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Analysis of the Previously Unknown Estampage of the Tonuquq Inscription Found in the Kyakhta Museum of Local Lore of Academician V. A. Obruchev

Abstract

In July 2019, I received information about the discovery of an estampage of an inscription made in Old Turkic Runic Writing in the fond “Documents. Photo documents” of the Kyakhta Museum

of Local Lore of Academician V. A. Obruchev. Judging on several obtained photographs, it has been tentatively identified as To?uquq/Tonyuquq Inscription. It is an epigraphic text on a monument of the period of the so-called Second Eastern Turkic Qaghanate, great nomadic empire that existed in Inner Asia in 682–744 A. D. The monument was discovered in 1897 and has since been repeatedly studied, copied and translated. I could find no information on which of the copies could have been found in Kyakhta. The opportunity to get acquainted with the find in situ came only in December 2019, and it became apparent that this copy has been previously unknown to the academic community. The subsequent work followed two directions. Firstly, it was necessary to establish the origin of the copy, its authorship, dating, and circumstances surrounding its appearance in the collections of the Kyakhta Museum of Local Lore. Secondly, it was necessary to work directly with the discovered copy for the purpose of its comparison with others known copies and, if possible, of identifying differences in copying any of the text fragments. As a result, it has been understood that the copy was made by Chinese scientists and then somehow transferred to St. Petersburg, wherefrom W. Kotwicz sent it to Kyakhta in April 1913 as a supplement to W. Radloff's "Atlas of Antiquities of Mongolia." Incidentally, it has been discovered that at least one of the similar copies of the To?uquq/Tonyuquq Inscription, stored today in the fonds of the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts (IOM) of the Russian Academy of Sciences, must be contemporary to the one found in Kyakhta. A careful analysis of the copy itself — eight estampages corresponding to the eight sides of the To?uquq/Tonyuquq Inscription (four sides on two stelae) — has allowed us to conclude that individual fragments differ from the corresponding ones on earliest copies made in 1898 in the course of the Orkhon expedition work, as well as from those made in 1909 in the field research of G. J. Ramstedt. We have also made measurements and description of these estampages.

Keywords

Historical source, Second Eastern Turkic Qaghanate of 682–744, Old Turkic Runic Writing Monuments, E. N. Klementz's Orkhon expedition of 1897, W. L. Kotwicz, W. Radloff's "Atlas of Antiquities of Mongolia," estampage, To?uquq/Tonyuquq Inscription, Nalaikh Inscription, Ba?n Tsokto Inscription, Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Kyakhta.

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