IDEAS BEHIND SYMBOLS – LANGUAGES BEHIND SCRIPTS

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Ideas behind symbols – languages behind scripts

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Contents

The Ogur Turks in Chinese records

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In an earlier work of us[1] we quoted a detailed list of these tribes preserved in the *Suishu* (隋書).[2] On the other hand, data were also preserved in the *Beishi* (北史).[3] Ligeti supposed that this list had to be composed *cca.* 600 AD.[4] This can support the idea that the Chinese list of the *Tiele* tribes should be contemporary of our Byzantine sources from Priscus to Theophylactus.

According to our Chinese list the *Tiele* tribes living to the east of Fulin (拂菻, Roma, EMC *pʰut-lim*) were the *Enqu* (恩屈, EMC *ʔən-kʰut*; Hamilton: *ˑən-kịuət*),[5] the *Alan* (阿蘭, EMC *ʔa-lan*),[6] *Beiru* (北褥, EMC *pək-ɲuawk*; Hamilton: *pək-ńźịwok*), *Jiuli* (九離, EMC *kuwˀ-lið̣ʰ/liʰ* or 'Nine *Li*'), the *Fu-wa*[7] 伏嗢, EMC *buwˀ-ʔwət*) and the *Hun* (昏, EMC *xwən*). The tribe living along the coasts of the Volga (*Ätil*, (阿得 *Ade* EMC *ʔa-tək*) was the *Suba* (蘇拔, EMC *sɔ-bəịt/bɛːt*).[8]

According to Hamilton, *Fu-wa*[9] 伏嗢, EMC *buwˀ-ʔwət*), *Hun* (昏, EMC *xwən*) should be read as *Jiuliwu* (九離伏) and *Wahun. Wahun* (嗢昏, EMC *ʔwət-xwən*: Hamilton: *ˑuət-xuən*). It is a well-known fact, that in Old and Middle Chinese a

1 The Altaic World Through Byzantine Eyes: Some Remarks to Zemarchus' Journey to the Turks (AD 569–570), *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scietiarum Hungarica* LXIV (2011), 375–378.
2 *Suishu* 84, *liechuan* 49, (Shanghai, Commercial Press ed., 18a-18b); Zhongguo Shudian ed. 1879–1880; LMT (pp. 127–128); Hamilton (1962, pp. 26–27), his reconstructions are shown as Hamilton); the list of the *Tiele* tribes in this work and one of its later variants consisting of 15 tribal names preserved in the 14th century work *Wenxian dongkao* (文獻通考 'Comprehensive Examination of Literature') was analyzed also by Ligeti (1986, pp. 333–336), his readings and reconstructions are shown as Ligeti), and later by Golden (1992, pp. 155–156); for a partial analysis in English see Mori (1985); in Turkish, see: Ögel (1945, pp. 80–83); later (based on the *Tangshu*) Taşağıl (2004, pp. 45–46); in Mongolian (the Eastern tribes only), Batsüren (2009, pp. 32–33).
3 *Beishi* quan 99, liechuan 87, Zhongguo Shudian ed. 3303. Beijing 1974.
4 Ligeti, L.: *A magyar nyelv török jövevényszavai a honfoglalás előtt és az Árpád-korban*, Budapest, 1985, 333.
5 In whom some scholars see the Onogurs, Golden (1992, p. 95); Ögel (1945, p. 80).
6 The only tribal name that can be certainly identified with that of the Alans, Ligeti (1986, p. 334); *cf.* also Alemany (2000, pp. 1, 401–403).
7 CP, f. 8ᵇ.
8 *Suβar (?),* Hamilton (1962, p. 27).
9 CP, f. 8ᵇ.

foreign *−r* was usually represented by *-t*.[10] Thus this name can be accepted as a Chinese rendering of the name of *Varhonitai* (Οὐαρχονίται) of our Byzantine sources.

Beiru (北褥, EMC *pək-ɲuawk*; Hamilton: *pək-ńźi̯wok*) may be understood either as Northern *Ru* a still unidentifiable Chinese type tribal name, or, based on its phonetic form, a hypothetical Turkic tribal name **Buŋaɣ/q* 'disturbed ones?', not attested by any other sources.[11] As to *Jiuli* (九離 *kuwʾ-liǯʰ/liʰ*) it may be held for a Chinese version of the name *Kutrigur* (< **Toqur Oɣur*). We can add that the numeral *jiu* (九) itself means 'nine' in Chinese. We can also assume that the change **Toqur Oɣur> Kutrigur* should appear also in the original name and not only in the Byzantine sources. *Fu* (伏 EMC *buwʾ* Baxter OCh 338: *bjuwH*) hypothetically can be held for a somehow corrupted form of the name Utigur. This could fit into the historical environment, but, of course, it still remains uncertain. As to the *Suba* (蘇拔, EMC *sɔ-bəit/bɛ:t*), with great probability they can be identical with the Sabirs.

We can reconstruct the list the following way:

Enqu (恩屈, EMC *ʔən-kʰut*; Hamilton: *·ən-ki̯uət*), *Alan* (阿蘭, EMC *ʔa-lan*), *Beiru* (北褥, EMC *pək-ɲuawk*; Hamilton: *pək-ńźi̯wok*), *Jiuli* (九離, EMC *kuwʾ-liǯʰ/liʰ* veya 'Dokuz *Li*'), Fu 伏 *buwʾ*), *Wahun* (嗢昏, EMC *ʔwət-xwən*: Hamilton: *·uət-xuən*), *Suba* (蘇拔, EMC *sɔ-bəit/bɛ:t*).

Comparing our Byzantine and Chinese data we can see the following picture:
Certain identifications:

Wahun, 嗢昏, EMC *ʔwət-xwən* Warhun	*Enqu* 恩屈, EMC *ʔən-kʰut* Onogur	*Alan* (阿蘭), EMC *ʔa-lan* Alan	EMC *sɔ-bəit/bɛ:t* Suba (蘇拔) Sabir

Tentative identifications:

Jiuli (九離 *kuwʾ-liǯʰ/liʰ*) Kutrigur	*Beiru* (北褥 EMC *pək-ɲuawk*) *Buŋaq*

Remaining uncertain:

Fu (伏 buwʾ) *Utigur?

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10 As it happened in the first syllable of *Burxan*, the Inner Asian form of the name of Buddha, which is *fo* (佛, 'Buddha') in Modern Chinese, cf.: Laufer (1916, p. 391); and Bailey (1931, p. 280); Doerfer: TMEN (II, pp. 261–262 [*but*], 283 [*burχan*])); according to Pulleyblank (1991, p. 96) the Early Middle Chinese form of this first syllable was still *but*.

11 Cf. *buŋaɣ ~ buŋ* DTS, 124; 'die Benegung'; Radloff IV/2, 1809; *buŋ* 'grief, sorrow, melancholy', Clauson *ED* 347, печаль, скорб, страдание, тягость, забота DTA 124 *bunqal* 'дряхлый, лишенний сил, непригодный (?)', DTS 124.

From the point of view of the historian, the most sensitive question is that of *Wahun* (嗢昏), *Warhun*. Albeit the identification is being philologically clear, the historical whereabouts of this ethnonym still have some uncertain points.

The Turks, negotiating with the Byzantine authorities, argued that the Avars reaching the Carpathian Basin at 568 were Warhuns, falsely using the name of the Avars. In this preliminary report we have not the space to discuss this case in detail.[12] On the other hand we may constate that the data preserved in our Chinese sources differ from those of the Byzantine authors. Even at a first glance one can realize that some of the *Warhun* tribes could have been present in the Eastern European region before the Avar conquest of the Carpathian Basin.

The most enigmatic tribal name is that of the **Buŋaq*. This word is a *hapax legomenon* not attested in any other sources. As we have seen above, Old Turkic *buŋ* usually means 'pain, sorrow'. In this meaning it was also passed into Hungarian (*bú* 'sorrow, grief; trouble' < Old Turkic *buγ/buŋ* '*id*').[13]

Reading the Orkhon Inscriptions, one can assume that in these texts the stem *buŋ* is used in the meaning 'trouble' rather than 'sorrow'. Let us now see some examples:[14]

> I. *altun kümüš isigti qutay buŋsïz anča bérür* (S5)
> They (i. e. the Chinese people) give (us) gold, silver and silk in abundance.

> II. *ötükän yér olurup arqïš térkiš ïsar näŋ buŋuγ yoq* (S8)
> If you stay in the land of Ötükän and send caravans from there, you will have no trouble.

> T II E 7 *ne buŋï bar ärtäči ärmis*
> (…) what kind of trouble would I have?

According to these data *buŋ* means 'trouble', therefore we can assume that our reconstruction **Buŋaq* should mean 'troublesome or rebellious people'.

To sum up, we can constate that the data of our Chinese records can be analyzed and some of the tribal names can be identified on the basis of our earlier historical knowledge. Of course, these data need more detailed analysis that we are planning to prepare in the close future.

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12 Dobrovits, M.: "They called themselves Avar" - Considering the pseudo-Avar question in the work of Theophylaktos, in: Compareti, M. — Raffetta, P. — Scarcia, G. (eds.): *Ērān ud Anērān. Studies Presented to Boris Il'ič Maršak on the Occasion of His 70th Birthday*, Venezia 2006, 176–183.

13 Benkő L. (Ed.-in chief): *A magyar nyelv történeti-etimológiai szótára* (Budapest 1984), I., 373.

14 If not shown otherwise we reflect on the readings and translations of Talât Tekin, *A Grammar of Orkhon Turkic* (Indiana University, Uralic And Altaic Series) Bloomington, 1968.

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