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Old-Turkic runiform inscriptions in Mongolia: An overview

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This paper attempts to survey and map the Old Turkic runiform inscriptions in Mongolia and to give the main bibliographical data concerning them. It identifies the inscriptions mentioned under several names in the literature and suggests a new unified system of designation for the runiform inscriptions in Mongolia. A map also attached to the paper indicates the approximate place of the inscriptions.*

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Runiform inscriptions form a subgroup within the numerous groups of Turkic sources dating from different periods and written in different writing systems. These inscriptions are usually subdivided mostly according to geographical guidelines (see Vasilev 1983a). We distinguish Old Turkic runiform inscriptions from Mongolia (OT RM), which are considered to be the oldest ones, from those originating from the region of Lake Baikal and the River Lena (OT RB), from the Yenisei region (OT RY), from the Altai region (OT RA), from Turkestan including Dunhuang (OT RT), from Kirgizstan and Kazakhstan (OT RK), and finally runiform inscriptions from the region of Fergana (OT RF).

The first mapping of runiform inscriptions was undertaken by Rintchen. After the publication of a work containing photos of runiform inscriptions and rock-carvings in Mongolia (Rintchen 1968), in his *Ethnologic and linguistic atlas* of 1979 Rintchen also published a map, map no. 160, which indicated the sites of inscriptions with runiform, Uighur, Arabic and *tod bičig* or clear script. The map relates to 26 Turkic runiform inscriptions.

The data concerning runiform inscriptions from Mongolia were surveyed by Sertkaya in 1984.

A description of inscriptions in Mongolia compiled by Bold appeared in 1990. This work (*BNMAU-yn nutag dah' hadny bičees*) deals with 40 runiform inscriptions, providing brief information on the sites of the inscriptions and the previous literature. Since that time, new inscriptions have come to light in Mongolia.

* This work was carried out in the Research Group of Turkic Linguistics of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and the University of Szeged.

The growing number of inscriptions and the increasing volume of literature dealing with them have given rise to the need for a unified system of describing the runiform inscriptions in Mongolia.

An examination of the literature on runiform inscriptions reveals that some inscriptions have several names. Additionally, some site names appear in many variations. Such problems have led me to collect the runiform inscriptions from Mongolia that are mentioned in the available literature, to identify them, to provide them with a systematic abbreviation and to try to identify their locations on a map. The abbreviation consists of three elements. The first element is the letter R, which indicates that the source is written in runiform script. The second element, the letter M, indicates that the inscription was found on the territory now known as the Mongolian Republic, while the third element is an abbreviation of the name of the inscription. For example, the inscription from Binder has the abbreviation RMBin. The abbreviations are arranged in alphabetical order. The abbreviation is followed by the name of the inscription. This system is similar to that used by Róna-Tas and Berta in their project which compiled the *Etymological dictionary of Turkic loanwords in Hungarian*, where all of the Turkic sources are assigned an abbreviation of this type (see Berta & Róna-Tas 2002).

Names in brackets are those under which the inscription is mentioned in the earlier literature. Next, the abbreviation "Loc" identifies the location of the inscription, the abbreviations "a." and "s." denoting the Mongolian administrative units *ajmag* and *sumun*, respectively. The locations that are given are those mentioned according to Bold (1990).

If dating the inscription is possible, then this is indicated by the letter D. The dating mostly falls into the periods of the Türk and Uighur khaganates.

At the end of each item, under the abbreviation "Lit", the bibliographical data concerning the runiform inscription follow. It is important to mention that, besides the reference works by Sertkaya and Bold, only those publications are included in which the whole squeeze moulding or photo-image has been published, together with the transliteration and / or transcription of the inscription.

In paragraphs without numbering, earlier names of inscriptions are mentioned, and a reference to the abbreviation is given where the data concerning the inscription are to be found.

Mapping the sites of inscriptions sometimes involves the problem that it is not even known in which *sumun* some runiform inscriptions are situated.

For example, the site of the inscription of Ih Hanuj nuur in the earlier literature is mentioned as Arhangaj ajmag Hajrhan sumun, but Bold states that it is in Arhangaj ajmag Erdenemandal sumun. These are two neighbouring *sumuns*, and if we consider the vast territory of Mongolia, it is not surprising that it is not always clear in which *sumun* an actual spot is located.

Some runiform inscriptions in Mongolia are preserved in museums in Ulaanbaatar or in different *ajmag* museums, but the map denotes the sites where they were originally found.

As an example, the Tes inscription was found in Hövsgöl ajmag, was later transported to the Hövsgöl Ajmag Museum, and is now located in the Mongolian Institute of History in Ulaanbaatar.

As concerns the coin with a runiform inscription, the only thing known is that it was found in Sühbaatar ajmag. Thus in this case the centre of Sühbaatar ajmag, Baruun urt, is marked, just as in the case of the inscription from Övörhangai, which was found at a place called Maan'tyn bürd, but Bold does not state where this place actually is. The same is true for the bronze plate kept in the Ethnographical Museum at Dundgov' ajmag.

Item number 14 details the site of the inscription from Dzürijn ovoo. This inscription was formerly known as the Tes inscription, but Bold suggests the former name in order to avoid any misunderstanding.

The other Tes inscription is not without problems either. The literature claims that it was found in Hövsgöl ajmag Cagaan-uul sumun, but the maps available make no mention of any Cagaan uul sumun. However, from the location of the River Tes in Hövsgöl ajmag on the map, the inscription must be in the Hanh sumun of this ajmag.

Item number 27 mentions the site of the inscription from Nogoon nuur. This inscription was found in 1988 on the bank of Ačit nuur, but Bold suggests the name Nogoon nuur, because there is another inscription with the name Ačit nuur. No photo of this inscription was published, but on September 10, 1988 its translation appeared in the newspaper *Ünen*, as follows: "When we reached Hakem, we turned back".

It must be mentioned that in many cases precise local information is not available. The map therefore only indicates the *sumuns* in which the inscriptions were found, and not their exact sites. This is a weakness of the map, of course, but the distribution of the finds is clearly visible, and this too permits certain conclusions.

Following this short introduction, let us now consider the systematic list of Old Turkic runiform inscriptions from Mongolia. The numbers of the sections refer to the numbers on the map on p. 52.[1]

OT(RM)

1. **RMAčit** Inscription from Ačit nuur; Loc: Uvs a. Böhmörön s.; Lit: Kljaštornyj (1980), Haržaubaj (1987), Bold (1990: 19-20).
2. **RMAr** Inscription from Arhan (= Aru han, Ar Hanan); Loc: Bulgan a. Hišig öndör s.; D: 8-9th c.; Lit: Rintchen (1968: 37), Tryjarski (1965), Sertkaya (1984: XX), Bold (1990: 17-18).

[1] The transliteration of the Cyrillic Mongolian alphabet used in this paper is based on the Russian transliteration system. The only exception is the Cyrillic letter з, which is rendered here as *dz*. Russian does not have the letters ө and ү; for these, *ö* and *ü*, respectively, are used.

3. **RMAru** Inscription from Aru Bogdo (= Tevš; Hovd); Loc: Övörhangai a. Bogd s. (former Hovd s.); D: 8-9th c.; Lit: Bernštam (1958), Rintchen (1968: 43c), Nadeljaev (1974: 136-166), Haržaubaj (1979), Sertkaya (1984: XXVI), Bold (1990: 110-112).
4. **RMBaišI-III** Inscriptions from Bajšing Üdzüür (= Cagan Tolgoi, Darvi); Loc: Hovd a. Darvi s.; D: 8-9th c.; Lit: Rintchen (1968: 38-39), Šinehüü (1972), Bold (1990: 28-29).

Bajan Tsokto see **RMTon**.

Bajan čor see **RMŠin**.

5. **RMBajb** Inscription from Bajbalag; Loc: Bulgan a. Hutag s.; Lit: Rintchen (1968: 69).
6. **RMBegI-V** Inscriptions from Beger (= Biger); Loc: Govi Altaj a. Beger s.; D: 8-9th c.; Lit: Šinehüü (1971), Sertkaya (1984: XXIX), Bold (1990: 21-22).
7. **RMBilg** Inscription of Bilge kagan (= Mogilyan, Hosho Tsaidam); Loc: Arhangaj a. Hašaat s.; D: 735; Lit: Orkun (1936-1941/1987 I: 56-73), Malov (1959: 11-25), Tekin (1968: 231-248, 261-273), Rintchen (1968: 60-71), Sertkaya (1984: VII), Bold (1990: 54-60).
8. **RMBin** Inscription from Binder; Loc: Hentij a. Bat-šireet s.; D: 8-9th c.; Lit: Rintchen (1968: 43), Sertkaya (1984: XXXIII).
9. **RMBur** Inscription from Burgast valley (= Cenher Mandal); Loc: Hentij a. Cenher mandal s.; D: 8-9th c.; Lit: Vjatkina (1958), Feng Za-sheng (1959), Rintchen (1968: 43), Šinehüü (1977), Kljaštornyj (1978a), Vasilev (1978), Sertkaya (1984: XXV), Bold (1990: 139-142).
10. **RMC** Coin kept in Ulaanbaatar, Inst. of Archeology; originally found in Sühbaatar a.; D: 8-9th c.; Lit: Kljaštornyj (1973), Sertkaya (1984: XXVIII), Bold (1990: 31-33).

Cagan-nuur see **RMTerh**.

Cagan Tolgoi see **RMBais**.

11. **RMČoy** Inscription from Čojr (= Choyrin; Chöyren; Choyren; Čoiriin); Loc: Dornogov' a. Sümber s.; D: 8-9th c.; Lit: Orkun (1936-1941/1987: 164-168), Rintchen (1968: 39), Klaštornyj (1971), Sertkaya (1984: I), Bold (1990: 143-146).

Cenher Mandal see **RMBur**.

Darvi see **RMBaiš**.

12. **RMDGob** bronze plate; Loc: Dundgov' a. Ethnographical Museum.; D: 8-9th c.; Lit: Bazylhan (1964), Rintchen (1968: 40), Sertkaya (1984: XXIII), Bold (1990: 69-70).
13. **RMDol** Inscription from Doloodoj; Loc: Uvs a. Türgen s.; Lit: Doržsüren (1957), Rintchen (1968: 41), Bold (1990: 30).
14. **RMDzür** One-line inscription from Dzürijn ovoo (= Dzüriin ovoo). Formerly also called Tes (II) (= Tez) Inscription; Loc: Dzavhan a. Bajantes s.; D: 8-9th c.; Lit: Rintchen (1968: 40), Kljaštornyj (1978a: 152-155), Sertkaya (1984: XVII), Bold (1990: 34-37).

15. **RMGurb** Inscription from Gurvalžin-uul (= Gurbaljin uula); Loc: Bulgan a. Gurvanbulag s.; D: 8-9th c.; Lit: Orkun (1936-1941/1987 II: 163), Rintchen (1968: 37), Bazylhan (1969), Kljaštornyj (1978a), Bold (1990: 23-24).
16. **RMGurv** Inscription from Gurvan mandal; Loc: Bajanhongor a. Buucagaan s.; Lit: Bold & Bjambaa (1988), Bold (1990: 25-27).
17. **RMHan** Inscription from Ih Hanuj nuur (= Ihe Hanui nuur); Loc: Arhangaj a. Hajrhan s. (Bold: Arhangaj a. Erdenemandal s.); D: 8-9th c.; Lit: Kljaštornyj (1978a), Sertkaya (1984: X), Bold (1990: 38-39).
18. **RMHang** Inscription from Hangidaj had; Loc: Bulgan a. Dašinčilen s.; D: 8-9th c.; Lit: Rintchen (1968: 37), Bazylhan (1968), Kljaštornyj (1978a), Sertkaya (1984: XI), Bold (1990: 121-123).

Hanan had see **RMYam**.

Hentei see **RMBur**, **RMBin**.

19. **RMHoiI-X** Inscriptions from Hojd Tamir (= Hoitu Tamir; Tajhir); D: 744-756, No VII: 735; Loc: Arhangaj a. Ih Tamir s.; Lit: Orkun (1936-1941/1987 II: 107-117), Aalto-Ramstedt-Granö (1958), Malov (1959: 46-54), Perlee (1960), Rintchen (1968: 34-36), Vasilev (1975), Sertkaya (1984: XIV), Bold (1990: 90-92).

Hosho Tsaidam see **RMBilg**.

Hovd see **RMAru**.

Höl Asgatu; Höl Asgat see **RMIhe**.

20. **RMHut** Inscription from Hutag uul (= Hutugtu uula; Kutug ula); Loc: Övörhangaj a. Baruunbajan ulaan s.; D: 8-9th c.; Lit: Lauer (1972), Tryjarski & Hamilton (1975), Šinehüü (1976), Sertkaya (1984: XXX), Bold (1990: 135-137).

Ihe Höshütü see **RMKöl**.

21. **RMIheI-II** Inscription from Ihe Ashete (= Höl Asgat; Höl Asgatu); Loc: Bulgan a. Mogod s.; D: 724.; Lit: Orkun (1936-1941/1987 II: 121-127), Malov (1959: 44-46), Rintchen (1968: 41), Sertkaya (1984: IV), Bold (1990: 129-134).
22. **RMKarI** Fragments from Karabalgasun; Loc: Arhangaj a. Hotont s.; D: 810 or 821; Lit: Radlov (1892-1899: XXXV), Orkun (1936-1941/1987 I: 85, II 31-54), Sertkaya (1984: XV), Bold (1990: 124-125).
23. **RMKarII** Inscription from Karabalgasun; Loc: Arhangaj a. Hotont s.; Lit: Šinehüü (1980), Bold (1990: 126-128).
24. **RMKöl** Inscription of Köli čor (= Ihe Höshütü); Loc: Töv a. Delgerhaan s.; D: 720-725.; Lit: Radlov (1892-1899 XXXV: 135-151), Orkun (1936-1941/1987 I: 135-151), Malov (1959: 25-30), Clauson & Tryjarski (1971), Sertkaya (1984: III), Bold (1990: 40-43).

Kötü Su see **RMYam**.

25. **RMKT** Inscription of Köl tegin; Loc: Arhangaj a. Hašaat s.; D: 732.; Lit: Orkun (1936-1941/1987 I: 22-55), Rintchen (1968: 53-59), Sertkaya (1984: V), Bold (1990: 44-51).

RMKT+ broken parts of **RMKT** (Rintchen 1968: 43), (Matuz 1972), (Sertkaya 1984: V)

Kutug ula, Hutugtu uula see **RMHut**.

Mogilyan see **RMBilg**.
Moyin chor see **RMŠin**.
26. **RMNal** Inscription from Nalajh; Loc: Nalajh; Lit: Orkun (1936-1941/1987 II: 161-162), Sertkaya (1984: IX).
27. **RMNog** Inscription from Nogoon nuur; Loc: Bajan-Ölgij a. Nogonnuur s.; Lit: Bold (1990: 71).
28. **RMOng** Inscription from Ongi (= Ongin; Ongiin; Ong); Loc: Övörhangaj a. Ujanga s.; D: 720 or 731.; Lit: Orkun (1936-1941/1987 I: 127-132, III: 216-217), Malov (1959: 7-11), Rintchen (1968: 44), Sertkaya (1984: II), Bold (1990: 74-77).

RMOng+ broken part of **RMOng**.
29. **RMOr** Inscription from Orjuk had; Loc: Hövsgöl a. Rinčenlhünbe s.; Lit: Bold (1986, 1990: 78-80).
30. **RMÖvörD** Inscription from Övör Dörvölž; Loc: Hovd a. Hovd s.; D: 8-9th c.; Lit: Rintchen (1968: 43), Bazylhan (1969), Sertkaya (1984: XXIV), Bold (1990: 81-82).
31. **RMÖvörH** Inscription from Övörhangaj; Loc: Övörhangaj a. Museum of Arvajheer; Lit: Bold (1987, 1990: 83-84).
32. **RMRaš** Inscription from Rašaan had; Loc: Hentij a. Bat šireet s.; Lit: Perlee (1974), Haržaubaj (1987), Bold (1990: 85-86).

Selenginskij kamen' see **RMShin**.
33. **RMSev** Inscription from Sevrej sumun; Loc: Ömnögov' a. Sevrej s.; D: 763.; Lit: Rintchen (1968: 42), Kljaštornyj & Livšic (1971), Sertkaya (1984: XVIII).
34. **RMŠin** Inscription from Šine us (= Shine usu; Moyin chor; Bayan chor; Selenginskij kamen'; Yaklagar); Loc: Bulgan a. Hutag s.; D: 759/760. Lit: Ramstedt (1913), Malov (1959: 30-44), Orkun (1936-1941/1987 I: 163-186), Sertkaya (1984: XIII), Bold (1990: 61-68).
35. **RMŠiv** Inscription from Šiveet ulaan; Loc: Arhangaj a. Hajrhan s.; D: 8-9th c.; Lit: Hayashi & Moriyasu (1999: 142).
36. **RMSuj** Inscription from Süüž; Loc: Bulgan a. (?) Sajhan s.; D: 840. Lit: Ramstedt (1913), Orkun (1936-1941/1987 I: 155-159), Zuev (1958), Kljaštornyj (1959), Marazzi (1979), Sertkaya (1984: XIX), Bold (1990: 87-89).

Tarjat see **RMTerh**.
Tajhir see **RMHoi**.
Cagan Tolgoi see **RMBaiš**.
Terek see **RMTerh**.
37. **RMTerh** Inscription of Terh at the Terhijn gol (= Terhin; Taryat; Terek; Caganuur); Loc: Arhangaj a. Tariat s.; D: 753-754.; Lit: Šinehüü (1975), Šinehüü (1980), Kljaštornyj (1980), Sertkaya (1984: XII), Tekin (1983), Bold (1990: 93-94).
38. **RMTes** Inscription of Tes (= Tez); Loc: Hövsgöl a. Hanh s.; D: 750.; Lit: Šinehüü (1977), Šinehüü (1980), Kljaštornyj (1985), Tekin (1988), Bold (1990: 113-117).

TesII see **RMDzür**.
Tevš see **RMAru**.

39. **RMTon** Tonyukuk inscription (= Bayan Cokto; Baïn Tsokto); Loc: Töv a. Bajandzürh s.; D: 726; Lit: Orkun (1936-1941/1987 I: 99-124, III: 222-234), Aalto (1958), Giraud (1961), Rintchen (1968: 40), Sertkaya (1984: VIII), Rybatzki (1997), Bold (1990: 100-106).

RMTon+ Inscriptions found on the building around **RMTon**; Loc: Töv a. Bajandzürh s.; Lit: Rintchen (1968: 40), Bold (1990: 107-108).

40. **RMTöm** Inscription from Tömör Corgo (= Tömör Tsorgo); Loc: Uvs a. Sagil s.; Lit: Ceveendorž (1984), Bold (1990: 109).
41. **RMTsah** Inscription from Cahir (= Tsahir); Loc: Hövsgöl a. Cecerleg s.; Lit: Ceveendorž (1984), Bold (1990: 138).
42. **RMUlan** Inscription from Ulaangom (= Ulangom); Loc: Uvs a. Ulaangom; D: 8-9th c.; Lit: Rintchen (1968: 41), Sertkaya (1984: XXXII).

Yaklagar or Yaglakar see **RMŠin**.

43. **RMYam** Inscription from Jamaany us (= Yamani us; Kötü Su; Hanan had); Loc: Hovd a. Üjenč s.; D: 8-9th c. Novgorodova & Tenišev (1983: 205-208), Sertkaya (1984: XXXI), Bold (1990: 118-120).

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Map: Old Turkic runiform inscriptions in Mongolia

