ACTA ORIENT. HUNG.
Tomus XXV. Fasc. 1—3.

Separatum

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72.73959 Akadémiai Nyomda, Budapest — Felelős vezető: Bernát György

1972

ACTA ORIENTALIA

A MAGYAR TUDOMÁNYOS AKADÉMIA
ORIENTALISZTIKAI KÖZLEMÉNYEI

SZERKESZTŐSÉG ÉS KIADÓHIVATAL: BUDAPEST V., ALKOTMÁNY UTCA 21

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Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae, Tomus XXV, pp. 275—281 (1972)

ON THE NUMERICAL COMPOSITION OF THE ANCIENT TURKISH TRIBAL CONFEDERATIONS

BY

K. CZEGLÉDY

It is generally held that we have no certain information about the number of the Eastern Turkish tribes. Those holding this view, however, tend to overlook the inscription surviving on the tomb of the daughter of the Eastern Turkish qaghan Qapghan.[1] This inscription informs us how all the Turkish tribes rejoiced in 691 A. D. when Qapghan came into power. The peculiar phrases expressing this rejoicing are well known from the Orkhon Turkish inscriptions (II E 2) as stock words carrying, in this case, the meaning that all the tribes accepted the rule of the new qaghan without rebelling.

The epitaph of the Qaghan's daughter also indicates the number of the tribes under Qapghan's rule naming him «the qaghan of the Thirty-tribes».[2]

According to the clear testimony of the Turkish inscriptions, the tribal confederation under the rule of Qapghan was composed of Turkish and Oghuz tribes. This is also confirmed by the tomb inscription of the qaghan's daughter which, directly after the quoted phrase, in what seems to be an explanation of why Qapghan was called «the qaghan of the Thirty-tribes», goes on to tell the reader that, at first, nine tribes paid homage to the new qaghan and then further twelve tribes welcomed his blissful rule. The name *Nine-tribes* of the Chinese sources, as we know,[3] often figures as an equivalent of *Toquz-oghuz* ('Nine-oghuz') mentioned in the Turkish inscriptions. Hence the name *Twelve tribes* must denote the other group of tribes under Qapghan's rule, that is, the

[1] Edited and commented on by E. Chavannes, *Épitaphes de deux princesses Turques de l'époque des T'ang*: *Festschrift Vilhelm Thomsen* (Leipzig 1912), pp. 78—87; cf. P. Pelliot, *La fille de Mo-tcho Qaghan et ses rapports avec Kül-tegin*: T'oung Pao XIII (1912), pp. 301—306.

[2] Chavannes, *loc. cit.*, p. 82, n. 7.

[3] Mainly by the investigations of V. Thomsen, E. H. Parker, J. Marquart and T. Haneda: *Toyo Gakuho* IX (1919), pp. 1—61, 141—145, cf. moreover the French résumé in *Recueil des oeuvres posthumes de Tôru Haneda* II (Kyôto 1958), pp. 20—23; cf. furthermore E. G. Pulleyblank's notes: *Ural-Altaische Jahrbücher* 1956, pp. 35—42 and Liu Mau-tsai's notes: *Die chinesischen Nachrichten zur Geschichte der Ost-Türken (T'u-küe)* II, pp. 591—593, n. 831.

Turks. The fact, however, that the total number of the tribes was 30, necessitates the conclusion that the name *Nine-tribes* must somehow denote 18 Oghuz tribes, as only in this case would the number of the Turkish tribes (12) and that of the Oghuz tribes (18) add up to 30.

There are cogent arguments for both conclusions. First we must refer to the Tibetan manuscript n° 1283 of the Pelliot Collection, of Tunhuang origin, which was published with translation from the literary remains of Pelliot by Bacot in 1956.[4] This manuscript gives a brief description, based on explorers' reports, of the countries of Central Asia, plainly telling the reader that the Eastern Turks have 12 tribes, and actually gives the names of the 12 tribes. This Tibetan writing contains data which date back to the period of the Uyghur Empire, certainly after 750 A. D.[5] Some Chinese data too, dating from the same period tell us that the Eastern Turks have 12 tribes: first in 742, then later, in the report on An Lu-šan's rebellion, about 750—760 A. D., it is again with the name *Twelve tribes* that the Eastern Turks are referred to.[6]

We have evidence of equal cogency for stating that the name *Nine-tribes* denoting the Toquz-oghuz tribal confederation, was in fact the name of a tribal group composed of 18 tribes. I already discussed in an earlier article[7] the structure of the Toquz-oghuz tribal confederation. I tried to prove there that it is by comparing the Turkish inscriptions, the relevant Chinese, Uyghur and other sources with each other that we can ascertain nearly every name of the Toquz-oghuz tribes (*Buqu*, *Tongra*, *Uyghur*, *Bayirqu*, etc., 9 in all).

We have clear evidence, on the other hand, to the fact that the leading tribe *Uyghur* possessed alone nine sub-tribes, the names of which (*Yaghlaqar*, *Yabutqar*, *Kürebir*, etc.) are enumerated in the Chinese sources[8] and mentioned partly also in Saka and other documents.[9] The Nine-oghuz tribal confederation was formed accordingly by the 9 sub-tribes of the Uyghur tribe and by 8 other. Oghuz tribes, i. e. by 17 tribes in all. Our sources furnish convincing evidence as to the 18th tribe of the Toquz-oghuz confederation too, as they prove that to the nine tribes of the Toquz-oghuz there was added a tenth one, of non-Oghuz origin.

These ten tribes,[10] according to the Chinese sources, constituted only the leading tribal group within the old tribal confederation of the T'ieh-le, whose territories comprised big parts of the Eurasian steppe, from the North of Mongolia as far as the Altai region and further to the West to the river Volga, the Caucasian mountains and the Pontus. About 620 A. D. the leading ten tribes (*Buqu*, *Tongra*, *Uyghur*, etc.) of the mighty T'ieh-le confederation, according to the Chinese sources, assumed the name *Uyghur*,[11] as at that time the Uyghur came into prominence and overtook the leading role within the Ten-tribes. Consequently we would have to assume the existence of a Turkish name *On-Uyghur* («Ten-uyghur») on the basis of the Chinese reports, even if it did not occur in the Uyghur-Turkic inscriptions of Shine-usu (N 7), where it figures as the first component of the compound name *On-uyghur—Toquz-oghuz* applied by the Uyghur qaghan to his own people.

From these facts it becomes clear that both names *On-uyghur* and *Toquz-oghuz* or even the compound designation *On-uyghur—Toquz-oghuz* denoted, with the exception of a single tribe, the same group of tribes.[12] The double division may have been due to historical developments in the course of which the very old clan organization of the Nine-oghuz was completed by a tenth,

[4] J. Bacot, *Reonnaissance en Haute Asie Septentrionale par cinq envoyés ouigours au VIII^e siècle*: *Journal Asiatique* 1956, pp. 137—153. — The data of this Tibetan document referring to the Pechenegs had been made known before Bacot's paper to the Hungarian orientalists by Prof. L. Ligeti.

[5] Cf. G. Clauson, *À propos du Manuscrit Pelliot Tibétain 1283*: *Journ. Asiat.* 1957, pp. 11—24.

[6] The Chinese data were made accessible for historical research by E. G. Pulleyblank: *T'oung Pao* XLI, p. 339, n. 2, cf. also Pulleyblank's data *ap.* Clauson: *Journ Asiat.* 1957, p. 18. However, the inscription on the tomb of Qapghan's daughter had escaped Pulleyblank's attention so that he found no occurrence of the name «Twelve-tribes» earlier than the middle of the 8th century. The epitaph, however, clearly indicates that it was not only about the time of the dissolution of the Eastern Turkish empire, that is, about 750, that the name *Twelve-tribes* denoted the Turks, but, in fact, much earlier, already in the days of the qaghans Qapghan and Bilgä and even at the time of Qapghan's accession to the throne in 691 A. D. As we shell see later, the duodecimal designation is even earlier than that and was introduced probably some time after 557 A. D.

[7] «On the structure of the Turkish tribal organizations and on the classification of the Turkish languages»: *Magyar Nyelv* [Hungarian Language], XLV (1949), pp. 291—296.

[8] For the names of the tribes belonging to the Toquz-oghuz in the T'ang period (618—907 A. D.) see Chavannes, *Documents*, p. 87, n. 3; for the names of the sub-tribes of the Uyghur tribe: *ibid.*, pp. 93—94; cf. also Haneda's and Pulleyblank's papers quoted above, n. 3.

[9] The Saka documents were discussed by W. B. Henning: *BSOS* IX (1937—1939), pp. 553—559.

[10] The oldest list of these tribes originates from the Sui period (589—618 A. D.) and is contained in the report of the *Sui-History* (cap. 84) on the T'ieh-le, cf. J. J. de Groot's translation *ap.* J. Marquart, *Komanen*, pp. 199—200; cf. also Liu Mau-tsai, *op. cit.*, pp. 127—129.

[11] According to the report of the *Chiu T'ang-šu* (cap. 195) on the Uyghurs (translated by Chavannes, *op. cit* , p. 89).

[12] I already emphasized this in 1949, in my paper quoted above, n. 7. — For another interpretation of the sources on this point see E. G. Pulleyblank, *Some remarks on the Toquzoghuz problem*: *Ural-Altaische Jahrbücher* XXVIII (1956), pp. 35—42. The author of this paper does not regard as wholly authentic the Chinese list of the Uyghur sub-tribes but proposes a bold emendation by which he raises the number of the Uyghur sub-tribes from nine to ten. The 18 Toquz-oghuz tribes were composed, consequently, in his opinion, by ten Uyghur sub-tribes and eight other Oghuz tribes.

non-Oghuz tribe. The military forces of the great tribal confederations of Central Asia having come to power, were, from the Hsiung-nu times on until Jinghiz-khan, mostly rearranged according to a decimal pattern.[13]

The tribal groups of ten were furthermore subdivided into two symmetrical «wings» consisting each of five tribes. This seems to have happened in the case of the Turkish tribal confederation too. The Eastern Turks had, as we shall see below, originally ten tribes, the same being the number of the Western Turkish tribes as well. The two wings of the Ten-uyghurs bore the names *Töliš* (five tribes) and *Tarduš* (five tribes).[14] The same two names denoted the two wings of the Eastern Turkish and possibly of the Kirghiz tribal groups as well.[15]

The old clan organization of the Nine-oghuz, however, continued to exist too even as far as the 10th century A. D. This is testified on the one hand by the Muhammadan historical and geographical sources which still use the designation *Nine-oghuz* for the (Ten-) Uyghur tribal group in the 9th and 10th centuries and on the other hand by the use of the double name *On-uyghur – Toquz-oghuz* in a 10th century Uyghur-Turkic text of Turfan origin.[16]

It was in 1948 that a new and compelling argument for 18 as the number of the Toquz-oghuz tribes was found. In a passage of the Meshed manuscript of the Arab geographer Ibn al-Faqīh,[17] an Arab traveller who visited the Uyghur court, tells his readers that, besides the qaghan, the Toquz-oghuz had 17 chieftains. A further note by the same traveller is also important: as to their individual military power, the 18 tribes of the Toquz-oghuz are about equal. This means that the 9 Uyghur sub-tribes in themselves were about as strong a military force as the remaining 8 Oghuz tribes together. This helps us to understand the military events related in the Shine-usu inscriptions (E 1—7). Here we read about a rebellion against the Uyghur, that is, Toquz-oghuz qaghan, when, with the exception of his own people, the nine Uyghur sub-tribes, all other eight Oghuz tribes rose against the qaghan, and they even allied themselves with the Toquz-tatars, and yet the qaghan, heading only his own tribe, that is, the 9 Uyghur sub-tribes, was able not only to resist but even to defeat the *Eight-oghuz* (*Säkiz-oghuz* in the text of the inscription).

[13] Emphasizing the significance of the decimal system for the rearrangement of the old clan-organizations I am slightly altering, in this paragraph, the text of my paper written in 1962 (cf. below, n. 25).

[14] This is proved by the Shine-usu inscriptions and by the quoted Saka documents.

[15] A Kirghiz *Tarduš inančᵘ čor* is mentioned in the Orkhon Turkic inscriptions (I N 13). — Our sources furnish sufficient evidence that each of the ten tribes belonging to the two wings of the Turkish tribal confederation stood under the military leadership of a *šad*. Besides, one of the wings was also headed by five *irkin*-s and the other by five *čor*-s. The decimal system still existed with the Uyghurs even after the collapse of the Orkhon Uyghur empire in 840 A. D., as the Saka sources still speak of the Töliš and Tarduš wings of the Uyghurs in the time of the late Uyghur state founded in Turfan and Kansu about 860 A. D.

[16] Published by A. von Gabain, *Türkische Turfan-Texte* IX, line 90.

[17] Ed. V. Minorsky: *BSOAS* XI, p. 281.

A Tibetan text furnishes further proof of the fact that the number of the Toquz-oghuz tribes was 18. Here, in a description of the tribes living beyond the northern frontiers of Tibet, we read of the «18 Drugu 'Bog-'čhol», i.e. «the Eighteen Turkish 'Bog-'čhol» tribes and land, respectively.[18] This — at first glance — curious name occurs in the form *Dru-gu 'Bug-čhor* in the Tibetan texts of Tunhuang origin.[19] The meaning and use of this Tibetan phrase have so far been only partially clarified. It seems, however, certain that the name *'Bug-čhor* is identical with the designation of the earlier military rank Qapghan qaghan's: *Bäg-čor* of the Talas Turkish inscriptions and *Mo-č'o* of the Chinese sources.[20]

To all this we may add three more comments: 1. according to the above evidence Qapghan Bäg-čor had 30 tribes, including 18 tribes of the Oghuz-Uyghur. The number 18 in the Tibetan sources refers to these 18 Oghuz-Uyghur tribes. 2. The Tibetan phrase *Dru-gu 'Bug-čhor* renders a Turkic *Bäg-čor Türk* and refers also to the territory held by the Eastern Turks. It is a designation of the same nature as the Turkish name *Yabghu Türk* («Western Turks»). It was a well-known custom among the Turkish peoples to name certain ethnic groups and their corresponding habitats after the dignitarial designation of the chiefs. Any doubt one may have about this explanation may be dispelled by the fact that the Chinese, too, used the expression *Mo-č'o T'u-chüeh* (*Bäg-čor Türk*) in the same manner.[21] — 3. The name *türk* (*drugu*) in the Tibetan phrase *18 Drugu 'Bog-'čhol* was transferred to the Uyghur-Oghuz not because the Tibetans knew that the Türk and the Uyghur-Oghuz spoke the same language, but because of the political union of the two tribal groups inasmuch as the Oghuz also belonged to the Turkic tribal confederation of the qaghan Bäg-čor Qapghan.

The numerical relations of the Eastern Turks and the Oghuz-Uyghur tribes as well as the unity of the ancient Turkish-speaking peoples are reflected in a remarkable manner in a very ancient genealogical myth of the Eastern Turks which has been preserved in two main variants by the Chinese.[22] Accord-

[18] R. A. Stein, *Les tribus anciennes des marches sino-tibétaines* (Paris 1961), pp. 4, 10.

[19] F. W. Thomas, *Tibetan literary texts and documents concerning Chinese Turkestan* II (London 1951), pp. 276—287.

[20] The Chinese form of the name *Bäg*: Anc. Chin. *mək* seems to prove that the Tibetans heard of Bäg-čor qaghan first by Chinese mediation. — Cf. Pelliot's note *ap.* Bacot: *Journ. Asiat.* 1956, p 151; cf, J. Hamilton: *T'oung Pao* XLVI, p. 131 and A. Macdonald: *Journ. Asiat.* 1962, pp. 533—541.

[21] Liu Mau-tsai, *op. cit.*, pp. 388, 733.

[22] Liu Mau-tsai, *op. cit.*, pp. 4—5.

ing to both variants the Eastern Turks originated from their totemic ancestral animal, the Mother Wolf. According to one variant, the chief of the primeval horde and his brothers numbered 18. The ancestor of the Kirghiz was the descendant of one of the brothers, while that of another was the progenitor of the Eastern Turks. Both variants assert that the forefather of the Turks had 10 wives. According to one of the versions these ten wives had ten sons from whom the names of the ten tribes originated.

There cannot be any doubt that this myth is in fact the genealogical saga of the Eastern Turkish, Uyghur-Oghuz and Kirghiz peoples and the number 18 in it obviously refers to the number of the Uyghur-Oghuz tribes. However, it is surprising that, according to the saga, the Eastern Turks had not 12 but only 10 tribes. But this is also understandable if we take into account that in the Tibetan list of the Eastern Turkish tribes, the 11th tribe is named *He-bdal*.[23] We know of the Hephthalites that it was only in 557 A. D., after their defeat by the Turks, that they became the latter's subject. It is therefore, most probable that, prior to 557, the Eastern Turks had but 10 tribes and that it was only after 557 that the 11th tribe, the *Heftal*, and the 12th one, the *Gar-rga-pur*, were made to join their alliance. Thus the tribal confederation of the Turks was symmetrically divided into two groups each consisting of 10 tribes. But, whereas the original number of the Eastern Turks had changed after 557, already in the initial phase of Turkish history, that of the Western Turks remained constant. That explains also the name *On-oq* («Ten-arrow») of the Western Turks used also in the Orkhon Turkish inscriptions.

The finding that the Turkish and Oghuz tribal confederation of Bäg-čor Qapghan consisted of 12 Turkish and 18 Uyghur-Oghuz tribes, making altogether 30 tribes, as well as the definition of the meaning of the double name *On-uyghur—Toquz-oghuz*, provide the key to a more exact interpretation of a fragmentary passage of the Orkhon Turkish inscriptions. For, in the Kültegin Inscription, in a throne address from the mouth of qaghan Bilgä (I S 1), the qaghan speaks to his whole people and also addresses those having the highest offices. In his appellation, he uses a double name similar to the *On-uyghur—Toquz-oghuz* of the Shine-usu Uyghur inscription, but some letters of the name have crumbled away: *Otuz . . . Toquz-oghuz* («Thirty . . . Nine-oghuz»). In view that the Qaghan's words are addressed to the whole people, that is, the 12 Turkish and the 18 Uyghur-Oghuz tribes, the filling in of the gap following the word *Otuz* raises no difficulties, the obvious reading being: *Otuz-türk—Toquz-oghuz*. Thomsen — in his time — suggested *Otuz-tatar* — with a question mark — — in view of the fact that the Orkhon inscriptions also speak of an Otuz-

[23] In the Tibetan document published by Bacot: *Journ. Asiat.* 1956, pp. 141 and 145, line 11.

tatar tribal group.[24] It must be pointed out, however, that the only right place of the name *Otuz-tatar* would be in the enumeration of the subjugated tribes and definitely not here where the qaghan addresses his own tribal confederation. Moreover, as we have seen, qaghan Qapghan, «the lord of thirty tribes» was, according to the epitaph on his daughter's tomb, the ruler of 12 Turkish and 18 Uyghur-Oghuz tribes.

The phrase *Toquz-oghuz*, in the compound name *Otuz-türk—Toguz-oghuz*, is a repetition, in the same way as in the On-uyghur—Toquz-oghuz of the Shine-usu inscription, for it was with the inclusion of the Toquz-oghuz tribes that the number of the Turkish tribes gave the total of 30, while the *On-Uyghur* also included the Toquz-oghuz tribes to make the total of 10 tribes. The repetition of the name *Toquz-oghuz* in both cases reflects the importance of the role which the Toquz-oghuz tribes played in the Turkish and Uyghur-Oghuz tribal confederations.[25]

[24] It is a very remarkable fact that both the Turks and the Tatars, at the time of the Turkish and Uyghur empires, possessed tribal groups consisting each of 9 and 30 tribes. The number 9 had a sacral character with the Turkish peoples.

[25] The Hungarian original of this paper was published in 1962 (*Magyar Nyelv* LIX, pp. 456—461.) The concluding paragraphs, on qaghan Abuz of the Toquz-oghuz, shall be published separately in the volume containing the papers read at the meeting of the Permanent International Altaistic Conference in Szeged, 1971 (to be published as the next vol. of the *Bibliotheca Orientalis Hungarica*).

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