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TWO INNER ASIAN RIVER NAMES IN TERKH INSCRIPTION

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ABSTRACT

In the part referring to Uyghur khan of Terh inscriptions, constructed in 750's, there are place names in poem. Most of these place names are of two big rivers still named in the same way. Per this, it is obvious that Sebin and Teledü in Uyghur khan's inscription are river names.

In the part about Baya'ut tribe in "Cami'ü't-Tevarih", the place where the tribe settled is mentioned. The place names are written in alliteration and recorded in this way. Also, in the part about Baya'ut tribe, two of the three rivers, flowing from the mountain named *Börä Ündür*in to Selenge river, are named *Kibän* and *Taladu.*

Names of these rivers are recorded identical with that in Terh inscription and Câmi'ü't-Tevârîh. The fact that these names appear in these historical artifacts shows not only that these two rivers are very close, but also that they are named through at least 540 years.

Keywords: Terkh inscription, hydronomy, Sebin, Teledü, alliteration

TERH YAZITLARINDA GİZLİ İKİ ASYA NEHRİNİN ADI

ÖZ

750'li yıllarında dikilmiş olan Terh yazıtında, Uygur kağanına ait yer adlarını bahseden kısmında şiir şeklinde yazılan yer adları bulunmaktadır. Bu yer adlarının çoğu bugüne kadar hala adlandıran büyük nehirlerin isimleridir. Buna göre Uygur kağanın yazıtındaki *Sebin* ve *Teledü* sözleri nehir adı olduğu şüphesizdir.

"Câmi'ü't-Tevârîh"daki Baya'ut kabilesi hakkında yazılan kısmında onların yerleştiği (oturduğu) bölgesi üzerine bahsedilmiştir. Yer adlarını yazarken aliterasyon sırayla şiir şeklinde geçtiğini tamamen o şekilde kaydedilmiş. Bunun yanı sıra Baya'ut kabilesine ait kısmında *Börä Ündür* denilen dağının herhangi bir tarafından başlayıp (kaynayıp) Selenge nehrine akan üç ırmağın ikisinin adlarını *Kibän* ve *Taladu* olarak geçmektedir.

Bu iki nehrin adı Terh yazıtında ve "Câmi'ü't-Tevârîh"da rastlandığı gibi ikisi birlikte kaydedilmiş ve tarihi eserlerinde hep beraber geçmesi ise iki ırmağın hem mesafe olarak çok yakın olduğunu hem de en azında 540 yıl boyunca birlikte anıldığını (adlandırdığını) göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Terh Yazıtları, hidronomi, Sebin, Teledü, aliterasyon.

In line 4 on the west side of the Terkh stele, which was erected about in 750 AD., there is a part that states on dwellings of the Khagan of the Uighur Empire (745-840). In this line some places have been declared as all of them belong to the Uighur Khagan. Those place names are as follows: Sekiz Seleŋe : Orqun Toγula : Sebin : Teledü : Qaraγa: Boruγu.

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It is obvious that except Sekiz, Sebin and Teledü, all of them are large rivers in Mongolia of which names have been survived to the present day. These river names clearly point out that Sebin and Teledü are certain river names.

After the first publication of the text of the Terkh inscription in 1975 [Şinekhüü 1975], these two names were correctly read and identified as river names by the famous Turkologist T.Tekin only in 1983 [Tekin 1983a: 818]. (Table 1) However, the locality of these two rivers is still not identified.

In October 2015 I first introduced my suggestion to an international conference that the two hydronyms also occur in the "Jami'u't-tawarikh", the well-known early-14th-century chronicle in Persian. [Mönkhtulga 2015] In this paper, I attempt to reconsider the two river names and introduce an Inner Asian tradition of calling the place names in alliterative verse.

Sebin and Teledü

After the Tekin's publication, most of the researches who read the Terkh inscription have generally accepted that these two words are river names, although there are some sign differences of vowels in their readings. The readings of the two words by the researchers as follows:

	Researchers	**Transcriptions**	**Translations**
	Şinekhüü 1975	/ögüz/ täldü. [69]	golıig gatalj, [69]; Ya pérékhodiv réki ... [69]
	Klyaştornıy 1980	sebentürdü [90]	raduyut ménya. [92]
	Klyaştornıy 1982	s^{ä}b^{ä}nt^{ü}rdü [341]	made me happy. [344]
	Bazylkhan 1982	/sub/.. tülädü. [170]	/ıın usan sav/ tüvşin tögs bolov. [170]
	Tekin 1983a	s(e)b(i)n t(e)l(e)dü [806]	Sebin (Seben?), Teledü (Teldü?), [810]
	Tekin 1983b	s(ä)b(i)n t(ä)l(?ä)dü: [47]	Sebin, Teledü, [51]
	Katayama 1999	säbin # tälädü: [170]	Säbin, Tälädü, [171]
	Bazılkhan 2005	Seben: Teldü: [141]	Sébén: Téldü: [141]
	Mert 2009	s(e)b#(i)[n] : t(e)l(e)dü : [180]	Sebin, Teledü, [182]
	User 2009	s(ä)b(i)[n] t(ä)l(ä)dü : [480]	säbin tälädü
	Ölmez 2013	*sevi[n] teledü :* [277]	Sevin, Teledü, [282]

Table 1

Unfortunately, I could not find Turkologist A.Berta's book on Old Turkic Runic inscriptions in which the two words are transcribed and translated not as hydronyms but perhaps as verbs. [Berta 2006]

Kibin and Teledu

There are many Inner Asian toponyms and hydronyms in the "Jami'u't-tawarikh" or "Compendium of Chronicles" which was written by Rashiduddin (1247-1318), a vizier of Ghazan Khan (1271-1304) of Ilkhanate.

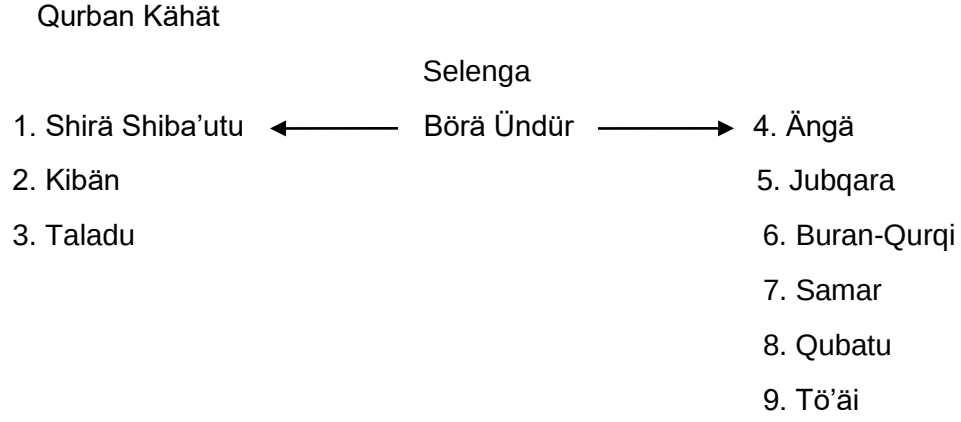
The Inner Asian place names in the above source most probably informed by some ethnic Mongols of that time including Bolad Chingsang who came from the State of Great Khan, or Yuan Dynasty in Chinese historical view, to Ilkhanate in the Ghazan Khan's reign period. Original form of most names of the places that dwelt and named by the Mongols of the 13th-14th cc. is still unknown because through the centuries, this famous medieval work has been hand-copied by people who did not know Mongolian.

In a part about the *oboq* of Baya'ut which was a well known people at the pre- and modern times of Chingis Khan, Rashiduddin wrote on important places where they dwelt, on the basis of narratives of informants who probably came from Mongolia proper. [Rashid-ad-din 1952: 175-176; Rashiduddin 1998: 96]

A passage contains these two names has been translated into English by W.Thackston as follows: "The rivers that flow down from Börä Ündür are as follows. From in front of the mountain are Shirä Shiba'utu, Kibän, and Taladu. From behind the mountain are Ängä, Jubqara, Buran Qurqi, Samar, Qubatu, and Tö'äi. These nine rivers spill into the Selenga." [Rashiduddin 1998: 96]

It should also be noted that translators differently restored some place names in the "Jami'u't-tawarikh" when they translated this source from its original Middle Persian into modern languages because of their own view.

At first, we need to analyze the passage contains the names to make clear its meaning. It is clear that these were hydronyms, particularly names of rivers. These hydronyms are 2 of the 9 rivers that flow down from two sides of a mountain named Börä Ündür and spill into Selenge. It can be shown as in the following sketch:



Mongolian scholar Kh.Perlee identified the Börä Ündür with present mountains of Büren Khaan which are located between the Selenge and Orkhon rivers. [Perlee (1969) 2012: 390] He suggested that the river Kibin can be identified with today's Iven river which flows from the Büren Khaan mountains into the Orkhon river. [Perlee (1964) 2012: 322; Perlee (1969) 2012: 390]

As written together in the Terkh stele, the two names appear again together in “Jami‘u’t-tawarikh”. It means that the rivers were close to each other and their names had been called together at least during 540 years.

It is interesting that these Inner Asian hydronyms that have been preserved through the times also bear a long tradition of calling the place names in alliterative verse.

Place names in alliteration

Due to lack of evidence, we do not know when the Altaic-speaking peoples began to compose their poetries in alliterative verses. The tradition of alliteration undoubtedly has a long history. Many modern Altaic peoples still preserved the tradition of alliteration. However, a part of this tradition, calling the place names in alliterative verse is still kept up only among the Mongols. [Damdinsüren 1987: 6] To pray famous places in alliterative verse is common in Mongolian folklore [Damdinsüren 1987: 6-13] and manuscripts with prayer texts of sacred places [Sükhbaatar 2001]. Although there are many evidences on this subject, only two examples are presented here.

Kharaa Boroo (Qaraγa: Boruγu or Qaraghas Burughus in “Jami‘u’t-tawarikh”)

Khanan Bayan

Khasıın Khöndiy

Tend End

Tereg Şaazgay

Temeen Çuluut

Guna Gund

Gunj Möördög

Khoni Maildag

Khoyor Zagisdag

Döröö Khanginadag [Damdinsüren 1987: 12-13]

… Kharaa Yöröö

Khasıın Khöndiy

Khanuy Khünüy (Qanuy : Künüy in the Terkh inscription)

Khangal Çingel

Khariin Nuur

Khalzan Bözönkhiy

Khayrkhan Bayan Ulaan

Khanan Salkhit

Temeen Çuluut

Tereg Şaazgayt [Damdinsüren 1987: 8]

In the above two examples, it is visible that the names of every two rivers that are close to each other are in an alliterative line. As composed in the alliterative verses, the river names in the Terkh inscription should be restored in alliterative lines as follows:

Sekiz Seleŋe : Orqun Toγula :

Sebin : Teledü : Qaraγa : Boruγu.

The doublets may also be written in the following version:

Sekiz Seleŋe :

Orqun Toγula :

Sebin : Teledü :

Qaraγa : Boruγu.

All the river names in alliterative lines seem to be structured as set on a map counterclockwise. As a central point of a map, Sebin and Teledü rivers can be imagined by the following sketch of location of the rivers.

Northwest: Selenge	North: Sekiz	Northeast
West: Selenge	Center: Sebin Teledü	East
Southwest: Orkhon	South: Tuul, Kharaa, Boroo	Southeast

Table 2

As shown in the Table 2, Sebin and Teledü may be located to the south from the Sekiz and Selenge rivers, to the northeast from Orkhon and to the north from Tuul, Kharaa and Boroo. If we restrict the location, losing the rivers that coincided in direction, there must be the following sketch.

Northwest: Selenge	North: Sekiz
West: Selenge	Center: Sebin and Teledü
	South: Kharaa

Table 3

In the “Jami‘u’t-tawarikh”, it is clear that the place names mentioned by some informants but in certain sequence, like the structure of traditional Mongolian poem which is always composed in alliterative verse and particularly like the poem structure in the Terkh inscription.

“Jami‘u’t-tawarikh” states that another affluent of the Selenge river which flows down from Börä Ündür is Shirä Shiba’utu. As the 13th century tradition of calling the famous place names in alliterative verse, in “Jami‘u’t-tawarikh”, there are many examples of such word pairs, names of two places which are close to each other. For example, “… the Onon, the Kelüren, Talan Balji’us, Burqan Qaldun, Kökä Na’ur, Bu’ir

Na'ur, Qarqab, Küyin, the Ergüne, Qala'ir, the Selenga, Barqujin Tögüm, Qalajin Älät, and Öngü, …". [Rashid-ad-din 1952: 74; Rashiduddin 1998: 23-24]

Therefore, the most possible restoration of the pair of names in the "Jami'u't-tawarikh" is ∗sibin/∗šibin because according to both the middle and modern Mongolian poem traditions, the word pair must be written in alliterative lines as follows:

Šira Šiba'utu

Šibin Teledü.

Conclusion

If we accept that Sebin in the Terkhin inscription and Kibin in the "Jami'u't-tawarikh" are the same names, the two rivers, Sebin and Teledü seem to have been flow down from a big mountain named Börä Ündür between the last 13th c. and early 14th c. where perhaps one of the *Quruq-i Buzurg*, a great sanctuary where members of Chingis Khan's family and their descendants were buried. The names of these two rivers that would be close to each other are now forgotten. The only Inner Asian source about these rivers, the Terkh inscription indicates that most believable forms of the names of these rivers are Sebin and Teledü.

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