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THE EARLY ESTAMPAGES OF THE TONYUKUK INSCRIPTION IDENTIFIED IN THE COLLECTION OF CENTRAL ASIA AND SIBERIA OF THE IOM, RAS

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Abstract: *The Tonyukuk inscription, also known as the Bain Tsokto monument, was discovered by Elizaveta Klementz not far from the city of Urga (modern Ulaanbaatar) in 1897. The text was published two years later by a prominent Russian researcher Wilhelm Radloff. At the same time 17 photographs of estampages were included in the 4th volume of the “Atlas der Alterthümer der Mongolei”. While these photo copies are still frequently mentioned in the multiple publications concerning the Tonyukuk inscription, only a few specialists are aware that the originals are kept in the Collection of Central Asia and Siberia of the IOM, RAS. Moreover 81 estampages were identified as copies of the Tonyukuk inscription during the full-scale inventory of the Collection that took place in 2021. Thanks to recent publications by V. Tishin, it became obvious that eight similar copies of the monument are preserved in the collection of the Academician Obruchev Museum of Local Lore (Khyakhta). This discovery allowed to specify the authorship and dating of the St. Petersburg copies. The Chinese seal preserved on one of the Khyakhta's estampages suggests that they were produced for the last Qing Amban of Outer Mongolia Sanduo between 1910 and 1911.*

Although the monument has been well studied, some of the preserved at the IOM copies seem to be of great value and could be used by turcologists for controversial text fragments clarification. The paper presents acquisition history and brief description (catalogue) of the preserved copies of text.

Keywords: Bain Tsokto monument, Old Turkic inscription, Turkic runic script, W. Radloff, Sanduo's stampages.

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INTRODUCTION

The discovery of Old Turkic memorial inscriptions erected in honor of Prince Kül Tegin (684–731) and his older brother Bilge Khagan (683–734) made by Russian traveler and archaeologist Nikolai Yadrintsev in the Kosho Tsaidam valley (Mongolia) in 1889, and decipherment of the Old Turkic runiform script by Vilhelm Thomsen in 1893, initiated a systematic study of the history, language, and culture of the nomadic tribes mentioned in the inscriptions under the name *Türk* (𐰽𐰺𐰍, 𐰽𐰺𐰎).

Four years later, in 1897, the voluminous and most completely preserved runiform inscription similar to those already deciphered was discovered in the place Bain Tsokto, between the Nalaikh

post-station and the right bank of the Tuul river. The inscription is graven on two pillars that are still standing. The first and larger stone contains lines 1–36, that start on the narrow side turned to the West, and is continued round towards North. The direct continuation in 27 lines (37–62) likewise begins on the West side of the second stone, more weathered than the first one. On both pillars the inscriptions are incised in vertical lines as in the Orkhon inscriptions, but with difference they are read from left to right.

These stelae, later known as the Tonyukuk, or Bain Tsokto inscriptions, are part of the memorial complex¹, that had been erected in honor of *Tonyukuk* (ca. 646–ca. 726), the chief minister and counselor of three Second Turkic Khaganate rulers, Ilterish Khagan (d. 692), Kapaghan Khagan (ca. 664–716) and Bilge Khagan. The narration in the first person by Tonyukuk allows to specify the authorship and dating of the inscription. It seems to have been incised under the auspices of Tonyukuk between 716 and 719². The monument has a special place among the Old Turkic inscriptions in terms of narration of historical events and vocabulary of Old Turkic.

THE FIRST ESTAMPAGES OF THE TONYUKUK INSCRIPTION

The memorial complex was ‘discovered’³ by Elizaveta Klementz (née Zvereva, 1854–1914) during the expedition to Northern Mongolia on the instructions of the Imperial Botanic Garden. The circumstances related to the monument discovery and the first estampages made by Klementz were described in details by W.W. Radloff in his article “*Eine neu aufgefundene alttürkische Inschrift*” [Radloff, 1898]. It is also known that a year later, in 1898, on the request of the Imperial Academy of Sciences Yakov Shishmarev, the Consul General in Urga at that time, organized an expedition to Nalaikh and Sharshoroot to make copies and photographs of the runiform inscriptions⁴. The expedition was headed by a little-known photographer Ivan Fedorov, who was in charge of making copies⁵.

The estampages made by Elizaveta Klementz and Ivan Fedorov were used by W.W. Radloff for the first translation of the text. Moreover, the majority of them were published in the 4th volume of the “*Atlas der Alterthümer der Mongolei*” published in 1899⁶.

¹ The memorial complex consisted of a building with four columns (not preserved by the time of discovery of the monument), two sarcophagi (225×125; 170×170 cm), two stelae (243×64×32; 215×50×28 cm) with inscriptions, eight stone figures, whose heads have been knocked off, and a row of 289 upright flag stones running to the East. The stelae and the larger sarcophagus are still in place.

² The text describes the military achievements and various merits of Tonyukuk in the formation and expansion of the Second Turkic Khaganate. In all likelihood the inscription was graven before 720, as the struggle against the Basmils is not mentioned [Rykin, Telitsin, 2020, p. 288].

³ First of all, for European academic community. As a Russian researcher Andrei Rudnev justly noted, “almost all ancient monuments in Mongolia were discovered by chance ... the Mongols jealously protect these relics, which they do not comprehend, but which inspire mystical awe, and only through great diplomatic skill one can make a Mongol to blab out or talk about these monuments” [Ramstedt, 1914, p. 34].

⁴ The telegram sent by Yakov Shishmarev dated September 29, 1898 is preserved nowadays at St. Petersburg Branch of the Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences [SPbB ARAS, coll. 142, inv. 1, item 51, f. 43]. For details see: [Ivanov, 2016, p. 110].

⁵ Ivan Fedorov is the most famous and at the same time mysterious photographer, who worked in Mongolia in the second half of the 19th c. The most detailed information about him is presented in the diary of the famous mongolist Aleksei Pozdneevev [Pozdneevev, 1896, p. XXVIII–XXIX]. For other details concerning his activities in Mongolia see: [Ivanov, 2016].

⁶ This fact is mentioned in the introduction to the edition by W.W. Radloff: “Diese Lieferung des Atlas der Alterthümer der Mongolei enthält auf Tafel CV–CVIII die photographischen Aufnahmen der Grabstätte des Tonjukuk (vergl. Altürkische Inschriften der Mongolei, Zweite Folge. St. Petersburg, 1899), welche im Auftrage der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften durch gütige Vermittlung des Kaiserlich-russischen General-Konsul’s in Urga von Photographen Fedoroff ausgeführt worden sind. Auf den Tafeln CIX–CXVI sind die mir vorliegenden Ablatsche der Inschriften reproducirt, welche theils von Frau Klementz theils von Herrn Fedoroff hergestellt sind” [Atlas, 1899].

Nowadays these first Tonyukuk inscription estampages are preserved in the Collection of Central Asia and Siberia of the Institute of Oriental Manuscript, RAS (St. Petersburg)⁷. Twenty copies kept under call numbers **IIAC 455–474** could be divided into two sets according to the type of cotton cloth used for their production⁸. For the estampages with call numbers **IIAC 455, 458, 460, 462, 464, 465, 467, 468, 470, 472, 473, 474** cotton fabric with rather loose texture (threads uneven in thickness, warp threads thicker than weft threads) was used. Moreover, most of these copies (except **IIAC 464, 467, 472, 474**) were retouched: the space between the signs was tinted with red ink, while the signs were outlined with white pigment. Other copies were produced with dense cloth (the warp and weft threads are of the same thickness, giving a slight relief of runiform signs).

The comparison of Elizaveta Klementz' personal letters⁹ and a few notes written in the margins of the previously mentioned set of mostly retouched estampages allows to identify the very first copies as made in 1897¹⁰. One should note that the practice of retouching original copies was widespread at the turn of the 19th–20th cc. in general, and frequently used by eminent researchers like W.W. Radloff, in particular. Later, specialists engaged in Turkic studies pointed out that this method of “improving” had only negative consequences: estampages irreversibly lost their value for further study. Thus, Dmitry Nasilov wrote: “... many scholars, and first of all W.W. Radloff, V. Thomsen, H.N. Orkun and even S.E. Malov, used estampages and photographs of the inscriptions before the Orkhon-Yenisei script was completely deciphered. The latter circumstance had a particularly negative effect on the retouching of copies, as random chips or cracks on stone were perceived as a continuation of strokes of runiform letters. These retouched texts were mainly used as a basis for inscriptions reading and transliteration, so errors wandered through the editions and are even found sometimes in the recent publications” [Nasilov, 1974, p. 205].

The list of the first estampages preserved in the collection of the IOM, RAS and concordance with plates in the 4th volume of ‘Atlas’ edition are given below:

Description	Call number	Retouched	Atlas
Stele I, western side, lines 1–7	IIAC 456	—	CIX-1
Stele I, western side, lines 1–7	IIAC 455	V	CIX-2
Stele I, southern side, lines 8–17	IIAC 457	—	CX-1
Stele I, southern side, lines 8–17	IIAC 458	V	CX-2
Stele I, eastern side, lines 18–24	IIAC 459	—	CXI-1
Stele I, eastern side, lines 18–24	IIAC 460	V	CXI-2
Stele I, northern side, lines 25–35	IIAC 461	—	CXII-1
Stele I, northern side, lines 25–35	IIAC 462	V	CXII-2

⁷ They were identified during the inventory procedures that took place in 2021. The Collection of Central Asia and Siberia is almost unknown to the academic community. It includes 11 sketches and 784 estampages of stelae, cave inscriptions, and other epigraphic monuments of Siberia, Central and Middle Asia. The collection is diversified in terms of dates (from petroglyphs of the Stone and Bronze Ages to the trilingual stele of 1759, erected in honor of the victory of the Manchus on the shore of Lake Issyk-Kul) and languages (epigraphic monuments in eleven languages: ancient Turkic, Arabic, Bulgar-Tatar, Syriac, Manchu, Chinese, Sogdian, Turkic, Tibetan, Mongolian and Sanskrit). The history of this collection, the formation of which was closely related to the activities of prominent Russian explorers of Siberia and Central Asia, archaeologists, linguists and ethnographers, is still insufficiently studied, and a lot of facts require clarification. The items are preserved under call numbers ‘IIAC ...’.

⁸ The copies were made according to the technology described by W.W. Radloff. For details see: [Radlov, 1893].

⁹ I would like to thank the Minusinsk Local Lore Museum of N. Martyanov for providing photo copies of Elizaveta Klementz' personal letters and notes.

¹⁰ In fairness, it is worth noting that W.W. Radloff used more vague copies for retouching.

Stele II, western side, lines 36–44	IIAC 463	—	CXIII-1
Stele II, western side, lines 36–44	IIAC 465	V	CXIII-2
Stele II, western side, lines 36–44	IIAC 464	—	—
Stele II, southern side, lines 45–50	IIAC 466	—	CXIV-1
Stele II, southern side, lines 45–50	IIAC 468	V	CXIV-2
Stele II, southern side, lines 45–50	IIAC 467	—	—
Stele II, eastern side, lines 51–58	IIAC 469	—	CXV-1
Stele II, eastern side, lines 51–58	IIAC 474	—	CXV-2
Stele II, eastern side, lines 51–58	IIAC 470	V	CXV-3
Stele II, northern side, lines 59–62	IIAC 471	—	CXVI-1
Stele II, northern side, lines 59–62	IIAC 473	V	CXVI-2
Stele II, northern side, lines 59–62	IIAC 472	—	—

SANDUO ESTAMPAGES OF THE TONYUKUK INSCRIPTION

Other eighty-one estampages of the Tonyukuk inscription were identified during inventory procedures of the Collection of Central Asia and Siberia in 2021. Nowadays they are preserved under call numbers **IIAC 613–697**. These estampages differ significantly: the copies were produced on thin Chinese rice paper. On the tag made of brownish wrapping paper and kept with the estampages nowadays one could read: “III 478 nova. Pamiatnik Tonyukuk (snimki AI’-da) [Monument of Tonyukuk (copies by AI-da)]”.

The provenance and acquisition history of these estampages have remained obscure until recently. Thanks to recent publications by Vladimir Tishin [Tishin, 2020; 2021] it became obvious that eight similar copies of the Tonyukuk inscription are preserved in the collection of the Academician Obruchev Museum of Local Lore (Kyakhta). According to the note on a fragmentary preserved envelope with the post office seal of the city of Troitskosavsk, “snimki San’-do [copies by Sanduo]” were sent to the the Troitskosavsko-Kyakhta Branch of the Priamursky Department of the Imperial Russian Geographical Society by a famous scholar Władysław Kotwicz in 1913 [Tishin, 2020, p. 72–73].

On one of the etampages preserved in Kyakhta one can find a Chinese red seal 三多所拓 (sanduo suo ta) ‘copied by Sanduo’. The seal allows to specify the authorship and dating of the copies. The estampages were most probably made for the last Qing Amban of Outer Mongolia from 1909 to 1911, Sanduo (三多, courtesy name Liuqiao 六橋, 1876–1941). It is known that Sanduo was appointed as Amban responsible for Tsetsen Khan and Tüsheet Khan aimags on November 26, 1909, and arrived to Urga (modern Ulaanbaatar) in March 1910. On December, 1911, he was forced to flee to China as the Outer Mongolia declare independence¹¹. Remembered and frequently criticized for his politics in the Outer Mongolia, Sanduo is rarely mentioned as a person who took a deep interest in Mongolian archeology and history. Meanwhile, a Mongol by origin, he was engaged in preservation of the cultural heritage of the country. Thus, Władysław Kotwicz, head of the archaeological expedition to Mongolia in 1912, noted in his report: “The destruction of the pavilion (of the memorial complex in honor of Prince Kül Tegin) drew attention of the last Manchu Amban in Urga Sanduo. He was an antique-lover, who aimed to copy all

¹¹For Sanduo life and activities in Mongolia see: [Batbayar, 1999, p. 139; Nakami, 2005, p. 356; Onon, Pritchatt, 1989, p. 12–13; Powell, 1925, p. 646].

epigraphic monuments located in the area under his jurisdiction. To that end, Sanduo sent all over the place the officials, who made estampages for him using traditional Chinese method” [Kotvich, 1914, p. 52].

Moreover, Sanduo’s estampages, most probably later incorrectly marked as “copies by Al’-da”, are mentioned in one of the Russian Committee for Middle and East Asia Exploration (RCMA) reports from 1913: “A letter dated May 20, from Ts.Zh. Zhamtsarano addressed to the [Committee] chairman, accompanied herewith two parcels, estampages of the Orkhon inscriptions, 49 nos. in total were presented; the estampages were discovered in the pantry of the expelled from Urga Manchu Amban Sanduo. According to W.W. Radloff, these are the estampages of the Tonyukuk inscription” [RCMA, 1913, p. 32].

Taking these facts into consideration, one can assume that the estampages made for Amban Sanduo in 1910–1911 were sent to St. Petersburg in 1913 by a Buryat scholar and one of the leading figures in Mongolian politics at that time Jamsrangiin Tseveen (1881–1942). The published RCMA report mentions 49 nos¹². Further research is required to identify the estampages preserved in Collection of Central Asia and Siberia of the IOM (81 items) and the Kyakhta Museum (8 items)¹³ with the ones mentioned in the RCMA report from 1913.

It is known that the Imperial Academy of Sciences considered the “publication of the photographs and estampages made by Władysław Kotwicz, as a continuation of the “Atlas der Altertümer der Mongolei” published by W.W. Radloff” [RCMA, 1913, p. 32], but due to the Russian revolution of 1917 and the events that followed, these intentions were never translated into reality.

The list of the estampages preserved at the IOM, RAS is presented in the table below. All copies are made on Chinese paper and unretouched. The sides of the stelae are marked in the margins by Chinese characters (indicating the cardinal points) and references to the estampages published in ‘Atlas’ are written by unknown person who was probably engaged in sorting the materials later. The notes are given in Chinese and Cyrillic (old orthography is preserved)¹⁴.

Description	Call number	Dimensions (cm)	Notes in the margins
Stele I, western side, lines 1–7	ЦАС 613	231×43	西; № 6; CIX-1
Stele I, western side, lines 1–7 (upper part of the stele)	ЦАС 615	163×42	西; № 13; CIX-1
Stele I, western side, lines 1–7	ЦАС 616	229×42	西; № 18; CIX-1
Stele I, western side, lines 1–7	ЦАС 617	229×40	西; 35; CIX-1
Stele I, western side, lines 1–7	ЦАС 648	229×40	西; Радлов; CIX; CIX-1
Stele I, western side, lines 1–7	ЦАС 649	228×42	南西; В. Радлов; CIX; CIX-1
Stele I, western side, lines 1–7	ЦАС 650	228×41	西; В.В. Радлов; CIX; CIX-1
Stele I, western side, lines 1–7	ЦАС 651	226×42	西; В.В. Радлов; 4 в.; CIX; CIX-1
Stele I, western side, lines 1–7	ЦАС 652	226×41	西; Атласъ В.В. Радлова; вып. 4; CIX; CIX; CIX-1
Stele I, western side, lines 1–7	ЦАС 653	224×40	西; Радлов; CIX; CIX-1

¹² The used ‘№№’ does not allow to assume whether ‘sets’ or ‘items’ were meant. Only a few estampages were numbered.

¹³ It is also impossible to exclude the possibility that similar copies may be kept in other museums of Siberia.

¹⁴ The most recent large reform of the Russian spelling was prepared by Aleksey Shakhmatov and carried out shortly after the 1917 Revolution. The usage of pre-revolutionary orthography allows to assume that the notes were written down on the estampages from 1913 to 1918.

Stele I, western side, lines 1–7 (lower part of the stele)	ЦАС 614	69×43	№ 12; CIX-1
Stele I, southern side, lines 8–17	ЦАС 618	226×52	南; № 4; CX-1
Stele I, southern side, lines 8–17	ЦАС 619	227×48	南; № 8; CX-1
Stele I, southern side, lines 8–17	ЦАС 620	234×52	南; № 16; CX-1
Stele I, southern side, lines 8–17	ЦАС 621	226×52	南; № 20; CX-1
Stele I, southern side, lines 8–17 (lower part of the stele)	ЦАС 622	65×56	№ 21. CX-1
Stele I, southern side, lines 8–17	ЦАС 623	228×52	南; 33; CX-1
Stele I, southern side, lines 8–17	ЦАС 624	232×51	南; № 34; CX-1
Stele I, southern side, lines 8–17	ЦАС 654	231×51	南; Атлас В.В. Радлова; 4 ^{изд} в.; CX; CX; CX-1
Stele I, southern side, lines 8–17	ЦАС 655	227×51	南; Атлас Радлова; IV; CX; CX-1
Stele I, southern side, lines 8–17	ЦАС 656	227×50.5	南; CX; CX-1
Stele I, southern side, lines 8–17	ЦАС 657	223×50	南; В.В. Радлов; вып. 4; CX; CX-1
Stele I, southern side, lines 8–17 (upper part of the stele)	ЦАС 658	176×52	南; В.В. Радлов; 4 вып.; CX; CX-1
Stele I, southern side, lines 8–17 (upper part of the stele)	ЦАС 659	149×49	南; CX; CX-1
Stele I, southern side, lines 8–17 (upper part of the stele)	ЦАС 660	89×60	南左; В. Радлов; CX; CX-1.
Stele I, southern side, lines 8–17 (middle part of the stele)	ЦАС 663	44×20	CX-1
Stele I, southern side, lines 8–17 (lower part of the stele)	ЦАС 661	58×54	CX-1
Stele I, southern side, lines 8–17 (lower part of the stele)	ЦАС 662	45×32	CX-1
Stele I, eastern side, lines 18–24	ЦАС 625	226×41	东; № 9; CXI-1
Stele I, eastern side, lines 18–24	ЦАС 626	225×41	东; № 14; CXI-1
Stele I, eastern side, lines 18–24	ЦАС 627	229×42	东; № 19; CXI-1
Stele I, eastern side, lines 18–24	ЦАС 628	225×43	东; 28; CXI-1
Stele I, eastern side, lines 18–24	ЦАС 629	227×40	东; 37; CXI-1
Stele I, eastern side, lines 18–24	ЦАС 664	227×43	东; В.В. Радлов; 4 вып.; CXI; CXI-1
Stele I, eastern side, lines 18–24	ЦАС 665	227×41	东; Атлас В. В. Радлова; 4 ^{изд} в.; CXI; CXI-1
Stele I, eastern side, lines 18–24 (upper part of the stele)	ЦАС 667	115×44	东; Атлас В.В. Радлова; 4 ^{изд} вып.; CXI; CXI-1
Stele I, eastern side, lines 18–24 (lower part of the stele)	ЦАС 666	116×42	В.В. Радлов; 4 ^{изд} ; CXI; CXI-1
Stele I, northern side, lines 25–35	ЦАС 630	225×53	北; № 29; CXII-1
Stele I, northern side, lines 25–35	ЦАС 668	239×52	北; CXII; CXII-1
Stele I, northern side, lines 25–35	ЦАС 669	233×52	北; CXII; CXII-1
Stele I, northern side, lines 25–35	ЦАС 670	232×52	北; В.В. Радлов; в. 4; CXII; CXII-1

Stele I, northern side, lines 25–35	ЦАС 671	232×52	北; CXII; CXII-1
Stele I, northern side, lines 25–35 (upper part of the stele)	ЦАС 631	96×51	北; 38. CXII-1
Stele I, northern side, lines 25–35 (lower part of the stele)	ЦАС 632	143×51	CXII-1
Stele II, western side, lines 36–44	ЦАС 633	184×64	西; № 1; CXIII-1
Stele II, western side, lines 36–44	ЦАС 634	186×65	西; № 5; CXIII-1
Stele II, western side, lines 36–44	ЦАС 635	183×64	西; № 7; CXIII-1
Stele II, western side, lines 36–44	ЦАС 636	182×63	西; 36; CXIII-1
Stele II, western side, lines 36–44	ЦАС 672	187×64	西; CXIII; CXIII-1
Stele II, western side, lines 36–44	ЦАС 673	183×63	西; CXIII
Stele II, western side, lines 36–44 (upper part of the stele)	ЦАС 674	156×62	西; В. Радлов; CXIII; CXIII-1
Stele II, western side, lines 36–44 (lower part of the stele)	ЦАС 637	62×37	41; CXIII-1
Stele II, southern side, lines 45–50	ЦАС 638	184×50	№ 2; CXIV-1
Stele II, southern side, lines 45–50	ЦАС 639	186×50	№ 11; CXIV-1
Stele II, southern side, lines 45–50	ЦАС 640	183×49	31; CXIV-1
Stele II, southern side, lines 45–50	ЦАС 641	183×49	40; CXIV-1
Stele II, southern side, lines 45–50	ЦАС 675	185×50	CXIV; CXIV-1
Stele II, southern side, lines 45–50	ЦАС 676	183×49	CXIV; CXIV-1
Stele II, southern side, lines 45–50	ЦАС 677	183×49	В.В. Радлов; в. 4.; CXIV; CXIV-1
Stele II, southern side, lines 45–50	ЦАС 678	181×48	CXIV; CXIV-1
Stele II, southern side, lines 45–50	ЦАС 679	180×48	В. Радлов; в. 4.; CXIV; CXIV-1
Stele II, southern side, lines 45–50	ЦАС 680	177×48	В.В. Радлов; CXIV
Stele II, eastern side, lines 51–58	ЦАС 642	185×63	东; № 3; CXV-1
Stele II, eastern side, lines 51–58	ЦАС 643	178×63	东; 32; CXV-1
Stele II, eastern side, lines 51–58	ЦАС 644	182×63	东; 39; CXV-1
Stele II, eastern side, lines 51–58	ЦАС 645	186×32	№ 10. CXVI-1
Stele II, eastern side, lines 51–58	ЦАС 681	185×64	东; CXV; CXV-1
Stele II, eastern side, lines 51–58	ЦАС 682	184×63	东; CXV; CXV-1
Stele II, eastern side, lines 51–58	ЦАС 683	183×63	东; CXV; CXV-1
Stele II, eastern side, lines 51–58	ЦАС 684	180×62	东; CXV; CXV-1
Stele II, eastern side, lines 51–58	ЦАС 685	178×63	东; CXV; CXV-1
Stele II, northern side, lines 59–62	ЦАС 646	191×32	№ 15. CXVI-1
Stele II, northern side, lines 59–62	ЦАС 647	191×32	№ 17. CXVI-1
Stele II, northern side, lines 59–62	ЦАС 686	190×33	CXVI; CXVI-1
Stele II, northern side, lines 59–62	ЦАС 687	190×32	CXVI; CXVI-1
Stele II, northern side, lines 59–62	ЦАС 688	187×32	CXVI; CXVI-1
Stele II, northern side, lines 59–62	ЦАС 689	186×32	CXVI; CXVI-1

Stele II, northern side, lines 59–62	ЦАС 690	186×32	CXVI; CXVI-1
Stele II, northern side, lines 59–62	ЦАС 691	178×31	北北; CXVI; CXVI-1
Stele II, northern side, lines 59–62	ЦАС 692	173×40	北; CXVI; CXVI-1
Stele II, northern side, lines 59–62 (lower part of the stele)	ЦАС 693	45×16	CXVI-1

CONCLUSION

Since the first edition of the Tonyukuk inscription by W.W. Radloff in 1899, the monument has repeatedly drawn attention of the researchers, who proposed new readings and translations of the text fragments¹⁵. Nowadays the inscription can be considered to be rigorously studied, however discussions concerning interpretation of individual passages are still in place. Taking into consideration the fact that Old Turkic monuments are inevitably suffer gradual destruction due to erosion and environment influences¹⁶, early copies have enduring value.

The eighty-one estampages made for Amban Sanduo around 1910 represent the appearance of the Tonyukuk inscription in the state closest to the time of its discovery and could be used as additional sources for clarification of individual text fragments. The significance of the newly identified copies for the text study could not be overestimated, as unlike the first estampages made by Elizaveta Klementz and Ivan Fedorov in 1898–1898 and Gustaf John Ramstedt in 1909¹⁷, they have never been published before¹⁸.

ABBREVIATIONS

IOM RAS – Institute of Oriental manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Sciences

RCMA – Russian Committee for Middle and East Asia Exploration

SPbB ARAS – St. Petersburg Branch of the Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences

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¹⁵ For the study of the inscription, related problems and bibliography during the 20th c. see [Rybatzki, 1997; Bazylkhan, 2005, p. 107].

¹⁶ The process cannot be stopped by conservation and preservation procedures. See: [Bazylkhan, 2010].

¹⁷ The materials collected by Gustaf John Ramstedt during his field studies in 1909 were published only in 1958 by his student Pentti Aalto [Aalto, 1958].

¹⁸ As a result of the precise study of the eight copies preserved in Kyakhta, Vladimir Tishin provided a few examples of discrepancies that could be illuminated by the copies [Tishin, 2020, p. 74–78].

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