A SHORT HISTORY OF THE BUGUT INSCRIPTION

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Abstract

The two Bugut inscriptions from the First Turkic Khaganate in Mongolia are primary sources for the Turkic history, as well as for the history of Sogdian and Mongolian languages. The field research that has been conducted on the bilingual Bugut inscription was quite limited, but the last one has finally solved the mystery of the unknown side of the Bugut inscription.

Keywords: Mongolian archeology, First Turkic Khaganate, Bugut inscription

When we speak about the Old Turkic inscriptions from Mongolia, the Kül Tegin and Bilge Kaghan inscriptions from Khöšöö Tsaidam close to Orkhon valley and some distance from the Erdene Zuu monastery first come to mind. Going back over 120 years, the Tunyukuk inscription from Bain Tsokto is also added to the important part of the collection of the Old Turkic inscriptions. All three inscriptions, Kül Tegin, Bilge Kaghan and Tunyukuk are from the second Turkic Kaghanate that existed between 682-744 AD. None of the similar inscriptions from the First Turkic Kaghanate have been discovered until 1970. New information began to surface after 1969 about these Turkic inscriptions. Most important of these discoveries took place after 1971 when it was found out that there was an inscription from the First Turkic Kaghanate, namely from the East Turkic Kaghanate (Kljaštornyj and Livšic 1971, 1972). Livšic and Kljaštornyj's joint publication introduced the first reading and interpretation of the Sogdian Bugut inscription as being created by the First Turkic Khaganate, but actually this inscription was unearthed by the Mongol archeologist C. Doržsuren in 1956 at Bugut in Arkhangai Province[1]. Today the inscription is kept at the provincial museum in Tsetserleg, the capital of Arkhangai.

Today we know that in Mongolia there are at least two inscriptions from the First Turkic Kaghanate: Khüis Tolgoi I and Bugut. The former is written in Mongolic and the latter is written in Sogdian and Mongolian.

A concise summary of publications on the Sogdian Bugut is presented below. Since Livšic & Kljaštornyj 1969 is the first publication on the Sogdian inscription, I am going to start with a more detailed outline of their joint publication:

> In 1956 the Mongolian archeologist Dordžsuren discovered a monument situated at the back side of the stone turtle, which was located between the gravestones of Bugut som. Three sides of the stone (the front side (BS I), the right side (BS II) and the left side (BS III)) were identified as Sogdian by Livšic.
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> Although the initial parts of the lines are eroded, half of the text is preserved. The reading order of the inscription is BSI – BSII – BSIII. Unlike Karabalgasun monument, Bugut inscription does not contain Chinese text. The fourth side of the monument contains another text written in the Syriac script (current text is not identified and there is a high possibility of it being a Sogdian text added afterwards). The main text is written in up to down direction, in the cursive Sogdian script. All letters are about the same size (about 1.5 cm height; 1 to 2 cm width). İn terms of the paleographic features (style of writings of -t endings), the text belongs to 7th century.
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> Regarding the content of the manuscript, the information we provide below is only a preview. The current text is the historical didactic script. Just like the Turkish runic inscriptions, it is a kind of genealogy (chronology of important events is listed). According to the names given in the text it refers to the history of First Turkic Khaganate. The text written in form of sermons mentions the names of khans (including the names from Chinese manuscripts) in the form of βγy 'privat name' γ'γ'n 'mister, master, the govemor, khan'. A few names are still not identified.
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> The text most probably provides information concerning the religion of the Old Turks (in BS III line 4 one kaghan is mentioned as a savior of the World). Here, the Word used for the savior is a zoroastrian term *saoşyant*, which appears in the Avesta texts as *saoşyant* and in Middle Persian as *sôşyana; sôşyans; sûtômand*. Usually

[1] GPS 47°49'11" N 101°16'58" E. For details, see K&L 1972: 69. About measures of the inscription, see K&L 1972, and Yoshida & Moriyasu 1999: 122.

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this word is used for Zoroaster himself, his priests or believers. The events in the text are listed according to the 12 cycles calendar.

The names of the khans (except for Bumın and Istemi) of the First Turkic Khaganate are only known from Chinese manuscripts. In contrast to Chinese texts, the names of khans in Sogdian are transliterated in accordance with the Turkish system. For this reason today only two names like Bumın (death 552) and Muhan (558-572) were defined. The number of Turkic khans' names is equal to the amount of the First Turkic Khaganate's khans.

The relief is partially preserved. The main part resembles a sculpture of a female wolf with the human figure underneath. It is probably the display of the Turkic epos, which tells the history of the Ashina clan's ancestry. There is no mention of the khans of the Second Turkic Khaganate on the monument. The fact that the inscription was placed on the turtle base suggests that it is a tombstone of someone belonging to the Ashina clan (552-630). Due to the Sogdian advisors during the time of governing of the last two khans called Shiba (609-619) and Heli (620-630), there is a high chance of official documentary being written in Sogdian language.

First text edition and translation was published by Kljaštornyj and Livšic (K&L 1971 and 1972). There is also a paper from 1970 which belongs to Livšic (see Livšic 1970). About Sogdian part of the Bugut inscription, M. Mori, L. Bazin, O. Pritsak and J.-P. Roux shared their ideas about the inscription and some titles which occur in the text.[2]

In 1977, the Turkish philologists S. Çağatay and S. Tezcan interpreted the content of the Sogdian text according to K&L 1971 and 1972 from the Old Turkic side. This article includes both a review of the historical events and people occurring in the text of the inscription, and the Turkish translation of the inscription. In this translation, the phrase *βγy* is interpreted as "divine, god-like" instead of "god" (pp. 248-249). While translating the text of Yoshida Yutaka into Turkish, I also interpreted and translated *βγy* in the same manner as Çağatay and Tezcan and compared it with Old Turkic *teŋri teg* (Ölmez 2015, p. 66).

After the 1990s, Japanese and Turkish academics have conducted several expeditions to the inscription site. In particular, the Japanese team published a detailed report on Bugut worth mentioning (see Moriyasu-Ochir 1999). In 2005, two different articles were published in Kazakhstan about Turkic archeological sites in Mongolia by Sartqojaulı and Bazilhan. In his book, Sartqojaulı described exactly where the inscription originally was, and how Kurgan area and balbals were looking etc.:

The Bugut inscription is located to the area called "Bugutı" near the southeastern part of Ih-Tamir Sum in Middle Mongolia. Unfortunately, today, we don't have the records of



Fig. 1. Kurgan area and the balbals

[2] Mori 1972, L. Bazin 1975, Pritsak 1982 and Roux 1982.

the excavation work in 1956. Ser-Odžav mentioned the excavation work carried out in Middle Mongolia in 1957 in his article published in 1968 (all are according to K&L 1972). In addition to the sources mentioned above, a report on the work in the area of the inscription was written by Sartqojauly in 1982.[3] According to Sartqojauly, there were six balbals in that area. There are in fact 258 balbals in a 300 meters range. At a height of 128 cm in the area of the inscription, there is a broken "bugu" stone (Sartqojauly, p. 34ff).

Bazilhan presented a list of all of the works with regards to the inscription up until 2005, describing the inscription and the area it was unearthed from. Bazilhan's work also includes the Kazakh and English translations of the inscription text and Yoshida's publication (pp. 45-50). At first it was believed that there was a wolf figure at the head of the inscription and under the wolf was child being suckled by the wolf. This suggestion was due to a combination of the legend of Turks presented in the Chinese annals. But it was not clear because the head part is broken. When the broken part of the inscription is attached to the main part of the head, it becomes clear that it is not a wolf, and there is no child or baby suckled by the wolf. We can thus infer that the text refers to a mythological animal.

Returning to the history of the inscription's language, it was dealt by Livšic and Kljaštornyj on two occasions, once in Russian and then in English. Later, the Sogdian text was corrected and examined a few times by Yoshida Yutaka. Here in the same issue of the *Journal Asiatique* the last edition of the Sogdian text according to Yoshida Yutaka is presented. He has had a series of articles on the Sogdian inscription (see Yoshida's article in this issue). In addition, Yoshida Yutaka worked and published on Turkic-Sogdian relations in his articles, including trilingual Uyghur inscription from Uyghur Kaghanate (Kara Balghasun, s. 1988, 2009, 2011, Turco-Sogdian Futures).

Until 2014, some scholars assumed that the Brāhmī side of the inscription was written in Sanskrit. Through D. Maue and A. Vovin's reading, it becomes clear that the Brāhmī side of the inscription is not written in Sanskrit, but in Mongolian.

Finally, our joint expedition to Bugut was carried out on August 22~25, 2014, together with A. Vovin, D. Maue and É. de la Vaissière. The 3D technicians from the University of Mainz, T. Reich and J. Bingenheimer, were also with us. We have worked at the museum on August 22~24. We went as well to Bugut plateau on August 24~25 to conduct our additional field research. The coordinates of the inscription I have obtained are 47°49'11"N, 101°16'58"E. I have also dealt with some lexical differences in Turkic inscriptions, including Bugut. Especially the following words or titles on the Sogdian side are very interesting: *'wrkwp'r, tr'wk, x'γ'n, tyk'yn, xwrγ'pčyn, šʾδpyt, trxw'n, twdwn, y'rwk' (? y'rwkc).*

Through D. Maue, A. Vovin and Y. Yoshida's contributions, the most important problems related to the Bugut inscription are finally solved. But it also brought many new questions on Turco-Sogdian and Turco-Mongolian relations. In the upcoming years, Altaists and Iranists will be surely busy studying these topics.

[3] *1981-1982 onï xeeriyn šinžilgeniy taylan, archive document*, see Sartqojauly, p. 354, Nr. 158.

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Fig. 2. Kljashtornyj examining the Bugut stele
(after TDAY-Belleten 1987)

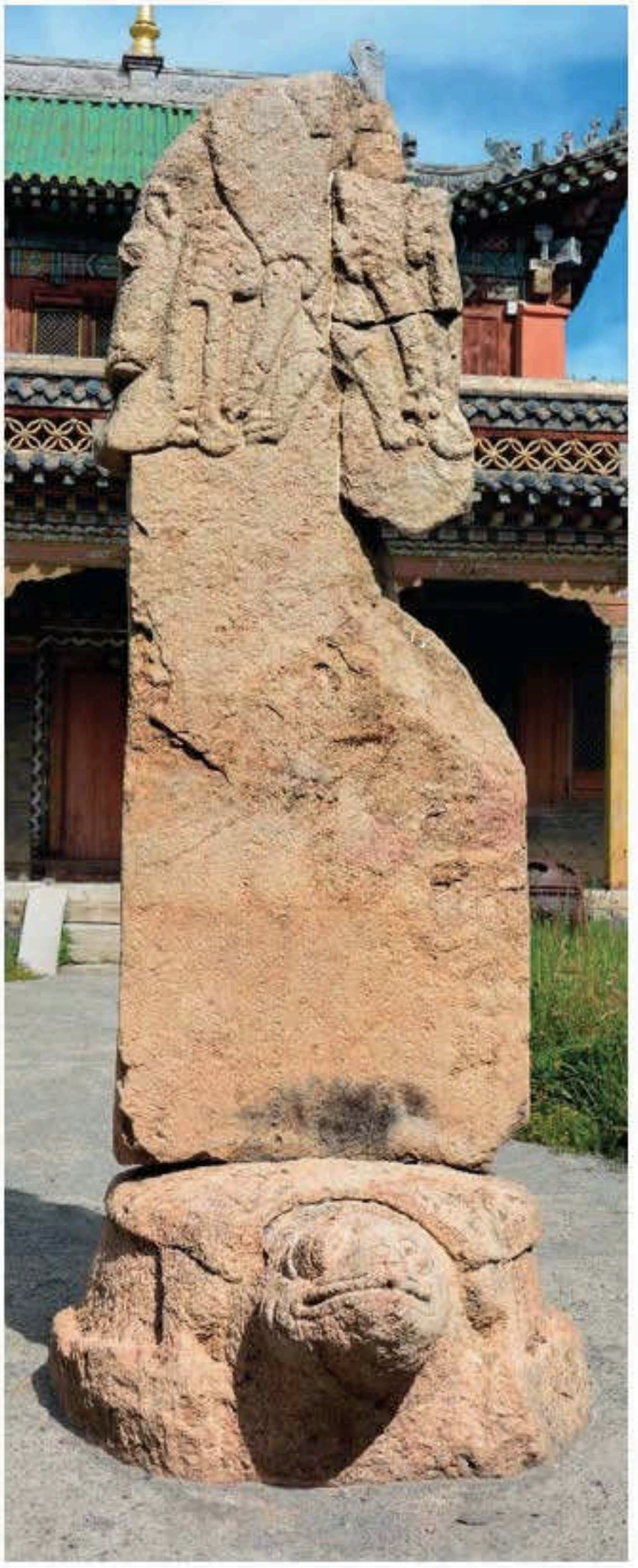


Fig. 3. The Bugut stele today (B-2 side)

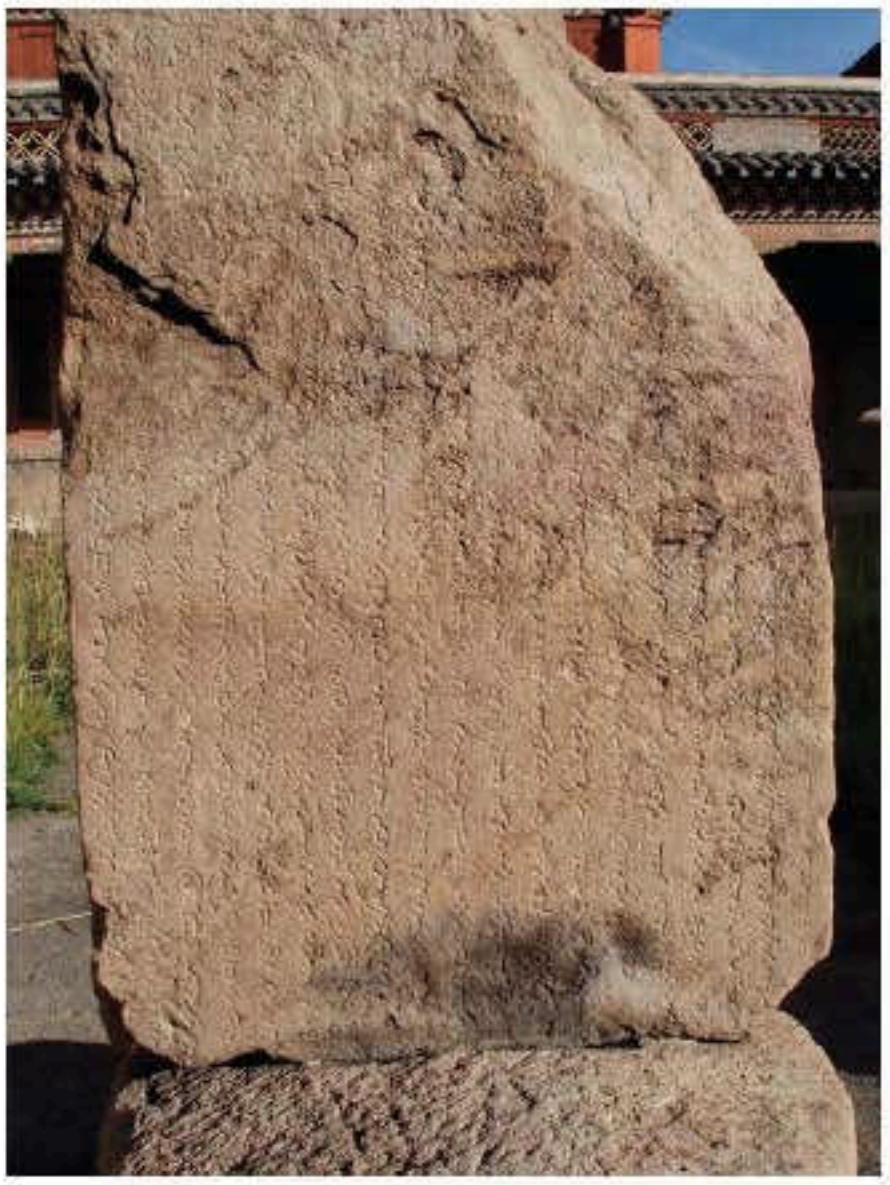


Fig. 4. The Bugut stele, B-2 side

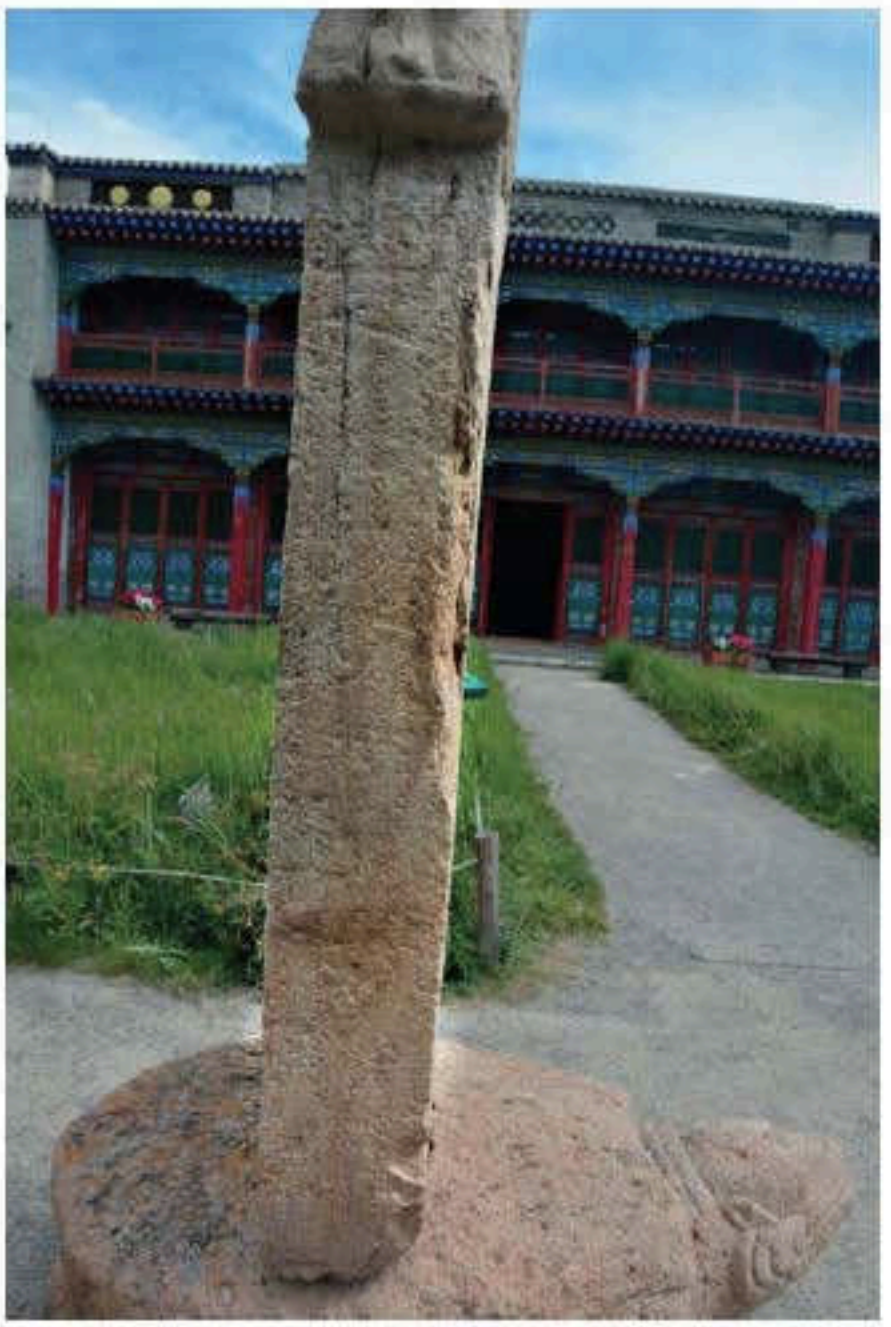


Fig. 5. The Bugut stele, B-1 side

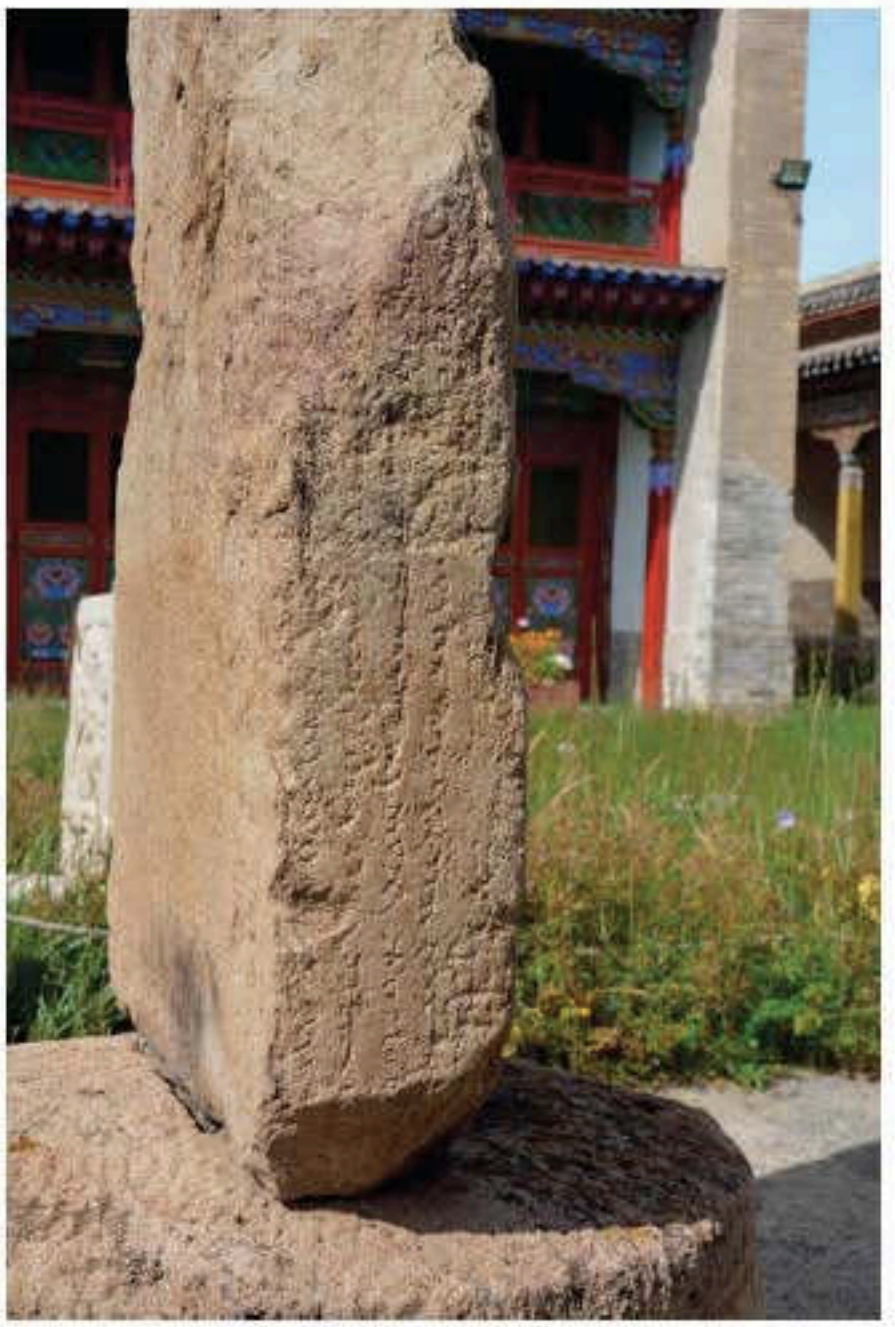


Fig. 6. The Bugut stele B-3 side

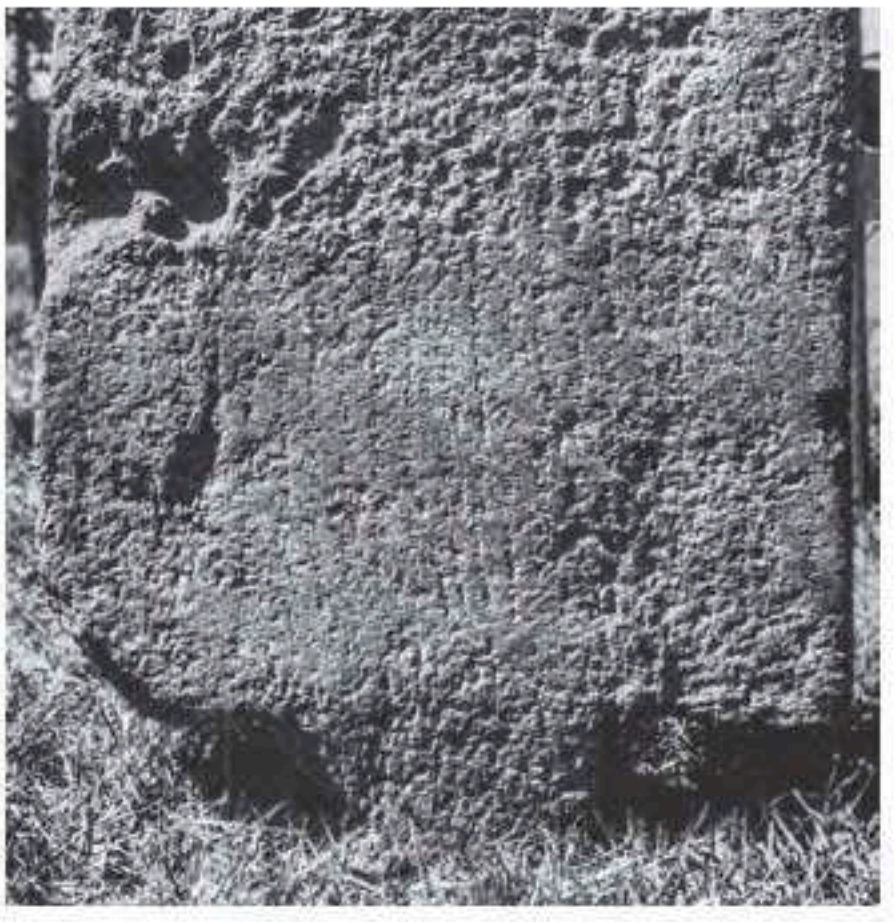


Fig. 7. The Brahmi text (after TDAY-Belleten 1987)