



## Some aspects of the social structure and authority of the Ancient Turks in written sources of the 8th-11th centuries

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### ABSTRACT

The ancient Turkic script, which became the foundation for the writing systems of the Turkic-speaking peoples of the Eurasian steppes and Transcaucasia, was developed in the 6th-7th centuries. Written documents from the ancient Turks have been preserved in the form of stone stelae, brief inscriptions, and personal notification. The analysis of these texts provides insights into the political, economic, and social history of the ancient Turkic era. This article examines aspects of the state structure of the Turkic peoples from the 6th to the 15th centuries as indicated by written monuments displayed at the National Museum of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The sources for this article include copies of the stelae of Kul Tigin, Tonyukuk, El Etmish Bilge Khagan, as well as monuments from the ancient Uighur period, specifically the Doloodoyn monuments. Additionally, translations of Mahmud al-Kashgari's "Diwan-i Lughat al-turk" and Yusuf Balasaguni's "Kutadgu Bilig" are considered to discuss the political structure of the Turkic states. These sources are available in the Ancient Turkic Civilization exhibition halls and the Hall of the History of Kazakhstan from the 13th to the 20th centuries at the National Museum of Kazakhstan.

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## Introduction

Written sources are crucial for understanding the history of civilization. One of the ancient forms of alphabetic writing in the Eurasian steppes is the Old Turkic script, which became the basis for the writing systems of Turkic-speaking peoples in Central Asia, the Volga region, Transcaucasia, and Kazakhstan. This script originated in the 6th-7th centuries (Khabdulina, 2022: 123).

The monuments of the ancient Turkic runic script discovered in Southern Siberia, Mongolia, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan are an extremely valuable source for understanding the language, history, ethnogenesis, geography, spiritual culture, written tradition, beliefs and worldview of the ancient Turkic tribes. Special focus is given to these sources in the study of the state system, political structure, and the complexities of relationships within the administrative framework of the Turkic state, as documented on the monuments exhibited in the National Museum of Kazakhstan.

In order to better understand this issue, as well as to study the transformation of the political and administrative system of the Turkic states during the 6th-11th centuries, it is also useful to refer to the written works of later authors, such as Mahmud al-Kashgari and Yusuf Balasaguni.

In the early 2000s, scientists engaged in research and translations of Turkic runic inscriptions noted that a comprehensive study of these monuments was hindered by inaccuracies in individual publications, arbitrary interpretations, the presence of undeciphered runic signs, and even controversy over the definition of what constitutes Old Turkic culture (Zholdasbekov, Sartkozhauly, 2006: 12; Stark 2008: 55-63 [defining “alttürkisch” more in view of archaeological research]; Zsidai, 2018). Further identification and study of written monuments from this period expanded the territorial range of objects, allowing for the identification of several variants of alphabets, which in turn enables more accurate translations of runic texts.

When analyzing translations of texts from the museum collection of the National Museum of the Republic of Kazakhstan, our primary aim is to study the state structure by identifying the terms used for government representatives within the administrative system and by describing the relationships between the political elite and other institutions within the society of the Turkic tribes.

## Materials and research methods

The basic sources of this article are copies of the inscribed stelae of Kul Tigin, Tonyukuk, El Etmish Bilge Khagan, as well as monuments of the ancient Uighur period, in particular, the Doloodoyn monuments, shown in the exhibition of the National Museum of Kazakhstan. Until 2020, visitors could only view a copy of the stela of Kul Tigin, located in the hall of Ancient and Medieval History. Currently, after the opening of the hall of Ancient Turkic Civilization, guests of the National Museum have the opportunity to study the stelae of Tonyukuk, El Etmish Bilge Khagan and the Doloodoyn monuments as well. In addition, to better understand the political structure of the Turkic states, copies and translations of Mahmud al-Kashgari's

“Diwan-i Lughat al-turk” and Yusuf Balasaguni’s “Kutadgu Bilig” are also displayed in the exhibition of the Hall of History of Kazakhstan of the 13th-20th centuries, were taken into consideration.

During the research, the methods of source critique, analysis and synthesis were used. Translations of written texts from the ancient Turkic era, the ancient Uighur period and Arabic works of the 10th-11th centuries provide a basis for studying the formation and transformation of the political and administrative structures of the Turkic states through documentary data.

Using cross-cultural research techniques, we compare the psychological characteristics of the Turkic people, their attitudes toward rulers and individuals in the state’s administrative system as depicted in the texts from the 6th-8th centuries and the works of later authors.

### Research background

One of the first monuments of runic writing monuments was discovered by the traveller and encyclopedic scientist Daniel Gottlieb Messerschmidt. His research activity in Siberia began in 1718-1719, coinciding with the official opening of the famous *Kunstkammer* in St. Petersburg and the issuance of decrees of Peter I, which legalized collective activities in Russia. (Tunkina, Savinov, 2017: 13). According to Decree No. 3159 of February 13, 1718, residents were required to bring “born freaks” or “unusual things found” to the Governors and Commandants of the cities (*Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossijskoj imperii*, 1718: 541-542).

D.G. Messerschmidt’s manuscript “*Sibiria Perlustrata*” contains archaeological materials discovered during the expeditions of the 1720s. According to D.G. Savinov’s research, the finds span periods from the Early Scythian Iron Age to the Medieval Mongolian era, based on the modern periodization of archaeological sites in Southern Siberia (Savinov, 2021: 252-265).

More than a hundred years later, in 1889, N.M. Yadrintsev discovered the stelae of the monuments of Kul Tigin and Bilge Khagan in the Khoshoo Tsaidam tract, 400 km west of modern Ulaanbaatar (Shaymerdinova, 2009: 8). As noted in the report by Danish linguist and Turkologist Wilhelm Thomsen, a foreign corresponding member of the Russian Academy of Sciences, dated December 15, 1893 at a meeting of the Royal Danish Academy, the written monuments were examined in 1890-1891 by a Finnish expedition led by the archaeologist A.O. Heikel, and in 1891 by the Russian Turkologist Radlov’s expedition (Thomsen, 2011: 5). The deciphering of the Kul Tigin stelae by W. Thomsen introduced a large number of original texts of diverse content into the collection of the most important documents in Central Asian history. In 1894, V. Radlov presented the first translation of the written monument, and during 1894-1896, he supplemented the original deciphered text, taking into account W. Thomsen’s critical remarks (Tekin, 2014: 2).

The most important result of this meticulous translation into Russian was the collaborative work of V. Radlov and P. Melioransky (Radlov, Melioransky, 1897) (Medyntseva, 2019). As Melioransky himself notes, “this translation is not the result of a new independent processing of inscriptions, but was made by me, at the request of V. Radlov, from his German translation” (Radlov, Melioransky, 1897: 2; Radloff, 1895).

V. Radlov also made a great contribution to the process of deciphering the Tonyukuk inscription, the research of which began in 1897 by Russian archaeologist and ethnographer D.A. Klements. The first mention of this monument can be found in his “Archaeological Diary ...” (Klements, 1895) and his letter to Academician V. Radlov (Klements, 1892).

The first analysis of the discovered and deciphered Orkhon inscriptions was conducted in the late 19th century by the Russian orientalist Vasily Bartold (Bartold, 1899). Later, in 1926, at the request of the Turkish government, he delivered 12 lectures on the history of the Turkic peoples of Middle Asia at Istanbul University. In these lectures he described the history of the Turkic peoples based on numerous sources. This collection of lectures has been republished many times in subsequent years (Bartold, 1998). From the 19th century to the present day, the study of the Orkhon script monuments was carried out by Turkologists from Russia, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Turkey, as well as scientists from Europe (Keleş, 2020). In Turkey, one of the first translations of the Orkhon monuments into Turkish was done by Necib Asım, based on the works of Radlov and Thomsen (Asım, 1921).

Soviet scientists played a crucial role in refining translations and analyzing the ancient Turkic script. The work of S.E. Malov includes translations of the Kul Tigin and Tonyukuk stelae, as well as the Arabic works “Kutadgu bilig” (“Blessed knowledge”) by Yusuf Balasaguni and “Diwan-i lughat al-turk” (“Compendium of the languages of the Turks”) by Mahmud al-Kashgari (Malov, 1951). In Kazakhstan, during the 20th and 21st centuries, Orkhon monuments were studied by K. Sartkozhauly, G. Aidarov, A. Amanzholov, N. Kelimbetov, A. Egeubai and others.

A. Bernshtam was one of the first Soviet scholars to discuss the socio-economic system of the Turks from the 6th to 8th centuries (Bernshtam, 1946). However, his study was based on the materialist theory of that time, which linked the origin of the state to the institution of private property (land) and the subsequent hierarchization of society into classes and class contradictions. The social and state structure of the Turkic khaganates was further explored in the works of S.G. Klyashtorny and D.G. Savinov, who provided a chronologically structured analysis of Eurasian states, starting with the Huns, Zhuns and Yuezhi and extending to the Tatars in the 12th century. (Klyashtorny, Savinov, 2005). Similar work had earlier been done by P.B. Golden (Golden, 1992), Yu. Zuev (Zuev, 2002). Based on archaeological and written materials Yu.Zuev demonstrated the similarities and differences in the state structure of nomadic tribes across the Eurasian steppes.

It is also worth noting the work of S.G. Klyashtorny on the position of the khagan in the Orkhon monuments (Klyashtorny, 2003). T.S. Zhumaganbetov, Yu.I. Drobyshev, A.V. Kubatin, K.E. Torlanbayeva, S.A. Vasyutin, Z. Samashev, N.G. Shaymerdinova, A. Rogozhinsky studied the social and political structure of the Turkic states using written sources, archaeological monuments, and toreutic materials (Zhumaganbetov, 2006; Drobyshev, 2018; Kubatin, 2016; Torlanbayeva, 2003<sup>1</sup>; Vasyutin, 2014; Samashev, 2022; Samashev, Aitkali, Tolegenov, 2022; Shaymerdinova, 2014; Kairzhanov, Shaimerdinova, 2018, Rogozhinsky, 2019, Erdal, 2019).

S.G. Klyashtorny made significant contributions by studying and deciphering the Terkhin inscription, a copy of which is also displayed at the National Museum of the Republic of

<sup>1</sup>Торланбаева К.Е., 2003. Институты каганской власти (Второй Восточно-Тюркский каганат) автореф...к.и.н. Алматы. 25 с.

Kazakhstan. This inscription is a crucial source for researching the state system of ancient Turkic power. The remains of this monument were first discovered by the Mongolian archaeologist Ts. Dorzhsuren in 1957, and were later investigated by S.G. Klyashtorny, N. Sir-Ordzhav, and V. Volkov between 1960 and 1970 (*Pismennaya civilizaciya drevnetyurskoj epohi*, 2023: 155-157).

We should also note the works of V.Tishin, who studied the social organization of Turkic tribes through the use of tamga signs. According to Tishin, these signs correlate with family-related groups, which he identifies as the main socio-political units of ancient Turkic society (Tishin, 2015). Equally important is the joint monograph by N. Seregin and V. Tishin (Seregin, Tishin, 2017). This work is based on epitaphs, Turkic and Uighur written monuments, as well as the works of Yu. Balasaguni, M. al-Kashgari, the epics “Oguzname» and “Legends of Korkut», ethnographic materials, and “external sources» – i.e., the writings of tribes and states that interacted had contact with the Turks. A key focus of the monograph is a comparative analysis of the status of women in Turkic tribal society (Seregin, Tishin, 2017: 145-172).

In 2023, a project led by N. Bazylkhan, A. Rogozhinsky, A. Kamalov, and R. Arziev aimed to compile written sources from the ancient Turkic era and the ancient Uighur period spanning the 6th to 14th centuries (*Pismennaya civilizaciya drevnetyurskoj epohi*, 2023). Albums and atlases of Turkic epigraphic monuments, including those monuments discussed in this article, were also published earlier (Zholdasbekov, Sartkozhauly, 2006; Zholdasbekov, Dosymbayeva, 2013).

Mahmud al-Kashgari’s work “*Diwan-i lughat al-turk*” was preserved in a single copy at the Millet Genel Library in Istanbul (Kashgari, 2005:13). The dictionary was first published between 1915 and 1917 in Turkey by K.M. Rifat (Rifat, 1917). In the 1990s, A. Egeubai began translating Kashgari’s work into Kazakh (Egeubai, 2006a). Later, in 2005, a Russian translation by Z.-A. Auezova was published in Almaty (Kashgari, 2005).

Yusuf Balasaguni’s poem has been preserved in three manuscripts – the Vienna (Herat), Cairo and Namangan (Ferghana) versions, named after their original locations. The Cairo and Ferghana manuscripts are written in Arabic script, while the Vienna manuscript is written in Uighur letters. Later, in 1890, V. Radlov commissioned a copy of the Cairo manuscript for the Asian Museum of the St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences (Radlov, 1890). The Ferghana manuscript, discovered by A.Z. Validov in 1913, is considered the most complete (Balasaguni, 1990:537-538).

Balasaguni’s work was first translated into Kazakh by A. Egeubai in 1986 and was published later (Egeubai, 2006). Notably, the Turkologist N. Kelimbetov studied “*Kutadgu Bilig*”, considering it a political and philosophical treatise. He emphasized the problems of government, rules and procedures of power, as well as the norms of behavior and customs-traditions of members of Turkic society (Kelimbetov, 2011).

## Analysis

The analyzed texts reflect various aspects of the history of the Turkic people, including the exploits of individuals and the entire population during specific periods. Among the most significant written sources from the era of the Turkic Khaganate are the written monuments discovered in present-day Mongolia. Copies of the Kul Tigin, Tonyukuk, Doloodoyn and the Terkhin inscription are currently on display in the Ancient Turkic Civilization exhibition hall at the National Museum of Kazakhstan.

Let's briefly describe each source. The monument to Kul Tigin (also transcribed as K l Tegin) was discovered in 1889 in the Khoshoo Tsaidam tract along the the Komnin-Orkhon River in Mongolia. Kul Tigin was a political and military leader of the Second Turkic Khaganate, serving as a co-ruler with Bilge Khagan, and the son of Kutlug-Elterish Khagan. He is celebrated as a valiant warrior and key participant in numerous military campaigns, that solidified Turkic hegemony in Central Asia. Kul Tigin died at the age of 47, on February 27, 731 (Zholdasbekov, Sartkozhauly, 2006: 117-120). The Turkic runic inscriptions, which date back to the 13th century, consist of 76 stanzas in the ancient Turkic alphabet and 14 stanzas in Chinese. They provide historical information and rich linguistic material, offering insights into the linguistic and cultural heritage of the Turkic peoples.

In addition to this stele, there is a complex of monuments dedicated to El Etmish Bilge Khagan. The title in the ancient Turkic language reads: Tenjiride: bolmuř: El Etmish Bilge: qayan. The monument was discovered in the Doloon Mod area, north of the Khoyt Terhiin Tariat Somon river in the Archangei region of Mongolia. The stele is partially stored in the laboratory of the Institute of Archaeology of Mongolia, with a stone turtle placed at the entrance of the Mongolian Academy of Sciences. The stele is made of light gray granite, with 30 lines of inscription carved on its four sides. The turtle pedestal is also made of gray granite, featuring a hole on its back, along with a tamga-sign and one line of inscription carved on the turtle's right side.

An equally significant discovery, complementing the monuments of the Kooshoo Tsaidam tract, is the Tonyukuk stele. This Turkic runic monument dates back to 725-726 and is part of the Tonyukuk memorial complex located in the Bain-Tsokto tract in Mongolia. The stele contains 62 stanzas that describe the biography, political and military activities of the "wise Tonyukuk".

In 1955, in the present area of Khar us Turgen Somon of the Uva region of Mongolia, the Mongolian archaeologist Ts. Dorzhsuren discovered a written monument to Doloodoyn. The stele bears only 4 stanzas, in which the name "Bilge Chor" is mentioned, a "military name" (TURK BITIG, electronic resource).

It should be emphasized that the Turkic Runic script and individual stone pedestals are the most significant documents of the historical chronicle of the early Middle Ages from the 6th to 9th centuries. The Runic writing of the Turks created and transmitted through its content a certain model of governance, administrative division and traditions of the supreme power of nomadic states. The Doloodoyn written monument does not address the political structure of the ancient Turks. Regarding the later history of the Turkic tribes and their development, it is necessary to refer to Arabic sources.

In the Preface of “*Diwan-i lughat al-Turk*”, the author Mahmud al-Kashgari justified his right to write this work: “Of their [Turks] number, I am one of the most eloquent and clear in my presentation, the most educated, the noblest by birth and the most dexterous in throwing a spear. The dialects of all the tribes have been mastered by me perfectly and are set out in an elegant sequence” (Kashgari, 2005). The work was written in 1074, and the text of the surviving manuscript was rewritten in 1266. The original manuscript consists of 319 pages written in Arabic. More than 50 words and verbs in this work concern the political structure of the late Turkic states.

Yusuf Khass Hajib Balasaguni was an outstanding poet, thinker, prominent public figure and scholar-encyclopedist of the 11th century, whose name was widely known throughout the East. In the poem «*Kutadgu bilig*», which made this wise philosopher, brilliant thinker, and excellent expert on the social problems of his time known worldwide, the social image of that era is indicated in a remarkably artistic language. He created his work in 1069-1070 (Turkology, 2016: 251-252).

When considering the question of governance of the Turkic states, it is worth highlighting several points:

1. Identification of the role and functions of the supreme ruler, the peculiarities of his administration;
2. Analysis of the sacralization of the supreme ruler. An important aspect is also the perception and influence of his family members on the social system;
3. Study of written materials in search of the reasons for the destabilization of power.

In the text of *Kul Tigin*, the rule of the khagans is described as a generational sequence. The change of a khagan’s rule signifies a change of generation, an assessment is given, and tribute is paid to the rule of each khagan. The ancestors or the first khagans are the most revered and respected, and subsequent generations, in the minds of the Turks, are expected to follow the traditions of their ancestors. The ancestors of the ancient Turkic Khaganate, Bumyn Khagan and Istemi Khagan, are praised as “wise khagans”, as “courageous khagans” who created a strong state and power. Stanzas 3, 4, and 5 of this work are devoted to the process of changing the government, when “unreasonable khagans sat on the throne” and “their military leaders were also unwise and weak” (Shaymerdinova, 2009: 223). Mahmud al-Kashgari also noted the weakening of power with the change of generations, citing a proverb about geese and ducks as an example: “**Kaz kubsa urdak kuluk ikanu [illanur]** – when the goose flies away from the pond, the duck begins to rule there. This is what they say about an inconspicuous person who undertakes to rule the people after the departure of their ruler” (Kashgari, 2005: 133).

Having determined the importance and role of the supreme ruler in society, it is necessary to consider the management system. Based on the Orkhon monuments, S.G. Klyashtorny identified five main functions of the khagan:

1. Military;
2. Diplomatic;

3. The administrative function, through which he defines the territories of the conquered peoples;

4. Governmental, i.e. the distribution of representatives of the Turkic people in the conquered territories. In addition, he has the right to transfer part of the tribal lands to certain groups of immigrants (Sogdians).

5. Centralization, on the basis of which he “arranges” the Turks in the “country of Otyuken”, i.e. in the indigenous territory of the Turkic people (Klyashtorny, 2003: 244).

These functions are also described in the works of later authors. Mahmud al-Kashgari’s “Diwan-i lughat al-turk” contains a number of nouns, verbs and proverbs characterizing the ruler’s activities.

For example, the military prerogative of the khagan can be observed through the following words and proverbs:

A) verb [**urush-**] – [to quarrel, to fight], where the phrase **birla urushdi** is given as an example – “they quarreled with each other. That’s what they say about rulers who are at war with each other.” The proverb is also mentioned in this episode:

**alblar birla urushma**

**baklar birla turushma** – “don’t fight the brave, don’t rebel against the rulers” (Kashgari, 2005: 204).

B) verb [**ikash-**] – [sawing, pushing]. For a better understanding of this verb, again a proverb is given:

**ikki bugra ikashur**

**utra kukakun yanzhilur** – “two camels push each other, and a fly dies between them” (Kashgari, 2005:208). In this proverb, the social context is important, as it demonstrates the “death of the defenseless” in the military confrontation between the rulers of two states.

C) word [**yurtug**] – The Sultan’s march on the day of battle or departure (Kashgari, 2005: 773).

Yusuf Balasaguni also wrote about military duties:

*The ruler of a country is used to fighting-. He sends his army into battle by his command* (Balasaguni, 1990: 64, translation from Russian).

*The axe and the sword are the guardians of the country. With weapons the beaks and the power are strong* (Balasaguni, 1990: 217, translation from Russian)

But at the same time, his text noted that it is necessary to be far-sighted and careful, given the strength of the laws and abiding by them:

*And to strengthen their power year after year, Put the law, not force, over the people* (Balasaguni, 1990: 168, translation from Russian)

Diplomatic relations and the rules of conduct for ambassadors are also revealed the words and titles mentioned in the “Compendium of the languages of the Turks”:

A) **tanuk** – “the name of the gift presented to the Kings during their travels”, which includes food and brocade (Kashgari, 2005: 1012).

B) title **yalavar** – “the envoy of the ruler in the” Uighur dialect. In the disclosure of this concept, there is a proverb that reveals the main duty of any state ambassador. The definition of Kashgari is interesting as a comparative example, which demonstrates the influence of Islam and the Arabic language on the social and political structure:



**yash ut kuymas**

**yalavar ulmas** – “fresh grass does not burn, the ambassador does not die, even if the message shows the cruelty and rudeness of the sender. This is similar to what was said by the Great and Almighty: “ma ala r-rasuli illa l-balag” [the duties of the ambassador are only a message] (Kashgari, 2005: 777). The assassination of a state ambassador may provoke military action against the recipient of the message. It is also worth noting the concept of **bushut** – “permission to return”, which the sultan grants to the envoy sent to him, as well as the reward he receives. This is similar to how the Arabic word *sufra* originally meant food supplies for travel, and later came to mean a piece of cloth in which food is wrapped” (Kashgari, 2005: 353).

C) il – the peace (between two rulers) – **iki bar birla il buldi**. This concept has two more meanings - “possession, bak ili – ruler’s domain” and “horses, master of the domain” (Kashgari, 2005:86,88). It is likely that this implies economic well-being and territorial integrity. It is no coincidence that the “Compendium” also contains another concept – **artut** – “a gift presented to the rulers – a horse or something similar” (Kashgari, 2005: 138). The presence of livestock, such as horses, is equivalent to owning pastureland, demonstrating the social system, and the nomadic lifestyle of the Turkic peoples. Bernshtam considered that land ownership was an indicator of the gradual settling of nomads. However, this idea must be understood in the political context of that time and is now regarded as misinterpretation (Bernshtam, 1946: 5-6).

In the work of Yusuf Balasaguni, a separate chapter notes the duties and rights of an ambassador appointed to the post, but in the case of the duties of the ruler himself, he warns against rash decisions:

*Don't pour someone else's blood, don't drink someone else's blood; From these two evils, your death will be pitiful* (Balasaguni, 1990: 165, translation from Russian).

An important area of activity of the ruler is the appointment of persons in the administrative and territorial structures of the state (see Golden 1992: 148-149 for a list of offices, some of which were hereditary – with further literature). In the work of Mahmud al- Kashgari, this is expressed through concepts and verbs in the Turkic language, among which the words **at** (title), **[ata-]** (to assign a title, to give a name), **ayag** (title) can be distinguished. Definitions are interesting as they specify the prerogative of the ruler to confer titles and allocate land holdings to certain individuals: **bak anar at birdi** – “ the ruler gave him the title” (Kashgari, 2005: 111), **ul anar at atadi** (a derivative of the verb [ata-] - “he gave him the title” (Kashgari, 2005: 930). The phrase is also given:

**kuzgil mana akilik**

**bulsun mana ayaga**

**izgil mani tukishka**

**yuvkiya mana ulaga** – “let me be generous so that my title is generous. Send me to battle and help me by giving me a horse that takes me to the [field] of battle” (Kashgari, 2005: 870).

In the inscriptions of Tonyukuk and the Terkhin stele, the role of the supreme ruler is presented from the very beginning, depicting him as inviolable and “born of the Sky” (Terkhin inscription) and suggesting that “Tengri (Sky God) himself gave Khan ...” (Tonyukuk Stele).

The sacredness of the khagan mentioned in the Kul Tigin inscription was noted by Golden, who referred to the ruler as “Heaven-like (“God-like”), heaven-driven, Türk, wise Qağan” (Golden, 1992: 146-147).

In the work of Mahmud al-Kashgari, this sacredness is transferred to an Islamic context: “Allah Almighty lifted the luminary of fate to the constellations of the Turks, instructed the heavens to revolve around their kingdom, called them al-Türk and endowed them with power, made them Rulers of the Epoch and put the reins of the chosen people in their hands, exalted them above [other] people and directed them to the truth” (Kashgari, 2005: 53). It is no coincidence that the word “**alkshi**” means “praising the power of man, invoking it and remembering it.” In the “Compendium” Kashgari also mentions the words «**bakka alkshi birdi**» – “[someone] praised the ruler” (Kashgari, 2005: 128).

Balasaguni’s work also sets out the priorities, duties, rights and qualities of rulers:

There is a right of the ruler: he is the head of people, but the people also have duties and rights. (Balasaguni, 1990: 64).

The spread of Islam in the 10th-11th centuries altered the religious context of the khagan’s sacralization. The ruler’s position relative to the Almighty was more clearly defined, as evidenced by the concepts of **kirgag** and **kargag**. **Kirgag** refers to the ruler’s anger, the king against his subjects. “They make a distinction between the curse of Allah, the Almighty and the Great (**kargag**), sent down to his servant, and the curse from the servant of God to his own kind from among his subjects... This is similar to the distinction between the Messengers of Allah Almighty (yalawaj) and the ambassador of the king (**yalawar**)” (Kashgari, 2005: 682).

The erection of a stele in honor of Kul Tigin, who was primarily a military commander rather than a member of the political or managerial staff of the Turkic state, underscores the importance and influence of family members on society. In this source, in addition to his military campaigns, to which 20 stanzas of the stela are dedicated, the funeral ceremony attracts special attention. The names of the peoples who honored Kul Tigin are listed: “Kidans, Tatabs, Tabgachi, Tibetan khagan, Sogdians, Berchekers, Bukhara people, Turgesh, Kyrgyz khagan” (Shaymerdinova, 2009: 228-229). A similar narrative is also found in Kashgari’s work:

**Baklar atin argurub**

**kazgu ani turgurub**

**Manzi yuzi sargarib**

**kurkum anar tutulur** – “the rulers drove their horses, they themselves were exhausted by sadness: their faces [turned yellow], as if they had been rubbed with saffron” (Kashgari, 2005: 449). However, the key difference between these plots is that in the 11th-century monument, the mourning was not for a family member of the supreme ruler but for the ruler himself.

An equally important person among the members of the ruling family was the spouse. We can find confirmation of this both in the Orkhon monuments and in Arabic manuscripts. The Terkhin inscription begins not only with the words about the “born of the Sky El Etmish Bilge Khagan”, but also about the “born of the Sky (spouse) Elbilge Khatun, assuming the titles **khagan** and **khatun**” (Golden 1992: 148; Pismennaya civilizaciya, 2023: 167). The concept

of “khatun“ is also mentioned in ”Diwan-i lughat al-turk», as the title of the successors of the family of supreme rulers. In this definition, the author also makes a reference to a proverb:

**Khan ishi bulsa**

**katun ishi kalir** – “when the king has things to do, the princess’s worries will be left aside” (Kashgari, 2005: 386). In addition, he cites the name of another title worn by women: **kunzhui** – “a woman of noble origin, lower in rank than khatun” (Kashgari, 2005: 922). In the text of the monument to Kul Tigin, it is mentioned that the marriage of representatives of the ruling family was seen as a guarantee of establishing strong relations: “Barys became their bek, then we gave the title of khagan, gave him my younger sister, the princess, as his wife” (Shaymerdinova, 2009: 225).

An important factor of a strong state is the centralization of power. In the inscriptions of the stele of Kul Tigin, stanzas 6 and 7 note that the reasons for the weakening of the state were “the infidelity of the beks and the people to the khagan, due to the fact that they believed deception and succumbed to incitement”, internal strife - “enmity between younger and older brothers”, as well as “the lack of unity between the beks and the people” (stele of Kul Tigin). Another reason for the weakening is the influence of external factors: “because of subordination to others...The Turkic people weakened, became exhausted and disappeared” (Tonyukuk stela). This is also highlighted in the Kul Tigin stele: “they became enemies of the Tabgach khagan...Under these circumstances, the Turkic people did not want to give up their labors and strength. “We’d rather die, we’ll be left without descendants” (Shaymerdinova, 2009: 224, 243).

M. al-Kashgari in his work, also addressed the problem of internal strife which affects the strength of state power, citing a proverb:

iki kuzhnar bashse

bir ashinta bolmas – “the heads of two sheep are not boiled in the same pot” (Kashgari, 2005: 1025)

In his work, Yusuf Balasaguni focused on the establishment of legislation as a guarantee of stability within the state (see also Golden, 1992: 147). The work periodically contains statements about the need for and importance of enacting laws:

Strengthen the law – and all disasters will disappear,

And you will be happy (Balasaguni, 1990: 169, translation from Russian)

Where the bek approved a reliable law,

The country will flourish (Balasaguni, 1990: 209, translation from Russian).

This is also confirmed by the proverb given as an example to explain the verb [**ubrash-**] – “to wear out, to deteriorate”:

**kanashlik bilik uzrashur**

**kanashsiz bilik ubrashur** – “the rule following the advice is flourishing (every day), but without advice it is deteriorating” (Kashgari, 2005: 242). The high importance of reaffirmation and respecting traditional customary law as one of the first acts of the khagan was already noted by Golden (Golden, 1992: 147).

## Results

Each written manuscript is undoubtedly a complex literary work representing an important historical chronicle. The discovery of these written monuments marked the beginning of a large-scale search and study of written monuments from the Turkic period in Mongolia and the Altai.

By examining the written monuments from the 8th to the 11th centuries, it is possible to observe the societal changes resulting from the spread of Islam, as well as the influence of the Arabic language on daily life. Additionally, the writings of later authors further confirm and expand upon aspects of political governance in the Turkic states, the perception of the supreme ruler and the ruling family by society, and the causes of destabilization.

The spread of Islam influenced the process of sacralization of the image of the khagan, which developed during the creation of the Orkhon stelae. In these texts, there is a gradual decrease in the emphasis of the the supreme ruler's role in relation to the Almighty. While the ancient Turkic writings of the 8th century allowed authors to liken their rulers to deities (such as Tengri and Umai), the manuscript of Mahmud al-Kashgari highlights the distinction between deity and ruler in linguistic terms. Meanwhile, Yusuf Balasaguni's work underscores the omnipotence of Allah, reflecting this through praises and affirmations of His power.

In addition, Islam influenced the social structure of the state, particularly in how the influence of the ruler's wife was expressed. While in the inscriptions on the Kul Tigin stele, the author Yollyg-tegin likens his mother the "khatun" to Umai (31 stanzas), Mahmud al-Kashgari confirmed the existence of certain titles for members of noble families, including the ruling family. However, Yusuf Balasaguni only notes the requirements for the future wife of the ruler. These requirements do not include an equal position between the ruler and his wife. This suggests that women did not participate in political decision-making.

Written monuments also broadly define the functions, duties and rights of the supreme ruler. Among the duties of the khagan included:

1. Protection of the territorial integrity of the state, as well as efforts to expand its territory and ensure security;
2. Activities to ensure the economic well-being of the people;
3. Ensuring the honour and glory of the Turkic state and people;
4. Control and management of the administrative-territorial divisions of the state, including the appointment of certain persons to public positions.

## Conclusion

In the history of world civilization, the ancient Turkic Orkhon-Yenisei inscriptions carved in stone during the 6th to 8th centuries, hold a special place. These memorial stones are not only evidence of a high-level of spiritual culture but also constitute a precious legacy of socio-political thought.

Thus, the Turkic Runic script and Arabic written sources represent the significant examples of historical chronicles and also serve as the foundation for the languages of subsequent Turkic peoples across the vast expanses of Eurasia. The Turkic inscriptions conveyed and preserved a

particular model of governance, administrative division, and traditions of supreme power in nomadic states, from the Great Turkic Khaganate of the 6th century up to the Kazakh Khanate of the 15th-18th centuries (Khabdulina, 2022: 120).

The availability of translations of all the sources used here, accomplished by a large group of scholars over more than two hundred years, allows us to observe changes in the social and political structure throughout history. This provides an opportunity to study the transformational processes of the state structure during the ancient Turkic period based on exhibits at the National Museum of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

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## VIII-XI ғғ. жазбаларындағы ежелгі түркілердің қоғамдық құрылымы мен билік жүйесінің кейбір аспектілері

**Аннотация.** Кавказ сырты мен Еуразия даласындағы түркі тілдес халықтардың жазбаларына негіз болған көне түркі жазуы VI-VII ғасырларда қалыптасты. Ежелгі түркі халықтарының жазба ескерткіштері өмірдің саяси, экономикалық, әлеуметтік аспектілерін зерттеуге мүмкіндік береді. Осы негізде жазылған бұл ғылыми мақаланың мақсаты Қазақстан Республикасы Ұлттық музейінің экспозициясындағы жазбаша ескерткіштерді зерделеу арқылы VI-XI ғасырлардағы түркі халықтарының мемлекеттік құрылымы мәселесін анықтау болып табылады.

Күлтегін, Тоныкөк, Ел Етміш Білге қағанның жазбаша стелаларының көшірмелері мен ежелгі ұйғыр кезеңіндегі ескерткіштер, атап айтқанда, Долоодойн ескерткіштері ғылыми мақаланың негізі дереккөзі болып табылады. Сонымен қатар, түркі мемлекеттерінің саяси құрылымы

тақырыбын ашу үшін Махмұд Қашқаридің «Диуани Луғат ат-түрік» және Жүсіп Баласағұнидің «Құтадғу біліг» шығармаларының көшірмелері мен аудармалары пайдаланылды. Бұл дереккөздер Қазақстан Ұлттық музейінің ежелгі түркі өркениеті залы мен XIII-XX ғғ. Қазақстан тарихы залының көрмесінде орналасқан.

Зерттеу барысында деректану, талдау және синтез әдістері қолданылды. Ежелгі түркі дәуірінің, ежелгі ұйғыр кезеңінің және X-XI ғасырлардағы арабграфиялық жұмыстары жазбаша мәтіндерінің аудармалары деректерді оқшаулау арқылы түркі мемлекеттерінің саяси-әкімшілік құрылымын қалыптастыру және өзгерту процесі, мемлекеттік иерархия және биліктің саяси құрылымы өкілдерінің арасындағы қатынастар мәселелерін зерттеуге мүмкіндік берді.

Мәдениетаралық зерттеу әдістерінің негізінде түркі халқының психологиялық ерекшеліктерін VI-VIII ғасырлар мәтіндеріндегі және X-XI ғасырлардан кейінгі авторлар еңбектеріндегі билеушілер мен мемлекеттің басқару жүйесіндегі адамдардың тұлғаларымен салғастыру мүмкін болды.

**Кілт сөздер:** руникалық жазу, көне түркі жазба ескерткіштері, Орхон жазулары, мемлекеттік құрылым, Күлтегін, «Құтадғу біліг», түркі мемлекеттері, музей жәдігерлері.

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### **Некоторые аспекты общественного строя и власти древних тюрков в письменных источниках VIII-XI веков**

**Аннотация.** Древнетюркская письменность, ставшая основой письменности тюркоязычных народов евразийских степей и Закавказья, сформировалась в VI-VII веках. Письменные памятники древнетюркских народов позволили изучить политические, экономические, социальные аспекты жизни. Цель данной статьи - через изучение письменных памятников, находящихся в экспозиции Национального музея Республики Казахстан, рассмотреть вопросы государственного устройства тюркских народов VI-XI вв.

Источниковой базой данной статьи послужили копии письменных стел Кюльтегину, Тоньюкуку, Иль Етмиш Бильге кагану, а также памятников древнеуйгурского периода, в частности, памятников Долоодойн. Кроме того, для раскрытия темы политического устройства тюркских государств были привлечены копии и переводы работ «Диуани Лугатат-тюрк» Махмуда Кашгари и «Кутадгу Билиг» Юсуфа Баласағуни. Данные источники доступны в экспозиции залов Древнетюркской цивилизации и зала Истории Казахстана XIII-XX вв. Национального музея Казахстана.

В процессе исследования были использованы методы источниковедческого анализа, анализа и синтеза. Переводы письменных текстов древнетюркской эпохи, древнеуйгурского периода и арабографических работ X-XI вв. позволили путем систематизации сведений представить процесс формирования и трансформации политического и административного устройства тюркских государств, государственной иерархии и взаимоотношений между представителями политической элиты.

На основе приемов кросскультурного исследования текстов VI-VIII вв. и работ поздних авторов X-XI вв. осуществлено сопоставление психологической оценки тюркским народом личностей правителей и лиц, находящихся в управленческой системе государства.

**Ключевые слова:** руническая письменность, древнетюркские письменные памятники, орхонские надписи, государственное устройство, Кюль-тегин, «Кутадгу билиг», тюркские государства, музейные экспонаты.

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