

ON THE BURIAL MOUNDS OF ULAAN KHERMIIN SHOROON BUMBAGAR (MAYKHAN UUL) AND SHOROON DOV IN MONGOLIA

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Abstract

As archaeological researches increase about Early Medieval burial sites around Altai and Tengri (Tien Shan) mountains, our information about early Turkic tribes becomes more reliable. One of the cases that will help to enhance our understanding is the burial mounds found recently in Mongolia, named as Shoroon Dov and Ulaan Khermiin Shoroon Bumbagar.

Kurgans were excavated by joint archaeological teams in 2009 and 2011. They are close in proximity on both site of the river Tola. Also the artifacts of kurgans constitute an important source for the history of Tola valley around 630 CE. even for Orhon Uighur Khaganate (Ötüken/Great Uyghur Khaganate) established after 744 CE.

It must be admitted that every archaeologist studying the objects of the Gök Türks¹ has a cherished dream to find the grave of one of the great steppe rulers. Sometimes this seemingly innocent vanity prevents the archaeologist from truly interpreting the archaeological artifacts. Thus, after the discovery of the Ulaan Khermiin Shoroon Bumbagar kurgan, some archaeologists claimed the idea that it should belong to one of the rulers of the Gök Türks.

In this article, based on the archaeological materials of this kurgans and comparing it with the artifacts of other burials dated to the same period, we try clarify to whom and the which civilization these burials might have belonged to.

Keywords: Shoroon Dov, Ulaan Khermiin Shoroon Bumbagar, Maykhan Uul, Pu-ku Yi-tu, Turkic kurgan

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¹ Although its usage is controversial since Bang's article (W. Bang-Kaup, *Über die Köktürkische Inschrift auf der Südseite des Kül Tägün-Denkmal's*, Otto Harrassowitz, Leipzig 1896), in this paper for the sake of disambiguation I prefer using the term Gök Türk (after Tekin [Talat Tekin, *Orhon Yazıtları*, Ankara 1988, p. 9, 37, as he is offer K.T. east face line 3, B.K east face line 4) to denote the Eastern Turkic confederation ruled by A-shi-na Clan to distinguish it from the other early Turkic nomadic tribes of the same historical period. For western part of Turkic Confederation is preferred the name "On Ok".

Moğolistan'da Bulunan Ulaan Khermiin Shoroon Bumbagar (Mayhan Uul) ve Shoroon Dov Kurganları Üzerine

Öz

Altay ve Tanrı dağları (T'ien shan) civarında Erken Orta Çağ göçerleri ile ilgili arkeolojik araştırmalarımız arttıkça, Eski Türklerle ait bilgilerimizin de daha güvenilir hale gelmeye başladığını söyleyebiliriz. Bu konuda bilgi üretmemize yardımcı olan çalışmalardan biri, Moğolistan'da Shoroon Dov ve Ulaan Khermiin Shoroon Bumbagar olarak adlandırılan kurganların kazılarak malzemelerinin ve planlarının bilim dünyasına tanıtılması olmuştur.

Kurganlar, 2009 ve 2011 yıllarında çok uluslu ekiplerce kazılmışlardır. İki kurgan birbirine yakın mesafelerde, Tola nehrinin her iki yakasında yer almaktadırlar. Kazı malzemeleri, sadece 630 yılı etrafında Tola vadisinde dönen siyasi gelişmelerle ilgili değil, aynı zamanda 744 yılından sonra kurulan Orhon Uygur Kağanlığı (Ötüken / Büyük Uygur Kağanlığı) tarihi için de önemli bilgiler içermektedir.

Şunu belirtmek gerekir ki, Gök Türk arkeolojisi ile ilgilenen bütün arkeologların gönlünde, bozkırın büyük idarecilerinden birinin mezarını bulmak özlemi yatmaktadır. Ancak oldukça masum görünen bu istek, bazen arkeolojik malzemeleri doğru yorumlamanın önüne geçmektedir. Bu yüzden, Ulaan Khermiin Shoroon Bumbagar kurganının keşfi, bazı arkeologları derhal kurganın Gök Türk idarecilerinden biri olduğu düşüncesine itmştir.

Bu çalışma, kurganlardan çıkan malzemeleri dönemin diğer kurganlarından çıkan malzemelerle karşılaştırarak mezarların gerçekte hangi uygarlığa ve kime ait oldukları konusuna bir açıklık getirmeye çalışacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Shoroon Dov, Ulaan Khermiin Shoroon Bumbagar, Maykhan Uul, Pu-ku Yi-tu, Turkic kurgan

Introduction

In the years of 2009 and 2011 in Bayannuur Somon of Bulgan Aymak in Central Mongolia, the members of a Russian – Kazakh – Mongol joint expeditions conducted an excavation of two burial mounds located on the east and the west banks of Tola river (Map 1). These kurgans were dated to the interregnum period of the Gök Türks.

The kurgan referred as Shoroon Dov, was excavated by Mongolian and Russian archaeologists in 2009 and its results were published a year later.² The other one located at the west bank of the river was excavated by a Mongolian and Kazakh archaeological group. To avoid possible confusion with the first one the Kazakh

² S.V.Danilov & A.İ.Burayev & B.G.Saganov & A Oçir & L.Erdenebold & H. Batbold, "Kurgan Shoroon Dov i ego mesto v obşey sisteme arheologičeskikh pamyatnikov Tyurkskoj epohi 'Tsentrolnoy Azii'", *Drevniye Kulturi Mongolii i Baykalskoj Sibiri - Materiali Mejdunarodnoy Naučnoy 20-23 Sentyabrya 2010 g., Tsentralnaya Azija i Pribaykale v Drevnosti - İornik Nauçnıh Trudov*, Vıpusk 4, (Ulan-Ude 2010), pp. 254-257.

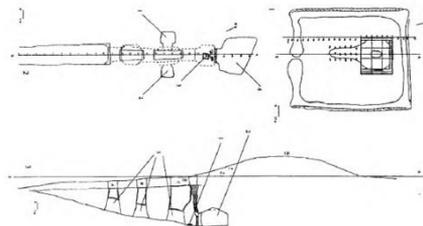
archaeologists referred to this kurgan as Maykhan Uul in their publications, on the other hand, Mongolian colleagues preferred to name the same burial mound as Ulaan Khermiin Shoroon Bumbagar or shortly Shoroon Bumbagar.³ We will dwell on both the differences and the similarities of these sites further in the article.



Map 1: The map points to some excavation sites around Tola river: At the western bank Ulaan Khermiin Shoroon Bumbagar; at the eastern bank Shoroon Dov and and Khermen Denzh city.



Plan 1: Plan, section and chamber room of Shoroon Bumbagar (after Seregin 2017: ill. 3)⁴



Plan 2: Plan and section of Shoroon Dov (after Danilov et. al. 2010: ill. 1)⁵

Dating

Probably the architectural structure of both kurgan located in Mongolia confused archaeologists about the origins of the culture. During the excavation of

³ A. Oçir & L. Erdenebolt, *Şoroon Bumbagarın Bunbant Orşunulga* (The Tomb of Shoroon Bumbagar), Xarxorum Muzeı, Kharakhorum 2018.; A. Oçir & Ts. Odbaatar & L. Erdenebold & B. Anhbayar, *Mongol Ulsın Hutag Dab Uygurçundın Arheologıyn Durşgal*, Ulaanbaatar 2019, pp. 158-186.; S. Karcaubay & C. Karcaubay, “Göktürk’ün toprak halkı”, *Atlas*, S. 238, İstanbul 2013, pp. 62-76.

⁴ N.N. Seregin, ““Elitniye” pogrebalniye kompleksı Tyurkskogo vremeniv Mongolii: itogi i perspektivi issledovaniy”, *Teoriya i Praktika Arheologičeskib İssledovaniy*, No. 2 (18), İzdatelstbo Altayskogo Gosudarstvennogo Universiteta, Barnaul 2017.

⁵ S.V.Danilov & et. al., “Kurgan Şoroon Dov i ...”,

Shoroon Dov both architecture and artifacts deceived archaeologists about the precise date. The proximity of the city of Ulaan Khermin which belongs to the Khitans, led the archaeologist to believe kurgan belongs to one of the city fathers.⁶

The archaeologists who excavated the Shoroon Bumbagar, claims that this site is of the Ancient Turk Chieftains (Beghs) dated around 7th century CE.⁷ Some argue that this site belongs to one of the Gök Türk Kaghans (or Beghs).⁸

Technical analyses such as luminescence measurements reveal two different dates. Terracotta figurines indicate the date to be circa 670 CE (± 70) and circa 550 CE (± 110). Some of the figurines exhibit color changes, this observation prompted the scientist to apply an alternative dating process. The analyses of the mortar resulted in the dating to be circa 740 CE (± 130).⁹ Solongo's results can be interpreted as the figurines and kurgan structure were finished in two different time periods. These findings suggest that kurgan should to be dated the second half of the 7th century CE. The construction techniques of the terracotta figurines give also some clues about the period of the kurgan. Glazed figurines were used by the Tang dynasty after the 8th century CE. None of the figurines has a glaze in both of these kurgans. So if we consider the luminescence measurement, figurines were made in China and must be brought to Mongolia before the 8th century CE.

Coins found in kurgan can also give an idea about dating. They look similar to Byzantium coins around 630 CE. but their technique of mint can be compared to early Arabic coins. Umayyad modeled their first coins after Sassanid and Byzantine samples. If our assumption is correct, the coins point to just after 650 CE.¹⁰

Thus, both coins and luminescence measurements suggest that kurgan were built in the second half of the 7th century.

On the other hand Shoroon Dov kurgan has important clues to the dating process. The Chinese inscription discovered at the entrance of the chamber room points to the one who this burial belongs to and the exact date of the mound. The text of the inscriptions (ill. 1) clearly signify that it belongs to Yi-tu, the Chieftain (Begh) of Pu-ku tribe who died in the year 678 CE.¹¹

⁶ S.V.Danilov & et. al., "Kurgan Şoroon Dov i ...", p. 256.; İ.L. Kızlasov, "Naçalo obsujdeniya materiaolb grobnitsı Mayhan-Ul", *Voprosı Tyurkologii*, No. 2, (Moskva 2012), p. 102.

⁷ K. Sartkojauly & A. Oçir & R. Erdenbold & J. Karjaubayuly, "Drevnetyurskiy mavzoley rannego srednekovya", *Voprosı Tyurkologii*, No. 2, (Moskva 2012), p. 82.; A. Oçir & L. Erdenebolt, *Şoroon Bumbagarın Bumbant Orşunlga ...*, p. 15.

⁸ Yaşar Çoruhlu, *Eski Türklerin Kutsal Mezarları*, İstanbul 2016, p. 234.

⁹ Saran Solongo, Ayudai Ochir, Saran Tengis, Kathryn Fitzsimmons, Jean-Jacques Hublin, "Luminescence dating of mortar and terracotta from a Royal tomb at Ulaankhermiin Shoroon Bumbagar, Mongolia", *Science and Technology of Archaeology Research*, Vol. 2, Issue 2, (2016), pp. 1, 8.

¹⁰ I would like to thank to my colleague Ass.Prof. Melda Ermis for interpretation of the coins.

¹¹ Enxue Feng, "Textual Research on epitaph of Pugu the governor of Jin Wei prefecture area found in Mongolia", *Cultural Relic*, Vol. 5, (2014), p. 84.



Illustration 1: Shoroon Dov artifacts, Epitaphs found in front of the Chamber room (Zanabazar Museum, Ulaan Baator - Mongolia)

It is apparent that both kurgans are dated the second half of the 7th century CE. This information is aligned with the findings of the archaeologists who conducted the excavation of these sites. This period is also known as an “interregnum period” of Gök Turks.



Illustration 2: Shoroon Dov artifacts, Heavenly King (Tian Wang), female and male attendants, Central Asian (Sogdian ?) figurines (Zanabazar Museum, Ulaan Baator - Mongolia)



Illustration 3: Shoroon Dov artifacts, Terracotta cavaliers (Zanabazar Museum, Ulaan Baator - Mongolia)



Illustration 4: Shoroon Dov artifacts, Terracotta apotropaic and natural animals made of wood. (Zanabazar Museum, Ulaan Baator - Mongolia)



Illustration 5: Shoroon Bumbagar artifacts, Heavenly Kings (Tian Wang) on both sides and apotropaic animals in the middle (Harhorin Museum, Mongolia)



Illustration 6: Shoroon Bumbagar artifacts, Female and male attendants in Chinese (T'ang period) costumes (Harhorin Museum, Mongolia)



Illustration 7: Shoroon Bumbagar artifacts, Terracotta cavaliers found in the niches (Harhorin Museum, Mongolia)

When the artifacts of Shoroon Dov (ill. 1 - 4) and Shoroon Bumbagar (ill. 5 - 7) compared with each other, the similarity between two kurgans will become more apparent. But again there are differences:

1. The dromos of the Shoroon Dov is constructed plainly. On the other hand, the walls of the dromos of Shoroon Bumbagar display figures like tiger, dragon, cavalries, adjutants and pictures like lotus, temple, demon, etc.

2. Both burial sides are planned with similar aspects: dromos, arches over the dromos, niches just before the chamber room. In addition to this, Shoroon Dov encircled with a rectangular ridge, probably in order to avoid floodwaters. Shoroon Bumbagar has no such a ridge.

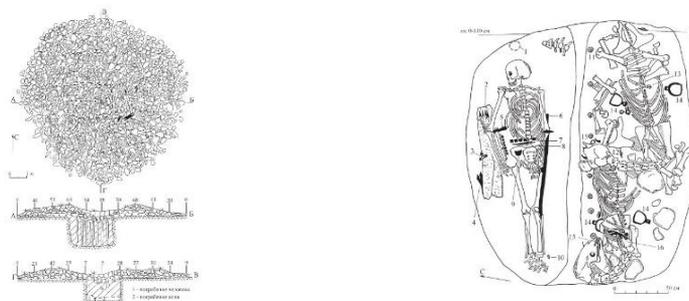
3. In Shoroon Bumbagar the cremation was chosen to bury the dead person but in Shoroon Dov there is no trace of burial at all. There is only an epitaph lead

us to think this burial ground is belong to Yi-tu, Chief of Pu-ku.¹²

4. Besides, there is an important point that is not mentioned in publications: a human and a canine skeleton found in front of the chamber of the kurgan of Shoroon Bumbagar. They are located in higher elevation above the dromos ground surface so it is understood that the remains appeared to be a result of a burglary attempt committed a long time ago. To avoid confusion it must be stated that these remains are not in-situ and they are not a result of sacrificial practices. This information was revealed in interview with the archaeologist who participated the excavation of kurgan.¹³

5. No weapons were found in both kurgans.

Both kurgans display clear features that cannot be attributed to those belong to the Gök Türk culture and burial structures. Turkic kurgans dated to this period, in general, are placed underground and contain deceased warrior and his belongings such as his horses and equipment to be used in the afterlife. Entire site elevated around 1 m. above the ground and covered with rocks (plan 3).¹⁴



Plan 3: Jolin I, Kurgan 9. Tasanti, Kos Agac - Gorno Altay / Russia Federation
A traditional Turkic kurgan which belongs to a Chieftain, with materials (horses, weaponry, etc.) to be used in afterlife. (After Kubarev 2005:Tabl. 58, 59)¹⁵

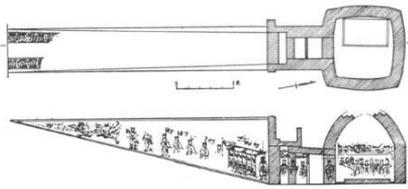
¹² In fact, the Gök Türk constructions associated with the funeral rite consisted of two features: A burial place called kurgan, and the other is a cultic site where a ritual of farewell to the dead was held (Anil Yılmaz, “Some remarks on the term balbal of Ancient Turks”, *Cihannuma*, Sayı IV/1, (2018), p. 2). Gök Türks named this ceremony which performed in cultic sites as yogh-ash (funeral feast) ceremony. Thus the ashes found in some cultic sites should belong to the hearth in order to prepare food for the participants and the bones not to the dead, but to the sacrificed animals. Yet those cultic sites are not burial places. Some information in Chinese annals (Liu Mau-Tsai, *Çin Kaynaklarına Göre Doğu Türkleri*, (Trans.: Ersel Kayaoğlu - Deniz Banoğlu), İstanbul 2011, p. 64) about the cremation practice of Turkic tribes must be misinterpret by the researchers.

¹³ I would like to express my gratitude to my Mongolian colleague Dr. L. Erdenebold.

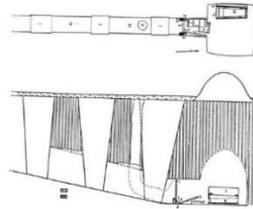
¹⁴ This information is derived from kurgans belong to Turkic Tribal Chieftains so far no kurgan has been discovered of Turkic “Kaghan”.

¹⁵ Gleb V. Kubarev, *Kultura Drevnih Tyurok Altaya – po Materialam Pogrebalmh Pamyatnikov*, Novosibirsk 2005.; Gleb V. Kubarev, “Pogrebalmnye pamyatniki drevnih Tyurok v doline r.Har-Yamaatin-gol (Severo-zapadnaya Mongoliya)”, *Arheologičeskiye Vesti*, No: 22, (Sankt Peterburg 2016), pp. 120-121.

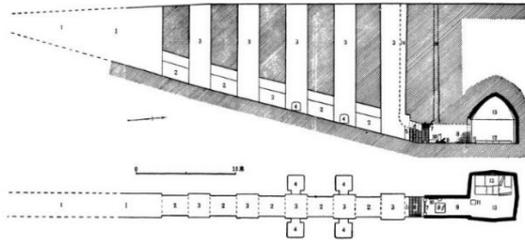
If we compare the plans 1, 2 and 3, it is clear that Shoroon Dov and Shoroon Bumbagar do not reflect traditional Turkic burials. On the contrary similar kurgans can be observed in China under the reign of Wei, Sui and T'ang dynasties (Plan 4).¹⁶



A burial mound belong to Ru-ru Princess (plan and western wall section) 550 CE. Eastern Wei Dynasty, Cixian, Hebei (after Fong 1991: fig. 2)¹⁷



A burial mound belong to Li He (plan and western wall section) 582 CE. Sui Dynasty, Sanyuan, Shaanxi (after Fong 1991: fig. 5)¹⁸



A burial mound belong to Zhang Shi-gui (plan and western wall section) 658 CE., T'ang Dynasty, Liqun, Shaanxi (after Fong 1991: fig. 6)¹⁹

Plan 4: Some kurgan plans and sections of Wei, Sui and T'ang period dynasty members in China

Similarities of the kurgans in Mongolia and China

Two kurgans found in Mongolia are situated along the north-south axis just like in China. Dromos provides a passage way to the chamber room from the south axis. Deceased is placed in the western part of the chamber room. The length of the dromos is correlated to the size of the kurgan. As the dromos lengthens, arches are placed in order to avoid collapse of the ceiling.

The pictures which are found on the walls of the dromos, can also be seen as part of the Chinese culture. The dromos walls have been pictured since the Western Han Dynasty so Wei, Sui, and T'ang dynasties followed the same tradition (ill. 8).²⁰ Frescoes in Shoroon Bumbagar are nearly identical with the ones in T'ang dynasty (ill. 8, 9).

¹⁶ Kızlasov, "Naçalo obsujdeniya materiaolb grobnitsı Mayhan-UI", pp. 98, 103.

¹⁷ Mary H. Fong, "Antecedents of Sui-Tang burial practices in Shaaxi", *Artibus Asiae*, Vol. 51, No. 3/4, (1991), 147-198.

¹⁸ Mary H. Fong, "Antecedents of Sui-Tang burial practices..."

¹⁹ Mary H. Fong, "Antecedents of Sui-Tang burial practices..."

²⁰ Tonia Eckfeld, *Imperial Tombs in Tang China, 618-907 - The Politics of Paradise*, London-New York 2005, p. 39.

The burial chamber is also identical to Chinese tradition. Cremated remains of the deceased²¹ are placed in a wooden box and again positioned in the western section of the chamber room.

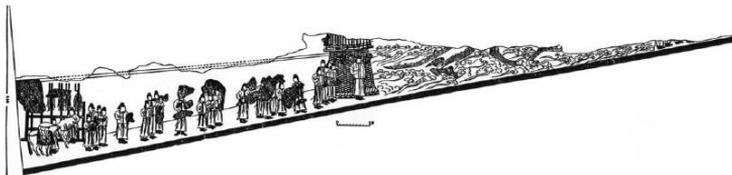


Illustration 8: 23.7 m. long composition on the Eastern wall of the dromos of Yong-tai's burial mound. 706 CE. T'ang Empire (After Eckfeld 2005: fig. 7.4)²²



Detail from the composition of "Seven Eunuch from the Khan Palace" 166 x 140 cm. Burial mound of Yi-de, 706 CE. (After Eckfeld 2005: fig.4.1)



Detail from the composition of "Lady Fang and Bridesmaids" 127 cm. Burial mound of Li Xi-an, 706 - 711 CE. (After Eckfeld 2005: fig.8.3)

Illustration 9: Details from the compositions on the dromos walls of different kurgans from the T'ang period.

Chinese - Turkic relations around 630 CE.

In the second half of the 7th century CE. Chinese culture and military power became dominant over the Turkic tribes. The war of Yin-shan (630) lost by Il Kaghan (Ilig Kaghan), resulted in the relocation of the Turks to the Ordos region. Furthermore, Turks were forced to accept Emperor T'ai-Tsung as their own leader.²³

Kurgan Shoroon Dov and Shoroon Bumbagar were built during these events. Circumstances indicate that Turks were unable to form power in the steppe. Even

²¹ Cremation process was not applied in Han period but these practices were allowed during the T'ang period. The fact that Buddhism was the official state religion by the T'ang Empire, they allowed this doctrine to spread and large numbers of Chinese to practice cremation (Christina Han, "Cremation and body burning in Five Dynasties China", *Journal of Chine Studies*, No. 55, July. 2012, s. 3). This practice continued until the Qing Dynasty. Excavations at the burial complex of 2nd Qing Emperor Huan-tai-ji (and his wife Empress Xiao-duan-wen) revealed well-preserved crematorium centers (<https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1004/documents/>).

²² Tonia Eckfeld, *Imperial Tombs in Tang ...*

²³ Ahmet Taşağul, *Gök-Türkler II (Fetret Devri 630-681)*, Ankara 1999, pp. 14-15.

their bows and arrows were collected by the Emperor.²⁴ The void of power in the steppe required restructuring of new power. This was to become either by Chinese intervention or existing dynamics of the steppe. The historical recordings display extensive Chinese leadership. Northern regions were divided into 6 states and administered under the name “Jimi system”.²⁵ According to the inscription excavated from Shoroon Dov, river Tola basin was given to Pu-ku Tribe.²⁶

Pu-ku is one of the well-known tribe among the 9 tribes which were located in the North. Yi-tu became a leader of the Pu-ku since his grandfather was the leader of the Tribe. Yi-tu was born in 635 and died in 678. During his time, A-shi-nas surrendered to the T’ang dynasty and forced to locate to the Ordos region. Yi-tu’s life coincide of the interregnum period of Ancient Turks.²⁷

Who were the kurgans belong to?

As we have stated above some researchers think that Shoroon Bunbagar belongs one of the Turkic Bey (or Kagan). Another thesis claims that the kurgan belongs to a father of Pu-ku Yitu whose burial mound is on the other bank of the Tola river.²⁸

In order to give an opinion for this question, kurgan architecture and the interpretation of artifacts must be accurate. Unlike the ancient Turks, Buddhist traditions did not allow any material, such as a weapon, to be left in the grave, which made people away from being virtuous. Whether it is a woman or a man's grave, who is converted to Buddhism, it is not possible to find combat equipment such as bow and arrows or swords in kurgans. Apparently Buddhists do not wish to be accompanied by any weapons during to journey to Nirvana. Just like our kurgans are free of weapons.

The inscription in Shoroon Dov kurgan points direct ownership of Yi-tu. But without inscription it is hard to determine the gender of the deceased who cremated in Shoroon Bumbagar. However, the practices such as the frescoes over the dromos that push Shoroon Bumbagar mound closer to the Chinese culture. Both side of dromos wall and the arches full of pleasant vistas, nature, horses and attendants.²⁹

²⁴ Liu Mau-Tsai, Çin Kaynaklarına Göre Doğu Türkleri, p. 240.

²⁵ Lyndon Arden-Wong, “Tang governance and administration in the Turkic period”, *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, Vol. VI, Issue 2, 2014, p. 9.

²⁶ Wang Zhenping, “Ideas concerning diplomacy and foreign policy under the Tang Emperors Gaozu and Taizong”, *Asia Major*, Vol. 22, No. 1, 2009, s. 257.; Ahmet Taşağıl, *Gök-Türkler II (Fetret Devri 630-681)*, Ankara 1999, p. 42.

²⁷ Enxue Feng, “Textual Rearch on epitaph of Pugu ...”, p. 84.

²⁸ Baatad Gonçigiyın Batbold, *Martagdsan Pugu Aymag*, Ulaanbaatar 2017, s. 34.

²⁹ As we have tried to explain above, Chinese kurgans are built with similar perspective. Buddhism influences avoid presence of weapons and such but the walls of the dromos of the Prince kurgans adorned with hunting, armed guards or war scenes (Tonia Eckfeld, *Imperial Tombs in Tang China ...*, s. 39; plate 10; fig. 6.9).



Illustration 10: Ulaan Khermiin Shoroon Bumbagar (Maykhan Uul) burial mound
Bayannuur, Bulgan / Mongolia

One more thing about Shoroon Dov kurgan. It is not only free from paintings but also there is no burial inside the chamber room. Why the members of Pu-ku tribe performed such a ritual is yet mystery.

On the other hand Shoroon Bumbagar, both with a cremated body and the paintings over the dromos reflects complete Chinese burial traditions. Then it is possible that this tomb belongs to a Chinese. If the situation is as we claim, then whom it would be in the kurgan?



Illustration 11: Pictures on dromos of Shoroon Bumbagar
Some male attendants in Chinese custom. Bayannuur, Bulgan / Mongolia

Marriages with the Chinese Princesses

It is well known that Kingdoms do establish kinship through marriages. Both Chinese and Turks used this tradition in order to establish support among domestic and foreign relations.³⁰ Chronicles point out that marriage affairs have begun just

³⁰ Tuncer Baykara, "Türk şehircilik tarihinden: Hatun şehirleri?", *TTK Bellesten*, XLIV, S.175, (1980), p. 499.

after the Ancient Turkic formation over the northern steppe:

A revealing example is Eastern Turkic Kagan Sse-Kin's promise to give his daughter to Northern Chinese Emperor T'ai-Tsu. However, Northern Ts'i wanted to interfere with this agreement and try to spoil the arrangement. Northern Ts'i Emperor offered infinite gifts to Sse-Kin and asked him to give his daughter to himself. It never happened.³¹ The first request by the Turks happened in 579 CE. Emperor Tsing-ti, in the first year of Ta-Siang, agreed to give Yü-wen's daughter Ts'ien-kin Kung-çu to the Kaghan of T'u-kü (Turks) T'a-Po.³² T'u-li Kaghan was serving as a vice-Governor (Şad), his father Shih-pi Kaghan wedded him to a Sui princess Huai-nan.³³ Both parties had their own expectations from this arrangements.

Marriages made with Chinese continued to be practiced in the Uyghur period as well. 2nd Kaghan of Uyghur Khaganate Tengri'de Kut Bolmuş İl İtmiş Kagan (Bayan Chor / Mo-ho-chuou (747-759), married with Chinese princess of Ning-kuo, the second daughter of Tsu-tsong in 758 CE. This marriage strengthened an alliance between the Uyghur and T'ang Dynasty of China. Therefore T'ang Dynasty has secured a safe zone in the northern steppes. This arrangement created a prestigious position for Uyghur as well. These marriages also created a profound impact on the Uyghur dynasty. Alp Kutluk Bilge (Tun Baga Tarkan 779-789) married with Shian'an Princess in 787 CE. and descendants of the dynasty were the result of this marriage. When the Princess died in 808 CE., she was the first member of T'ang royal family, who lived among the Uyghur for 21 years and died. There were 6 marriages with Chinese Royalty in the time of Uyghur.³⁴

There are quite a lot of information about the marriages in the records. Some of the promises were held but some was not fulfilled. We would like to draw your attention to the question of what happened to the remains of the deceased Princesses. It was unlikely that the remains were sent back to China.

Conclusion

When we consider all the findings and data about the period, we can drive how Yi-tu lived and died. Just like Gelanboyan, his son tsi-fu and his grandson Yi-tu must have had T'ang approval to be the ruler of the territory in order to stay in Jimi system. Unlike his father and grandfather, Yi-tu was raised in T'ang Palace in his youth. After his father -Tsi-fu's- death, he was appointed to rule the Pu-ku. It is apparent from the records that Yi-tu ruled with confidence. When it comes to foreign policies he preferred to align himself with Chinese foreign policy. He even joined with the army of Emperor Tai-tsong and Kao-tsong to fight in Chinese

³¹ Liu Mau-Tsai, Çin Kaynaklarına Göre Doğu Türkleri, p. 25.

³² Liu Mau-Tsai, Çin Kaynaklarına Göre Doğu Türkleri, p. 31.

³³ Ahmet Taşağıl, *Gök-Türkler II* ..., p. 16.

³⁴ Colin Mackerras, "Uygur-Tang Relations 744-840", *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 19, No. 2, (2000), p. 229-230.

foreign wars. In 658, he assisted Chinese against the up rise of On Ok leader A-shi-na Hou-lou. He also supported the T'ang army against the Tibet wars in 666 and 670. In return for his efforts, Chinese Emperor grant him to attend the ceremony of offering to the Sky.³⁵ 3 generations of help and support assured the Pu-ku tribe some certain benefits. We know that the China gave the privilege to the Northern Tribes by sending a Chinese Princesses. By the way of marriages, China reward the Tribes who choose to be loyal to China.

The construction of the kurgans coincides with the interregnum period of Ancient Turks. As we observe from the Chinese records, there was an apparent power shift in the region. Nomadic Tribes sometimes joined to On Ok sometimes they declared loyalty to Eastern Turks but eventually wanted to formulate independence. The T'ang administration should have searched an alternative ruler rather than Turks when it came to the steppe. They wanted to benefit from the Jimi system as long as possible. But they probably knew that this system was not sustainable. Sir Tardush tribes were the alternative candidate to fulfill this policy. I-nan Kaghan a leader of the Sir Tardushs, was planning to marry a Chinese Princess.³⁶ Even though this marriage has never happened, Tribes clearly knew that the best way to become the leading Kaghan in the steppe was through marriage with Chinese court.

It is clear that when Turks were forced to locate to the Ordos region, Tola river valley was the homeland of T'ie-le/Uyghur (Pu-ku) tribes. Uyghurs can also be considered alternative tribes to rule the region but the well-organized structure of Turks in Ordos, made them indispensable in the eyes of Chinese.

Considering cultural, political and even military acts of both sides, help us to understand how the relationship progress among Chinese – Turks and Uighurs. So the cremated remains found in Shoroon Bumbagar must belong to Buddhist Chinese princess who was sent as a bride to one of the T'ie-le / Uyghur tribes (Pu-ku³⁷) during the interregnum period.

The failure of Jimi system actually stems from the idea of omission of conveniently chosen data. Some of the wrong decisions relating to northern tribes and the rise of the Turks in Ordos, indicates the failure of Jimi system. By simply stating, Chinese bureaucrats did not want to record any questionable decisions to the imperial chronicles because the consequences would be too severe for them.

³⁵ Enxue Feng, "Textual Rearch on epitaph of Pugu ...", pp. 84-86.

³⁶ Ahmet Taşağul, *Gök-Türkler II* ..., p. 102.

³⁷ Pu-ku was originally one of the T'ie-le tribes, but later joined the union that founded the Uighurs (Peter B. Golden, *An Introduction to the History of the Turkic Peoples*, Wiesbaden 1992, s. 155-156). In some sources it is accepted directly as Uyghur Tribe (W. B. Henning, "Argi and the 'Tokharians'", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies, University of London*, Vol. 9, No. 3, (Cambridge 1938), p. 555; Edouard Chavannes, *Çin Kaynaklarına Göre Batı Türkleri*, İstanbul 2013, p. 83.).

If our hypothesis is correct and the kurgan belongs to Chinese Princess, then whose wife she would be? We suggest that the occupant of the kurgan is not the wife of Yi-tu, lying in Shoroon Dov, actually she is the mother of Yi-tu. This fiction, explains why the Chinese accepted Yi-tu readily and why he feels so close to Chinese customs. If we review our historical information, the Crown Prince mostly being hosted by the reigning empires as Assyrians, Romans or Ottomans. This practice happens due to facilitate proper relations between Empires. As in the past, this practice sometimes might have caused unwanted consequences and Princes may desire to act more independently when they returned to their country. And we know that Yi-tu was also hosted by T'ang administrators. But he was significantly different compare to other Princes. His mother was Chinese, his mother language was Chinese and because he was crown prince he was raised in China. Circumstances made Yi-tu, more concentrated on Chinese policies and traditions. Therefore when he was sent to Chinese Palace he must have felt at home. Furthermore from the practices of the burial mound, we can assume that he was converted to Buddhism. He associated with Chinese tradition and culture since his time in the Chinese Palace. His willingness to accept and implement Chinese policies, not only come from good judgment but also blood relations.

So we can comment on why Yi-tu's tomb is empty: Although Yi-tu was raised up by the Chinese traditions, he was the last big Chieftain of his tribe because Gök Türks raised again. Yi-tu is become a very Buddhist under the assimilation of China even his members of his own tribe were disturbed what is going on around. So those who prepared the tomb wanted to bury him according to their traditions (Turkic) and they did not put his body into this burial mound. Yet we do not have information about whether Yi-tu's body is cremated or not.



Illustration 12: Another kurgan just beneath the Shoroon Bumbagar Bayannuur, Bulgan - Mongolia

The conflict between Turkic Tribes was greatly manipulated by Chinese administrators. Sending a bride one of those Tribes, clearly indicates Chinese preference. We can say that this strategy failed or was not as effective as the Chinese expected. If the two Pu-ku kurgans were built under Chinese assimilation as we

claim, we can understand why other northern Turkic Tribes followed Yağlakar instead of Pu-ku in 744 CE. It is also predictable after independence Uyghur administrators preferred Manichaeism to Buddhism simply they did not want to repeat their experience while they were under control of the Pu-ku.³⁸

There is another kurgan (ill. 12) just beneath the Shoroon Bumbagar. Although it is not appropriate to give any opinion without excavation, this kurgan must belong to Tsi-fu, the father of Yi-tu or the husband of the Princess who lies in Shoroon Bumbagar.

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³⁸ Anıl Yılmaz, "Bilge Kağan'a atfedilen taç ve (Doğı) Gök Türklerin Budizm'e yaklaşımı", *Art-Sanat*, S. 11, (2019), 403, 410.

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