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## THE ROLE OF HISTORICAL SOURCES IN THE STUDY OF THE HISTORY OF THE TURKISH EMPIRE

**Submission Date:** October 01, 2022, **Accepted Date:** October 06, 2022,

**Published Date:** October 27, 2022

**Crossref doi:** <https://doi.org/10.37547/ajsshr/Volume02Issue10-05>

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### ABSTRACT

The importance of sources related to the history of the Turkish Empire is reflected as a topical issue from today's point of view. Ancient sources are very important in identifying the sources directly related to the Turkish khanate and determining the level of reliability of the information, in which ethno-political process they were created. Because on this basis, the primary and auxiliary sources of the history of the Khanate are determined, and the extent to which the information is related to real realities is expressed. The article focuses on the comparative analysis of historical sources related to the Turkish khanate. And through this, the foundations, management procedures and history of Turkish statehood are gradually analysed.

### KEYWORDS

Bugut and Ili inscriptions, Kul Tegin, Bilga Khagan, Muyunchor, Terkhin, Orkhon inscriptions, Chinese, Sogdian, Bactrian, Armenian and Indian sources.

### INTRODUCTION

The role of foreign sources in the scientific coverage of the history of the Turkish Empire is of great importance. In this place, when studying the history of the Turkish Khanate, of course, the official historical works of the Khanate, the Sugdian-language Bugut (588) and Ili (599) inscriptions, as well as the ancient Turkish (Ongin, Tunyuquq, Kul Tegin, Bilga Khagan, Muyunchor, Terkhin) created between VI-VII centuries like Orkhon inscriptions. Although the author of some of these written works has not been identified, the fact that each of them was written in the environment of the ancient Turks, the ethnic group that founded the Khanate, leads to the solution of many issues related to the topic [1.12].

## LITERATURE REVIEW

In the analysis of historical sources, although the inscriptions of Bugut and Ili were mainly written in the Sugdian language, the fact that their authors were people belonging to the Khaganate environment does not diminish the importance of these sources in any way. Therefore, the inscriptions in both languages are unique as sources. Numismatic materials discovered in the following years can also be added to these.

In particular, the Ili inscription (Eastern Turkestan), which has been introduced to scholars in recent years, is the only Sugdian-language source related to the West Turkic Khanate that has been identified so far, and it is valuable because it reflects information that

illuminates a number of abstract pages of the Khanate's history [2. 26].

Nevertheless, these sources cannot be included among the sources that fully reflect the information about the Khanate. Therefore, unlike the Chinese annals, they are works in the form of memoirs, lack coherence, and the activities of each of the rulers are not covered sequentially.

Although most of the sources in Chinese were written outside the Khaganate environment, they are significant for their consistency of information compared to others. Also, the sources in this language are original because they were created by authors "looking from outside" to the Khanate. Works in Chinese can be divided into chronicles and travelogues. Among them are "Bei Shi" ("History of the Northern Dynasties", 630 AD), "Sui Shu" ("History of the Sui Dynasty", 630 AD) and "Tan Shu" ("History of the Tang Dynasty", X asr) covers almost the entire period of the Khaganate history [3. 36]. In particular, they cover the activities of all Turkish khans and are advantageous in terms of helping to study issues such as statehood traditions and the system of titles existing in the ancient Turks.

Sources in the Sugdian language are documents created in a Sugdian-dominated environment in the Sugdian oasis and adjacent regions, and refer to the dominions subordinate to the Khanate. Therefore,

they can be included among the sources not directly or indirectly related to the history of the Khanate. It should also be mentioned that it is impossible to cover the history of the Khaganate based only on sources in this language, since no historical works written in the Sugdian language about this period have survived [4.81].

The main part of the Sugdian-language sources is the Mugh Mountain Sugdian documents (Tajikistan) belonging to the rulers of Panch (Panjikent), one of the dominions in the Sugdian confederation, among which there are about 10 documents related to the khanate, terms and similar statehood information. In particular, the documents contain expressions such as “Khun (Turkish) ruler” and “rank//title from the Khan”, titles such as Khaan, Tudun, Eltabar, Tarkhan, and names and epithets typical of the Khaganate, such as Chakin Chor Bilga[5.12].

Although the Bactrian language is the official correspondence language of the ethnic groups living in Tokhoristan and the Kabul Valley, which is far from the central region of the Khanate, a significant part of the documents written in this language is distinguished by the fact that it reflects the titles and epithets related to the Khanate administration system. The main part of the Bactrian documents, read by the English Iranian scholar N. Sims-Williams and translated into English, has not yet been widely studied as a historical source. For this reason, their role as a source for illuminating

the history of the Khaganate is not fully recognized [6.24]. However, Bactrian-language documents related to the Turkish khanate started from the 640s until the last years of the khanate, and they contain the title of eltabar, the supervisory deputy of the khanate and dozens of similar Turkish titles presented by the khans to local rulers. Especially, in documents, the first word (addressee) begins in the form of “Khan’s servant, the manager of (such and such) rulership was established in the presence of the eltabar” or the meeting of pure Turkish epithets in the form of “qutlug’ tapug’lug’ bilga sebuk” (“wise and beloved servant”) in relation to officials, they are the ancient traditions of Turkish statehood, places the necessity of learning as a source [7.18].

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Ethnic processes in the Turkish khanate were investigated in the study based on comparative, historical and logic analysis methods.

Historical works written in Greek within the framework of the Byzantine Empire occupy a special place in elucidating the history of the Turkish khanate, especially the history of its diplomatic relations. Byzantium, which became an ally of the Khaganate in the first years of its establishment, is a country that has had diplomatic relations with it for many years. Especially, the fact that the Byzantine ambassadors visited the territory of the Turkish khanate for almost

fifty years created an opportunity for Greek-language authors to get acquainted with the events taking place in the khanate, its social-political and cultural life, and information about state administration. For example, Byzantine authors such as Menander (late VI century), Theophanes (early VII century), Feofilikat Simocatta (first half of the VII century) directly used the messages brought by these ambassadors while quoting information about the Khanate in their works.

Greek-language sources differ from other sources in that they preserve a lot of information about the administrative division of the khanate, the management system, and the system of titles. Also, they are distinguished by the fact that they reflect the information about the activities of the Khanate in the Caucasus, the Black Sea and the Volga basin, as well as the management of the herding peoples who lived in these areas by the Khanate, which are hardly found in other sources. Information on the history of the Khanate from Byzantine sources chronologically covers the period from the 60s of the VI century to the 30s of the VII century [8.14].

## **ANALYSIS AND RESULTS**

In general, we can find information about the Turkish khanate from the analytical results of the sources in the Armenian language, another source that has a special place in the history of the khanate. Therefore, the authors who wrote in Armenian language were closely

acquainted with the activities of the Khaganate. Especially in the 620s, when the Khaganate intensified its attacks against Iran, the Sassanids, who ruled over Armenia and Georgia at that time, in order to establish their political dominance in the Caucasus, Armenian authors were directly acquainted with the existing realities. In particular, the historical records in the works of Armenian historians and geographers such as Sebeos (VII century), Ananias Shirakatsi (VII century), Moisei Kalankavatsi (VII century), Moisei Khorenatsi (VIII century) are based on the information that the authors directly witnessed or heard. Another unique aspect of information in Armenian sources is that they reflect the march of the Khaganate troops to Sassanid Iran along the Amudarya-Caspian Sea (Khorasan) route. The primary information about the activities of the Khanate against the Sassanids in this direction is mainly found in Armenian sources, which in essence complement the short and long information about this issue in Chinese and Arab-Persian sources. The chronology of Armenian sources on the history of the Khanate is limited to a period of about 50 years between the last quarter of the VII century and the 30s of the VII century.

Arabic and Persian sources also have their own place as a source of history of the Khanate. Although they also belong to a much later period, the IX-X centuries, they have information that illuminates some dark pages of the history of the Khanate. First of all, the most



valuable source among them is the work of Abu Ja'far al-Tabari "Tarikh ar-rusul wa-l-muluk" (IX century), the author relied on the narrations of many eyewitnesses while writing his work. Already, the work's information about the pre-Islamic social-political situation, the Iran-Turonian conflict, the march of Arab troops to Central Asia, the struggle of the Turkish khagans against the Arabs in alliance with the rulers of Sughd, Bukhara, Shosh, Ferghana, and Tokhoristan is based on the content of the Pahlavi-language sources that have not reached so far. In addition, in his work, Tabari reflected some information about Suyab, the administrative center of the Khaganate, fighting methods, traditions and titles typical of the ancient Turks. Among the sources in the Arabic language, it is possible to include the works of geographical sources written by tourists and ambassadors who visited Central Asia in the IX-XI centuries, in particular among the Turkic clans and tribes living in the steppe regions of this region. Although such works belong to a rather late period, they can give a certain idea about the society of the ancient Turks. Among them, the earliest information about an ambassador sent by Caliph Hisham (724-743) to the Turkish Khan, whose name has not been preserved, is particularly noteworthy, which is contained in Ibn al-Faqih al-Hamadani's "Kitab al-Buldan". For example, according to the work, when the ambassador went to the Turkish Khan, the Khagan showed him his army, and when 10 flags were waved one by one, 10,000 soldiers gathered under each flag,

and an army of 100,000 was gathered. This information is related to the "O'n o'q" (Ten Arrows) structure typical of the Western Khaganate and the 10 Turkish tribes, each of which provided 10 thousand soldiers, mentioned in the Chinese chronicles.

The least studied as a source of information on the history of Khakhanid are written monuments in India. In most of the studies done on the history of Khahanid, Indian sources have hardly been used. The reason is that the information in this language is scattered in various written monuments, most of which were referred to a narrow scientific community as a result of the research conducted in the following years. Also, since they have been studied from the point of view of linguistics and Indology, their role as a historical source for the ancient Turkic peoples has not yet been sufficiently evaluated.

The sources in India are mainly short-line epigraphic monuments in Brahmi and Karoshti scripts, found in North India, Pakistan and Afghanistan. Some of them belong to the Tegin Shahi dynasty, which ruled in Kabul and Gandhara in the VIII-IX centuries. Also, in religious texts there are pictures about Central Asian ethnic groups such as Huna (Hun) and Turushka (Turk) who occupied North India. In addition, numismatic materials can also be included in Indian language sources. They were suppressed by this Tegin-Shahi dynasty with Turkic titles such as Tegin, Khitivira (Turk. eltabar) in Bactrian, Pahlavi, and ancient Indian scripts,

which iconographically reflect Indo-Iranian-Turkish traditions [9. 85-95].

## CONCLUSION

In short, the sources of the history of the Turkish khanate have come down to us from different peoples. One such source is Indian sources. Information related indirectly to Indian sources is also distinguished by the fact that it has important evidence about the history of the Khanate. For example, in the work "India" of Abu Rayhan Beruni, written using ancient Indian historiographical traditions, there are historical facts about ancient Turks known to Indians. Scientist cites the legends of the local population about the origin of the Teginshah dynasty of Kabul, and gives the name of the founder of this dynasty as Barkha-tegin (Bori Tegin) and describes the legend of the cave associated with him [10. 88]. Also, according to a number of researchers, the scenes related to the Turkish prince named Barkhatekin leaving the cave in the mountain and founding the dynasty, according to a number of researchers, there are ancient Turks about the founders of the Khanate coming out of the closed valley in the mountain and establishing their state, preserved in Chinese chronicles and Turkish epics.

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