Baz Qaɣan and the Transformation of Toquz Oɣuz[*]

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The transformation of the concept of toquz oɣuz in Medieval Eurasia is a good example for us to observe the nuances of the changes and continuities of nomadic societies. The designation of toquz oɣuz in Runic Turkic inscriptions was relatively clear; it was one of the tribal confederations of the Türk Qaɣanate and four members of the toquz oɣuz had found shelter in the prefectures of Gan and Liang in the northwest of China. The Türks used the term oɣuz to refer to the toquz oɣuz. The concept of toquz oɣuz changed essentially in the Uygur Qaɣanate after the Uygur itself became a member of the toquz oɣuz confederation. For example, in the Šine-Usu Inscription, besides toquz oɣuz there also appears sekiz oɣuz, apparently not including Uygur. In the Chinese sources, the records about toquz oɣuz in the Uygur Qaɣanate are extremely limited. This period formed part of the process of the disintegration of toquz oɣuz.

The transformation of *toquz oɣuz* in Medieval Eurasia is a good example for us to observe the nuances of the changes and continuities of nomadic societies. Previous research on this topic has essentially involved etymological studies.[2] The Turkic term *toquz oɣuz* appears many times in the Old Turkic Inscriptions (see below). The Japanese historian T. Haneda convincingly identifies it with

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[2] B. Munkácsi, "Ursprung des Volksnamens 'Ugor' ," *Ethnologische Mitteilungen aus Ungarn* V (1896), 7–10, 89–92; E. G. Pulleyblank, "Some remarks on the Toquzoghuz Problem," *Ural-altaische Jahrbücher* 1956 (28), 35–42; J. Hamilton, "Toquz-Oɣuz et On-Uyɣur," *Journal Asiatique* 1962, 23–64; B. P. Golden, "Oq and Oğur- Oğuz," *Turkic Languages* 16 (2012), 155–199.

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the designation *jiuxing*, "nine surnames", in Chinese sources.[3] According to these Chinese sources, the *jiuxing* was a term referring to the tribes within the Tiele confederation. Originally there were up to fifteen tribes, and until the middle of the 8th century, there were approximately nine tribes left: Uyghur, Pugu (EMC[4]: *bawk-kɔʰ*<OT[5]: Bögü), Hun, Bayegu (EMC: *bəiit-jia'-kɔʰ*< OT: Bayïrqu), Tonglu (EMC: *dəwŋ-la*< OT: Toŋra), Sijie (EMC: *si-kɛt*< OT: Izgil), Qibi, Abusi and Gulunwugu. [6] In Turkic languages, *toquz* means "nine"; here, the meaning of *oɣuz* has been the subject of debate for a long time. The interpretation that *oɣuz* should be a variant form of the Old Turkic *oɣuš*, which means "tribe, ethnic group", seems reliable. In this paper, I am not going to offer another etymological interpretation of *oɣuz*. Rather, the focus will be placed on the historical context of *toquz oɣuz*, and the transformation of its meaning in the history of Medieval Eurasia.

In the Tońuquq Inscription, there are several places that mention *toquz oɣuz* and *oɣuz*. According to Tońuquq's narrative, after the Türk people declared independence and the Türk qaɣan ascended the throne, "so many Chinese in the south, Qïtań people in the east and Oɣuz in the north were killed [by Türk]" (cf. T. 6-7).[7] After rebelling against the Chinese government, the Türk people found shelter in the Black Sand, eating wild game and hares. They then intercepted a piece of intelligence that "a qaɣan ascended the throne over Toquz Oɣuz people". This message was brought by "a fugitive from the side of Oɣuz". (cf. T. 8-9).[8] It is noteworthy that in the Tońuquq Inscription, both the

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3   Haneda Tōru, "Kyūsei Kaikotsu to Toquzoɣuz to no kankei o ronzu," [On the relationship between Jiuxing Uyghurs and Toquz Oɣuz] *Tōyō gakuhō* 9 (1919), 1–61, 141–145.

4   EMC is an abbreviation of Early Middle Chinese.

5   OT is an abbreviation of Old Turkic.

6   Liu Xu et al., *Jiu Tangshu* 199b, 5343; Wang Pu, *Tanghuiyao* 98, 1955, 1744. All the Chinese official histories cited in this article are the punctuated edition of the Zhonghua Publishing House. The pronunciation of Early Middle Chinese will be provided here according to the reconstruction of E. G. Pulleyblank, *Lexicon of Reconstruction in Early Middle Chinese, Late Middle Chinese, and Early Middle Mandarin*, Vancouver 1991.

7   Here, T. is an abbreviation of the Tońuquq Inscription, and the roman number corresponds to the line. There are already many editions of the Old Turkic Inscriptions. Talat Tekin's work remains the most influential one. (cf. T. Tekin, *A Grammar of Orkhon Turkic*, Bloomington 1968). In my doctoral thesis, *A History of the Second Türk Empire (ca. 682-745 AD): Through a combination of Old Turkic Inscriptions and Chinese sources* (Free University of Berlin 2016), I also have made my own transcription and translation of the three main Old Turkic inscriptions, i.e. the Tońuquq Inscription, Kül Tegin Inscription, and Bilgä Qaɣan Inscription. The citations of the Old Turkic inscriptions in this article are from my doctoral thesis.

8   The Old Turkic transcription is: *oɣuzdundan küräg kälti*. The first suffix of *oɣuzdundan* is the orientational suffix +*dXn*, and the second suffix is the ablative +*dAn*. (cf. A. von Gabain, *Alttürkische Grammatik*, Wiesbaden 1941, § 183; M. Erdal, *A Grammar of Old Turkic*, Leiden–Boston 2004, 181, 174) According to M. Erdal, its

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terms *oƔuz* and *toquz oƔuz* were used in the same situation. From this usage, we can conclude that in the case of the Tońuquq Inscription, *oƔuz* could be a shorter form of *toquz oƔuz*. In the eyes of Tońuquq, or more accurately until the time the memorial was established, *toquz oƔuz* could be shortened as *oƔuz*, implying that the attributive element (i.e. nine) of the term was not indispensable information. Tońuquq did not give the full form of the term *toquz oƔuz*, partly because it was self-evident for him and his readers that the number of the members within OƔuz was *toquz* (nine), not *säkiz* (eight) or *üč* (three). We will discuss Säkiz OƔuz later. The phrase *üč oƔuz* appears once on the eastern side of Bilgä QaƔan, but it seems that it was not an ethnic name as T. Tekin has suggested, but solely meant "three OƔuz groups".[9]

The intelligence intercepted by Tońuquq also included the notion that the qaƔan over Toquz OƔuz intended to unite China and Qïtań to form an alliance against the rising power, i.e. the Türks (cf. T. 9-11). Here, it is reasonable for us to infer that the so-called Toquz OƔuz was an independent political unity and military force, just like China, Qïtań, and the Türks. Having realised the urgent situation, on the advice of Tońuquq, the Türk qaƔan decided to send a military expedition towards the OƔuz. After a medium scale battle at the TuƔla River, the Türks defeated the OƔuz troops. After the conquest of the OƔuz people in Ötükän, which was a sacred place and represented the legitimacy of rule in the eyes of the steppe people, the Türk people settled down there, accepting the allegiance of people from all directions (cf. T. 12-17). The rebellion of the Türk people against the Chinese government and their return to Ötükän Mountain have also been narrated by Bilgä QaƔan in the memorial of Kül Tegin. When describing the urgent political situation of the Türks, he mentioned that in the North, Baz QaƔan and the Toquz OƔuz people were enemies[10] (cf. K. E. 14). When Eltäriš QaƔan passed away, Baz QaƔan was made into a *balbal* (stone figure), in commemoration of him. Considering the same historical context of the narratives of T. 12-17 and K. E. 11-14, the "Baz QaƔan" mentioned by Bilgä QaƔan should be the same "qaƔan over the Toquz OƔuz" as mentioned by Tońuquq.

The Baz QaƔan over Toquz OƔuz was a key figure; therefore, it is necessary for us to reveal his identity. From Chinese sources, we know that within the Toquz OƔuz confederation, the Uyghur tribe was then the most powerful polity and was the only one who had the possibility of owning an independent qaƔan. Since Zhen-guan XX (ca. 646), though nominally under the rule of the Tang government, the Uyghur had already owned a qaƔan. In that year, the

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vowel would (after a rounded vowel) have had to be explicitly spelled as if the inscription had had the ablative suffix as +*dIn*. Therefore, he transcribed this word as *oƔuzdundan* (cf. Erdal, *A Grammar of Old Turkic*, 174–175.). For further discussions, see V. Rybatzki, *Die Toñuquq Inschrift*, Szeged 1997, 47, 90.

9   Tekin, *A Grammar of Orkhon Turkic*, 392.

10   Here, K. is an abbreviation of Kül Tegin Inscription; E. stands for "the eastern side", and the roman number corresponds to the line of the inscription.

Uyghur chief Tumidu (EMC: *tʰɔ'-mɛj-dɔʰ*) ascended the throne and established a similar administrative system to that of the First Türk Empire, including six outer ministers, three inner ministers, plus several *dudu* (i.e. commanders), *jiangjun* (i.e. generals), and *sima* (i.e. adjutants).[11] It is known that the Chinese titles *dudu* and *jiangjun* were borrowed into Old Turkic as *tutuq* and *säŋün*, meaning "commander" and "general", respectively. However, what is hardly known is that the title *sima* mentioned here was also borrowed into Old Turkic as *simä*, meaning "adjutant", referring to a lower military rank.[12] In the Tońu- quq Inscription, the envoy sent by the Toquz Oγuz qaγan to the Qïtań was called Toŋra Simä, whose title was exactly the same as we have found in the Uyghur administrative system. Besides this, in the Tońuquq Inscription, the envoy dispatched by the Toquz Oγuz qaγan to Tang was Qunï Säŋün, whose title can also be found in the Uyghur administrative system. Considering the fact that the titles of the envoys sent by the Toquz Oγuz qaγan could perfectly match the titles in the Uyghur bureaucratic system, and the fact that within the Toquz Oγuz confederation only the Uyghurs had an independent qaγan, we can ascertain that the Baz Qaγan over Toquz Oγuz mentioned by Tońuquq and Bilgä Qaγan was a Uyghur qaγan, but which one?

Regarding Uyghur history before the year 744, the records are quite scarce in Chinese sources, from which we can only draw a sketchy reigning sequence. Hans Bielenstein has collected all the Chinese sources concerning diplomatic matters and trade between the Uyghurs and Tang, and translated them into English.[13] Here, we are going to focus on the field of politics and military. In 648, Tumidu was killed by his nephew Wuhe (EMC: *ʔɔ-γət*), who had had an affair with the former's wife. However, Wuhe did not manage to win support from the Tang court. He was executed by a Tang general. The son of Tumidu, Porun (EMC: *ba-ɲwinʰ*), was appointed by the Tang court as Grand Silifa (EMC: *ʑi'-liʰ-puat*<OT: *elitbär*), in charge of the military affairs of the Uyghurs.[14] Porun took a very cooperative gesture with the Tang court and made a great contribu- tion to Tang's conquest of the On Oq people. He passed away during the Long- shuo years (ca. 661 to 663). After his death, his nephew Bisudu (EMC: *bjiʰ-suwk- dəwk*) ascended the throne and turned hostile to the Tang.[15] Along with the Pugu (EMC: *bawk-kɔʰ*<OT: Bögü) and Tongluo (EMC: *dəwŋ-la*<OT: *toŋra*) tribes, he plundered the Tang's land. The Tang emperor could not bear such provoca-

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11   Ouyang Xiu et al., *Xin Tangshu* 217a, 6113; Liu Xu et al., *Jiu Tangshu* 195, 5196.
12   G. Shimin, *Studies of the Old Turkic Inscriptions*, Beijing 2005, 109.
13   H. Bielenstein, *Diplomacy and Trade in the Chinese World 589-1276*, Leiden–Boston 2005.
14   The conventional spelling of this title is *eltäbär*. Since scholars have found the original form of this title in the Bactrian inscription as *hilitbēr*, Turkologists are inclined to give the Turkic form as *elitbär*. Cf. N. Sims-Williams, "Ancient Afghanistan and its invaders: Linguistic evidence from the Bactrian documents and inscriptions," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 2002 (116), 225–242; M. Erdal, "Helitbär and some other early Turkic titles and names", forthcoming.
15   *Xin Tangshu* says he was the son of Porun, see *Xin Tangshu* 217a, 6114.

tion and launched a punitive campaign towards the Toquz Oɣuz. The Tang succeeded in putting down the rebellion and included the land of the Toquz Oɣuz as an administrative area of China. Bisudu fled and, from that point onwards, he disappeared from the Chinese sources. The next leader of the Uyghurs was Dujiezhi (EMC: *dəwk-kaɨj'-tɕiă*), whose rule began from in the Yonglong period (the year of the snake, i.e. 680-681).[16]

From Dujiezhi onwards, the records about the Uyghurs in the Chinese sources become even more fragmentary and are sometimes contradictory. According to *Jiu Tangshu*, his successor was Fudifu (EMC: *buwk-tɛjʰ*), whose rule began in the Sisheng period (the year of the monkey, i.e. 684). The next leader was Chengzong (EMC:*dʑiŋ-tsawŋ*), ruling in the middle of the Kaiyuan period (i.e. until 714). From the Chinese sources, we know that in Chuigong I. (the year of rooster, i.e. 685), there was a large-scale migration of the Oɣuz people towards China, partly because of the political turmoil that occurred on the steppe, and partly because of the severe famine.[17] The Chinese government built several stations on the border to receive the refugees from the steppe. At least four groups of the Oɣuz found shelter in Prefecture Liang and Prefecture Gan (today's Gansu Province). They were Uyghur, Qibi (EMC: *kʰit-bjit*), Sijie (EMC: *si-kɛt*< OT: Izgil), and Hun. As they obtained protection from China, in return, they were enrolled into the Chinese Chishui Army.[18] The author of *Xin Tangshu* attributed the political turmoil on the steppe to the invasion of the Türks.[19] This means that the Türks' invasion of Toquz Oɣuz had taken place before the year of the rooster (i.e. 685).[20] The Uyghur Baz qaɣan, who was made into a *balbal* by the Türks, could be either Dujiezhi or his son Fudifu, because the next qaɣan ruled from the year 714 onwards.

Who was the Baz Qaɣan exactly? Between Dujiezhi and his son Fudifu, we have to make a decision. There are many interpretations of *balbal* by modern scholars, but basically it was a custom of the Türk society: in order to honor a hero's achievement, people would erect a stone figure or stone figures at his death, imitating the look of an enemy that he had killed in his lifetime.[21] In the Chinese sources, *balbal* is translated as "stone of the killed".[22] Therefore, Baz Qaɣan should have been killed by the Türk Eltäriš Qaɣan in battle. Between

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16   *Jiu Tangshu* 195, 5197–5198; *Xin Tangshu* 217a, 6113–6114.

17   *Quantangwen* 209, 2119–2120.

18   *Xin Tangshu* 217a, 6114.

19   In *Xin Tangshu*, it is written that "During the reign of Empress Wu, the Türk Qapɣan Qaɣan was very strong, and he occupied the land of Oɣuz. So, the Uyghur along with the Qibi, Sijie and Hun migrated to Prefecture Gan and Prefecture Liang." (cf. *Xin Tangshu* 217a, 6114). Here, the compiler of *Xin Tangshu* made a mistake. During this time, Eltäriš Qaɣan was still alive.

20   The year of the rooster began on 09.02.685 and ended on 29.01.686.

21   L. Jisl: *Balbals, Steinbabas und andere Steinfiguren als Äusserungen der Religiösen Vorstellungen der Ost-Türken*, Prag 1970; *The Orkhon Türks and Problems of the Archaeology of the Second Eastern Türk Kaghanate*, Praha 1997, 61–71.

22   *Zhoushu* 50, 910.

Dujiezhi and his son Fudifu, which one could be the qaɣan who was killed during the battle with Türks before the year 685? The answer is obvious: Dujiezhi, because Fudifu's ruling period began from 684 and ended in 714 or later. We can infer that the main reason for Tang court's being unable to obtain updated information about the Uyghur after Dujiezhi was the Türks' conquest over Toquz Oɣuz. Therefore, based on the Uyghur chronological data preserved in the Chinese sources, we have come to the conclusion that Baz Qaɣan, the ruler of the Toquz Oɣuz mentioned in the Old Turkic inscriptions, should be identified with Dujiezhi in the Chinese records. The phonetic correspondence between *dujiezhi* (EMC: *dəwk-kaɨj'-tɕɨă*) and *baz* is hard to tell. However, this is not the only example where the Turkic title cannot match the transcription in the Chinese sources. We can compare this with the cases of Eltäriš Qaɣan and Qapɣan Qaɣan, whose names in the Chinese sources are written as Gudulu and Mochuo. Here, the Chinese term *dujiezhi* might be a transcription of one of his earlier titles before he had become the Uyghur qaɣan.

Although neither Tońuquq nor Bilgä Qaɣan gave any hint of the date concerning this event, we can still ascertain, with the assistance of the Chinese records, the year in which the Türk troops campaigned towards Ötükän and conquered the Oɣuz people there. *Jiu Tangshu* tells us that, after Dujiezhi's death, his son Fudifu ascended the throne in the Sisheng year (i.e. the year of monkey, 684).[23] This information helps us to ascertain that the Türks must have finished their conquest over the Toquz Oɣuz by the end of the Sisheng year. From then onwards, the Türk qaɣan started to move their horde to the Ötükän.

As the narrative of the Tońuquq Inscription is limited to the reign of Eltäriš Qaɣan, until 691, in order to trace the further activities of the Toquz Oɣuz, we are forced to rely on the other important inscriptions, namely the Kül Tegin and Bilgä Qaɣan inscriptions.[24] At some point before Kül Tegin was twenty-six years old, the great *irkin* of Bayïrqu became the enemy. "We routed and demolished them at Türgi Yargu Lake" (cf. K. E. 34). When Kül Tegin was thirty years old, the Izgil people turned hostile. "Izgil people died; the Toquz Oɣuz people had been my (i.e. Bilgä Qaɣan) own subjects, but they became the enemy because of the disorder in heaven and on earth" (cf. K. N. 4; B. E. 29). The Türk army fought against the Oɣuz five times within that year. "The second time we battled against Ädiz at Qušlaɣaq." "The fourth time we fought at the top of Čuš...we surrounded and killed one clan-warrior and ten people of Toŋra at the funeral of Toŋra Tegin" (cf. K. N. 7; B. E. 31). From the above citations, we are able to gain the impression that during the reign of Qapɣan

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[23]   *Jiu Tangshu* 195, 5198.
[24]   I agree to G. Clauson's view that Tońuquq's memorial was established in the year 716. Yet I disagree with his assumption that the events narrated by Tońuquq occurred as late as 716 (cf. G. Clauson, "Some notes on the inscription of Toñuquq," In: *Studia Turcica* ed. L. Ligeti, Budapest 1971, 125–132). In my doctoral thesis, I have discussed this issue; the conclusion is that Tońuquq limited his narrative to the reign of Eltäriš Qaɣan, which means until the year 691.

Qaɣan, the Oɣuz tribes who resisted the Türk forces were basically Bayïrqu, Ädiz, Toŋra, and Izgil. As the Izgil people had already moved to China in the year 684 together with the Uyghur, the Izgil here might refer to the faction that had remained on the steppe.

Returning to the Chinese records, the Uyghurs after serving in the Chinese army for more than forty years, began to experience conflict and clashes with the local Chinese government and they were forced to leave China. Finally, in 727, the Uyghurs returned to the Ötükän.[25] Due to the scarcity of sources, we are unable to trace further the activities of Toquz Oɣuz during this period. However, it seems that, as the Oɣuz groups who had migrated to China returned to the steppe, they formed a political and military confederation with other Oɣuz groups who had remained on the steppe, to fight against the Türk Empire. Finally, in the year 744, the Uyghurs founded their own empire on the steppe.

It is noteworthy that in the Old Turkic inscriptions, the Uyghurs were never mentioned, except in the final years of the Türk Empire. Instead, the term Toquz Oɣuz, or simply Oɣuz, has always been used to refer to the political confederation. On the contrary, the other Oɣuz groups, such as Bayïrqu, Izgil and Toŋra, were mentioned. From the absence of the Uyghur in the Tońuquq Inscription, the Kül Tegin Inscription and the Bilgä Qaɣan Inscription, we infer that during the Second Türk Empire (ca. 682-745), the Uyghur were only members of the Oɣuz confederation and were not prominent ones. However, in 745, the Uyghur managed to establish an empire of their own. The Chinese sources that we know of state that, at that point, there appeared a new structure of nine Uyghur surnames. The transcriptions of the nine Uyghur surnames are as follows: Yaoluoge, Huduoge, Jueluowu, Mogexihe, Awudi, Gesa, Huwensu, Yaowuge, and Xixiewu. It is difficult to reconstruct their Old Turkic forms. The first one is the surname of the Uyghur royal house. Later on, they also absorbed Basmïl and Qarluq. Thus, there were eleven surnames in total.[26] In the Šine-Usu/Moyun Čor Inscription of the Uyghur Empire, there is a term *on uyɣur*.[27] It seems that the structure of the surnames was not fixed by the Uyghurs. Although there is a lack of direct evidence, we assume that the Uyghurs inherited the traditional political structure of "*toquz*/nine", but replaced the nine Oɣuz surnames with nine Uyghur surnames. Therefore, why did the Uyghurs abandon the traditional nomadic political confederation of *toquz oɣuz*?

By the year 745, as the last Türk qaɣan was killed, the Uyghurs became the new masters of the Eurasian steppe, which means that from then on, they were no longer at the same status as the other members of Toquz Oɣuz. In order to highlight their dominant and special political position, the Uyghurs decided to construct a new political structure consisting of nine Uyghur surnames to replace the old structure of nine Oɣuz surnames. In the Šine-Usu/Moyun Čor

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[25] *Xin Tangshu* 217a, 6114; *Jiu Tangshu* 195, 5198.
[26] *Xin Tangshu* 217a, 6114.
[27] S. E Malov, *Pamjatniki Drevnetjurkskoj Pis'mennosti*. Moskva 1959, 34.

Inscription of the Uyghur Empire, there is a term *säkiz oγuz*, obviously referring to the *toquz oγuz* without the Uyghur.[28] The former Oγuz tribes disintegrated and they gradually disappeared from the historical sources, either Chinese or Turkic. Regarding the migrations of the Oγuz people from Mongolia into Central Asia and even further, P. B. Golden has conducted an excellent piece of research by collecting the relevant sources that are preserved in different languages including those written in Arabic, Persian, and Turkic.[29]

The transformation of the political structure on the steppe from Toquz Oγuz to On Uyghur in the second half of the 8th century had an influential consequence. In the year 840, the Qïrqïz invaded the Uyghur Empire from the north and successfully drove the Uyghurs away from the steppe. However, the Qïrqïz did not stay on the steppe; rather, they returned home, causing a political vacuum on the steppe for a long time, until the Mongols arose and established a new Eurasian empire in the 13th century. If the Toquz Oγuz confederation had not been disintegrated by the Uyghurs, there would have been a political force to succeed the Uyghurs in 840. In other words, the continuity of the Eurasian political tradition was broken by the Uyghurs. Michael Drompp, although from other perspectives, termed this phenomenon of the political vacuum, which was caused by Qïrqïz's destroying of Uyghurs, as the "break of the Orkhon tradition".[30]

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[28] Malov, *Pamjatniki,* 35; T. Moriyasu and A. Ochir, *Provisional Report of Researches on Historical Sites and Inscriptions in Mongolia from 1996-1998.* Toganaka 1999, 179.

[29] B. P. Golden, "The Migrations of the Oğuz," *Archivum Ottomanicum* IV. The Hague 1972, 45-84.

[30] M. Drompp, "Breaking the Orkhon Tradition: Kirghiz adherence to the Yenisei region after A. D. 840," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 119/3 (1999), 390–403.