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The Verbs *bol-* and *er-* in Orkhon (Bilge Kagan, Kül Tigin, Tunyukuk) Runic Inscriptions

By

ADNAN R. KARABEYOĞLU

(Locaeli University, Turkey)

The verbs *bol-* and *er-* have different attributes within the context of beginning (dynamic) and stagnancy (stationary) aspects, and their meanings are close in terms of notifying the presence and occurrence of things within time and location. Due to this, the functions of the main verb and copula become closely related or mixed with each other, particularly in the Middle Turkish period. The functional differences that these two verbs have, and when and in which situations these verbs began to replace each other, is uncertain. Due to these reasons, and the close meanings they have, function identification can be ambiguous and can lead to the thought that *bol-* is used in place of *er-*. (Clauson 1972: 331).

In this paper, in order to ascertain some of these points, the examples of the verbs *bol-* and *er-* in the Orkhon Inscriptions (Kul Tegin, Bilge Khan, Tonyukuk) are reviewed. The meanings and functions of the Turkish language within these ancient texts, which belong to the 8th century, are shown, and an explanation sought as to whether these two verbs can and do replace each other or not.

I

When it is taken into account that names correspond to things, the elements (things) to which the verbs *bol-* and *er-* are related in the word alignment and meaning, and functional discrepancies resulting from the characteristics shown by these two verbs in the verbalization of these elements (things) point to *object*, *quality (adjective)* or *situation (state),* it is understood that the relations of these verbs to the things are grouped as follows:

1. *Name + main verb*: the existence or emerging existence of a thing to which the name in the subject state refers,

2. *Name + copula*: The state or quality of the subject to which the name next to it refers, or the acquisition of a characteristic by these; showing and pointing to the thing.

Taking this grouping into consideration, the verbs *bol-* and *er-* are now examined in the context of main verb and copula.

II

Verb *bol-* (to become)

1. *bol-* as a main verb: "to appear, to occur, to come into existence".
In order to express *the occurrence and coming into existence* of a thing in time and location, which stands as a subject in the sentence and is used as a main verb, it appears within the inscriptions only in such examples as; *yay bol-* (BK W 3), *yut bol-* (BK E 31), *sümüz bol-* (T1 E 1), and *Türük Bilge Kağan (Teŋride) bol-* (KT S 1; BK N 1) in which the adverb element is used for addressing the thing or the location of the thing where it appeared.

a. *Teŋri teğ Teŋride bolmış Türük Bilge Kağan, bu ödke olurtum /.../* (KT S 1) (Tekin 1995: 34).

b. *Bilge Kağan u[çdı(?)] (BK W 2) Yay bolsar üze t[eŋri]* (BK W 3) *köbürgesi eterçe anç[a]* (BK B 4), *tağda sığun etser a[nça(?)]* (BK W 5) *sakınur men /.../* (BK W 6) (Tekin 1995: 80).

c. *Otuz artukı eki yaşıma amgı korgan kışladukda yut boltı /.../* (BK E 31) (Tekin 1995: 72).

The above sentences describe a. The creation of *Türük Bilge Kağan*, b. The ending of Winter and coming of Spring, and c. The emergence of famine, are very clear examples of the dynamic aspect of the verb *bol-*. In these sentences the function of the verb *bol-* enables the emergence and existence of *Türük Bilge Kağan*, *yay* (spring) and *yut* (famine), which are subjects.

d. *Eki bıŋ ertimiz. [Eki] sümüz b]oltı /.../* (T1 E 1) (Tekin 1995: 86).

The Turkish translation of example d., which translates as "We were two thousand. We had two armies" (Ergin 1996: 55), appears in Orkun as "we were, became two thousand" (Orkun 1994: 106), and in Tekin with the form of "We had two armies" (Tekin 1995: 87). In this example the "possesive" meaning occurs with the 1.plural genitive suffix (*-miz*), and if the *dynamic* aspect of *bol-* is taken into account *oldu* should be used. In

order to transform this phrase into *vardı*, the verb *er-* which expresses stagnancy, should have been used in place of *bol-*. The example below, which shows *er-* being used as a main verb, supports this. (See: Verb *er-*, 1.1.): *Neŋ neŋ sabım erser beŋgü taşka urtum* /.../ (KT S 11) (Tekin 1995: 36).

2. *bol-* as a copula

Bol- as a main verb verbalizes its meanings of "to appear, to occur, to come into existence" by attributing these meanings to the names in the pattern of *name + copula*, and thus with its copula state, the thing as the *subject of the compound verb* in accordance with the word alignment, is employed in *expressing its presence with the coexistence of the name next to it.*

In other words, it enables the act of attaining another thing (subject), the name element next to it (quality or situation), and the occurence of the quality or situation in that thing (subject). It can be seen that the verb *bol-* is used in such meanings for *transformation into* a (situation, state), acquisition, and possession (quality, situation):

a. *Antağ külüğ kağan ermiş. Anta kisre, inisi kağan* (KT E 4) *bolmış erinç, oğlıtı kağan bolmış erinç* /.../ (KT E 5) (Tekin 1995: 38–40).

b. /.../ *Üç Oğuz süsi basa kelti. "Yadağ yabız boltı" tip algalı kelti* /.../ (BK E 32) (Tekin 1995: 74).

c. /.../ *On Ok kağanı yağımız erti* (T1 E 2), *artuk [Kırkız] küç[lüğ kağan yağımız] boltı* /.../ (T1 E 3) (Tekin 1995: 86).

In sentence a. (translation: little brothers, sons becoming khans), b. (tr. Disintegration of the infantries), and c. (tr: Kirghiz Khan becoming an enemy), the verb *bol-*, with its dynamic aspect, assigns the qualities expressed with such name elements as *kağan*, *yabız*, and *yağı* within the compound verbs *kağan bol-*, *yabız bol-* and *yağı bol*, to the subjects *inisi*, *oğlıtı*, *yadağ*, and *Kırkız kağan* through the function of copula.

Bolma-, with its negative structure, expresses the *failure of the subject to acquire the quality shown by the name element* within the compound name.

a. *Türük bodun yok bolmazun tiyin, bodun bolçun tiyin* /.../ (BK E 10) (Tekin 1995: 64).

b. /.../ *Eçümiz apamız tutmış yir sub idisiz bolmazun tiyin* /.../ (KT E 19) (Tekin 1995: 42).

The example groups of *Bol-* being used in many forms in the inscriptions as *copulas, subject acquisition of the quality which the name ad-*

dresses, transformation of this subject into a situation, and possessing this quality, are as follows:

Bodun bol- (KT E 11; BK E 10, 37; T2 E 6), *buŋsuz bol-* (BK N 14), *(yetmiş, yeti yz) er bol-* (KT E 12, 13; BK E 11; T1 W 4), *il bol-* (T2 E 6), *kağan bol-* (KT E 4-5; BK E 5; T1 W 7), *kergek bol-* (KT E 4, 30, K 10; BK E 4).

Verb *er-* (to be)

1. *er- as a main verb*: "to be, to exist, to be (existent) in a location".
The verb *er-* appears as a *situation* verb in accordance with its function and is seen in the inscriptions with four different functions such as the explanation of the existence, notification of existing somewhere, attaining and defining identity or characteristic (showing, addressing the thing; expressing its identity, what and who the thing is)

When the translation of *er-* in other languages is examined, for instance in English, the functions mentioned are provided with the verb *to be* and the last three is attributed to its copulative function. However, while *being existent* is used differently to the other three, existence (necessary for itself) is rarely used differently to the time and location phrases. In addition to this the function priority appears in the act of *existing*. (Lyons 1969: 322, 389). As for the act of *existing somewhere*, the necessity of being existent was taken into consideration and the verb *er-* was handled by expressing the task of existing somewhere (existent) as a main verb function.

1.1. *With a meaning of "being available, existing"*
In the inscriptions *the verb er-* as a *main verb* appears as *sab er-* (KT S 11; BK N 8) with the function of expressing the presence of existence of the thing for which the verb *er-* is the subject. By means of its static aspect, the verb *er-* expresses, in example a., the existence of the *word* which stands as a subject:

a. */.../ Türük [bodun ti]ri il tutsıkıŋın bunta urtum; yaŋılıp ölsikiŋin yeme* (KT S 10) *bunta urtum. Neŋ neŋ sabım erser beŋgü taşka urtum /.../* (KT S 11) (Tekin 1995: 36).

1.2. *With a meaning of "Being (existent) somewhere"*
The verb *er-* as a *main verb* expresses the location-centered existence of a thing which is its subject. In the inscriptions it has three functional examples; *ebde er-, anta er-,* and *eriğ yerte er-:*

a. *Oğuz tapa süledim. İlki sü taş[ık]mış erti, ekin sü ebde erti* /.../ (BK E 32) (Tekin 1995: 74).

b. /.../ *Ol üç kağan öğleşip "Altun yış üze kabışalım!" temiş* /.../ (T1 E 3) /.../ *Türgiş kağan ança temiş: Beniŋ bodunum anta erür" temiş* (T1 E 4) (Tekin 1995: 86).

c. /.../ *Beŋü taş* (KT S 12) *tokıtdım. Y[ağ]uk el erser, ança takı eriğ yerte irser, ança eriğ yerte beŋgü taş tokıtdım* /.../ (KT S 13) (Tekin 1995: 38).

In example b. the present Turkish translation for anta erür is "He is there" in Ergin. (Ergin 1996: 55). In Orkun, it is translated as "He will be there" (Orkun 1994: 106–107) and in Tekin as "He will be existent there" (Tekin 1995: 87). In line with this, due to the functional difference of the verb *bol-* , it is believed that this expression should be understood as "He will be there". In examples a. and c. locations are provided for the subjects such as *army* and *the place where an everlasting stone is erected (eb, eriğ yer).*

2. *er-* as a copula

In the Orkhon inscriptions, *er-* as a copula, through its meanings of "being in a situation" and "describing its identity", has a function of combining a thing (subject) with the names (and conjugational verb forms) which appear as determiners (verbs) of that thing.

2.1. *With a meaning of "Being in a situation (state)"*

Er- places the *being, existing* meaning that it has in the *main verb* state on the names before it in the *name + copula* pattern and verbalizes them. In this way, it is used to express *that the thing which is the subject of the compound verb, as the copula in the word alignment, is in the state to which the name next to it refers:*

a. /.../ *Eçim Kağan olurtukda özüm Tarduş bodun üze Şad ertim* /../ (KT E 17) (Tekin 1995: 42).

b. *Kül Tigin yok erser kop ölteçi ertiğiz* /.../ (KT N 10) (Tekin 1995: 52).

c. /.../ *Türk bodun aç erti* /.../ (BK E 38) (Tekin 1995: 76).

d. *Kaŋım kağan süsi böri teg ermiş, yağısı kony teg ermiş* /.../ (BK E 11) (Tekin 1995: 64).

e. /.../ *Tabgaç kağan yağımız erti, On Ok kağanı yağımız erti* (T1 E 2) (Tekin 1995: 86).

In the above examples the verb *er-* combines the subjects (a.) *özüm*, (b.) *Kül Tigin*, (c.) *Türk bodun*, (d.) *sü, yağı* and (e.) *Tabgaç kağan* with

the names (a.) *Şad*, (b.) *yok*, (c.) *aç*, (d.) *böri teg, kony teg*, and (e.) *yağı* which are determiners (verbs) and gives them *existence* (*object, quality, situation*) and *identity* (*characteristic*) that is determined by these names. It expresses that the thing which is the subject in the word alignment *is in the state to which the name next to it refers.*

The examples of the group in *which the subject is in the state to which the name refers* (in which *er-* is used as a copula in the inscriptions) are as follows:

Alp er- (KT E 3; BK E 4; T1 S 3, 6, 7, E 4), *aç er-* (BK E 38), *artuk er-* (T2 W 5), *az er-* (BK E 32), *bar er-* (T1 N 6, S 3, T2 E 7), *beg er-* (KT E 20; BK E 17), *(eki) bıŋ er-* (T1 S 9, E 1), *bilge er-* (KT E 3; BK E 4; T1 S 3, N 5).

2.2. *With a function of "denoting, addressing, and expressing the thing"*
Another usage of *er-* in the inscriptions as a *copula*, observed in the examples *il tutsık yir ötüken yış er-* (KT S 4; BK N 3), *uduzuğma uluğı şad er- ayığması ben er-* (T1 W 5), *ayğuçısı ben er-* (T2 S 5), *yağıçısı ben er-* (T2 S 6), is the identification and concretization of the thing in the word alignment with a function of *denoting, addressing and expressing* the thing to which the name next to it refers.

In the examples below, where the function of *expressing the situation/quality of the subject* also exists, there is a function of verb *er- to crystallize and concretize by denoting, addressing and expressing the characteristic of the* names (a.) *il tutsık yir*, (b.) *uduzugma uluğı, ayığması*, (c.) *ayğuçısı, yağıçısı* and *what, who* (a.) *ötüken yış*, (b.) *şad, ben*, (c.) *ben* are:

a. */.../ Ötüken yışda yiğ idi yok ermiş! İl tutsık yir ötüken yış ermiş! /.../* (KT S 4) (Tekin 1995: 34).

b. */.../ Yeti yüz kişiğ* (T1 W 4) *uduzuğma uluğı "Şad" erti. "Ayğıl!" tidi. Ayığması ben ertim, Bilge Tunyukuk /.../* (T1 W 5) (Tekin 1995: 82).

c. */.../ Anta ayğuçı[sı?]* (T2 S 5) *yeme ben ök ertim, yağıçısı yeme ben ök ertim /.../* (T2 S 6) (Tekin 1995: 92).

3. Usage of *er-* with finite verb structures

Er- is used in the Orkhon Inscriptions in *-mIş erti, -Ur/-Ir erti/ermiş, -mAz erti/ermiş, -ti erse, -ir erser, -mez erser; -TAçI erti/ermiş* forms. As a *copula*, it expresses that the subject has performed the things in the past that the verb before it describes/states, which has an affirmative meaning (examples a. and b.); and that the subject has not performed the things in the past that the verb before it describes/states, which has a negative meaning (example c.):

a. /.../ *Süçiğ [s]abın, yımşak ağın arıp ırak [bod]unuğ ança yağutır ermiş* /.../ (BK N 4) (Tekin 1995: 56).

b. *Alp er biziŋe teğmiş erti. Antağ ödke ökünüp Kül Tiginiğ az erin irtürü ıttımız* /.../ (KT E 40) (Tekin 1995: 48).

c. /.../ *Ol ödke kul kulluğ, küŋ küŋlüğ bolmış erti. İnisi, [eç]isin bilmez erti* /.../ (BK E 18) (Tekin 1995: 68).

The situation mentioned above also applies to *-ti erse, -ir erser, -mez erser* structures and *-ser*. A situation-penalty relation is formed with the following sentence:

d. *İlteriş Kağan kazganmasar yok erti erser ben özüm Bilge Tunyukuk kazganmasar, yok ertim erser* (T2 N 1) *Kapgan Kağan Türük Sir bodun yerinte bod yeme, bodun yeme, kişi yeme idi yok erteçi erti* (T2 N 2) (Tekin 1995: 94).

In the exampls below (e., f., g., h.), *Türk bodun*, which is in the subject form in the *TAçI erti/ermiş* structure, is in the addressed form in (e.) *yablak boltaçı*, (f.) *ölteçi, yok boltaçı*, and (g.) *küŋ boltaçı, yolta yatu kaltaçı* verbs. In example (h.) – *artatı udaçı* – the uncertainty expressed is related to the subject that will perform the verb and its competency situation (in performing the relevant verb):

e. /.../ *Türük* (KT K 6) *bodun adak kamşattı. Yablak boltaçı erti* /.../ (KT N 7) (Tekin 1995: 50).

f. /.../*Men iniliğü bunça başlayu kazganm[asar], Türük bodun ölteçi erti, yok boltaçı erti* /.../ (BK E 33) (Tekin 1995: 74).

g. *(Türk bodun)* /.../ *Bunça yeme tiriği küŋ boltaçı erti, ölüği yurtda yolta yatu kaltaçı ertiğiz* (KT N 9) (Tekin 1995: 52).

h. *Türk bodun, iliŋin törüğin kem artatı udaçı [ert]i?* /.../ (BK E 19) (Tekin 1995: 68).

In the examples below (ı. and j.), the *erteçi* phrase in the *erteçi erti/ermiş* structure should be understood not by its *starting* (variation, dynamic) quality represented by verb *bol-* in terms of performing with a meaning "it will occur in a time period in the future", (in other words with a meaning *to become, to gain existence*), but by its *being* meaning as the verb *er-* expresses *situation, process* (stagnancy, static) in the "it will exist in a time period in the future" form:

ı. /.../ *Neŋ yerdeki kağanlığ bodunka* (T2 E 6) *bünteği bar erser, ne buŋı bar erteçi ermiş?* (T2 E 7) (Tekin 1995: 92).

j. /.../ *İlteriş Kağan kazganmasar* (T2 E 4) *udu ben özüm kazganmasar, il yeme bodun yeme yok erteçi erti* /.../ (T2 E 5) (Tekin 1995: 92).

In terms of *er-*'s stationary form, it is believed that the first example above (ı.) in the "As long as such a statesman exists among an indepen-

dent nation, when will the situation in which the hardships would exist (in the past) occur (today)?" form, must be understood as follows: the subject "buŋ" has an uncertainty related to *its situation* in the future which is indicated by a question mark. In the second example (j.) "If (in the past) Iltarish Khan and I had not succeeded (in the battles and struggles), the Turkish state and its nation would have come to an end (would not have existed in the past)" it must be understood in terms of a function which expresses that the subject "il, bodun" *is in the state to which the name next to it (yok erteçi) refers.*

Other examples of this group in Orkhon Inscriptions are as follows: ***-ti er-*** : *yok erti erser* (T2 N 1), *yok ertim erser* (T2 N 1); **-mIş er-:** *taşıkmış erti* (BK E 32), *teğmiş erti* (KT E 40), *tezmiş erti* (T2 W 8), *bolmış erti* (KT E 21; BK E 18); **-Ur/-Ir er-**: *barır ermiş* (KT E 10), *bayur ertimiz* (T1 N 3), *boşgurur ermiş* (KT S 7; BK N 5).

Conclusion

In the etymological dictionary of pre-13th century Turkish, Clauson, while giving the meaning of verb *bol-*, refers to the fact that it was used in place of the verb *er-* by saying "Verb *bol-* started to lose its distinct characteristic and its extent from the old times /.../ and its meaning transformed into 'to be.' Some of *er-*'s time conjugations began to lose their usage and *bol-*'s time conjugations saw increased usage" (Clauson 1972: 331). In another dictionary, which refers to the period named *Drevnetjurkskij Slovar'*, or in grammatical studies of that period (Arat 1987, Ergin 1996, Gabain 1988, Orkun 1994, Tekin 1995, 2000, Türk 2004), this issue is also mentioned.

When the examples of these verbs in Orkhon Inscriptions – which have similar functions (*in expressing the existence of the things or their condition, their occurrences, or their becoming something but differ in terms of their forms*) are examined, it is observed that *bol-* as a main verb, with its *starting* (*variation, dynamic*) meaning, serves the function of *expressing the emergence and existence of the thing* to which the name that is the subject of it refers; and *er-* as a main verb, with its *situation* (stagnancy, static) meaning, *expresses the existence, or subsistence of the thing* to which the name that is the subject of it refers.

Absolute and simple meanings of *bol-* and *er-* as main verbs affects the verbalization of the names in *name + copula* structures, and in this way the verbalization direction of the names via *bol-* and *er-* copulas emerges in the framework of the meanings that these copulas have as main verbs.

In this regard, it is understood that *bol-* as a copula is used in the *name + copula* structure *to express the starting of existence, gaining existence, existing with that existence characteristic, and emergence of another thing as the subject of the compound verb addressed by the name next to it.* On the other hand, *er-* as a substantive verb is used in the *name + copula* structure which it forms with the names *to express the situation of existence, to show the thing, and to denote the thing as the subject of the compound verb addressed by the name component.*

In Kutadgu Bilig, it is stated that the verb *er-* is used with the "to become" meaning (Türk 2004) and the verbs *er-* and *bol-* have expressing duties (Ercilasun 1984: 49–51); The verb *ol-* in Old Anatolian Turkish can have *er-*'s meaning and functions (Turan 1999) and among the meanings of verb *ol-*, the "being, being in a situation" meaning is also used in Turkish today (Turkish Dictionary 2005: 1498). It is usual for components in the vocabulary of a language to experience various meaning and function variations. This issue, however, is not observed with the verbs *bol-* and *er-* in the Orkhon Inscriptions. Examples were used in an attempt to explain this. These verbs preserve their dynamic feature and stagnancy.

As the reasons for the meaning and function variations observed in these verbs (*bol-, er-* and *tur-*), used as substantive verbs in Middle Turkish period, are topics for another discussion, only the meaning and function variations have been examined here.

Abbreviations and Works Cited

/.../	A word or expression that has not been excerpted.
«»	If " " marks are used in the excerpted part, it is used as a quotation mark.
W	West side
E	East side
S	South side
S-E	Southeast side
N	North side
BK	Bilge Khan Scripture
KT	Kül Tigin Scripture
T1	Tonyukuk Scripture 1. stone
T2	Tonyukuk Scripture 2. stone

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