Apropos a Silver Goblet with Qarākhānid Inscription

By Michael Fedorov, Ilmenau

In May 1991 M. Mamyrbaev, student of the Kirgiz State University, brought to Dr. A. MoKEEV, the head of the chair of Ancient and Medieval History, a silver goblet with an ancient inscription. The goblet (Fig. 1, 2) was found by some shepherd at a dzhailoo (summer alpine pasture) in the Aq Shyiraq river basin in the Terskei Alatau mountains. About 100 km north-west of this dzhailoo at the southern shore of Issyk Kul lake there was the medieval town of Barskhan (nowadays Barskaun hillfort), which was the capital of an Eastern Qarākhānid appanage principality. So it seems that the Aq Shyiraq river basin was a dzhailoo, where the rulers of Barskhan spent the sultry summertime.

The goblet originally had a foot formed like a truncated cone, but the shepherd broke it off to have it cast into some silver jewelry. Later an

Fig. 1: Fragment of the decorative Arabic inscription and part of the goblet.
acquaintance of M. Mamyrbaev, a teacher in the village school, bought the goblet from the shepherd.

Dr. A. Mokeev asked me to read the inscription. It turned out to be an Arabic inscription containing the title of some Qarākhānīd ruler:

الخاقان الأجل السيد الملك المظفر عمد الدولة و سد د الفيلة طفر قرائاقان ولي أمير المومين

"Khaqan Most Illustrious, Lord Victorious Triumphant, Buttress of the State and Righteousness of the Religious Community, Ťoghrul Qarā-khaqān Friend of the Amir of True Believers"

I made a palaeographic analysis of the inscription, which was written in an ornamental kufic style. There are analogies to some inscriptions on architectural monuments in Turkmenistan, Kirgizstan and Uzbekistan, dating from 1055–1113. I also identified ʿImād al-Daula Ťoghrul Qarā-khaqān, who is being mentioned in the inscription on the goblet, with the Qarākhānīd ʿImād al-Daula Ťoghrul Qarā-khaqān. This name appears on the coins of AH 461 Marghīnān, AH 462 Tarāz and AH 462 Shāsh.¹ V.V. Bartold² dated the reign of this ruler to 451–467/1059–1074. Following this I wrote the article about the goblet.³

The reservoir of the goblet holds 1.8 litre. It is 13.7 cm high and has a diameter of 15.6 cm. It was made of 903 standard silver and cast in a special mould. A crude staple-like handle was made of 917.8 standard silver and fastened to the reservoir with iron rivets. The fact that reservoir and handle were made

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² V.V. Bartold: „Ocherk istorii Semirech’ia.“ In: Sochinenia. T. 2, Ch. 1. Moskva 1963, p. 44.
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Fig. 3: 1: Reconstruction of the original form of the goblet (with the foot and without the handle); 2, 3, 4: Sarmatian bronze or copper cauldrons of the 6th to 5th centuries BC.

of different standard silver, indicates that the reservoir and the handle were not made simultaneously. The handle was made at the same time as the inscription, because there was an empty part left in the inscription where the handle could be riveted to the reservoir. As a matter of fact, this clumsy handle looks quite odd and spoils the exquisite appearance of the goblet.

When I was working on this article, my attention was drawn to the fact that the goblet when it still had its foot resembled the goblet-shaped bronze or copper cauldrons which were widespread among the ancient nomads who populated vast steppe areas of South-Western Siberia, Kazakhstan, Central Asia and South-Eastern Europe. Those nomads were called Scythians in South-Eastern Europe, Sarmatians in areas south of the Ural, and Sacae in Kazakhstan and Central Asia.

This thought had occurred to me often and I started to peruse the archaeological literature on those ancient nomads and searched for analogies. Most striking is the resemblance between the form of the goblet and the bronze or copper cauldrons (Fig. 3, Nr. 2–4) of Sarmatian tribes of the 6th to 5th centuries BC.\(^4\) The similarity of the form of the goblet with one of the Sarmatian cauldrons (Fig. 3, Nr. 2) is especially noteworthy. Of course, the form of the goblet's foot could have been somewhat different, but when I drew the goblet with the foot of the same form, that had this Sarmatian cauldron, both vessels looked almost identical (cf. Fig. 3, Nr. 1 and 2). The main region of origin of Sarmatians in the 6th to 5th centuries BC was thought to be the steppes south of the Ural, but archaeologists of Central Asia established that some Sarmatian tribes were also living in Central Asia.

This fact made me conclude that the goblet in question was patterned after the Sarmatian cauldron and was made about one and a half millenium before the time, when the Qarâkhânid inscription was added. The outstanding Central-Asian scholar Abu Raihan Biruni (973–1051), by the way a contemporary of 'Imâd al-Daula Toghrul Qarâkhâqân, left us very interesting information which is quite relevant for us:

"In the Land of Turks (Turkistan) there are people known under the name 'Those who dig up (ancient) graves' (nabash). They search in the Land of Turks for ancient graves and dig them up, but do not find there anything apart from (the things) which cannot be spoiled by earth: gold, silver and other metals."^5

Obviously the nabashes made a thorough job. As to my experience, I know that almost all ancient nomad barrows (especially big and rich ones) were plundered by those unscrupulous robbers.

So it appears that the goblet, patterned after the Sarmatian cauldron, belonged to some ancient nomad priest and most probably was used as a ritual vessel for preparing or drinking intoxicating beverage (known to Zoroastrians as haoma or soma). This ritual vessel was buried in a barrow together with its owner. About one and a half millenium later the barrow of the ancient nomad priest was plundered by some nabash, who unearthed the silver goblet. This goblet (apart from being silver, a kind of curiosity) was then sold or presented to the Qarâkhânid ruler 'Imâd al-Daula Toghrul Qarâkhâqân (451–467/1059–1074), who ordered to embellish the goblet with his sumptuous title and an ugly handle. This handle in a way looks like a barbarian excess which spoils the otherwise exquisite form of the goblet. As a matter of fact, the goblet without this handle feels quite cosy and comfortable when held in both hands (and that was how it was used). When the goblet is filled up to its full capacity (which is 1.8 litre) it is difficult to hold it with one hand and the liquid oozes from the holes made for the rivets by which the handle was fastened to the reservoir. If the handle was made simultaneously with the reservoir, it would have been soldered to it, the same way as the truncated cone foot was originally made.

The goblet of 'Imâd al-Daula Toghrul Qarâkhâqân was brought to Barskhân either by himself or by some of his heirs. Whence it got to the khânian dzhalilo, the high-mountain and crisp-air pastureland of the Aq Shyiraq river basin that is abundant with mellow grass, young mares and fresh koumiss on which nomads live.

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Lexicographical Problems in Written Modern Uyghur

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Introduction

Modern Uyghur or New Uyghur or Eastern Turki as it was called some time ago and as GUNNAR JARRING – the most eminent scholar on this language – preferred to call it, is spoken and written by a number of people that can only be estimated. The round number of 8 mio comes probably near to reality. Over 90% of them live in the Western-most province of China, i.e. Xinjiang (Sinkiang), or as we prefer to say: Eastern Turkistan, i.e. Doğu Türkestan.

Eastern Turkistan is inhabited by a number of other nationalities, which partly have a minority status and of which most speak another Turkic language. During this century the demographic situation has changed dramatically in that country, due to planned sinisization, as we also know it from Tibet, where it has resulted in almost the complete destruction of the indigenous culture.

The effect that the demographic development had was not that strong on the Uyghurs, although a look at statistics has something alarming for the future.

According to the official censuses in the year 1940 there were 2,941,000 Uyghurs and 294,000 Han-Chinese living in Sinkiang. In 1982 the numbers were 5,949,664 Uyghurs, and 5,286,533 Chinese. While the number of the Uyghurs, and by the way also of the Kirgiz and Özbeks has doubled, that of the Kazaks even tripled, Han-Chinese have become 18 times more within these 40 years. Thus it does not take wonder when many places in Sinkiang make rather a Chinese impression instead of a Turkic one, except that labels and posters are usually written in Chinese and in Uyghur.

One of the highest percentage of Chinese inhabitants of course is to be found in the capital Ürümqi with 75,62%, but even in smaller places the Chinese are now in the majority, so for example in Komul/Hami, where they make 68,09%.