, supported extreme conservatism in relation to the already established social institutions and retained the limitations on seizing opportunities to exploit the kinsmen. Any strengthening of the social divisions and estrangement in the Xiong-nu society itself fatally led to the weakening of the state military power and after that to the falling away of the conquered tribes, military defeat, shortage in products supplied as a tribute and – in the end – the collapse of the empire, which became a reality in the first centuries A.D.

Thus, Xiong-nu society is an example of an early type social organization that lacked the potential for internal development through which more distinct and advanced class relationships could have emerged. The archaic forms of slavery and personal dependency that had appeared at the very early stages of the Xiong-nu state later had only an insignificant development.

Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to deny totally the existence of slavery formation in the Xiong-nu state.¹⁶ There is some convincing evidence (against the general background of the limited sources we have) that slavery formation existed, although it did not deeply penetrate into the system of social relations: the *Wei lue* 魏略 gives us information on one event that happened after the disintegration of the first (ancient) Xiong-nu state. At that time, in 25–55 A.D. the Zilu 贛虜 tribes amounting to a few dozens of thousands of people migrated to Northern China, to the lands extending from Shazhou 沙州 to the mountains of Helanshan 和蘭山. According to this source: "Zi was the word that the Xiong-nu used for slaves. . . . They were not of the same race. Among them living together were the Da-hu, 大胡 Ding-ling 丁令 and many Qiang 羌. This is because they originally were slaves of the Xiong-nu."¹⁷

The limited evidence on the character of economic usage of the slaves in the Xiong-nu society and the share of the slaves' labor does not allow us to identify this state as a military-slavery state, although there have been such attempts in literature. The attribution of the Xiong-nu state as a clan-tribal state is also not convincing enough. It is necessary to note that the Xiong-nu became the founders of the first still very archaic nomadic state in Central Asia, inside which social polarization was incomplete. However it did produce, on the one hand, the nobles, who based their superiority, privileges and prestige on the undeveloped forms of exploitation of their fellow tribesmen and foreign slaves, and on the other hand, the mass of individually-free nomads dependent on the nobles in military-administrative issues. The foreign slaves became the lowest layer of that society after the empire was established. Any more precise definitions of the social character of the Xiong-nu society are unlikely to appear nowadays; however the social and political structures that developed from it are clearly noticed in the Xiong-nu successor nomadic states in Central Asia.

¹⁶ Г.И. Семенюк. К проблеме рабства у кочевых народов. // Известия АН КазССР. Серия истории, археологии и этнографии. Вып. I. 1958: 57. [G. I. Semeniuk, Probleme Rabstva u Kochevnyh Narodov -. Izv. AN KazhSSR, seriya istorii, arheologii i etnografii. Issue 1. 1958.] (On the Problem of Slavery among the Nomadic People.).

¹⁷ Ed. Chavannes, "Les pays d'Occident d'après le Weillio," *TP*, sér. 2, vol. 6, 1905 525-526.

¹⁵ Taskin, *History of the Hsiung-nu*, issue. 1: 40

State formation on the lands of Central Asia and the Southern Siberia in the early middle ages, a few centuries after the disintegration of the Xiong-nu Empire, is connected with the formation of the Turkic Qaghanate (the first Turkic Qaghanate, 551–630 and the second Turkic Qaghanate, 681–744), the traditions of which were inherited by the Uighur Qaghanate (745–840). The Kyrgyz state on the Upper Yenisei did not differ from them either in ethno-cultural or social-economic aspects. The Kyrgyz state emerged soon after the decline of the Xiong-nu state and lasted till the Mongolian conquest. For a short period in history (840 – the beginning of the 10th century), it achieved hegemony over the whole of Central Asia.¹⁸ The unity of social-economic formation, ethno-cultural ties and the similarity of the political organization of all three of these states lets us view the time of their existence and dominance in Central Asia as a relatively complete historical-cultural period, which could be called according to the name of the first of those states – the Ancient Turkic Time or the Ancient Turkic Epoch in the same way as the previous periods are called the Scythian or the Xiong-nu (the Xiong-nu-Sarmat Time by S.V. Kiseliyov, the Xiong-nu-Shurmak Epoch by L.R. Kyzlasov),¹⁹ and the following period – the Mongolian Period;²⁰ for the neighboring Central Asian territories of the Far East, the ancient Turkic time was simultaneous with the Epoch of the Tungus States.²¹

Up until now, there have been disputes on the definition of the social nature of the ancient Turkic states that possessed similar institutions of social organization. Thus, L.N. Gumiliyov considers that the social structure of the ancient Turkic society that replaced the tribal organization by *orda* may be defined as military democracy.²² The Hungarian scholar I. Ecsedi, on the contrary, writes

¹⁸ V.V. Bartol'd. Dvenadtsat' lektzii po istorii narodov Srednei Azii. // Sochineniya. T. V. Moskva: Izdatel'stvo vostochnoi literatury, 1968, c. 19-192. [V. V. Bartold, (Dvenadtsat' lektzii po istorii narodov Srednei Azii) (The Twelve Lectures on the History of the Peoples of Central Asia); C. В. Киселев. Древняя история Южной Сибири. Москва: Издательство Академии Наук СССР, 1951: 487-635. [S. V. Kiselyov, Drevnyaya istoriya Yuzhnoi Sibiri] (The Ancient History of Southern Siberia); Древняя Сибирь. Т. 1. // История Сибири с древнейших времен до наших дней в 5 томах. Т. 1. Ленинград: Наука. Ленинградское отделение, 1968 Древняя Сибирь. Т. 1. // История Сибири с древнейших времен до наших дней в 5 томах. Т. 1. Ленинград: Наука. Ленинградское отделение, 1968: 266-302. [Istoriya Sibiri] (The History of Siberia) V. 1. [Drevnyaya Sibir'] (Ancient Siberia).

¹⁹ Ancient Siberia, 227; Kiselyov, Southern Siberia, 307; Л.Р. Кызласов. История Тувы в средние века. Москва: Издательство Московского университета, 1969, с. 79 [L. R. Kyzlasov Istoriya Tuvy v srednie veka] (The History of Tuva in the Middle Ages).

²⁰ Л.Р. Кызласов Древняя Тува. Москва; Издательство Московского университета, 1979, с.130. [L. R. Kyzlasov, Drevnyaya Tuva] (Ancient Tuva)

²¹ Ancient Siberia, 307; А.Д. Грач. Хронологические и этнокультурные границы древнетюркского времени. // Тюркологический сборник. Москва: Наука. Главная редакция восточной литературы, 1966, с. 188-193. [A. D. Grach, (Hronologicheskie i etnokul'urnye granitsy drevnetiurkского времени– Tiurkologicheskii Sbornik) (Chronological and Ethno-cultural Boundaries of the Ancient Turkic Times – Turkologic Collection).

²² Л.Н. Гумилев. Срединная Азия в древние времена. Москва, 1960, с. 63-66 [L. N. Gumilyov, Hsiung-nu. Sredinnaya Aziya v drevnie vremena] (Hsiung-nu. Central Asia in Ancient Times)

of the tribe and tribal organization of the Qaghanate.²³ The Japanese researcher M. Mori distinguishes three social classes in ancient Turkic society: the class of big cattle-owners (begs); the class of small-scale cattle-owners somewhat dependent on the first class and the slaves. He defines the Qaghanate structure as feudal, and feudalism itself he interprets as political phenomenon not connected with a particular social-economic process.²⁴ L.R. Kyzlasov writes on the formation of feudalism in the Turkic Qaghanates in the 6th – 8th centuries and on the golden age of feudalism in the ancient Khakas state,²⁵ in other words, in the Kyrgyz state. L.P. Potapov preserves in the definition of the Qaghanate social structure the term Patriarchal-Feudal Relations.²⁶

The well-known scarcity of the sources makes the authors of the works devoted to the above-mentioned topic follow generalist concepts rather than use the analysis of very little and often quite controversial evidence, the value of which, however, is approved since they adequately present the situation. This can be explained by both synchronism and the everyday reality of the known facts that exclude the possibility of their tendentious interpretation. The steles created by the nomadic state itself have a special meaning for explaining social ties and dependencies. The ancient Turkic epigraphic documents in Mongolia (8th – 9th centuries A.D.) and the Upper Yenisei valley in Tuva and Khakassia (8th – 11th centuries A.D.) present us with a rare opportunity to look inside the system of ideas of the Central Asian nomads in the early middle ages. The most historically valuable inscriptions are the ones in honor of Kül-tegin (732) and Bilge-qaghan (735) that are also called the Koshotsaidam steles. Both inscriptions were written in the name of Bilge-qaghan by his relative (grandson?) Yol-lyg-tegin. Together with the Tonyukuk inscriptions (the inscription from Bayan-Tsokto), Kuli-chor (the inscription from Ikhe Hushotu), Bilge Yshbar Tamgantarkan (the Ongin inscription) that are dated to the second decade of the 8th century, the Koshotsaidam inscriptions are included in the group of so-called Orkhon steles and viewed as some kind of encyclopedia on the history and culture of the ancient Turks. In the same range are the three runic steles of the Uighur dynasty (759–760) – the Terkh inscription, Tes inscription and the inscription from Mogan Shine Usu written in the name of Eletmich Bilge-qaghan and his successor.²⁷ Especially I would like to mention the oldest Turkic stele in the Sogdian language raised around 581–585 in honor of Taspar-qaghan.²⁸

²³ H. Ecsedy. "Tribe and Tribal Society the 6th Century Turk Empire," *AOH*. E. 25. 1972; 245-262.

²⁴ Masao Mori. *Historical Studies on the Ancient Turkic Peoples*. Tokyo, 1967.

²⁵ Kyzlasov, *Ancient Tuva*, 53-55, 121-125.

²⁶ *History of Siberia*, 280.

²⁷ С.Г. Кляшторный Терхинская надпись. // Советская тюркология. 1980, No. с. 82-95. [S. G. Klyashtornyi, (Terhinskaya nadpis') (Terkh Inscription); S. E. Malov, (Pamyatniki drevnetiurkской pis'mennosti. Teksty i issledovaniya) [The Ancient Turkic Inscriptions. Texts and Research] Moscow - Leningrad, 1951; С.Е. Малов. Энсейская письменность тюрков. Тексты и перевод. Москва-Ленинград: Издательство Академии Наук СССР, 1952. [S. E. Malov. Eniseiskaya pis'mennost' Tiurkov. Teksty i Perevod] (The Yenisei Turkic Inscriptions. Texts and Translation); С.Е. Малов. Памятники древнетюркской письменности Монголии и Киргизии. Москва-Ленинград: Издательство Академии Наук СССР, 1959. [S. E. Malov, (Pamyatniki drevnetiurkской pis'mennosti Mongolii i Kirgizii) (The Ancient Turkic Inscriptions in Mongolia and Kyrgyzstan); H. N. Orkun Eski türk yazitlari. T. 1-4 [Ancient Turkish

Although the geographic and ethnographic knowledge of the authors of the ancient Turkic texts was quite wide, their social-political thinking was limited by the tribal boundaries. The center of their world was the Holy Mountain of the Turks – the mountain Ötüken, the heart of all the ancient Turkic states of Central Asia and they called themselves the Peoples of the Holy Ötüken Mountain (KTb 23). The two acts of creation – the birth of people by the “blue sky and the brown land” and the appearance of the Turks “between them both” are identified with each other by the Koshotsaidam steles. The first people (*kishi oghly* the human sons) made that Turkic community, over which the ancestors of the ruling dynasty – qaghans Bumyn and Istemi (according to the Ongin inscription – Iamy-qaghan, and according to the Terkh inscription – qaghans Bumyn, Yollyg and Istemi) immediately mounted the throne. Together with them the other peoples emerged (this is only meant, but not directly told), who inhabited the four corners of the [world]. However, they were from the very beginning in opposition to the Turks and that was the reason why the Turkic qaghans conquered them (KTb2).²⁹

In the eyes of the author of the Koshotsaidam steles all of humanity was originally divided into the Turks, who had their state (*el*) and their organization (*törii*), and their enemies, whose fate it was to surrender themselves to the Turkic qaghans, as the inscriptions say: “to become their slaves.” Those who would not agree to surrender were to be eliminated. This is the postulated political and social concept embodied in the picture of the ideal historical past. In the same ideal political personification, they viewed the actual reality: “I made the people living in the four corners of the [world] establish peace with me and I caused them not to oppose me. All of them surrendered to me!” Bilge-qaghan evaluates his military success by these words (KTb 29-30).

The nucleus of the political philosophy of the steles could be summed up in one thesis – the organization of the world of people is invariable, the same as the organization of the four-sided Universe. Its absolute imperative was the aspiration of each people to subdue foreign tribes and rule over them (or the urge to become free from the foreign rule). That is why all peoples either surrender or rule over others and the relations among them are dominated by the struggle for preserving this rule or liberating themselves from it.

The structure of the Turkic community itself is invariable in the same way: the Turkic tribal union (*türk qara qamagh bodun* all the Turkic people) consists of separate tribes (*bod*) and clans (*oghush*). All of them are politically integrated

into the *el*. The clan-tribal organization (*bodun*) and the military-administrative governmental organization (*el*) supplement each other. The qaghan “holds the *el* and commands the *bodun*” (E 45, line 4). He functioned as head of the civil service inside his own tribal unit (people) according to the right of the elders in the genealogical hierarchy of the kinships and tribes and a function of a leader, supreme judge and supreme priest. At the same time, while leading the political organization created by his tribal unit, he fulfilled the functions of a military leader who subdued the other tribes and made them pay contribution and taxes. So far the functions of the ancient *el* were maintaining the army, orientation of military campaigns and raids, suppressing the subdued peoples and making them loyal, and using their economic and military resources. The qaghan was the head of the *el* and in his turn gained support from the tribal aristocracy, from which he recruited the military service class – the military-administrative commanders and personal milieu of the qaghan.

Addressing their listeners by means of the inscriptions-exhortations (“listen well to my speech!” – Bilge-qaghan requests, KTm2), the Turkic qaghans and their peers distinguished two social groups among the listeners – the nobles and the common people. In the Sogdian Bugut inscription of the end of the 6th century, those two groups were called the Kurkapyns, i.e., Those Possessing Titles, and The Clans and The People who belonged to the lower strata (line 12). In the inscriptions of the second Turkic Qaghanate we can see the same stereotype of addressing people – the begs and the people (*türk begler bodun* – the Turkic begs and the people). The begs and the Common People can be noted in the steles of the Yenisei Kyrgyz. The sharpest distinction between the nobles and the people can be found in the terminology of the ancient runic steles of the middle of the 8th century: *atygh* – the Great Names, and *qara igil bodun* – the Common People.

The dual nature of the opposing stands portrayed in the text are clearly seen in the inscriptions qaghan – begs – people:

qaghan and begs people
qaghan begs and people

The situations described in the inscriptions demonstrate the variations in behavior and also the difference in the interests of the begs and the people. Thus, the Ongin inscription tells us about the battle, in which the Common People were fighting and perished, but the begs stayed alive by escaping (Oa 1). The Uighur qaghan Eletmych Bilge opposed the interests of those great names, who betrayed him, to the interests of the common people and called upon the divided tribes to submit to him again (MSHu 17). In another situation, the Turkic Bilge-qaghan demanded that the people should not separate themselves from their begs (BK, Xb 13). Here we can find the same tendency as in the aristocratic folklore preserved by Mahmud al-Kashgarī محمود القشجری (MK, I, p. 466):

Inscriptions, Vols 1-4]. Istanbul, 1936–1941; T. A. Tekin, *A Grammar of Orkhon Turkic*. Bloomington, 1968.

²⁸ S. Kljaštornyĭ and V. Livsič, “The Sogdian Inscription of Bugut Revised,” *AOH*. T. 266 1972.

²⁹ С.Г. Кляшторный. Древнетюркские рунические памятники как источник по истории Средней Азии. Москва: Наука. Главная редакция восточной литературы, 1964, с. 71-77. [S. G. Klyashtornyĭ, *Drevnetiurkskie runicheskie pamiatniki kak istochnik po istorii Srednei Azii*] (The Ancient Turkic Runic Inscriptions as a Source on the History of Central Asia) and С.Г. Кляшторный. Представления древних тюрков о пространстве. // Письменные памятники и проблемы истории культуры народов Востока. Вып. XI, часть 1. Москва, 1975, с. 29-30. [[S. G. Klyashtornyĭ, *Predstavleniya drevnih tiurkov o prostranstve*.// PP i PIKNV. Issue 11, p. 1. Moscow, 1975, s. 29-30] (The Concepts of Space of the Ancient Turks).

jer basruqy tagh

bodun basruqy beg

The foundation of the earth – mountain

The foundation of the people – beg

The very essence of the nobles' attitude toward the people is clear in the epitaph-precept by one of the Kyrgyz begs: "Common people, be diligent (hardworking)! Do not break the establishment of the el!" (E 10, line 7).

The opposing stand, on the contrary, united the begs and the people by emphasizing contradictions between clan interests and the interests of the el associated with the qaghan. Accusing the begs and the people of previous betrayals and attempts to move away out of the control of the qaghan, Bilge accuses them also of the former misfortunes of the Turkic el and demands they confess to these previous actions and be permanently loyal to the qaghan (KTm 10-11, KTb 6-7). In some variants of the political interpretations only the Turkic people who betray the qaghan are mentioned (T 1-4). However, the context very clearly points out that the begs are not separated from the people here (KT 6-7, 22-24). The calls for the loyalty of the begs and the people to the qaghan in order to mutually oppose the aggressive surrounding peoples are expressed in extremely emotional terms in the Orkhon inscriptions.

These two stands, so clearly seen in the ancient Turkic steles, remained social positions and did not become class contradictions. Determining the positions of the traditional social groups that made the community, these opposing stands are more likely to reflect the struggle between the groups for their shares in the material welfare gained by the community rather than attempts to change the structure itself. There is a very representative story by the well-informed foreign historiographer about the rise and fall of the Türgesh qaghan Sulu (Suluk): "At the beginning (of his rule – S.K.) Sulu ruled his people well; he was attentive and thrifty. After every battle he gave all the loot to his loyal people, and that was why the clansmen were satisfied and served him with all their forces. . . In the last years. he became greedy and started to accumulate loot without distributing any of it. Then the people began to separate from him . . . Mohe Dagan and Dumochzhy unexpectedly at night attacked Sulu and killed him."³⁰

The begs were the upper strata of the ancient Turkic community, aristocracy by blood, by birth they belonged to the clan, and their status in handling the matters of the clan was undisputed and clear by tradition. In the Turkic *el* the elite of the aristocracy by blood was the qaghan clan of Ashin, and in the Uighur state – the clan of Yaylakar. Together with a few other noble clans, whose position in the hierarchy was commonly known and recognized by everybody, they were at the top of their communities and occupied a special privileged stratum.

The position of the nobles was based on the right to lead the clan and community and to take care of the welfare of their relatives. The ideology of the genealogical unity connected each tribal group – Turkic, Uighur, and Kyrgyz. The material base for this unity was the right to possess the clan and conquered lands, the right to a share in the military loot and the right to exploit the conquered and subdued tribes. In all the inscriptions by the Turkic qaghans and their

fellow-fighters, there is a persistently repeated idea that only qaghans with the help of their kinsmen and stepbrothers are able to feed the people. The preserved fragments of the Bugut inscription repeat this formula three times: it is said about Muhan-qaghan (553–572) that he fed the people well (B II 4). Bilge-qaghan constantly reminds the listeners that he "dressed the naked people," "fed the hungry people," and "made the poor people rich." It was due to him that the "Turkic people gained a lot." "For the sake of the Turkic people," he and his younger brother Kül-tegin "did not sit idle during the daytime and did not sleep at night" (KTm 9–10, KTb 26–27, BK 33, 38, BK Xa 10, BK Xb 11–12). Bilge Tonyukuk reminds them about the tireless efforts to make gains for the sake of the Turkic people by Elterish-qaghan and himself, accompanying his words by the sentential comment: "If people had a qaghan and [he] happened to be lazy, what grief that would cause to the people!" (T 57).

The unity demanded by the qaghans, a unity inside the community based not on the equality of the clan members, but on the multi-stepped system of suppression, meant the denial of social contradictions and the acceptance of such a political structure and such legal norms under which the power and consequently the welfare obtained by non-economic compulsion, war, and a threat of war belonged to the aristocrats by blood, who in their turn granted the rest of the community a share in the loot and contributions, determined by tradition. The communal unity had a social and legal reflection in using the single name – *er* (man-warrior) towards all the members of the community. Any young man by the right of birth became a man-warrior when he reached a certain age and received the status of *er* – "a man's (heroic, military) name," regardless whether he was one of the hundreds of commoner fighters or a prince by blood. In combination, *bish bingtr bashi* "head over five thousand man-warriors" (Terkh, 7) the term *er* indicated every soldier of the five thousand man detachment. Kül-tegin, the son of Elterish-qaghan became a man-warrior, when he was ten years old (KTb 30–31).

The gaining of a man's name was connected with the initiation cult. Before the initiation, a young man should have achieved a feat of arms or hunting. Probably the hunting feats of the hero mentioned in the Ikhe Hushotu inscription have something to do with the above-mentioned: "At seven years of age Kuli-chor killed the mountainous goat and at nine – the wild boar" (IX 18). In the noble families the initiation might have happened earlier than in others – immediately after the boy's success in hunting. A relatively late runic text on paper (10th century) mentions a more common variant of the initiation. This text – *Yrk bitig* (The Book of Fortune-telling) tells us: "There is a story of how the son of the hero-fighter (*alp er oghly*) went in a military campaign. On the battlefield, Erklig made him his messenger. And it is said, when he returned home he came famous and cheerful, with the honor [of a man] who had reached maturity. Know so far – this is very good!" (Parable LV). Only after participating in a battle and exhibiting heroism does the young man (*er oghly*) "reach maturity."

The same situation describing the cult of initiation itself can be found in the *Oguz Epos* (The Book of my grandfather Korkut). The son of the Khan Bai-Buri reached fifteen and he became a Dzhigit. However, "in those times a young man was not given a name until he had cut off a head or caused bloodshed." It did not mean that the boy did not have any name (he was called Basam), but that he lacked a man's name. Basam killed the robbers who attacked the merchant caravan. And then Bai-Buri called the begs-oguz together for a feast and together

³⁰ Bichurin, *Central Asia in Ancient Times*, I: 298-299.

with the begs “the grandfather Korkut came. . . and gave the boy a name. . . “You called your son Basam; (from now on) let his name be Bamsi-Beirek, the owner of the grey stallion!”³¹

After receiving a man’s name, the fighter could add to it the titles that would signify his nobility or his place in the military-administrative hierarchy of the Qaghanate. However, in all cases his first goal was to be an *er*, a man-warrior – a full member of the Turkic community.

At the same time, the Turkic *el* as any else tribe encompassed by it was a specifically structured community, in which the position of every *er* was determined first of all by the privileges that his kinsmen and tribe enjoyed. The strict hierarchy of kinships and tribes was a fundamental principle of social and state order in the nomadic states of Central Asia.

The position of an *er* in the society was determined by his title, a dignity that was a part of his man’s name, not standing alone and often not separated from his name. The title was often inherited according to the right of majority in succession to the throne and but also in succession within the household. The inscription on the Ikhe Hushotu gives a vivid example of inheriting the title and the position. It tells us about the fate of three generations of Kuli-chor, the hereditary rulers and begs of the Tardush people.³² It was the title that identified the position of the *er* in the system of rule and subordination. The majority of the epitaphs discovered in Mongolia and on the Yenisei tell us the name and the title of the buried man in the very first lines, sometimes they note his clan, but even more often render his clan *tamga* with the additional (diacritic) symbols that point out the place of the hero in the generations’ account. Here is an example of the relatively complete inscription on the position in the *el* (stele from Uiyk-Tarlak, E 1):

(1) To you, my *el*, my wives, my sons, my people –
Oh, what a pity! – I said farewell when I was sixty.

(2) My name is *El-Togan-tutuk*. I was a ruler of my divine *el*. I
was a beg of my six-formed people.

The welfare and prosperity of the family were of significant importance for the position and prestige of the *er*. The concept of movable property, including the tents (*eb*, *keregü*) and the constructions (*barq*), but first of all the property of cattle is very clearly reflected in the Orkhon-Yenisei inscriptions. The property differentiation inside the Turkic tribes was very notable as in the other nomadic tribes of Central Asia. Wealth became a matter of pride and praise among the Turkic aristocracy. The Kyrgyz inscriptions have the most vivid characteristics of property. “I was wealthy. I had ten enclosures for the cattle. I had numerous herds!” – these are the words from the epitaph of the buried Kutlug baga-tarkan, the noble Kyrgyz beg who lived on the territory of Northern Mongolia at the second part of the 9th century (E 47, line 5). The other Kyrgyz beg mentions his 6,000 horses (E 3, line 5), which means that according to the usual proportion

between the horses and the other cattle. he owned more than 20 thousand head. In other inscriptions, camels and various other cattle in numerous quantities are mentioned. The happiness that a human asks from the god, the latter presents the former by the usual good wish: “Let cattle be in your enclosures!” (YB, XLVII).

The poor, people without property (*cyghaj*, *joq cyghaj*) are opposed to the rich (*baj*, *bajbar*, *jylsygh*) in the inscriptions.³³ For the author of the Koshotsaidam inscriptions the poor people, “not having food inside them and clothes upon them” were “the pitiable, worthless, low people” (*jabyz jablaq bodun*, KTb 26). Poverty did not bring compassion, more than this it was despicable. The real man-warrior had to obtain wealth by means of weapons: “At fifteen I went (in a military campaign) against the Chinese khan. Due to my courage. . . I seized from the [Chinese] state, gold, silver, one-hump camels and people (variant: wives!)” (E 11, line 9).³⁴

The results of archaeological research provide us with vivid examples of social and property differentiation in ancient Turkic society. In comparison with the gorgeous burial constructions of the top nobles that were built by hundreds of people and decorated by specially invited masters from foreign countries, the kurgans of the common fighters looked plain. In these kurgans, the fighter was buried with his military horse in its full armament under the saddle. In the interments of the poorest commoners, there were neither expensive weapons nor horses.

In Mongun-Taiga situated on the Tuva-Mongolian border, in the high-mountainous valley of the river Karga there are plenty of Turkic kurgans of the 6th – 9th centuries. A few of them have been excavated and the two interments attract especial attention. One is the burial of a rich and noble *er* from the distant border tribe of the Turkic Qaghanate. He was buried in accordance with the full ceremony: with a horse and in clothes made from expensive Chinese silk. Such silk was called in the ancient Turkic language *aghy* (jewel, treasure). Beside him there was a Chinese metal mirror with an inscription written in characters and with highly artistic ornaments – one of those particularly appreciated by the nomads of Central Asia and sometimes even mentioned in the epitaph (E 26). Ten golden pendants that decorated the horse armor were made of gold of a high standard of purity. In the next kurgan there was a man buried who was 30–35 years of age, and his main property was a birch bark quiver. Instead of a military horse there was a bridled and belly-banded sheep.³⁵

³³ А.Н. Самойлович. “Богатый” и “бедный” в тюркских языках. // Известия Академии Наук. 1936, No. 4, с. 21-66. [A. N. Samoilovich “(Bogatyi” i “bednyi” v tiurkskih yazykah, ИАИ. 1936, No 4.с. 21-66] (“The Poor” and “the Rich” in the Turkic Languages).

³⁴ А.М. Щербак Енисейские рунические надписи. К истории открытия и изучения. // Тюркологический сборник. Москва: Наука, 1970, с. 111-134. [A. M. Scherbak, Eniseiskie runicheskie nadpisi. K istorii otkrytiya i izucheniya –Tiurkologicheskii sbornik, Moskva, 1970, с. 112-134] (The Yenisei Runic Inscriptions. On the Problem of Discovery and Research–Turkilogic Collection).

³⁵ А. Д. Грач. Археологические раскопки в Монгун-Тайге и исследования в центральной Туве. (Полевой сезон 1957). // Труды Тувинской комплексной археолого-этнографической экспедиции. Т. I. Москва-Ленинград: Издательство Академии Наук СССР, 1960, с. 18-40. [A. D. Grach, Arheologicheskie raskopki v Mongun-Taige i issledovaniya v Tsentral’noi Tuve (Polevoi sezon 1957) // Trudy Tuvinsoi kompleksnoi arheologo-etnograficheskoi ekspeditsii. V. 1. Moskva –

³¹ Книга моего деда Кorkyта. Огузский национальный эпос. Москва-Ленинград: Издательство Академии Наук СССР, 1962, с. 33-34. [Книга моего деда Korkyта. Oгузский героический эпос. Moskva – Leningrad, 1962, с. 33-34] (The Book of my Grandfather Korkut. The Oгуz Heroic Epos).

³² G. Clauson and E. Tyejarsky, “The Inscription at Ikhe Khushotu,” *RO*, 1971, т. 34.

The poor ers inevitably found themselves to be personally dependent on the begs. Mahmud al-Kashgarī writes particularly about them: “Er fell on his knees in front of the beg” (MK, II, 21). They could only rent cattle from the noble and rich begs (for duties and service) and become the herdsmen of great herds and flocks that belonged to their rich kinsmen. The regular fighters and servants of a beg were recruited from the poor ers. These people went with the beg in military campaigns and raids, protected his herds and property, and served him in everyday life. Mahmud al-Kashgarī calls each of them *qulsygh er* – ers that are similar to a slave (MK, III, 128).

Only rich begs could have many dependent kinsmen. At the same time, the ability of a beg to obtain and maintain wealth, prestige and position depended on the number of his fighters and servants. Mahmud al-Kashgarī tells a saying – a distich that was popular in the ancient Turkic world (MK, I, 362):

*Tavar kiming üklise beglik
angar kergejür
Tavarsyzyn qalyp beg erensizin
emgejür*

A man, who accumulates property should be a beg,
Who stays without wealth is a beg without ers.

A beg cannot maintain his prestige without dependent ers. The poor er, who has lost his cattle cannot live without the assistance and protection of the beg. However, even the poorest er, who was not squeamish about collecting alms, preserved a certain independence and freedom in relation to the clan beg.³⁶ Whatever the contradiction might have been with the relationship between the poor and the rich, the begs and the common people, the bodun in general was opposed to another population group of the ancient Turkic el – the slaves who entirely different from the ers, and who did not become members of the ancient Turkic community, even though some of them were integrated into the families of their owners. Particularly the slaves belonged to a category without rights who were on the social periphery of the ancient Turkic society.

Telling about the power of the Turks in the period of Kapagan-qaghan, the author of the Koshotsaidam inscriptions names those whose prosperity reached the top level; the rise of the state had an effect upon the welfare of each family. In the list of the family members the closest relatives are named – fathers and sons, the elders and the youngest brothers. Together with them he mentions the male and female slaves, who themselves also became the owners of male and female slaves. Clarifying the semantic spectrum of terms for the non-free man (*qul*) and non-free woman (*küng*), who together constituted the layer of the non-free population (*qul küng*), can be achieved as a result of analysis of the relevant

Leningrad, 1960, с. 18-40] (The Archaeological excavations in Mongun-Taiga and Investigation in the Central Tuva – The Works of the Tuviniian Complex Archaeological-ethnographic Expedition).

³⁶ А.П. Ковалевский, путешествие Ибн-Фадлана на Волгу. Москва-Ленинград: Издательство Академии Наук СССР, 1939. [A. P. Kovalevskii, Puteshestvie Ibn-Fadlana na Volgu, Moscow – Leningrad, 1939, с. 63.] (The Trip of Ibn-Fadlan to the Volga).

passages in the runic texts and the sources synchronic to them. Let us look at the Koshotsaidam steles first of all.

After a bad winter for the Turks, that of 723/24 (they lost cattle because of the ice-covered ground and snow-drifts), the Oguz tribes began another uprising. One of the Oguz detachments attacked Bilge-Qaghan when the main forces of the Turks were absent. However, the younger brother of the qaghan Kül-tegin faced the enemies: “Our enemies the Oguz attacked us. Kül-tegin sat on the white [horse] Ogsiz, stabbed to death nine men and did not surrender! My mother-qatun and together with her my mothers-in-law, my aunts and daughters-in-law, my wives – all of you could have stayed alive, but would have become slaves or have been killed and now would be lying on the ground and on the road! But for Kül-tegin all of you could have perished!” (KTb 48–49).

The description of the typical situation for the tribal wars shows the main source of concern – people being captured during a raid or in war. At the same time we can clarify a little the status of a slave – in foreign surroundings the dependent person does not have any kinship ties and, consequently, no protection. He or she finds himself or herself under the rule of the foreigners who captured him or her. The position of the captured is even comparable with the position of the dead lying on the ground. “The slave directs his or her prayers to Heaven” – this perceptive phrase is preserved in the most significant text from the Eastern Turkistan “runes on paper”, *The Book of Fortune-telling (Yrk bitig)* and vividly describes the legal status of a slave.

The messages about the capture of people by the Turks are typical for the inscriptions and for the other sources of those times. “I defeated the Tangut people,” Bilge-qaghan says, “I took their young men and girls, their cattle and goods” (BK 24). Overtaking the Oguz, who were fleeing from him, trying to escape, Bilge-qaghan captured “their sons and daughters, their women” (BK 38). The same happened during the raid on the Tataby (BK, Xa 3). The Turkic detachment in Sogd received women and girls as gifts among the other goods (T 48). The Uighur qaghan Eletmich Bilge took cattle, women and girls from the rebels and the tribes conquered by him (MShU15). The Byzantium historian tells us that the qaghan Dizavul (Istemi) presented to the ambassador Zimarh a captured woman from the so-called Kherkhis people (the Kyrgyz – S.K.).³⁷ The Chinese sources contain numerous stories about capturing people, mainly, women. Thus, in the story about one war at the beginning of the 7th century the following episode is described: “Buli-she (Böri-shad – S.K.), the younger brother of Chulo-khan (Churyu-qaghan – S.K.) joined his brother with 2,000 horses in Bingzhou. Within three days he took all the women and girls in the city and left.”³⁸ The other stories tell us about capturing dozens of thousands of slaves.

The terms *qul* (not free man, slave) and *küng* (not free woman, slave) relate particularly to this layer of the Qaghanate population. The male and female slaves were the people forcefully taken away from their homeland, their ethnic surroundings, without their former social status, and who were at the full disposal of their masters. They were the outsiders in the Turkic community. Slavery became their destiny for the rest of their lives. More than this, even their

³⁷ С. Дестунис. Византийские историки. Санкт-Петербург, 1860, с. 379 [S. Destunis, Vizantiiskie istoriki, Sankt Peterburg, 1860, с. 379 (Byzantine Historians)].

³⁸ Bichurin, *Central Asia in Ancient Times*, I: 246.

kinsmen who were captured as slaves and after that returned in their tribe could not retain the former status. The Arab author of the end of the 9th, beginning of the 10th century, Ibn al-Fakih gives important evidence on the situation with the slaves – the story by Said b. al-Hasan as-Samarkandi سعيد بن الحسن السمرقندي on the customs of the Turks, which he knew very well: “Said b. al-Hasan as-Samarkandi tells: ‘among the Turks there are nomads who roam from place to a place, searching for ungrazed pastures, since they need to feed their livestock, in the same way as the nomads in the country of Islam do. They do not recognise the tsarist authority and do not surrender to anybody, attacking each other and capturing women and children. From time to time a group [of these nomads] leaves their tribe and joins another tribe. Together with them, the women, who formerly belonged [to that tribe] and also the children of those women, who [also] were made slaves, move to another tribe. The tribe that accepted the newcomers do not punish them for [their kinsmen, who became slaves], but consider these latter to be the same [slaves] as their own slaves, according to their custom and agreements.’”³⁹ Even blood relatives, according to the source of Ibn al-Fakih, would not cut the new social ties that emerged as a result of a free woman being captured and having been made a slave.

The characteristics of the economic role of slavery in ancient Turkic society are rather incomplete due to the lack of direct evidence about the participation of slaves in everyday labor or on the other forms of exploitation in the texts. There is an obvious necessity to use carefully the written sources and the ethnographic analogies related to the tribes that to a certain extent inherited the economy and social traditions of the Turkic Qaghanates.

Scholars studying ancient Turkic societies do not give proper attention to one important fact: the inscriptions describe first and sometimes only the capture of women and girls, and from time to time that of boys and young men, but never adult men. Women and girls were taken as slaves during raids and military campaigns. They are always mentioned as the main loot; they were demanded as contribution. They were taken away from conquered clans and tribes if those had raised a rebellion or did not pay tribute at the fixed time. At the extreme, a man who was guilty of injuring others was “condemned to give his daughter” in slavery to his own kinsmen.⁴⁰ The tendency to capture mostly women as slaves clearly proves the domestic character of slavery in the ancient Turkic states or, at least, the dominance of domestic slavery that was a variation of the patriarchal slavery. Becoming a slave, the woman was caused to become involved in the system of family relations of her owner and in the system of economic life of his family, taking part in the family and also public production. At the same time it was not of primary importance whether she was one of the wives or concubines of her owner or a slave-servant.

³⁹ Ibn al-Fakih. *Kitab akhbar al-buldan*. ابن الفقيه: كتاب اخبار البلدان. [Ибн Аль-Факих. *Китаб акхбар аль-булдан*.// Фотокопия Мешхедской рукописи. Рукописное собрание Санкт-Петербургского филиала Института востоковедения Российской Академии Наук (FV-202). (Ibn al-Fakih. *Kitab akhbar al-buldan*. // Fotokopiya Meshhedskoi rukopisi. *Kitab akhbar al-buldan*. Photocopy of the Meshhed Manuscript, // Manuscript Collection of St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies Russian Academy of Sciences (FV-202)).

⁴⁰ Bichurin, *Central Asia in Ancient Times*, 1: 230.

During the ancient and medieval ages, nomadic societies of Central Asia polygamy was usual and widely practiced, certainly among the wealthiest members of society. Sima Qian and other Chinese historians write about the many wives of the Xiong-nu shan-yus.⁴¹ It is also noted that “[Xiong-nu] take the wives of their fathers and brothers after their death, having concern that the reproduction of their family may cease.”⁴² Marco Polo writes about the Mongols: “Everyone takes as many wives as possible, even one hundred if he can provide for them. They marry their cousins; if the father dies, the elder son marries his father’s wife if she is not his mother; after the brother’s death – his wife.”⁴³ Johann de Plano Carpini describes marriage among the Mongols in the same way: “Everyone has the number of wives he can provide for: some have one hundred, some – fifty, some – ten, some more, the other less, and they can marry any relative except their mother and the daughters and sisters of the same mother. He can marry the sisters of the father’s line and also the wives of the father after his death. The younger brother is even required to marry the wife of his elder brother after his death. All the other women are taken by them as wives without any difference and they pay parents very high prices for their daughters.”⁴⁴

The observations by Johann de Plano Carpini are especially remarkable. Like Marco Polo he emphasizes the direct connection between the prosperity of the husband (volume and productivity of his household) and the number of wives, with whom he probably also includes concubines, about whom there is no separate note.

Thus it is determined that after the death of the man his widows are kept in his kinship through marriage with his son (excluding incest), brother or at least someone of his younger relatives (the custom of levirate). In addition, the proposal to a kinwoman led to considerable expenses for the family of the future husband.

According to the little evidence available from the sources, the marriage customs and family relations in ancient Turkic societies did not differ a lot from those described by Johann de Plano Carpini and Marco Polo. The inscription in honor of Kül-tegin mentions Elbelge-qatun, the elder wife of his father Elterish-qaghan, but also the younger wives – the stepmothers of Kül-tegin and many wives (*quncujlar*) of his elder brother – Bilge-qaghan (КТ6 49). In the Yenisei epitaphs are the wives of the inscription’s hero (*qunčuj*; E 18: kishi; E 43: *jutuz*), with whom he parted. In one of the parables of the *Book of Fortune-telling*, the third wife of the beg is mentioned, who brought him a son-successor (YB V). In the same source (YB XXXVIII), we also find a term for a slave-concubine:

⁴¹ Taskin, *History of the Hsiung-nu*, I: 39, 131.

⁴² Taskin, *History of the Hsiung-nu*, I: 46.

⁴³ Книга Марко Поло. Перевод Н.П. Минаева. Редакция и вступительная Н.П. Магидовича. Москва: Государственное издательство географической литературы, 1955, с. 88. [Kniga Marko Polo. Perevod I. P. Minaeva. Redaktsiya i vstupitel'naya stat'ya I.P. Magidovicha. Moskva: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo geograficheskoi literatury, 1955, с 88] (The Book of Marco Polo).

⁴⁴ Плано Карпини, Джованни дель. История монголов. (Гильом де Рубрук. Путешествие в восточные страны. Редакция и вступительная статья Н.П. Шастиной. Москва: Государственное издательство географической литературы. Москва, 1967, с. 26-27 [Johann de Plano Carpini, *Istoriya mongolov*. Moskva. 1957, 26-27] (The History of the Mongols)

abyncy (*abync* – pleasure); in other inscriptions of the same time – *qyrqyn*; compare, for example: *jyncke qyrqynlar* – graceful concubines (Uig., III, 42).

In the *Book of Fortune-telling* there is a parable about one concubine, who was not on mercy and was hiding in the canes, but soon became a mistress (the elder wife of the noble); the parable is accompanied by the words: “This is good!” (YB XXXVIII). Evidently, the ancient Turks, as well as the Turkic and Mongolian tribes of the late middle ages, did not make a strict distinction between the wife and the concubine.

The existed among the Turks the custom of levirate that kept the widowed wives in the clan of their former husband.⁴⁵ Also, as among the Mongols, the marriage of a Turk with a kinwoman cost the family of the groom great expenditures for betrothal gifts and the bride price; such prices ranging from hundreds to a thousand head of cattle are mentioned for the Kyrgyz.⁴⁶ Ibn Fadlan describes the same customs for the Oguz living at the beginning of the 10th century who had moved from Central Asia to Syr-Darya and the area near the Aral Sea in the 5th – 7th centuries: “They have the following rules for marriage: if one of them asks the other for a woman from his family to marry – his daughter or sister or somebody he possesses – the one who asks has to present this or that amount of clothes to the one who gives the woman. After paying all that, he can take her to his place. Sometimes the camels, horses or other large cattle may form the *ka-lym*. If a married man who has had children dies, then the eldest of his sons marries his wife if she is not his mother.”⁴⁷

All these conditions – polygamy, keeping the widows in the family and in the clan of the deed man, large prices for a bride – made endogamous marriages inside the tribe very difficult and led to the situation that capturing women from other tribes and foreign lands became an important stimulus for raids and military campaigns.

First of all, one part of the male population, predominantly from the poorest clans, because of the unavoidable lack of brides and the huge expenses of the bride price, could not create their own families in any other way but through marrying a captured woman. According to the accepted hypothesis by A.N. Bernshtam, the adoption of the captured girls and women in the Turkic families was wide spread.⁴⁸ Making conclusions from the successful campaigns that had brought the Turks rich loot and women, Bilge-qaghan addressed his clansmen: “I made the poor people rich, those who were few in number, I made great in number!” (KTm 10). The growth of the population immediately after successful campaigns could be explained only because of the custom of adopting the captured girls, women and children into the families of the ruling tribe.

Secondly, stealing cattle from enemy tribes against a background of involving male adults in war increased the need for working hands. If in the main sphere of work – the herding of cattle – the number of the people involved was

always limited and the demand for the workers was satisfied by the internal resources,⁴⁹ the labor-consuming household production of the nomads was much less supported by labor force. The possibility of using female (*ev jutuzy*, *ev qyzy* – house-serfs, (literally, – home) women and girls,” Uig, II, 7, 85) labor in the nomadic households was determined by the area of production where female labor was used in the nomadic economy.

Ethnographic observations show us that the female share in the nomadic economy significantly exceeded the labor input of the men. The extraordinary observer of the life of the Mongols in the epoch of the first Chinggidzids, Johann de Plano Carpini through close scrutiny pointed out and rather exaggeratingly described this specific feature of the militant nomadic society: “The men do nothing at all, except make arrows, and have little responsibility for the herds. However, they hunt and practice shooting... They value horses very much and more than this – they carefully protect all their property. Their wives make everything: short sheepskin coats, dresses, shoes, boots and all leather things, they also drive carriages and repair them, pack camels and are very swift and fast in everything.” More than this, “the girls and women ride horses very adroitly. . . and some of them can even shoot like men.”

Guillaume de Rubruck agrees with and adds to the information of Johann de Plano Carpini who was his contemporary. He writes: “The duties of the women are to drive the carriages, put up the tents on and take them down, milk cows, make butter and *grut* (*kurut* – dried curds – S.K.), make leather pieces and sew them together. They sew them together with thread made of tendons. They divide the tendons into thin threads and interlace them into one long thread. They also sew sandals, shoes and other clothes. . . . They also make thick felt and cover the tents with it. In addition, the women take part in herding the sheep and goats.”⁵⁰ Marco Polo similarly evaluated the proportion of male and female labor in Mongolian every-day life: “The wives, I will tell you, sell and buy everything that the husband needs, and run the household. The husbands care about nothing except taking part in warfare and hunting animals and birds with falcons.”⁵¹ According to the *Yasa* of Chinggis-khan, the women “do the men’s work and fulfill their responsibilities” during the military campaigns.⁵²

To assess the input of the female labor force in the family households of the Central Asian nomads it is important to use the ethnographic materials related to the recent past of the Mongols, Tuvins, Buryats, and the Kyrgyz of the Tian Shan mountains. Thus, in the Mongolian households “the women milk cattle, process the cattle-breeding products, sew clothes, prepare meals and do other

⁴⁵ Bichurin, *Central Asia in Ancient Times*, I: 230.

⁴⁶ Bichurin, *Central Asia in Ancient Times*, I: 35.

⁴⁷ Kovalevsky, *The Trip of Ibn-Fadlan*, 61.

⁴⁸ А.Н. Бернштам Социально-экономический строй орхон-енисейских тюрок VI–VIII веков. Москва-Ленинград: Издательство Академии Наук СССР, 1946, с 92, 95, 118. [A. N. Bernshtam, (Sotsial’no-ekonomicheskii stroi orkhono-eniseiskih tiurok VI – VIII vekov. Moskva-Leningrad, 1946, 92, 95, 118)] (Social-economic Formation of the Orkhono-Yenisei Turks in the VI – VIII centuries)..

⁴⁹ G. I. Semeniuk, *Problem of Slavery*, 64-67.

⁵⁰ Гилом Рубрук. Путешествие в восточные страны. Москва, 1967, 36-37, 100-101. [Gilóm Rubruk, Puteshestvie v vostochnye strany. Moskva, 1967, 36-37, 100-101] (A Journey to Foreign Countries).

⁵¹ *Marco Polo*, 98.

⁵² Б. Я. Владимирцов Б. Я. Общественный строй монголов. Монгольский кочевой феодализм. Ленинград: Издательство АН СССР, 1934. с. 56. [B. Y. Vladimirtsev, Obschestvennyi stroi mongolov, Mongol’skii kochevij feodalizm. Leningrad, 1934, с. 56] (The Social Formation of the Mongols).

minor house work.” In addition, the women take an active part in herding small cattle – sheep and goats.⁵³

The Mongolian, Tuvinian, Buryatian and Kazakh women were involved in such heavy work as processing (rolling) thick felt, processing skins, dressing leather, sewing leather things.⁵⁴ There is an interesting description of every-day life in a big Tian Shan Kyrgyz family: “The daughters-in-law together did all the work about the house: cooked, brought water, stoked stoves, spun threads, milked cows, sheep and mares, made woollen materials, dressed leather, rolled thick felts, put up and took down tents during migrations and made beds for all family members. They also sewed for all family members and prepared all the men’s and woman’s clothes, except for boots.”⁵⁵ And naturally, women were responsible for taking care of the little children.

In the conditions of the patriarchal natural economy (and every nomadic or semi-nomadic economy is like that) the welfare of the family depended not only on the number of cattle, their maintenance and reproduction, but not less on the ability to process the various products of cattle-breeding, hunting and gathering fully and in timely fashion, and to prepare them for use and storage. The women’s labor played the main role in that. That is why in the polygamy of the ancient Central Asian nomads, in their persistent adherence to levirate marriage and in their capturing women as the main loot during the raids, we can clearly see the economic motivation – the need to provide their family households – the main productive unit of the nomadic society – with additional labor force. The richer in cattle such a household was, the more women’s hands it needed.

The use of female labor (also female slaves’ labor) in the nomadic economy instead of the labor of some considerable amount of male slaves was insistently and, perhaps, primarily dictated by reasons of security. For the sake of security it was just impossible to concentrate the slaves (the former fighters of the enemy tribes) in the *ail* settlements scattered in the steppes and mountains, at the places of the nomadic nobles, or to leave the cattle, tents and families in charge of the slaves for the long period, when the fighters of the ruling tribe went away for a regular raid. As early as in the *History* by Herodotus (IV, 3–4) we find a semi-legendary story about a war of the Scythians, who came back from the raid to be faced with a rebellion of their slaves who had captured their households. The recent history of the nomads gives us not less vivid examples of this kind. On the basis of the Russian archival data, G.I. Semeniuk describes one of the slaves’

⁵³ С.И. Вайнштейн. Историческая этнография тувинцев. Проблемы кочевого хозяйства. Москва: Наука, 1972, 1972, 146. [S. I. Vainshtein, Istoricheskaya etnografiya tuvintsev. Problemy kochevogo obschestva. Moskva, 1972, 146] (The Historical Ethnography of the Tuvinians. The Problems of the Nomadic Economy).

⁵⁴ К.В. Вяткина. Очерки культуры и быта бурят. Ленинград: Издательство АН СССР, 1969, с. 82–84 [K. V. Vyatkina, Ocherki kul'tury i byta buryat, Leningrad, 1969, 83–84] (Essays on the Culture and Every-day Economy of the Buryats); Л.П. Потанов. Очерки народного быта тувинцев. Москва: Наука. Главная редакция восточной литературы, Москва, 1969, с. 204. [L. P. Potanov, (Ocherki narodnogo byta tuvintsev. Moskva, 1969, с. 204] (Essays on the People’s Way of Life in Tuva) and Vainshtein, Nomadic Economy, 263.

⁵⁵ С.Г. Агаджанов. Очерки истории огузов и туркмен Средней Азии IX–XIII вв. Ашхабад: Ыльым, 1969, 245. [S. G. Agadzhanov. Ocherki istorii oguzov i turkmen Srednei Azii IX–XIII vv, 1969, 245] (Essays on the History of the Oguz and Turkmen of Central Asia of the IX – XIII centuries).

rebellions of the same kind: “When in 1755–1756, in Kazakhstan, a few thousands of captured and enslaved people were concentrated in the territory of the Small Dzuz - they killed their owners, stole their cattle, ran away into the knolls and cane brushwood. There they created gangs and terrorised the population of the whole Qaghanate (Dzuz) by raids and made the *ail* settlements come together for defense which led to a lack of grass, causing diseases and great loss of cattle. The economy and security of the nomads of the Dzuz was caused to become. . . threatened.”⁵⁶

The concentration of female slaves, some of whom became wives and concubines of their owners, was not a threat for their masters, the control over these women was maintained in the framework of the family economy. At the same time, the intensive usage of the female slaves’ labor in different kinds of work, including herding small cattle, released a considerable part of men for war and the most privileged women of the ruling tribe from hard physical labor.

The nomads also had male slaves. If we draw conclusions from the examples related to the Xiongnu and Mongolian periods and also from the early Middle Ages’ Turkic tribes of Central Asia, some of those male slaves became herdsmen of cows and sheep (*chabans*), but not horse herders: the slaves were not trusted with horses.⁵⁷ During the first several dozen years of the Turk Qaghanate history the sacrifices of slaves during the funerals of their master was practiced. For instance, during the burial of Dizavul (Istemi-qaghan) in 576 “four chained war captives were brought forward. . . to be sacrificed together with their horses.”⁵⁸ However, this custom is not mentioned in later periods. During the burial of a Turki fighter, kurgans or a fence were built, to which the chain of stone bulbs was attached from the east. Each of the stones symbolized the image of a foe killed by the fighter. In such a way, the souls of the killed were made to serve the victor in the next world and the necessity for human sacrifices at the fresh burial place disappeared.⁵⁹

The Yenisei Kyrgyz used the slaves’ labor on a broader scale than did the Mongols. The Kyrgyz, aside from extensive cattle breeding, grew grain, practised irrigational agriculture, and built sedentary fort villages. That was why the Kyrgyz needed a larger labor force than did the other nomadic tribes of Central Asia. The Chinese source informs us that the Kyrgyz “capture and use in work”

⁵⁶ Г.И. Семенюк. Проблемы истории кочевых племен и народов в период феодализма (на материалах Казахстана. Калинин, 1974, с. 35. [G. I. Semeniuk, Problemy istorii kochevykh plemion i narodov v period feodalizma (na materialah Kazahstana) Kalinin, 1974, 35] [The Problems of History of the Nomadic Tribes and Peoples in the Period of Feudalism (based on the materials from Kazakhstan)].

⁵⁷ S. G. Agadzhanov, History of the Oguz and Turkmen of Central Asia; [Рашид-ад-Дин. Сборник летописей. Перевод О.И. Смирновой, примечания Б.И. Панкратова и О.И. Смирновой. Т. I. Москва-Ленинград: Издательство Академии Наук СССР, 1952. vol. 1, Bk 1, 145] (Rashid-ad-din, (Sbornik letopisei, Perevod O. I. Smirnovoi, primechaniya B. I. Pankratova i O. I. Smirnovoi. T. I. Moskva-Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1952. vol. 1, Bk 1, 145.) [The Collection of Chronicles]

⁵⁸ Destunis, Byzantine Historians, 422.

⁵⁹ С.Г. Кляшторный. Храм, изваяние и стела в древнетюркских текстах. // Тюркологический сборник. 1974. Москва, 1978, 238–255. [S. G. Klyashtorny, (Hram, izvayanie i stela v drevnetiurkskikh tekstah – Tiurkologicheskii Sbornik. Moskva, 1978, 238–255] (Temple, Statue and Stele in the Ancient Turkic Texts – Turkologic Collections).

their neighbors from the taiga tribes.⁶⁰ Male slaves are also mentioned on the burial inscription of the one of the Kyrgyz khans. These men were serving the guests during the funeral feast: “Because of his chivalrous courage my elder brother raised (died). Alas! That is why his slaves now serve the [funeral] feast” (E 32).⁶¹ The concentrated population in the fort-post towns significantly diminished the threat of slaves’ rebellions and let the Kyrgyz nobles have the male slaves in the number needed by their households.

So far, in spite of the fact that in the Turkic states of Central Asia the number of personal slaves generally did not exceed those engaged solely in household duties, the whole mechanism of functioning of the ancient Turkic community and to a certain extent its military forces were connected with the exploitation of the slaves and even to a greater extent with the exploitation of the females slaves. The capture and enslavement of people was one of the main goals of the wars made by the Turks.

The Turks may have sold some part of the slaves captured in the inter-tribal wars to China. In any case, as E. Schafer indicates, in China there were slaves bought from the Turks and they were used as herdsmen, horse herders, drivers, coachmen, and private body guards.⁶² However trade of enslaved Turks did not exist in Central Asia on such a scale as in the Middle East.

Chinese war prisoners were returned for ransom. For example, in 630 Li Shimin (李世民, r. 627–649) is supposed to have gotten from the Turks 80 thousand people of both sexes for gold.⁶³ At the same time, the Turks, following the example of the Xiong-nu, settled Chinese on their lands, created handicraft-agricultural villages and these people worked for the masters. The Sogdians in the Turkic and Uighur Qaghanates also founded such villages and later towns. Settlers from Sogd founded in Semirechie and Eastern Turkestan, on the lands of the Western Turks (the latter called the former – the “Tats”), and also in the Eastern Turkic Qaghanate, a considerable amount of colonies that possessed a certain military-political independence. However, the Tats were never the slaves of the Western Turks, although they were considered to be the vassals of the “people of the dozen arrows” (the Western Turks).⁶⁴ The other categories of dependency were not always, however, identified by special terminology in the texts.

In 576, an embassy from the Emperor Tiberius headed by the sword-bearer Valentine, went to the recently powerful neighbor of Byzantium – the Turkic Qaghanate to convince it to assist the Empire in the war against the Persians. When the embassy arrived at the palace of Turksanf, one of the qaghan’s sons, they learned of Dizavul’s death. In reply to the request for the alliance, Turksanf accused the ambassadors of many crimes, the main one of which was patroniz-

ing the Avars-Varhonits. Not long before that, the Avars had clashed with the Turks and a part of them had escaped to the Byzantine domains. That was why Turksanf, speaking of the Avars in no other way but as “my slaves, who had run away from their masters”, insisted that the Byzantines should not have helped the escaped people.⁶⁵

To what extent the Byzantine historian Menander, who described the above-mentioned episode, was correct that Turksanf had really told the embassy about the slavery of the whole tribe defeated by him? In other words, were the Constantinople officials, who had negotiated with the Turkic prince, really exact in interpreting his manner of political thinking?

The texts created by the Turks themselves help us to answer this question. Yollyg-tegin evaluates the activities of his ancestors Bumyn and Istemi (Dizavul) – the Byzantine historian in a short pathetic formula produced in the times of the great conquests: “They (the qaghans) subdued all the peoples living in the four corners of the world and made them all establish peace! They made those who had heads bow their heads and those who had knees kneel!” (KT 2). Half a century had passed since the death of Istemi. Telling about the end of the first Turkic state, Yollyg-tegin writes: “Their (the Turks) strong male descendants became the slaves of the Tabgach people and their pure female descendants became female slaves. The Turkic begs gave up their Turkic titles and surrendered to the khan of the Tabgach people, accepting the titles of the Tabgach begs” (KTb 7). This happened on the Mongolian steppes in 630. The main duty of the Turks was the so-called “tribute in blood” – the duty to serve in the wars of the Tang 唐 Empire 618 – 906 (KTb 23–24). Iolyg-tegin reminds his readers about those piteous times: “All the Turkic people without exception said Ithis [at that time]: “We were people possessing our own el, where is our el now? We were people having our own qaghan, where is our qaghan now? For what qaghan do we now give our work and forces?” (KTb 8–9).⁶⁶

In all the cases concerning the new condition of the Turkic tribal union (people) the terms *qul bolty* and *küng bolty* are mentioned – “became slaves (non-free)” and “became female slaves (non-free women)” or the pare verb combination *qullad-künged* – “share slaves and female slaves” (KTb 13). The inscriptions identify the slave position of the whole tribal union by the following characteristics: first of all, by the loss of the Turkic qaghan; secondly, by the loss of the Turkic state organization – el; thirdly, by the loss of the establishments that had regulated the former life of the tribe (KTb 13); fourthly, by the loss of the opportunity to work and serve for their own interests; fifthly, by the loss of their tribal lands.

Nevertheless, the Turks preserved their tribal unity and the inter-tribal ties, nobles, military organization and the former way of life, that allowed them to win their war of liberation and re-establish the Qaghanate in 681–682. After declaring the rebellion’s leader Elterish-qaghan to be qaghan, after the re-establishing the el and the former regulations, Iolyg-tegin concluded that the Turkic people had gone beyond the period of slave production.

That was how the Turks perceived their recent past. However, Yollyg-tegin gives a similar description for the political relations that contemporary with him.

⁶⁰ Bichurin, *Central Asia in Ancient Times*, I: 351-352; Д.Г. Савинов. О длительности пребывания енисейских кыргызов Центральной Азии. // Вестник Ленинградского университета. 1978, Вып. 3 (14), с. 35-40. [D. G. Savinov. O dlitel'nosti prebyvaniya eniseiskih kirgizov v Tsentral'noi Azii. Leningrad, 1978, No. 14, 38-39] (On the Period of Stay of the Yenisei Kyrgyz in Central Asia).

⁶¹ Klyashtornyi, “Temple, Statue and Stele,” 250-252.

⁶² E. H. Schafer, *The Golden Peaches of Samarkand. A Study of T'ang Exotics*. Berkeley – Los Angeles, 1963: 42-44.

⁶³ Bichurin, *Central Asia in Ancient Times*, 256.

⁶⁴ Klyashtornyi, *Ancient Turkic Inscriptions*, 78-135.

⁶⁵ Destunis, *Byzantine Historians*, 416-422.

⁶⁶ Klyashtornyi, *Ancient Turkic Inscriptions*, 20-34.

In 710–711 the Turks crossed the Sayan mountains, crushed the Kyrgyz el and killed the Kyrgyz qaghan Bars-beg. “The qaghan was killed, and his people became female and male slaves. . .” Yollyg-tegin informs us: “We provided the tribal unions of the Az and Kyrgyz with the regulations” (KTb 20). The Kyrgyz el was eliminated and their qaghan killed, but the tribal union (*bodun*) of the Kyrgyz was preserved on their motherlands, where the Az and Kyrgyz still were pressed by the Turkic settlers.⁶⁷ The power went into the hands of the Turkic ruler. However, already in 732 the new Kyrgyz qaghan, allied with the Turks, was mentioned (KTb 53). At that period, when the Kyrgyz lost their ruler and found themselves under the direct dominance of the Turkic qaghan, they were called by Yollyg-tegin “the male and female slaves.”

There is also the third group of sources that proves the above-mentioned Turkic interpretation of any form of direct subordination of a tribe (tribal union) to a foreign ruler. According to the *Zhou History* (*Zhou shu* 周書), even before the Turks established their state, they had settled in the Altai, on the lands of the Ruanruan 蠕蠕, to whom they had begun paying tribute in the form of the iron ore that was extracted there. This gave a reason to the Ruanruan qaghan to call the Turkic leader Bumyn his *slave-producer* (551).⁶⁸ There is an even more interesting story in the *Sui History* (*Sui shu* 隋書), about Yshbara-qaghan (Shabo-luo), who during the internal wars at the end of the 6th century asked for the assistance of the empire. It was suggested that he acknowledge himself to be a vassal of the Sui Emperor. “Shabolio asked his officials what the word vassal meant. He was told in reply: ‘vassal in the Sui state means the same as the word slave among us (the Turks).’”⁶⁹

The comparison of all three groups of sources, especially the information from the runic texts, lets us come to the conclusion that the same terms used for slavery were applicable to other forms of social dependency in the ancient Turkic society – those that emerged as a result of the military and political subordination of some ethnic groups that originally had not been the part of the dominant tribal union. The slave tribes of this kind were made to pay tribute, and also to give military service to their new suzerains in the same way as it used to be with the Turks themselves, when they subordinated themselves to the Ruanruan and the Tang Empire. The formula of subordination determined by the Koshotsaidam inscriptions was the expression “to give one’s own work and forces” to the foreign tribesmen.

As usual the subdued tribe or the tribal group lost their head (Khan, qaghan) or this head recognized his slave dependency to the qaghan of the dominant tribal union. The nobles of the subdued tribes preserved their power inside their tribe, but were included into the political organization of the ruling tribes and obeyed the head of this organization, who controlled it through his representatives (*tudun*). The lands of the slave tribes could be taken if the captives were moved away to another territory.

In addition, the ancient Turkic inscriptions point out as slavery one more form of collective dependency that originally existed inside the dominant group of tribes. It is especially vividly indicated by the inscription from the Mogon Shine Usu. The establishment of the Uighur dynasty (744–840) was difficult. After defeating the Turks and crushing their former allies – the Karluks, Eletmish Bilge-qaghan faced resistance inside his own tribes, part of which rebelled under the leadership of Tai Bilge-tutuk and other famous leaders. The elder son of Eletmish may have been involved in the rebellion and the father put the son to death in the same year. Three times the qaghan fought against the rebels and three times he won. Eletmish tells about the outcome of the first battle: “*qulym küngim bodunygh tengri jer aju berti anca sancdym*” (line 13–14) – “The Heaven and Earth ordered my male and female slaves, this people (decided their destiny). Then I defeated them.” After punishing the famous instigators of the rebellion, the qaghan did not touch the remaining rebels: “*qara igil budunygh joq qylmady ebin barqyn jylqysyn julmady*” (line 14) – “I did not destroy their common people, I did not take their tents and buildings or their cattle.” Then, the qaghan calls the rebels *kentü bodunym* – my own people.

Only after the common people explicitly disobeyed and provoked a new battle did the qaghan take from the rebellious people “their herds, their goods, their women and girls” (line 15). A part of the rebellious tribes ran away. Over-taking the fugitives, the qaghan demands: “Serve me again and work!”

In the episodes of the civil war within the Uighur Qaghanate, the war for the power to exploit totally his own people, we can clearly see the contradictions typical of the whole ancient Turkic society, including the opposition between the qaghan and the tribal nobles, between the qaghan and the common people, and between the common people and the ones who possessed great names. The common people, his own people, who kept their lands, their cattle, their means of life and families, are called “male and female slaves” by Eletmish Bilge-qaghan. However, he enslaved only a part of women and girls of the rebels at the next stage of the rebellion. The rest were returned to their former position (“Serve me again and work!”), which was characterised by Eletmish as slavery. The qaghan called as slaves his own tribes, to whom he was indebted for military service and the part of his income.

So far, the analysis of the ancient Turkic inscriptions leads us to the conclusion that in the 6th to 10th centuries, within ancient Turkic society, slavery and the other forms of social dependency existed and were based on non-economic compulsion. The authors of the inscriptions determined those forms in the same terms as personal slavery. This fact proves that the collective social thinking of the ancient Turkic tribes had more of an archaic character that did the actual social life, and that the slave-owning relations despite their universal character, unavoidably affected all the other forms of social dependency.

⁶⁷ Ю.С. Худяков. Кок-тюрки на Среднем Енисее. // Новое в археологии Сибири и Дальнего Востока. Новосибирск: Наука. Сибирское отделение, 1979, с. 194-206. [Y. S. Khudyakov, Kok-tiurki na srednem Enisee— Novee v Arheologii Sibiri i Dal'nego Vostoka. Novosibirsk, 1979: 199-206] (The Kok-Turks on the Middle Yenise – New in the Archaeology of Siberia and the Far East)..

⁶⁸ Bichurin, *Central Asia in Ancient Times*, I: 228.

⁶⁹ Bichurin, *Central Asia in Ancient Times*, I: 237.