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Historical significance of tribal Tamgas and its relation to the runic script

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Abstract

This article studies the traditions of the Tamga and comprehensively examines its nature and significance for the peoples of Central Asia. The research presents interpretation of specific arguments and research reviews regarding the scope of Tamga use. By shedding light on the role of the Tamga in different tribes in terms of studying the ethnic history, the article considers the scientific concepts on formation and use of symbols. Studying the Tamga reveals its role in addressing the social issues. The common features that the Tamgas of different Turkic peoples have indicate the ethnic kinship between them.

Keywords: Turkic peoples, Symbol, Clan, Arameans, Totem.

Significado histórico de los Tamgas tribales y su relación con la escritura rúnica

Resumen

Este artículo estudia las tradiciones del Tamga y examina exhaustivamente su esencia e importancia para los pueblos de Asia Central. La investigación presenta la interpretación de argumentos específicos y revisiones de investigación con respecto al alcance de uso de Tamga. Al arrojar luz sobre la importancia del Tamga de diferentes tribus en términos de estudio de la historia étnica, el artículo considera los conceptos científicos sobre la formación y el uso de símbolos. El estudio de la Tamga revela su papel en el tratamiento de los problemas sociales. Las características comunes que tienen los Tamgas de diferentes pueblos turcos indican el parentesco étnico entre ellos.

Palabras clave: Pueblos turcos, Símbolo, Clan, Los arameos, Tótem.

1. INTRODUCTION

The word “Tamga” represents a certain symbol that denotes the worldview of the Turkic peoples. A complete scientific definition of the origin of the Turkic-Mongolian word “Tamga” is given in historical and philological terms. In the definition dictionary of the Russian language, D. N. Ushakov gives the following definition for “Tamga”:

1) A property mark that was common among Mongolian pastoralists. It was imprinted on trees, weapons, skin of animals, etc.

2) Monetary tax levied for trade, arts and crafts in some Eastern countries and in Russia after the Mongol invasion in the 13th century and had been existing until the 16th-17th centuries. It is also said about the origin of the word Tamga from the Turkic-Mongolian language (USHAKOV, 1935-1940).

At the same time, the researcher also expressed an opinion about the history of Tamga's origin in relation to private property. Translated from the Turkic-Mongolian language, the word "Tamga" has a unique deep essence and a long history of formation. A philologist and researcher Sh. Bekmagambetov, gives the following definition:

Tamga is an image of special symbolism that has a genealogical basis, ultimately representing a worldview concept common to certain humanity, is usually considered sacred, but at the same time has an unusual symbolic sign, which is an underlying image (BEKMAGAMBETOV, 2010).

Studying the tribal-clannish Tamgas, it is possible to examine not only the history of the Kazakh tribes, but also the historical and kinship relations between the Turkic peoples. N. Aristov, referring to the historical significance of clannish emblems, assures that the historical relations between the Turkic peoples can be defined:

...Tamgas – especially when they are collected and studied from a possibly large number of Turkic tribes and nationalities that maintain a nomadic and tribal lifestyle – can serve as very important indicators of the ethnic composition of tribes and clans (ARISTOV, 2007).

At the beginning of the 20th century, M. Tynyshpaev was engaged in studying the history of Tamgas of different tribes and clans. Relying on actual facts, he described the similarity of tribal Tamga between the Kirghiz (Kazakh) and Nogai, Kirghiz (Kazakh) and Bashkir, Kipchak, and Kazan, Tatar tribes. Tynyshpaev, criticizing previous researchers, always made his own conclusions. For example, to the opinion of N. A. Aristov, who said that Tamgas were not presented among the Yakuts, he referred to the research of Kochnev, who had encountered Yakut signs. Tynyshpaev tried to prove that the Yakut tribes had tribal Tamgas as well:

According to ARISTOV, the Yakuts did not have Tamgas. This idea somewhat disconcerted us. Kochnev claims, however, that he personally had the chance to see the Tamgas – □, [, ○, C – although he noted that there is a restricted amount of them.

Thus, Tynyshpaev convinces us that the Yakuts had own symbols. Tynyshpaev proposes a possible version for loss of Yakut signs, having said the following: People who have lost their writing will most probably lose their tribal Tamgas (TYNYSHPAEV, 1990). The Yakut Tamgas mentioned above are especially common among Kazakh tribes, for example, the symbol of the round moon. The similarity of the outline of symbols illustrates the relationship between the Yakut and Kazakh peoples. Ethnographer and historian Artykbaev, who has studied the lyrical poem “Kozy Korpesh – Bayan Sulu”, associates the name of the main character of the poem, Bayan Sulu, with the word “bayana” and concludes the following: Ethnographic sources prove that the image of ‘Bayan’ was widely spread not only

among the Teleuts, but also among the Chelkars, Kumandins, Shors, Yakuts, Buryats, Kalmyks, Mongols. In the Kazakh language, the concept of “Baiterek”, “Baisheshek”, “Baigyz”, “Baitobet”, and others are closely related to the sacred meaning of the word “Bay” (“Bayana”). This poem led to the strengthened connection of the Kazakh people with the Yakuts and other peoples (ARTYKBAEV, 2014).

Researcher of tribal Tamgas and petroglyphs Rogozhinsky wrote about the significance of symbols in the study of the history of the Turkic peoples:

Symbols are authentic, numerous, geographically widespread, diverse, interconnected in the context of other monuments of archeology and epigraphy, and conceivably are the most informative resource on a number of problems of the medieval history of the Turkic peoples (ROGOZHINSKIY, 2014).

Similarities in the engravings of Tamgas of ancient tribes were found along the Yenisey River, in Tambalytas on the Kazakh land, in Tamgabel in Kyrgyzstan, found in many places, indicate a historical connection. Studying the spread of the Tamga it is possible to conclude that the Turkic peoples are widely dissimilated and the symbols are located in the relief zone. The famous archaeologist Kisilev expressed the opinion that the Bitig script in the Yenisey is closely related to the Tamgas. The researcher of the Tamga of the Bashkir people, Kuzeev, studying the history of symbols, discovered the historical connection of the Turkic peoples. Ethnic tribes and clannish divisions are of particular interest to our topic. Bashkir

ethnonyms comprises the names of those peoples and tribes that to some extent participated in the formation of the ethnic composition of the Bashkirs (for example, the tribes Nogai-Jurmats, Mishar-Jurmats, Sart-Kalmak, Turkmen-Kudey; clannish divisions Kazakh, Kirghiz, Qarakalpaqs, Qizilbash, Tazhik, Uzbeks, Tatars, Chuvash, Mokshas, Cheremis, Ar, etc). The same group includes tribal names of clannish divisions; they emerged as a result of mutual mixing of Turkic or later Bashkir tribes (Tugus, Tau, Targyn, Un, Burzyan, Cumans, Kankalis, etc.) (KUZEEV, 1974). The researcher, referring to the connection between the Turkic peoples through the connections between the Tamgas, wrote that the Bashkirs were divided and had their own distinctive features. Although the tribe's Tamgas were unique, the original features have also remained.

The stable continuity of the Turkic Tamgas provides an opportunity for the original or ancient outlines of tribal Tamgas and signs. It also provides an opportunity for comparison, which is oftentimes held within one or neighboring ethnic groups.

Looking at the relief of Tamga, Kuzeev discussed what nations they can have a connection with (KUZEEV, 1974).

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The theoretical and methodological basis of the study were the opinions put forward in the works of prominent researchers and

ethnographers such as K. Sartkozhauly, M. Tomakov, A. Kurymzhanova, N. Aristov, Sh. Bekmagambetov and many others, as well as archival documents found in Central State Archive of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Orenburg Regional State Archive and Central State Archive of Uzbekistan.

In order to conduct presented work, such methods as historical-comparative, historical-systematic, semantic and semiotic methods were used.

Based on the research of R. G. Kuzeev, N. A. Aristov and M. Tynyshpaev, the article provided the conclusions about the relationship between the Kazakh and Bashkir tribal Tamgas, as well as the connection among modern Turkic, Azerbaijani, and Turkmen peoples by the ancient Oghuz Tamgas, and the connection between the Yakut (Sakha) tribal Tamgas within the Kazakh and Kirghiz peoples. The presence of common Tamgas in Turkic-speaking tribes of different ethnic groups indicates their ethnic kinship. Therefore, it is necessary to consider the viewpoint of Aristov, who in the 19th century stated that it is impossible to find the exact historical truth without studying all the Tamgas of the ancestral tribes that spread throughout the Eurasian steppe.

This article aimed to analyze the contradictions that currently arise on the origin of the spelling “Bitig”. Based on the study of the inscription of the ancient Turkic script “Bitig” (rune), it is proposed to use instead of the name of the rune script not runic or cuneiform script,

but the term “Bitig” or “Bitik” for scientific use. The authors sought to verify, based on research work, the denial of assumptions that may be caused by Phoenician-Aramaic and Sogdian writing concerning the history of the origin of the Bitig script. The article described the influence of the Tamga of an ancient tribe on the writing of the Bitig that inhabited the steppe of Eurasia. In turn, the authors do not deny the influence of the Bitig script on other world writings and the influence of the world’s ancient writings on the Bitig script.

3. RESULTS

In each of the clannish tribes, the possession of ancient Tamgas was characteristic of almost all Turkic peoples. Of particular importance is the study of the history of the Tamga associated with the ancient history of the Turkic peoples, as well as the establishment of relationships between them. In the course of studying the individual Tamgas of each Turkic people, it is necessary to pay attention to the common Tamgas of the Turkic peoples. Because by ignoring Tamgas of all the Turkic peoples that are common in the steppes of Eurasia, it is impossible to get complete information about the symbols. The Tamga of each clan, which determines its origin and ethnic connection, played a unique role in solving political and social problems. The symbols were presented to newly formed associations of clans and tribes, preserving the features of the main ancient sign. That is, new Tamgas were created with additional signs to the main one. Segizbaev pointed to the source value of the signs. He stressed the

need to study the ethnic history of the Kazakhs, based on external and internal sources of other peoples, including “focusing on the symbols of clans and tribes, which are one of the main sources” (SEGIZBAEV, 2013).

In connection with the history of the origin of the tribal Tamga, having analyzed the works of researchers, it is possible to testify mainly to two different views.

1. Tamgas were formed in association with private property.

2. Tamgas emerged in association with the beliefs of ancient clans and tribes.

Especially evident is a consistency of views of many researchers on the opinion about the emergence of Tamga in relation to property, because the role of Tamga in private property reveals the full meaning of symbols. In his work “Ethnogenesis and ethnic history of the Kazakh people” Aristov wrote his opinion on the connection of signs with property:

In addition to clannish names, as another indicator of the ethnic origin of the Turkic nomads can serve clannish signs associated with clannish life, that is, as an example of clannish ownership of cattle, and also found in other property of the clan, such as an emblem, stamps, signatures, etc (ARISTOV, 2007).

The opinion of Aristov on the origin of signs associated with private property is also supported by the majority of current

researchers. However, concluding that symbols are related only to property, it is impossible to fully reveal the essence and role of symbols. Even Aristov himself admits this fact.

The author of research works on petroglyphs and signs L. R. Kyzylasov refers to the existence of the sacred function of signs. It is confirmed by the presence of sites for performing various ritual ceremonies near the ancient steppe sources with symbols. The Russian researcher Yatsenko, who studied Tamgas of mainly Iranian-speaking peoples, writes that the concept of “communication with the spirits of the dead through individual clannish symbols among the Turkic peoples” has been preserved (YATSENKO, 2012). Yatsenko associates the genesis of Tamga with religious beliefs. It was understood that symbols protect a dynasty or clan from evil. Butanaev writes about the concept of association of symbols with the sky of the ancient Turkic peoples in his research (BUTANAIEV, 2003). The origin of the Tamga in relation to private property is supported by the opinion of Drachuk, who highlights the totem sign and writes: “The original sign – the sign of clannish property – was, with rare exceptions, originally an invention of the totem-progenitor” (DRACHUK, 1959).

The sign of the cross + is possible to attribute to the symbols that are common between ancient Tamgas. This sign is associated with the beliefs of ancient tribes. There are several concepts about the Tamga – infinity or the two directions of the cosmos, etc. In addition, the Tamga of the Trident means power, control from above. In

addition, among the three juzes, the Tamga of the sun can be traced from the sun worship of the nomadic population. Researchers such as Aristov, Drachuk, and Solomonnik, who deeply studied the Tamgas of tribal clans, were convinced that some Tamgas are associated with religious beliefs. Amankos Mektiptegi explains the situation in the following way:

The information load of the Tamga is changed by a geometric reincarnation of the configuration. Therefore, the image of Tamga is not conditional, it has a cryptographic, ideographic meaning, a mirror of a real idea (MEKTIPTEGI, 2009).

It is true that the symbols change. In the subsequent tribes, changes were made to the symbols, keeping them in their original state. Overall, it is possible to assume that two views about the emergence of symbols are correct. Along with the relationship of symbols to private property, some tribal Tamgas originally had a totemic nature. In turn, it is possible to assume that the development of common symbols initially influenced petroglyphs and subsequently influenced the origin of tribal Tamga and initial writing.

Several areas of application of tribal Tamga can be clearly identified:

1. Use of an individual clannish Tamga (in some cases, a private family or a personal sign of a person)
2. Use of Tamga denoting the territory of a certain tribal clan.

3. Tamga, marked on burials.
4. Use as a stamp or signature in documents.

When studying the history of Tamga, authors testify to the wide scope of the symbol's application. Tamga, first of all, meant a sign of property in the earlier times. An outstanding representative of the Russian Oriental Science of the 19th century Aristov, who studied the history of symbols as a frequent use as property, wrote: "Tamga is not a sign of property, but a clannish sign, and it is considered as the definition of only a sign of clannish property" (ARISTOV, 2003). Indeed, it has historically been known that property was originally in a common form. Tamgas emphasized this common quality and were inserted into certain items and on livestock. Aristov emphasizes this by the following words: "It is common to put marking on livestock, and even if they stick to someone else's livestock in the field, no one will take it." Drachuk states the following: "Initially a sign of clannish property in very rare cases was a totemic sign of ancestors". Thus the author supports the opinion that the Tamga originally appeared because of a private nature (ARISTOV, 2003). In nomadic peoples, the method of drawing symbols on livestock, including horses, is practiced to this day.

Researcher of the Bashkir Tamga, Kuzeev, shares the idea of how symbols relate to private families. In addition to private property, clannish Tamgas were also used to mark the territory. In particular, symbols on stones, stone balbals and forest trees indicate that the tribe

lived in that area. In nomadic life, there are symbols indicating to which tribe the pastures belong to. Tamgas in ancient funerary burials determined what kind of tribe they belong to. Tamgas were placed on tombstones as a sign identifying the origin of the deceased. Most of these ancient burials display only the name of the tribe, without the full name or other information about the deceased. One of the reasons for placing the symbols of the deceased during the war on tombstones was that it indicated his origin. Even the burial place of several of the graves have only one symbol. This indicates that the buried people are from the same tribe. During the Jungar invasion, there are only graves with symbols in the area where the battle of Bulanta took place. In some burial places, the full name, surname, year of birth and death of the person are also indicated along with symbols. Such burials are often associated with later period. The presence of Tamgas at burial sites indicates its role similar to that of a passport, which showed the identity of the deceased.

The special importance of these symbols in public life is also emphasized. Researcher of historical monuments on the territory of the West Kazakhstan region S. Azhigali said:

Tamga on the grave monument is, first of all, a symbol, an indicator of the clan (tribe) to which the deceased belonged. Here, it is appropriate to agree with those researchers who see the fundamental traditional meaning as a symbol of clannish belonging, as a synonym for the concept of a “clannish sign”, and showed his support of the opinions of A. N. Kharuzin, V. P. Kurylov, and others (AZHIGALI, 2002).

Tribal symbols were used as signatures, stamps, and to confirm certain documents. Archives show that symbols are often used as signatures in court cases, oaths, and in witness documents. One of these documents is that of 1856 on the transfer of barley to the Kazakhs during the spring sowing, the archive containing the surname, first name and the symbol “O” was saved in the certificate of receipt of miller’s barley (Case file over providing barley to Kazakhs for sowing as a loan in 1856). Another document that was saved is a report “On the Election of the New Khan in the Junior Juz”, which states: “In a letter of the sultans and elders of clans Aday, Bayuly, presenting instead of Zhantore Khan Ayshuakula Bukey Nuralyuly, which we print and put stamp on” in the Orenburg oblast of the Russian Federation archives (Case file over electing new Khans of Younger Horde).

4. CONCLUSION

According to the archives, Tamgas carved on rocks, stones, mounds and other monuments of Eurasia, and the studies of Tamgas indicate that the Tamgas of different tribes play a versatile role in the study of ethnic history. According to historical and archaeological data, it can be concluded that the history of the formation of Tamga of the Kazakh tribes dates back to the ancient Bronze Age and even much earlier. When the complex functional role of Tamga is fully revealed, researchers will definitely learn a lot about the past times. Since it is a kind of a symbol of a clan or a tribe, it is possible to compare it with a

key (code) to the trunk, which can independently describe the history of the past of the same clan or tribe. Tamga may comprise the information on what kind of people the clans and tribes lived in, and even on the beliefs that lasted from ancient times to the late era.

In the study of ethnic history, the significance of the tribal Tamga is very important. The article provided an interpretation of specific arguments and research reviews regarding the numerous ways of use of these symbols. Considering the different definitions of the term “Tamga”, the article also showed the territory of symbols dissemination. Tribal Tamgas supplement the information on the common historical features of the Turkic peoples. The study of tribal Tamgas helps determine the historical ties of the Turkic peoples in kinship relations. The article showed in detail the connections with personal and totemic concepts related to the history of Tamga origin. Moreover, the study indicates that symbols were part of the Turkic peoples’ life, characterizing individual features of a certain tribe acting as an emblem. This aspect reveals the political significance of Tamga. The Turkic peoples can express their freedom through their symbols and testify to the maintenance of democratic relations. During the disintegration of the Turkic peoples, the tribes that were part of each nation preserved their original Tamgas. The spread of symbols from the Altai territory to the Siberian zone, the Caucasus, and the Hungarian land indicates that the Turkic peoples from ancient times have settled and spread on this vast territory.

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