

*New research on historical aspects and interpretation of the Ongi site and inscriptions**

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The Ongi site with its stele and inscriptions is well known as one of the most important of Old Turkic monuments. It has come to be appreciated internationally among scholars of Turkic philology, history and archaeology since its discovery in 1891 by N. M. Yadrintsev, a Russian geographer, ethnographer, archaeologist and historian. Many researchers have tried to clarify the date, the identity of the person buried, the author of the epigraphy, the cultural background of the construction of this site and the inscription, from the philological, historical and archaeological points of view. Initially, V. V. Radloff published Yadrintsev's original rubbing, and also a second, revised version with his interpretation. Secondly, we can also refer to the revised version of Yadrintsev's rubbing and interpretation by the philologist, G. Clauson. Until now, these two versions have been regarded as the basic sources, however, even now it seems that there are many arguments on the points of the date of construction, the establisher of site and the stele, and the historical background.

The site and the stele have also been surveyed on several occasions. For example, G. Ramstedt and S. Pälsi surveyed it in 1908 for the Finno-Ugric Society. A Polish philologist, E. Tryjarski, and a Mongolian archaeologist, Namhaidakwa, tried to locate several fragments of the stele in 1962, and then a Russian archaeologist, E. Voitov, and a Mongolian archaeologist, D. Bayar, partly excavated the site and tried to research fragments of the site and stele in 1987. In 1996, with Japanese and Mongolian colleagues, I measured the site and stele, and took rubbings of fragments of the stele, the preliminary report of this fieldwork was published in 1999.¹ In the report, I emphasized the importance of the fieldwork of

* Based on the collections of G. Ramstedt and S. Pälsi and my new researches.

¹ T. Osawa, "Ongi Hibun." [Inscription of Ongi] in T. Moriyasu and A. Ochir, eds, *Mongoru Koku Genzon Iseki Hibun Chōsa Kenkyū Hōkoku*, Osaka University, Osaka Daigaku;

G. Ramstedt and S. Pälssi, whose diary and collections are preserved in the National Archive of Finland at Helsinki.² In particular, it is important to note that, according to Ramstedt and Pälssi, on 10 September 1909, they took rubbings of this stele in three fragments.

In this paper, I would like to clarify the Ongi site and inscriptions on the basis of the research of Ramstedt and Pälssi and our new field survey, conducted in 1996, from the archaeological and historical points of view.

I. Original place name and research history of the site

First, I would like to mention the formal name of this site. Until now, the site and inscription have generally been called “the Ongin site and inscription” in the literature, while Ramstedt and Pälssi called it “the Tarimalin site and stele”, after the Tarimalin River, which is a tributary of the Ongi River. From the viewpoint of historical geography, however, it seems undoubted that “Ongi” is the original local name, not “Ongin”, which is derived from “Ongi” and the Mongolian genitive suffix “n”. This is supported by the fact that the local Mongolian people pronounce the place name “Ongi”. In Old Turkic runic inscriptions, such as the Tonyukuk inscription and the Bilge Kaghan inscription, the name of this river is carved in the shape of “kök Öng” (The blue Öngi River). This can be attested as a Middle Chinese place name, “Ghwðn-ngia/ngi”,³ found in the geographical book of Gudan, a Chinese officer of the Tang Dynasty. From this form, we can reconstruct the original form as an Old Turkic place name, “Öngi”.⁴ I am convinced, therefore, that the original name of this site and its stele should be the “Ongi site and stele”.

I researched the site in the summer of 1996 as a member of the international Japanese and Mongolian joint epigraphic and archaeological expedition.⁵ The site

Chuô Yûrashia Gaku Kenkyûkai (in Japanese), *Provisional Report of Researches on Historical Sites and Inscriptions in Mongolia from 1996 to 1998*, Osaka University, The Society of Central Eurasian Studies, Osaka 1999, 126–136.

² H. Halén, ed. *Memoria Saecularis Sakari Pälssi. Aufzeichnungen von einer Forschungsreise nach der nördlichen Mongolei im Jahre 1909*. Helsinki 1982 (henceforth MSSP), 63; P. Aalto, *Oriental Studies in Finland 1828–1918*, Helsinki 1971, 107; H. Halén, ed. *Handbook of Oriental Collections in Finland*. Scandinavian Institute of Asian Studies Monograph Series 31, London–Malmö 1978, 99.

³ On the Tonyukuk inscription, see the 15th line; on the Bilge Kaghan inscription, see on the south-east side. E. Pulleyblank, *Lexicon of reconstructed pronunciation in Early Middle Chinese, Late Middle Chinese, and Early Mandarin*, Vancouver 1991, 135, 366.

⁴ S. Iwasa, *IWASA Seiichiro ikooshuu*. [Collected papers as a memorial to Iwasa Seiichiro] (in Japanese), Tokyo 1936, 128–130; Tekin 1994; 9, 64; T. Tekin, *Orhon Yazıtları*. Ankara 1988, 52–53.

⁵ The survey and research on this site was conducted in 20th and 21st days of summer in 1996. The members of the expedition were: Takao Moriyasu, Akio Katayama, Koichi Matsuda, Takashi Matsukawa, Dai Matsui; the Mongolian archaeologists, A. Ochir, L. Bold, Ts. Battulga; and the author of this paper (Cf. Moriyasu–Ochir, *Mongoru Koku Genzon*, 21–22).

is located at 46° 20' N, 102° 11' E, at an altitude of 2005 m, according to the GPS. It is located at the point where the Tarimal River joins the Ongi River on the right, at a distance of about 17 km from Oyanga-Sum in Ubur-Hangai Aymak. This site is 300 m from the right-hand side of the Manit River and is located at the centre of the basin of the Ongi Steppes, which is not very large. The site is surrounded by the low Maanit-Ola mountain to the north and the Xosh-Ula mountain to the east. A long, continuous line of balbal stones extends to the east, to an altitude of 2030~2040 m.⁶

The history of the discovery and research of this site and its inscriptions begins with the Orkhon expedition, which was organized and executed under the supervision of V. V. Radloff in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The Ongi monument was discovered and first surveyed by H. M. Yadarintsev⁷ in 1891, who reported it and sent sketches, photographs of the site and rubbings of the inscriptions to Radloff. Radloff published sketches of the general view and of some of the remains in 1893 (Plate 1(a) of this paper).⁸ Radloff named each side of the stele as follows: the wider side, having 8 lines, is (O), the narrow side, having 4 lines, is (Oa), the part having small letters in 7 lines on (Oa) is (Ob), and a balbal stone with lettering is (Oc) (Atlas: XVI, LXXXIII-1). Also, in the same year, the Orkhon expedition, under the supervision of D. A. Klements, visited the site and took many photographs, which have never been published.⁹

In 1909, G. Ramstedt and S. Pälsi visited the Ongi monument and surveyed the site and the remains and published their findings (MSSP: 63, 64, 130, pls. 80-81, p. 132, pls. 82-83; Cf. Plate 1, 6 and 7 of this paper). They excavated the mound and found the tortoise stone and the bricks under the central ground, and found some sheep bones in the western part of the mound. In 1926, Kozlov visited the site and recorded that there were three stone statues and two stone sheep of granite that had been broken and set in the tomb, a frame of stone boards of granite in the hole that had been dug in the ground, and there were balbal stones extending in a line eastwards from the mound etc.¹⁰ However, he did not publish his photographs either.

In 1962, Tryjarski visited and surveyed the monument. He published a plan of the monument and photographs of the three stone statues and two stone sheep.¹¹

⁶ Cf. T. Ôsawa, *Mongolstandaki Eski Türk Anıt ve Yazıtları üzerine Yeni Araştırmalar* (1), 1996-1998 Japon-Mongol ortak Çalışmalarının Ön Raporu. *Türk Dilleri Araştırmalar* 10, İstanbul 2000, 191-204, 235-247; Ôsawa 2001: 281-282.

⁷ N. M. Yadrintsev, "Otchet i dnevnik o puteshestvii po Orkhonu i v Yuzhnyi Xangai v 1891g." *Sbornik trudov Orkhonskoi Ekspeditsii* 5 (1901), 43.

⁸ W. Radloff, *Atlas der Altertümer der Mongolei*. St. Petersburg 1892, XIV.

⁹ Cf. W. Radloff, *Die alttürkischen Inschriften der Mongolei*. St Petersburg 1894-1899. (Reprint in 2 vols: Osnabrück 1987) (henceforth: ATIM), 244.

¹⁰ P. K. Kozlov, *Puteshestvie v Mongoliyu 1923-1926 gg.* Moscow 1949, 117; V. E. Voitov, "Onginskii pamyatnik, Problemy kul'turovedcheskoi interpretatsii," *Sovetskaya Tyurkologiya* 3 (1989), 36-38.

¹¹ E. Tryjarski, "Die heutige Mongolei und ihre alten Denkmäler and The Present State of Preservation of Old Turkic Relics in Mongolia and the Need for their Conservation,"

According to the director of the local museum at Arbaiheer, Namhaidakwa, Tryjarski informed him that the monument had been already dug secretly and destroyed by lamas at some time since 1909. It seemed that silver plates, the skull of a horse, harness and earthen vessels etc. were excavated from there. Namhaidagwa in turn told Tryjarski that underneath the ornamental stone boards he had discovered 37 pieces of broken earthen vessels and had added them to the collections of the Arbaiheer museum prior to 1962.¹² When we visited, there were about eight holes, which could be identified as the traces of excavation by the gravediggers at that time. In 1969, Namhaidagwa and Rinchen sent pictures of two pieces of the broken inscription. However after that, it seems that no further academic research was conducted on this site until the investigation of Voitov and Bayar in 1987.

II. Significance of a balbal stone with tamghas and the orientation of the tortoise stone

The balbal stone with two tamghas

One of the balbal stones at Ongi has particular significance due to its inscription. On this stone, there is a *tamgha* carved in the style of both a ram (tr. Koç) and a reverse "S", and a runic inscription interpreted as "ishbara tarqan balbalı". In the previous publications on this site,¹³ this stone is described as the first balbal erected on the east side of the mound. Comparing the actual landscape of the site with the photographs taken by Pälsi in 1909, however, in our opinion it should be identified as the eleventh of the balbal stones extending from the eastern side of the mound (Cf. Plate 1(e) & 9, *infra*). In my view, it is certain that this balbal has never been moved from another place, because it stands on undisturbed ground, so we can make a judgement that it was erected in this place from the beginning of the construction of the site. After all, the information that it was "a little epigraph that had been inscribed on the first balbal stone of all" can be dated back to the description of V. V. Radloff.¹⁴ However, as mentioned above, Radloff's information on Ongi was not first-hand, but was based on the information sent by M. N. Yadrintsev.

Therefore, as to the original place of the small inscription of Ongi, it is probable that Yadrintsev made a mistake in his report, or that for some unknown reason Radloff misunderstood Yadrintsev's report. Afterwards, it seems that subsequent researchers followed Radloff's account without hesitation. For example, Voitov reported that he could not find the balbal stone that had been inscribed

UJ 38 (1966), 166-168, fig. 11-14, 23-25; E. Tryjarski, "Some Remarks on the Monument of the Orkhon Turks," in *Türk Kültürü El Kitabı*, Istanbul 1972, 37-39, pl. 1a, 1b, 1b, 4-5.

¹² Cf. Tryjarski, "Die heutige Mongolei," 167.

¹³ ATIM 244; MSSP 63; E. Tryjarski and P. Aalto, "Two Old Turkic Monuments of Mongolia," *Mémoires de la Société Finno-Ougrienne* 150 (1973), 417-418, fig. 3; Voitov, "Onginskii pamyatnik," 36.

¹⁴ ATIM 244.

with an epigraph and a *tamgha*. Unfortunately, it appears that, guided by Radloff, he was looking for the wrong stone.

Stone statues and sarcophagus

As to the stone statues of the Ongi site, they are reported as being broken; four human statues without heads (63~84 cm high, 33~60 cm wide) and one small human statue (63 cm+18 cm high, 20 cm wide). Voitov and Bayar described them in detail and I published them in our preliminary report,¹⁵ so I will not describe them further here. When we surveyed the site, stone statues were placed in the fragment of stone bricks at the centre of the mound. Five stone statues and two stone sheep (one of 43 cm high, 64 cm length; the second of 50 cm high, 65 cm length) remained in the centre. In my view, the two sheep would originally have been facing each other near the gate of the eastern mound, such as is found in the Orkhon sites. Between them, one stone statue of the buried person, or two statues, of the buried person and his wife, should be placed in the front of the sarcophagi of the western mound, as in the Orkhon sites.

As to the sarcophagus, it became clear that the sarcophagus had already been destroyed and the reinforced stone had been situated at the foot of the sarcophagus when Ramstedt and Pälsi researched it in 1909.

Original orientation of the tortoise stone and the stele

When Yadrintsev found this site in 1891, he reported that the tortoise stone was oriented in a southerly direction: "We can see a stone board installed at the base of the stone stele, the stele itself is made of granite stone and erected on the stone board which can be regarded as one with the style of the tortoise".¹⁶ In my view, since the tortoise stone was facing in a southerly direction, this inscription must have faced the southern side too at the time it was investigated by Yadrintsev. But eighteen years later, when Ramstedt and Pälsi researched this site, the tortoise stone was buried under the ground, facing westwards. It appears thus that the orientation of the tortoise stone had been changed from south to west. This must have occurred corresponding with the fact that the inscription lay on the ground in the condition of three broken fragments at the same time. In which direction then did the tortoise stone of Ongi face originally?

To resolve this problem, a Russian archaeologist, E. A. Novgorodova, considered the orientation of the tortoise stone on the basis of the traditional view that the eastern side was regarded as the front among the Old Turkic nomadic peoples.¹⁷ Her view is on the basis of the interpretation of the ancient Turkish term "öngrä" and "ilgäri" which means "in the east, eastwards" and also has the

¹⁵ Voitov 1992; T. Osawa, *Mogolistan'daki Eski Türk Anıt ve Yazıtlarının 1996-1998. Yılları 1999*, Plate 2c.

¹⁶ Yadrintsev, "Otchet i dnevnik o puteshestvii," 43; Voitov, "Onginskii pamyatnik," 34-35.

¹⁷ E. A. Novgorodova, "Pamyatniki izobrazitel'nogo iskusstva drevnetyurkskogo vremeni na territorii MNR," *Tyrkologicheskij Sbornik* (1977), 210, pl. 3.

meaning of "in front, forwards".¹⁸ Her reconstruction has been supported by many researchers. Is it correct, however?

According to the archaeological evidence of L. Jisl and S. Odzhav's excavation at the Köl Tigin site in 1958, and of the Turkish and Mongol joint archaeological expedition, the tortoise stones of the Köl Rigin site and the Bilge Kaghan site when excavated were facing west.¹⁹ At the Bilge Kaghan site, it is my opinion that the Chinese part of the inscription, the western side of the stele, was carved first and was the most important part of the inscription. First, the western side of the stele is regarded generally as the most important side from the viewpoint of the tradition in which the shrine or sarcophagus and stone statue is turned to the west as the place of the spirit of the dead. In this particular case, it can be also recognized as the most important part from the political and cultural relationship with the Tang dynasty being expressed in the relationship of "father" and "son" between the Tang Emperor Xuanzong and the Turkic Bilge Kaghan. This reflects the Sinocentric political relationship of the Tang dynasty towards foreign countries which can be called symbolically the regime of "ce-feng". The runic text was then carved secondly, after finishing the Chinese text on the western side.²⁰ This position suggests that the tortoise stone and the inscription had been originally established so that the western side was turned to the soul of the dead, which can come back to the stone statue and the sarcophagus or the shrine that were constructed in the western part of the mound.

Therefore, I consider that in the case of the Ongi site, the tortoise stone and inscription would first have been set up so that the head and the part with the first line of the runic letters faced in the same direction. In the Orkhon inscription, we can see that the Chinese part was the most important side of all from the viewpoint of the political relationship between both countries, and the western side of the stele is traditionally regarded as the most important side, so in that case, the Chinese text was carved on the western side of the stele. The fact that the first line was carved in the western side can be confirmed by the fact that in the Tonyukuk inscription and Ikhu Xoshutuu inscription, the first line had been carved primarily the sides.²¹ According to the general position of Old Turkic inscriptions of the Second Eastern Old Turkic Kaghanate, in the case of the tortoise stone and the inscription of Ongi, we can consider that the first line was carved on the western side here also, and that the tortoise stone was positioned so that it turned its head

¹⁸ G. Clauson, *An Etymological Dictionary of Pre-Thirteenth-Century Turkish*. Oxford 1972, 189 a, 144a; Tekin *Orhon Yazıtları*, 138, 165.

¹⁹ L. Jisl, "Kül-Tegin Anıtında 1958'de yapılan Arkeoloji Araştırmalarının Sonuçları," *Belleten* 27 (1963), 392, plate 7; Mogolistan'daki Türk Anıtları Projesi 2993 yılı çalışmaları, Ankara 2003, 391; Mogolistan'daki Türk Anıtları Projesi 2005 yılı çalışmaları, Ankara 2005, 205; Bayar 2004: 77. pl. 7).

²⁰ T. Osawa, "Kinnnen-ni Okeru Biruge Kagan iseki no Hakkutsucyoosa to Kameishi, Hibun no Hooi kara mita Taitou kankei," [The archaeological excavation of the Bilge Kaghan site in recent years and the political relations between the Old Turkic Qaghanate and the Tang Dynasty] (in Japanese), *Shihou* 39 (2007), 23-29.

²¹ Osawa, "Kinnen-ni Okeru Biruge Kagan," 22-30.

towards the west. Therefore we can say that the wider side of the Ongi inscription faced westwards, and the narrower side faced southwards (Cf. Plate 1 (b), *infra*).

III. The Problem of the Fragments of the Ongi stele

First, it seems probable that the stele was broken into some fragments before Ramstedt and Pälssi visited in 1909. On our visit, we could identify (1) a fragment of the head stone of the stele which lay near a heap of bricks in the mound, (2) one small fragment, (3) one medium-sized fragment and (4) one large fragment. Three more fragments of stele with runic letters are conserved in the museum of Arbaiheer in Ubur-Hangai Aymak, however, the other fragments of the Ongi stele have not been discovered. It seems obvious that we cannot restore this stele to its original shape any more.

The fragments measured in our survey are as follows:

(1) *A fragment of the head stone*: There are small runic letters on one side. The front is 40 cm in height, while the middle part of the reverse side is 33 cm in height. The bottom part is 40 cm wide and 17~18.5 cm thick (Cf. Plate 2, *infra*).

(2) *A small fragment*: There are three lines of runic letters on one side, which is 11.5 cm long, 16 cm wide and 8.5~10 cm thick (Cf. Plate 3, *infra*).

(3) *A medium-sized fragment*: There are four lines of runic letters on one side, which is 24~30 cm long, 15.5~16.5 cm wide and 19.5~22 cm thick (Cf. Plate 4, *infra*).

(4) *A large fragment*: There are four lines of runic letters on two sides. The sides are 77~80 cm long, 19 cm wide, and 20.5~22 cm thick (Cf. Plate 5, *infra*).

As to the history of research on this stele, after a member of the Orkhon expedition, N. M. Yadrintsev, had found it in 1891, V. V. Radloff published the rubbings and the explanation of the plates that were sent by Yadrintsev in his *Atlas*, pl. XXVI-1, 2, in 1893. Klements researched the stele further and made rubbings,²² and also took many photographs, however, these have never been published. In 1895, Radloff published the printed text and the first interpretation.²³ The next year he also published the rubbings that Yadrintsev had taken and the retouched versions of the inscription, the inscription of a balbal stone and a part of the *Tamgha* in *Atlas*, Plate LXXXIII. In 1909 Ramstedt and Pälssi visited and investigated the site and took many photographs.²⁴ But as to the quality of their rubbings, it seems that they are worse than those of Yadrintsev.²⁵ In 1926 Kozlov visited and investigated and took a lot of photographs, however, these have never been published. In 1962, Tryjarski researched a small fragment of the stele and

²² D. A. Klements, *Kratkii otchet o puteshestvii po Mongolii za 1894g.* Izv. Imper. Akademii nauk, 3-3, Saint Petersburg 1895, 246-258; cf. Voitov, "Onginskii pamyatnik," 35.

²³ ATIM 246-252.

²⁴ MSSP 63; Hälen 1987, 99.

²⁵ Aalto, *Oriental Studies in Finland*, 107.

took photographs and investigated the condition of the rest of it.²⁶ Tryjarski discovered a (medium-sized) fragment of the stele at the site and informed the director of the local museum of Arbaiheer, Namhaidagwa.²⁷ The director assured him that he himself would conserve it in the museum.²⁸ Then Tryjarski took sketches of the *tamgha* in the ram style on a semi-circular fragment of stone. He regarded this as the head fragment of the main stele and pointed out the possibility that there are inscriptions read by Radloff on the side of the fragment.

Afterwards Namhaidagwa inspected the monument and succeeded in discovering a new (large) fragment. Rinchen then sent photographs of the two sides of the fragment to Tryjarski on 10 March 1969.²⁹ He tried to compare and attest the places of these fragments of the stele. In 1987, Voitov and Bayar inspected the site archaeologically and tried to consider it in detail.

Identification of the fragments of the stele

Based on the rubbings of the Ongi stele that Yadrintsev had sent him, Radloff explained that the part shown in his plate 2 can be identified as the horizontal line that was divided into five lines on the lower part of the stele (Atlas, pl. XXVI-1, 2; Cf. Plate 1 (b), *infra*). In my view, he made a mistake in this. In fact, as to the true position of this part, as shown in Atlas, pl. LXXXIII (Oa), it can be identified as the lower fragment which had been cut off from the right-hand side of the stele, and there are only three lines here. The large fragment of the stele included this fragment, and we can confirm this as the original position according to our inspection. Besides, according to the report of Yadrintsev, Radloff told him that in the lower part there was the fragment that was causing the problem, and he placed it in the lower part of the right side (Oa) apart at an interval of several cm, although Radloff explained that the letters were not going on to the bottom part of the stele. According to the position of the lower part in the large fragment, however, it seems that the length of the interval could have been ca. 40 cm from the final part of the narrow side (i.e., the north side) of the stele. Moreover, in the final part, this sentence is incomplete, so we can assume that the letters were carved on the following part, i.e. the bottom of this stele. As Radloff had mentioned there, as to the lower part of this stele, it must have been badly damaged already when Yadrintsev visited. As a result, from Radloff's Atlas we can only confirm one of the last parts that might have been recognized by Yadrintsev or Radloff at that time.

As to the fragment that had been divided into two parts found by Tryjarski in 1962 (which is 71 cm long, 34 cm wide and 15 cm thick),³⁰ Voitov identified it as

²⁶ Tryjarski, "Die heutige Mongolei," fig. 27.

²⁷ Tryjarski, "Die heutige Mongolei," fig. 27.

²⁸ Tryjarski, "Die heutige Mongolei," 160.

²⁹ E. Tryjarski, "Zur neueren Geschichte des Ongin-Denkmal," in *Sprache, Geschichte und Kultur der Altaischen Völker*, Schriften zur Geschichte und Kultur des Alten Orients 5, Berlin 1974.

³⁰ Tryjarski, "Die heutige Mongolei," 16.

the lower part of a second stele that had been erected at the site. However, as no second stele existed at the Ongi site, as is discussed below, his identification cannot be supported. In our researches, however, we could not find this fragment at the site or the museum.

As to another small fragment (which is 19 cm long, 16 cm wide and 9 cm thick), Namhaidagwa found it at a distance of 300 m from the Ongi site and deposited it in the Arbaiheer museum in 1968. Voitov considered it to be a fragment from another site, as a result of his comparative consideration of it from the viewpoints of the dimensions of the stone fragment, the measurement of the letters, and the distance between the letters.³¹ From comparison between our photographs and impressions and Radloff's Atlas, however, it seems not to be doubted that this can be identified as a fragment of which some letters are illegible in the fifth line of the east side and the opening sentence of the part from the 6th to the 8th lines of the north side.³²

As to another fragment of medium size that is held in the Arbaiheer local museum (which is 29~30 cm long, 21 cm wide and 16 cm thick), Tryjarski considered it to be the part of the Ongi fragment that has a wide side. He read about 20 letters on it and identified them as the same as the 5th~7th lines of the front side of the Ongi stele.³³ I can also vouch for his identification. Additionally I can say that, as a result of comparison between our photographs and impressions and Radloff's Atlas, we can find the letters from the beginning of the 8th line of the small fragment, even though it is badly damaged and illegible. So we can say that there must also have been letters in the 8th line of this fragment that now has four lines. When Yadrintsev discovered it in 1891, the runic letters of the 8th line seem already to have been worn away badly or disappeared.

On the contrary, Voitov thought that the medium-sized fragment and the large fragment were broken only at the upper and bottom parts while their sides were intact, and he considered that originally these two fragments were from a single fragment, whose original location is unknown. He considered that the medium-sized fragment was from another stele that is still unknown.³⁴ In fact, however, as I mentioned above, it seems certain that it can be identified as a fragment of the Ongi stele. And as to the large fragment, as a result of inspection in the Arbaiheer museum and comparison between the fragment and our impressions, it has traces of having been cut off not only at the upper and bottom sides, but also at the left side. Thus we can conclude that this can be identified as the larger part of the stele, so we cannot say that this is from the same portion of the stele as the

³¹ Voitov, "Onginskii pamyatnik," 43.

³² T. Ôsawa, "Kodai Tyurku No Ongi Iseki Hibun O Meguru Shomondai, Mongolu Koku Nai Deno Genchi Chôsa O Tôshite Mita," [Problems on the Ongi inscription of the Ancient Turkish period] *Chûto Isulamu Bunka No Shosô To Genngo Kenkyû IKEDA Osamu Sensei Gotaikan Kinen Ronbunshyû* [Aspects of the Islamic culture and language studies of the Middle East region], Osaka 1999, 287-288; Ôsawa, *Ongi Hibun*, 131.

³³ Tryjarski, "Zur neueren Geschichte des Ongin-Denkmal," 167-168, figs. 15, 26, 27.

³⁴ Voitov, "Onginskii pamyatnik," 43-44.

medium-sized fragment. Therefore we can acknowledge the correctness of Tryjarski's view.

As to the large fragment conserved in the Arbaiheer museum (which is 79 cm in height, 18-22 cm on the side that had letters, 18 cm in the other side, and 16-18 cm and 20-22 cm on the smooth sides), Rintchen sent a photograph of this to Tryjarski. Voitov considered that this can be identified as another unknown stele.³⁵ However, according to our inspection and comparison between photographs and rubbings and Radloff's Atlas, it can be clarified that the letters of one side in this fragment can be identified as those between lines 1-4 of the wide side (i.e., the east side) of the Ongi stele, and the letters of the other side can be identified as those from between lines 1-4 of the narrow side (i.e., the north side) of the Ongi stele. Therefore we cannot support the view of Voitov.³⁶

IV. Aspects of problems of the Ongi stele

As to the linguistic and philological studies on the stele, since the studies of Radloff, N. Orkun, S. E. Malov and H. Onogawa have read and interpreted the text on the basis of Radloff's reproductions of the rubbings.³⁷ On the other hand, G. Clauson questioned the rubbing as retouched by Radloff, so he reconsidered the letters on the basis of Radloff's original edition and published a new version in his own hand including transliteration, transcription, translation and historical consideration. Since then, many scholars have attempted to read and interpret this stele from the philological point of view based on the transliteration and transcription by Clauson.

As a result of our researches, it became evident that there are many points that should be reconsidered. One of these is the number of stele at the Ongi site. In 1909 Ramstedt and Pälsi reported as follows:

There was a lower part of the stele that had originally been erected there and is 56 cm in height, and the others had been divided into two parts (the medium part is 154 cm, the upper part is 104 cm). The stele of which of the Russian Kozlov took a rubbing is buried deeply under the ground. When we tried to excavate it, in fact the base stone of the stele, which has a square hole and was a board made of granite stone, appeared. Under this there was a stone pillar that was installed in layers of stone paving. Bone of sheep was excavated from the western side of

³⁵ Voitov, "Onginskii pamyatnik," 44.

³⁶ Ôsawa, "Kodai Tyurku No Ongi Iseki Hibun," 284-288; T. Ôsawa, and A. Katayama, "Ongi Iseki," [Site of Ongi] in T. Moriyasu, and A. Ochir, ed., *Mongoru Koku Genzon Iseki Hibun Chôsa Kenkyû Hôkoku*, Osaka University, Osaka Daigaku; Chuô Yûrashia Gaku Kenkyûkai (in Japanese), Provisional Report of Researches on Historical Sites and Inscriptions in Mongolia from 1996 to 1998, Osaka University, The Society of Central Eurasian Studies, Osaka 1999, 127-128.

³⁷ ETY I: 127-132; PDPMK: 7-11; Onogawa, "Ongin hibun yakuchû." *Haneda hakase shôjunkenin tôyôshiron*, [Ongin inscription, translation and notes. *Festschrift in the Dr. Toru Haneda, Oriental collection of essays*], Kyoto 1950, 431-451.

the wall under the ground. In the base stone, we could see a figure carved in the tortoise style, the face of which faced westwards.³⁸

On the other hand, as to Pälssi's investigation, Ramstedt wrote in his diary as follows:

During our trip we saw a stone standing upright, on which there had once been an inscription. The winds and changes of temperature had eaten into it so thoroughly that scarcely anything was left of the letters once carved into the stone. Pälssi and I were sorry that we ran into the stone about a thousand years too late. We discovered the base of another stone, but the inscription pillar belonging to it was not to be found. The basic stone was broad and well made. Pälssi desired to know how the layer of the stone slab was constructed. He dug at one side and discovered a layer of tiles on which the base slab rested. We got hold of some poles and tried to lift the slab up from the other side. Pälssi was convinced that something valuable had to be underneath the slab, but at that very moment some persons arrived who clearly had far from friendly intentions. We quickly let the slab fall back into its place, in doing which Pälssi hurt one foot somewhat. We got better results from this reckless attempt at lifting.³⁹

According to the two accounts quoted above, it might be mistakenly interpreted that a stele was erected near the east side of this mound and the rest of this lay near the former stone, while the main stele was buried under the ground near the centre of the mound. However, nobody investigated the state of this site from 1909 until 1963, and the site and stele were destroyed and badly damaged, therefore it is impossible to verify the statement of Ramstedt and Pälssi. It seems that subsequent researchers, such as Clauson, Tryjarski, Aalto and Voitov etc. considered that there were originally two stele at the Ongi site, i.e., a large stele and a small one. From our research, and according to Yadrintsev's rubbings, we can see only one stele and one stone balbal that had a short epigraph. In the following, I would like to reconsider this point.

(i) First, in this respect, in order to prove his opinion that there were two stele at the Ongi site, as one piece of evidence Voitov gave the fact that two *tamghas*, of a mountain goat and a hook, were carved on the wider side of the head stone, and this is different from the plate of the head stone in Radloff's Atlas. Additionally, in 1962 Tryjarski claimed to have discovered another tortoise stone, except this time a square one, in the mound. As to the first piece of evidence, as a result of our investigation, it became evident that two *tamghas*, of a mountain goat and a hook, were carved in both the front and the rear of the head stone that lay in the ground. The *tamgha* on one side (i.e., the front side that had the inscription in eight lines) could be identified with one in Radloff's Atlas, and moreover we should reconsider the traces of the long hook that seemed to have been drawn

³⁸ MSSP 63.

³⁹ G. J. Ramstedt, *Seven Journeys Eastward 1898-1912*. Tr. from Swedish and ed. by J. R. Krueger, Bloomington, Indiana 1978, 210.

vertically across the horizontal line of the goat, and the small trace of a *tamgha* of a hook, as in fact the trace of damage to the stone before its discovery by Yadrintsev. As to his second evidence, according to information from Radloff's Atlas based on the records of Yadrintsev, there was no second stone tortoise in the mound (Cf. Plate 1(a), *infra*). From the information both of the records and diary of Ramstedt and Pälisi, and also of Kozlov, we cannot find anywhere the second stone tortoise that Tryjarski recorded in 1962. From the viewpoint of art and archaeology, the first stone tortoise is not apparently similar to the second one. In my view, it should be considered that the second stone tortoise must have been carried to this site by someone in the period from 1909 to 1962. Therefore we can assume that in the Ongi monument there was only one stone tortoise at the time of the construction of this monument.

(ii) Secondly, Pälisi considered a fragment of the stone pillar that was erected near the east side of the mound as the lower part of the second stele and two fragments that lay near the stone pillar as the upper parts. In my view, however, as a result of comparing the stele of Radloff's Atlas with our three fragments (large, medium and small) of this stele, and the measurement of the length of the original stele that can be reconstructed based on the ratio of the fragments to Radloff's rubbings of the stele, it can be concluded that the runic epigraph at least was carved in a section 271 cm in length and 40 cm in width, the part of the head stone being 18.5 cm thick and the bottom part has 22 cm thick. On the other hand, if another stele had been erected in the east side of the mound, as Pälisi mentioned before, the result would be that the total length of this stele can be calculated as 314 cm in length (the upper part being 104 cm in length, the middle part 154 cm, and the lower part 56 cm). According to Pälisi, it is likely that another stele was buried under the ground. In my view, however, this is impossible because Yadrintsev would have reported the existence of two stele when he discovered and investigated this site. As long as he did not report this, we can assume that then there was only one stele at this site. Moreover this can be supported by the fact that there were only two sides with runic letters, i.e. in my view, the east side which had 8 lines of runic letters, and north side which had 4 lines, so this stele still had room to carve the inscription, and there was no need to erect another stele in order to carve further inscriptions. It is interesting to compare the Tunyquq inscriptions, where runic inscriptions had been inscribed on all sides of two steles to the full. Besides, when Pälisi discovered the tortoise stone, he wrote as if there were parts of the other stele under the ground, however, as Ramstedt registered in his diary, it could not be verified by excavation then. It seems probable that it was based on Pälisi's hypothesis. Of course, it cannot be denied that it was a part of the original stele. At present, I would say that two parts of stele lying in the east of the mound were from the original stele.

(iii) What, then, was the fragment of the stone pillar that Pälisi regarded as the lower part of the second stele? It seems that Ramstedt also considered that this was the lower part of a second stele in his diary, however, he forgot to explain that the letters had been scarcely left in the stone as quoted before. And Voitov also supports the same hypothesis. Of course, their identification can be sup-

ported only in the case that it had been moved by someone from its original position (i.e. near the centre of the mound) to the eastern area of the mound in the period between 1891 and 1909, however, it seems very unlikely at present. And we can also confirm that a fragment of a granite stone pillar 22 cm in height had been stuck firmly in the ground in the east side of the mound, however, it is no longer possible to test the hypothesis, because of the severe damage to this pillar. There is certainly no lettering on it now. To this problem, I would like to propose that this fragment of the stone pillar can be regarded as a balbal stone placed inside the mound. This can be supported by the fact that balbal stones were erected not only outside the mound, but also inside the mound in some of the ancient Turkish sites, such as the Bugut and Ider sites, which belong to the second half of the 6th century and the Tonyuquq and Ikh-khoshtu sites, which belong to the first half of the 8th century. In particular, a balbal stone in the east area inside the mound of the Ikh-Khoshtu site had been stuck firmly on the ground, and it can be confirmed that this balbal had been erected here at the beginning of the establishment of the site. Therefore we can say that in the Ongi site too, a balbal stone had been erected on the east side inside mound, like those of Tunyuquq and Ikh-Khoshtu sites, which belonged to the same periods.

As mentioned above in (i)-(iii), in my view, the hypothesis of Pälisi and then Voïtov cannot be supported, in other words, the fragment of the stone pillar found inside the mound should not be regarded as the lower part of a second stele, but as a balbal stone inside the mound of the Ongi site.

V. Reconstruction of the stele

As to the designation of the four sides of the Ongi stele, in his explanation of Yadrintsev's rubbings, Radloff noted correctly that on the front side there was a sign (i.e. *tamgha*) for Qan, and on the right-hand side, there were vertical lines that began at the same height as the lines of the front side. Moreover in the upper part of these lines, at the same height as the Qan's sign (i.e. *tamgha*), there were seven horizontal lines. In the preface to his decipherment,⁴⁰ Radloff further noted, correctly, that this stele had 8 lines on the front side and 4 lines in the right-hand side. Radloff named the wide side, the side of 8 lines, as (O), the narrow side, the side of 4 lines, as (Oa), the same side of 7 horizontal lines in the upper part (Oc). However, he did not mention where these should be positioned on the Ongi stele. For example, Clauson also named the front side (O) and the (right) side (Oa), according to Radloff.⁴¹ On the contrary, after Oonogawa renamed (O) the east side, and (Oa) the south side, subsequent scholars continued to support him.⁴² However, in our view, this naming should now be corrected.

⁴⁰ ATIM 244.

⁴¹ G. Clauson, "The Ongin Inscription," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1957:3/4), 177; GOT: 291-292.

⁴² Onogawa, "Ongin hibun yakuchû," 442-444; I. Sawada, "Ongin Hibun Ni Kannsuru Ichikôsatsu-Sonosetsuritsumokuteki to Setsuritungendai Wo Chuushinn To Shite," [A consideration of the Ongin inscription, especially on the purpose and the period of

That the letters were carved only on the wide side and the narrow right-hand side of the original stele can be supported by the state of the large fragment as mentioned above. Moreover, according to the explanation of the plate of the stone tortoise,⁴³ we can understand that the navel hole of the stone tortoise is 43 cm in length and 28 cm width, so it seems beyond doubt that the wide side of the stele was facing the head or the tail. In his diary of the 1891 survey, Yadrintsev recorded that the stele faced southwards.⁴⁴ Therefore at the beginning period of this discovery, it seems probable that the wide side of this stele faced southwards, and the narrow side with writing faced eastwards. As a result, then, this stele was erected with the wide side as the south side, and the narrow side as the east side. However, it seems doubtful whether the stele has remained in this position since the period of the first construction, because a gate was cut in the east side of the mound, and there was a shrine, and a sarcophagus positioned in the western part of the mound. As noted above, we observed the position of the Orkhon inscriptions and Tonyukuk inscriptions, and Ikhu-Khoshotuu (Küli Chor inscription), and found that in all cases the first line of the inscription faced towards the western side. This position can be considered meaning that the inscription was raised to show respect to the sarcophagus and shrine, or the stone statue of the buried person in front of the shrine, since the dead spirit dwelt in the mound. So we cannot deny that the first part of the inscription on this stele, of 8 lines, is turned to the western side as the front side, like the Orkhon inscriptions and Tonyukuk and Ikhu-Khoshtuu inscriptions of the second eastern Turkic Kaghanate periods. From this viewpoint, I researched the diary and the rubbings taken by G. Ramstedt and S. Pälssi on 10 September 1909. From these materials, I can confirm that Ramstedt and Pälssi considered that the initial part, of 8 lines, could be the western side, although this was only founded on the fact that the stele was lying on the ground in three parts in the eastern part of this mound, and the beginning part of the stele was turned to the west. If his argument on the position of the fragments of the stele was only hypothesis at that time, I can say that Ramstedt's view on this direction of the stele is completely supported. So at present, I would like to propose that the initial part of the 8 lines was the western side and the tortoise stone was also turned to the front side of the head-stone, that is, towards the west, so that it was facing the sarcophagus, the shrine and the stone statue of the person buried in this site. The narrow side of the lower part, with 4 lines of writing, therefore should be the southern side.

the erection] *Tôyoshikenky* 41:4 (1983), 54; I. Sawada, "Ongin hibun Tômen dai yonngyô no kaishyaku ni tsuite," *Nairiku ajia nishi ajia no syakai to bunka*, [Ongin inscription, on the interpretation of the 4th line of the east side of the Ongin inscription] ed. M. Mori, *The society and culture of Inner Asia and Western Asia*, Yamakawa shuppansya, Tokyo 1983, 79; I. Sawada, "Ongin hibunn yakkai," [Ongin inscription, Transcription and interpretation] *Shundai Shigaku* 41 (1984), 94.

⁴³ MSSP 130.

⁴⁴ Yadrintsev 1901: 43; cf. Voitov 1989: 43.

Confirmation of nine impressions made by Ramstedt

After receiving permission from the Finno-Ugric Society, I visited the National Archive of Helsinki and the National Board of Antiquities of Finland in March and April of 2005 and February and March of 2006.⁴⁵ There I examined the rubbings of the Ongi stele and Sine-Us stele taken by G. Ramstedt and S. Pälssi during their Mongolian journey, with the financial help of the Finno-Ugric Society, under the direction of Prof. O. Donner in 1909.⁴⁶ Especially in the rubbings of Ongi, there are annotations of "TAMIR 10/ IX 1908" in black ink on the surface. The rubbing papers consisted of 1-3 light brown paraffin, and were annotated as "W(est)-1", "W-2", "W-3", "S(outh)-1", "S-2", "S-3", "E(ast)-1", "O-2" and "E-3". These rubbings are made by the Western "squeeze moulding" method, of attaching the paper to the stone with adhesive and tearing off the paper after drying. This is not same method as the traditional Chinese rubbing used by Yadrintsev, and it is more difficult to read and understand the real shape of the runes than from Yadrintsev's version. In addition, I would like to emphasize that Ramstedt and Pälssi took rubbings of three sides (which they designated the western, southern and eastern sides). They made rubbings of all three parts of the three sides as follows:

Western side

First rubbing (Runic letters of 8 lines, 101 cm length, 38-39 width),
 Second rubbing (Runic letters of 8 lines, 153 cm length, 36-37 cm width)
 Third rubbing (Runic letters of 8 lines, 62 cm length, 35-36 cm width)
 General measurement of Western side: 316 cm length, 35-39 cm width.

Southern side

First rubbing (Runic letters of 4 lines, 100 cm length, 18-21 cm width),
 Second rubbing (Runic letters of 4 lines, 156 cm length, 22 cm width)
 Third rubbing (Runic letters of 4 lines, 63cm length, 23-24,5cm width)
 General measurement of Western side: 319 cm length, 18-24,5 cm width.

Eastern side

First rubbing (Runic letters of 8 lines, 111 cm length, 38-39 cm width),
 Second rubbing (Runic letters of 4 lines, 150 cm length, 38 cm width)
 Third rubbing (Runic letters of 8 lines, 65 cm length, 39-42 cm width)
 General measurement of Western side: 326 cm length, 38-42 cm width.

The measurement of the stele derived from the rubbings is almost same as the description given by Ramstedt in his diary, in which he reported that the runic epigraph had been carved in the parts of 271 cm in length and 40cm in width. Above all, in his diary, there is no mention that he could recognize any runic letters on the eastern side. However, in the first and second rubbings of the eastern

⁴⁵ For facilitating my research in Helsinki, I would like to express my thanks to H. Halén and V. Rybatzky who helped me gain permission to investigate the materials of Ramstedt and Pälssi from the Finno-Ugric Society and National Board Antiquities of Finland.

⁴⁶ Cf. Ramstedt, *Seven Journeys Eastward*; Aalto, *Oriental Studies in Finland*; Halén 1986.

side, I could recognize the slight tracks of 8 lines and a few runic letters that had not been quite worn away for some reason.

At present, I am engaged myself in the transliteration, transcription, and interpretation of all texts from the philological, historical and archaeological points of view, so I will present this research in the not-too-distant future. At this stage, I can present some new historical contexts from my readings as follows:

As is well known, according to the rubbings of Yadrintsev, we can read the first line of the western side as "Kaghanladuk kaghan içghün:ïdmis" (Kaghan who was made the ruler perished and went away). From this, however, we cannot know who made him a Kaghan. But according to my research of the rubbings of Ramstedt, this problematical phrase could be the next part of the last phrase of the first line of the bottom fragment, to be read as "II Begler Tabgach". So we can now read this part as follows: "Ol Begler Tabgach Kaghan kaghanladuk kaghan içghün:ïdmis", (The Turkish Kaghan, whom Begs of tribes and Tabgach Kaghan (i.e. the Tang Emperor) had made become a king, perished and went away). From here, we can consider that this description may be connected with a historical event in the rebellion of the Old Turkic tribes who were under the control of the Tang emperor against the Tang Dynasty in the years 670-688.

As an another example, we can read the sentence: "yabiz bat biz:azigh ukushug:kortug:..." (We are wrong and bad. We made the small people many one...) in the beginning sentences of the rubbing "W-7", however, we can read this as part of the next parts of the sentences: "biz baduk:biz:biz bat biz:biz:" (We are strong, we have disadvantage. We) of the bottom line of the fragment of "W-6". From there we can reconstruct this part as follows: "Biz baduk biz: biz bat biz: biz:yabiz bat biz: azigh ukushug:kortug:..." (We are strong, we have disadvantage. We are wrong and bad. We made the small people many one...). In the near future, I would like to present the results of my new reading and historical analysis on this stele.

That the *tamgha* of a mountain goat and a hook were carved in both sides of the head stone could mean that the person in whose honour this stele was erected belonged to the genealogy of the royal Ashinas family of the ancient Turkish Qaghanate. However, it can be interpreted such that he belonged to the collateral line of the royal family, which was different from the direct line of Ilterish, Bilgä Qaghan and Köl Tigin of the Second Turkish Qaghanate.⁴⁷

It seems that in the head stone the *tamghas* are worthy of note. However according to our impression, we can confirm that there was a line of semi-cylindrical style along the upper line of the head stone. There is no discussion of this feature in the literature. However, from the understanding that Tunyuquq and Küli Çor were high-ranking officials of the Second Turkish Qaghanate, but the head stones of their stele had no sculpted decoration like this, we should pay attention to this feature. In my view, the meaning of the semi-cylindrical line on this head stone can be considered as a kind of omitted expression of the dragon

⁴⁷ Clauson, "The Ongin Inscription," 177; Onogawa, "Ongin hibun yakuchû," 432; Sawada, "Ongin hibunn yakkai," 94, 96.

in order to indicate respectfully that the person in whose honour this stele was raised belonged to the ancient royal family of the Second Turkish Qaghanate. This view can be supported by the fact that the tortoise stone was carved in the primitive form.⁴⁸

Conclusions

As I stated above, it seems that there are many complicated problems associated with reconstruction of the Ongi monument and inscriptions, archaeologically and historically. These problems are made more difficult because the burial mound of the site was dug illegally and destroyed at some point after its discovery in 1891. Therefore we should try to solve the cultural and historical meaning of this monument and stele, including trying to inquire into other fragments of the stele as yet undiscovered. As most philologists and historians insist, it seems probable that the Ongi stele was constructed in the first half of the Second Turkish Qaghanate period and was involved in the historical events of that time. It is therefore valuable evidence in order to investigate the history of the revival and process of the Second Turkish Qaghanate. Therefore my aim is to analyze the historical meaning of this site and the stele not only philologically but also archaeologically, in order to utilize this site and stele for clarification of for whom, by whom and when the monument was constructed.

⁴⁸ Ôsawa, "Kodai Tyurku No Ongi Iseki Hibun," 288-289; Ôsawa, *Ongi Hibun*, 121-132.