

Regarding Recent Epigraphic Discoveries Dated to Ancient Turkic and Uighur Periods in Mongolia

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Abstract

In Mongolia, researchers have recently discovered and recorded written documents and other historical artifacts from the ancient Turkic and Uighur periods, including runic inscriptions on rocks. Between 2023 and 2025, twenty inscriptions were discovered and studied by researchers, as indicated by available documents and reports. A total of seven inscriptions were discovered in 2023: the Baga Khürkhree Inscription, the Ikh Duut Inscription, the Khürmen Khad Inscription, the Khürmen Mukhar Inscription, the Nagoon Uul II and III Inscriptions, and the second fragment of the Nomgon Inscription (Kutlug Khagan Inscriptions). 2022 marked the discovery of the initial segment of the Nomgon Inscription (Kutlug Khagan Inscription), while 2023 marked the discovery of the second fragment. Nevertheless, the discovery of thirteen inscriptions from only one area in 2024 and 2025 has piqued the interest of researchers. Their identified aimags can be used to evaluate the twenty runic inscriptions that were discovered in Mongolia between 2023 and 2025. Seventeen inscriptions were discovered in the Övörkhangaï aimag, two in the Khentii aimag, and one, the second fragment of a previously discovered inscription, in the Arkhangai aimag. The nineteen inscriptions that have been discovered in Mongolia over the recent three years will be the subject of this study, which will include readings and general information.

Keywords

Runic inscription, Mongolia, newly discovered inscriptions

Introduction

In recent years, the field of research on runic inscriptions in Mongolia has expanded significantly. Consequently, the number of runic inscriptions dated to ancient Turkic and Uighur periods in Mongolia has increased to 211 inscriptions from 113 various areas, as indicated by the news and documents we possess.

A maximum of seven inscriptions were recently discovered in a single location; however, in 2024 and 2025, thirteen small inscriptions were discovered and analyzed in a single location. We do not have the pertinent study or any published information, despite reports of new inscriptions being discovered in various regions as a result of the inscriptions discovered in a single region in 2025.

At the 10th Turkish Language Congress, which was organized by the Turkish Language Association, a document was presented that was derived from the research conducted in Mongolia between 2021 and 2023 on inscriptions. (Badam, 2024) Before commencing the investigation of the recently discovered inscriptions, it is imperative that we provide a concise summary of the information that has been presented in our statement.

Research on Mongolian runic inscriptions worldwide, including in Mongolia, has been divided into three main periods. The years 1889-1910, during which research was conducted to decipher the alphabet of the Orkhun and Yenisey inscriptions and determine the purpose for which these inscriptions were made, are considered the first period of runic inscription studies. However, the second period of studying Mongolian runic inscriptions covers research from the 1930s to the 1990s, and there are numerous studies by our scholars from this period (Damdin, 1960; Byamba, 1968, 1979; Maamdai, 1975, 1980). The studies conducted during this period were primarily focused on the initial stages of research, deciphering the monument after its discovery, determining the origin of the writing, and conducting grammatical research. However, starting in the second period, with the active participation of our country's scholars and the contribution of Mongolian scientists to Turkology studies, particularly the examination of runic inscriptions, research in this period focused more on the Altaic languages, their comparative analysis, and grammatical studies.

The third period is divided by us into two sub-sections: 1990-2000 and post-2000. Because while only one book by Mongolian scholars examining runic inscriptions was published between 1990 and 2000, research of this kind has intensified since 2000, with books, numerous articles, and reports published on the same topic. Research from this period is focused on reading, analyzing, and studying the vocabulary of newly discovered monuments (Badam, 2013; Luvsandorj, 1990, 2006, 2010, 2011, 2019, 2023; Rinchinkhorol, 2018; Tsend, 2005, 2020, 2022a, 2022b, 2022c; Tsend et al., 2016).

We only summarized the books previously written in Mongolia regarding the inscriptions mentioned above. Articles, conference papers, and master's and doctoral thesis are not mentioned here.

Runic inscriptions found in Mongolia from 2023-2025

In recent years, research conducted by international researchers on inscriptions has increasingly concentrated on the identification of historical documents, the collection and analysis of new data, and related endeavors. For scholars and scientists engaged in this significant endeavor, even a solitary character from the newly discovered inscriptions holds immense value. Consequently, we are presenting general information and previous analytical readings by researchers of the inscriptions discovered in the recent three years.

Table 1: Newly Discovered Inscriptions in the Last Three Years

Discovery year	No	Name of inscription	Location	Length
2023	1.	Baga Khürkhree Inscription	Baga Khürkhree, Kharkhorin, Övörkhangai	One character
	2.	Ikh Duut Inscription	Winter camp of Ikh Duut, Mt. Tevsh, Bogd, Övörkhangai	Three lines
	3.	Khürmen Khad Inscription	Mt. Baga Tevsh, Bogd, Övörkhangai	Two lines

	4.	Khürmen Mukhar Inscription	Khürmen Mukhar, Ölziit, Övörkhantai	Two characters
	5.	2nd Inscription of Nogoön Uul	Nogoön Uul, Darkhan, Khentii	Two lines
	6.	3rd Inscription of Nogoön Uul	Nogoön Uul, Darkhan, Khentii	Two lines
	7.	Nomgon Inscription /2nd piece/	Nomgon, Khashaat, Arkhangai ⇔ Cultural Heritage Center of Mongolia	<i>in examination</i>
2024	1-10.	Ten inscriptions of Naran Tolgoi	Mt. Naran Tolgoi, Yesön züil, Övörkhantai	<i>10 separate inscriptions, 1-4 lines each</i>
2025	1-3.	Three additional inscriptions of Naran Tolgoi	Mt. Naran Tolgoi, Yesön züil, Övörkhantai	<i>Three separate inscriptions, 1-2 lines each</i>

The first part of the Nomgon inscription (Kutlug Kagan Inscription) was discovered in 2022, and the second part in 2023.

Inscriptions Found in 2023

1. Baga Khürkhree Inscription

North of the Baga Khürkhree /Little Waterfall/ on the Tsagaan River in Kharkhorin soum, Övörkhantai aimag, there is a rocky area made of basalt. In 2023, rock paintings in the region were recorded (Bayartogtokh, 2023). This inscription, consisting of a single character and accompanied by a special stamp, was jointly read and studied by Saranbolor Erdembileg, a research fellow at the Institute of History and Ethnography of the Mongolian Academy of Sciences, and Batbold Gonchig, a research fellow at the Institute of Archaeology (Erdembileg & Gonchig, 2024, p. 117).

Table 2: Decoding of inscription

Text	Transliteration	Transcription	Translation
↑	r	är	sol-dier

2. Ikh Duut Inscription

This inscription was found by Prof. Dr. Battulga Tsend in October 2023 at the winter camp, which is named Ikh Duut, in the Baga Tevsh mountain region, Bayantökhöm bag, Bogd soum, and Övörkhantai aimag. Although there are no seals that can be directly related to the inscription, seals are abundant in the region (Tsend, 2024b, pp. 110-112, 2024a, pp. 147-148; Tsend & Basandorj, 2024, pp. 169-170).

Table 3: Decoding of inscription

Text	Transliteration	Transcription	Translation
ᠲᠠᠮᠪᠢᠨᠪᠠᠨᠠᠪᠢᠴᠢ	b n b ᠒ B č i	bän bän᠒ abiči	I am Beng Abichi.
ᠴᠠᠷᠠᠪᠣᠳᠤᠨᠴᠠᠪᠣᠬᠠ	Q R a B W D N Q a b ü k a	qara bodunᠴa bökä	I governed the people with rigor.
ᠲᠤᠮᠢᠰᠢᠶᠠᠶᠢᠶᠣᠴᠠᠷᠢᠮᠢᠰ	T W T m s Y G i Y W u Q r m s	tutmış yaᠶi yoᠴ ärmiş	There was no enemy.

3. Khürmen Khad Inscription

A two-line inscription was found on a basalt stone at the top of Aduun Khüree, in the Baga Tevsh mountain region of Bayantökhöm bag, Bogd soum, which is part of Övörkhongai aimag. The first reading of this inscription, discovered in October 2023 by Prof. Dr. Battulga Tsend, is also attributed to him (Tsend, 2024b, pp. 112-114, 2024a, pp. 148-149; Tsend & Basandorj, 2024, pp. 170-171). Although there are no stamps that can be directly related to the inscription, there are many stamps in the region.

Table 4: Decoding of inscription

Text	Transliteration	Transcription	Translation
ᠪᠳᠵᠢᠮᠰ	b d z m s	bädizmis	Crafted (or ornamented)
ᠬᠤᠲᠤᠯᠤᠭᠴᠢᠷ	Q W T L G č W R	qutluᠭ čur	Kutlug Chur

4. Khürmen Mukhar Inscription

The study of rock paintings in the Khürmen Mukhar area, north of the Orkhon River in Bat-Ölzii soum, which is part of the Övörkhongai aimag, was included in the research (Bayartogtokh, 2023, p. 21). The researcher, who recorded this monument as a stamp, did not realize that it was actually a runic inscription. The first reading and analysis of the inscription were published by Saranbolor Erdembileg, a research fellow at the Institute of History and Ethnography of the Mongolian Academy of Sciences, and Batbold Gonchig, a research fellow at the Institute of Archeology (Erdembileg & Gonchig, 2024, p. 119).

Table 5: Decoding of inscription

Text	Transliteration	Transcription	Translation
ᠰᠤ	s ü	sü	army

5. Second Inscription of Nogoön Uul

In July 2023, under the project "P2022-4373: Research on Runic Inscriptions Located in the Southern and Eastern Regions of Mongolia," which we directed, we conducted research in the Nogoön Uul area of Darkhan soum, Khentii aimag. While the first inscription of Nogoön Uul was being examined on-site, the second inscription of Nogoön Uul was found in this region by Zagarperenlei Tümenbayar. The first introduction of the inscription was made by Zagarperenlei Tümenbayar (Tümenbayar, 2023), and the first analysis was done by us (Badam et al., 2023).

Table 6: Decoding of inscription

Text	Transliteration	Transcription	Translation
ᠠᠨᠴᠠ	nč Y p	anča ayip	Verbalized [that]

ᠬᠢᠰᠢᠳᠤ	Y s d t	ay äsit[t]i	Verbalize [let them] listen
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6. Third Inscription of Nogoön Uul

There is an inscription on a brown rock south of Nogoön Uul, but it is not clearly visible because it has faded over time. We will discuss this inscription after further research and verification.

7. Nomgon Inscription /Second piece/

In 2022, a joint team from the Turkic Academy and the Institute of Archaeology of the Mongolian Academy of Sciences discovered the first part of the Nomgon Inscription in the Nomgon Valley of Khashaat soum in Arkhangai aimag. There is preliminary news that another part of this inscription was found in 2023. Research on the inscription is ongoing.

Inscriptions Found in 2024 and 2025

The discovery of ten inscriptions from only one area in 2024 and additional three inscriptions in 2025 has piqued the interest of researchers. The thirteen inscriptions that were just recently unearthed at the Naran Tolgoi site will be the exclusive focus of following research. This is due to the fact that we are not aware of any additional inscriptions that were found and published in the year 2025 at this time.

The Naran Tolgoi Inscriptions

Naran Tolgoi, situated in the Yesön züil soum of Övörkhangaï Aimag, features ten runic inscriptions. In 2024, Sodnomjamts Damchaabadgar and Tüvshinjargal Tömörbaatar, who are both research fellows at the Institute of Archaeology of the Mongolian Academy of Sciences, were the ones who made the discovery of the first and second inscriptions. In November 2024, Professor Dr. Battulga Tsend analyzed two new inscriptions, employing data acquired from previous researchers. In the field study, he uncovered eight unique new inscriptions, spanning from the third to the tenth, analyzed each, and disseminated the findings in a collaborative research journal. (Tsend et al., 2024) This was based on information that was acquired from those who had previously conducted research. Only a single mountain yielded these ten inscriptions. Consequently, we determined that it would be most appropriate to present these 10 inscriptions in a unified table.

Table 7: Decodings of Naran Tolgoi inscriptions

Text	Transcription	Translation
<i>First Inscription of Naran Tolgoi</i>		
ᠶᠦᠭᠠᠲᠤ ᠤᠻᠠᠷᠢᠮᠤ	yügät uqarim	Meeting I will make [them] understand
<i>Second Inscription of Naran Tolgoi</i>		
ᠤᠯᠤᠭ ᠠᠻ ᠲᠠᠨᠢᠷᠢᠭᠠᠨᠬᠠᠨᠬᠠᠵᠢ ᠶᠠᠬᠦ ᠠᠰᠢᠷᠲᠠ	uluy äk täñrikänkä kiyi: yäkü äširtkä	In great sorrow over the passing of elder sister
<i>Third Inscription of Naran Tolgoi</i>		
ᠬᠠᠨ ᠶᠠᠲᠤᠵᠢ ᠠᠳᠢᠰᠢ: ᠴᠤᠲᠤᠯᠤᠭ ᠪᠣᠯᠤᠨ ᠶᠢᠳᠤᠴᠢ ᠶᠠᠷ ᠰᠦᠪ	qan yat[t]i ädisi: qutluy boluñ iduq yär šub	Khan showed respect. May the owner be

		blessed. Sacred place and water.
ᠭᠡᠬᠡᠲᠤᠯᠤᠭᠠᠯᠠᠪᠠᠨᠪᠢᠲᠢᠳᠢᠮ	tuluq apa bān bitidim	I, the Tuluk Apa wrote.
<i>Fourth Inscription of Naran Tolgoi</i>		
ᠶᠤᠰᠤᠯᠡᠭᠦᠨᠶ᠋ᠢᠨᠠᠳᠤᠨᠢᠯᠠᠭᠢᠰᠢ	tuγčī bodunīṅ bāṅliḱ čabīš	Permanent ruler of the flag bearer people
ᠤᠰᠠᠮᠠᠨᠠᠯᠠᠲᠤᠮᠢᠰᠢᠠᠴᠢᠴᠤᠮᠢᠰᠢ	šaman älätmiš äčäkmiš (~ičikmiš)	The <i>shaman</i> led the army and conquered.
<i>Fifth Inscription of Naran Tolgoi</i>		
ᠠᠯᠠᠴᠢᠷᠤᠨᠴᠠᠯᠢᠮᠢᠰᠢ	apa čurun qalmiši	The remains of <i>Apa Chur</i>
ᠶᠠᠲᠪᠠᠰᠢᠶᠣᠯᠶᠠᠷᠠᠲᠢᠲᠢ	yat baši yol yarat[iti]	[He] had a road built with the head of the foreigners.
ᠪᠢᠲᠢᠭᠢᠭᠢᠪᠢᠯᠭᠠᠠᠯᠠᠯᠠᠭᠠ	bitigig bil(gä) apa	I, the Bilge Apa wrote the inscription.
ᠪᠢᠲᠢᠳᠢᠮ	bitidim	
<i>Sixth Inscription of Naran Tolgoi</i>		
ᠵᠠᠶᠠ	qaya	rock
<i>Seventh Inscription of Naran Tolgoi</i>		
ᠶᠠᠵᠤᠬᠦᠵ	yaz küz	Summer and autumn
<i>Eighth Inscription of Naran Tolgoi</i>		
ᠠᠷᠲᠢᠨᠦ	ärtiṅü	With much respect
ᠠᠰᠢᠲᠢᠵᠢᠮᠢᠰᠢ	äšit[ti]miš	Announced.
<i>Nineth Inscription of Naran Tolgoi</i>		
ᠠᠳᠢᠶᠠᠨᠠᠳᠤᠨᠢᠯᠠᠭᠢᠰᠢ	ädi (~idi) čuruγ bitigim	The ruler Chur my inscription.
ᠬᠦᠴᠢᠨᠠᠳᠤᠨᠢᠯᠠᠭᠢᠰᠢ	küči: bitigim	I, the Kuchi my inscription.
<i>Tenth Inscription of Naran Tolgoi</i>		
ᠠᠷᠢᠫᠤ	ärip	Chase (or <i>attack</i>)

Battulga Tsend, the researcher who aimed to re-evaluate and record the ten inscriptions located at Naran Tolgoi, identified three additional inscriptions at the same site during the summer of 2025. The interpretations of these three inscriptions have yet to be published.

The current phase of the research gives information regarding the twenty inscriptions under scrutiny. The discovery of twenty new inscriptions in the previous three years serves as substantial evidence of the

thoroughness of the fieldwork conducted. We emphasize the importance of notifying scientists about inscriptions that remain undeciphered or unexamined by epigraphers, despite their past discovery, since this may greatly aid in the acquisition of further inscriptions and historical materials.

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