ON Y²IL¹S²G¹ IN THE KÜL TEGIN AND BILGÄ KAGAN INSCRIPTIONS*

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Abstract

Many parts of the Kül Tegin and Bilgä Kagan inscriptions are almost identical with each other. Although most parts of these inscriptions are well understood, some words like the letter group 𐰸𐰃𐰍𐰺 Y²IL¹S²G¹ in KT E 26 and in BK E 21 are not so. The meaning of Y²IL¹S²G¹ can be approximated from its place in the sentence and the following sentence. The letter group 𐰸𐰃𐰍𐰺 Y²IL¹S²G¹, which appears only once in these two inscriptions, has been read and interpreted in various ways. But none of them are satisfactory.

In Turkic "runic" script, there are many characters with similar shapes, and researchers may confuse them with each other. The number of Turkic "runic" characters in the Kül Tegin and Bilgä Kagan inscriptions is about 8,110 and 8,165, respectively. When engraving these two inscriptions, not a few letters may have been misspelled. Although written as 𐰃 S² in both inscriptions, this letter seems to have been wrongly engraved instead of 𐰉 I.

Considering the example *utru (e)ki y(ï)l(ï)g kiši oglïn sokušmïš* "(the road god) allegedly came across two gentle-tempered human beings." in the *Ïrk Bitig*, the author regards 𐰸𐰃𐰍𐰺 Y²IL¹S²G¹ as a misspelling for 𐰸𐰉𐰍𐰺 Y²IL¹IG¹, i.e. a well-known word of *yïlïg* 'warm', and suggests that *yïlïg* here means 'docile, mild, gentle-tempered'.

Keywords: Bilgä Kagan Inscription, Ïrk Bitig, Kül Tegin Inscription, misspelling, Orkhon inscriptions, Orkhon Turkic

Résumé

De nombreuses parties des inscriptions de Kül Tegin et de Bilgä Kagan sont presque identiques les unes aux autres. Bien que la plus grande partie de ces inscriptions soit bien comprise, certains mots comme le groupe de lettres 𐰸𐰃𐰍𐰺 Y²IL¹S²G¹ dans KT E 26 et dans BK E 21 ne le sont pas. La signification de Y²IL¹S²G¹ peut être approchée à partir de sa place dans la phrase et la phrase suivante. Le groupe de lettres 𐰸𐰃𐰍𐰺 Y²IL¹S²G¹, qui n'apparaît qu'une seule fois dans ces deux inscriptions, a été lu et interprété de diverses manières. Mais aucune d'elles n'est satisfaisante. Dans l'écriture « runique » turque, il existe de nombreux caractères ayant des formes similaires, et les chercheurs peuvent les confondre. Le nombre de caractères « runiques » turcs dans les inscriptions de Kül Tegin et de Bilgä Kagan est respectivement d'environ 8 110 et 8 165. Lors de la gravure, de nombreuses lettres ont pu être mal orthographiées. Bien qu'écrite 𐰃 S² dans les deux inscriptions, cette lettre semble avoir été mal gravée au lieu de i I. En prenant l'exemple de *utru (e)ki y(ï)l(ï)g kiši oglïn sokušmïš* (le « dieu de la route » aurait rencontré deux êtres humains au caractère doux) dans l'*Ïrk Bitig*, l'auteur considère 𐰸𐰃𐰍𐰺 Y²IL¹S²G¹ comme une faute d'orthographe pour 𐰸𐰉𐰍𐰺 Y²IL¹IG¹, c'est-à-dire le mot bien connu de *yïlïg*, « chaleureux », et suggère que *yïlïg* signifie ici « docile, de caractère doux ».

Mots clés : stèle de Bilgä Kagan, *Ïrk Bitig*, stèle de Kül Tegin, faute d'orthographe, stèles de l'Orkhon, turk de l'Orkhon

I. INTRODUCTION

Orkhon Turkic is the oldest Turkic dialect whose written records have come down to us.[1] It is known to us through the inscriptions found in present-day Outer Mongolia, mainly in the basin of the Orkhon River, thus being conveniently called 'the Orkhon inscriptions'. These are the Kül Tegin, Bilgä Kagan, Tuñukuk, Išbara Tarkan (Ongi), and Küli Čor (Ikhe-Khüshötü) inscriptions.[2]

* This is a revised version of the paper read at the 12th International Congress of Mongolists on August 11, 2023 in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia [https://www.montsame.mn/en/read/324680 (retrieved on August 20, 2023)].

[1] Tekin 1968: 7.

[2] Tekin 1968: 9.

doi: 10.2143/JA.312.1.3293359

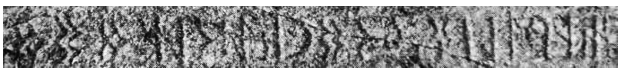
Severely damaged, the Kül Tegin and Bilgä Kagan inscriptions are now preserved in the museum. The replicas of these inscriptions are in their original places.

Many parts of these two inscriptions are almost identical with each other. Although most parts of these inscriptions are well understood, some words like the letter group Y²IL¹S²G¹ in KT E 26 and in BK E 21 are not so.

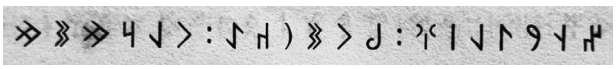
II. Research up to present

The sentence containing the letter group Y²IL¹S²G¹ is as follows in the Kül Tegin Inscription:

picture in the Finnish edition (1892: Tab. 3)[3]



typeset text in the Finnish edition (1892: 3)



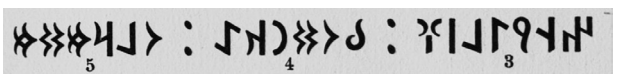
unretouched rubbing in the Radloff's edition (1893: Tafel XVII)



retouched rubbing in the Radloff's edition (1893: Tafel XVIII)

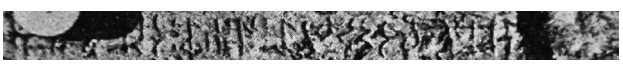


typeset text in the Radloff's edition (1896: Tafel XCVIII)

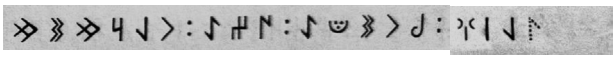


The sentence containing the letter group [Y²I]L¹S²G¹ is as follows in the Bilgä Kagan Inscription:

picture in the Finnish edition (1892: Tab. 27)



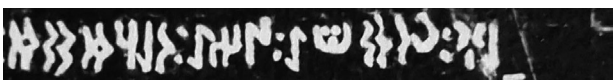
typeset text in the Finnish edition (1892: 23)



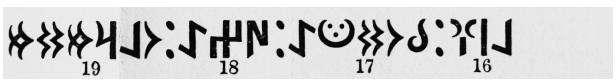
unretouched rubbing in the Radloff's edition (1893: Tafel XXII)



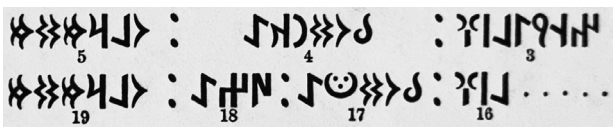
retouched rubbing in the Radloff's edition (1893: Tafel XXIII)



typeset text in the Radloff's edition (1896: Tafel C)



The sentence in question is typeset in the Radloff's edition (1896: Tafel CIII) for both inscriptions as follows:



They are transliterated in Latin script according to the Radloff's edition (1896) as follows:

: N²ŋY²IL¹S²G¹ : B¹WD¹NK¹A : WL¹R¹MD¹M (KT E 26)

: ...IL¹S²G¹ : B¹WD¹NTA : ẄZA : WL¹R¹MD¹M (BK E 21)

This sentence or the letter group N²ŋY²IL¹S²G¹ has been read as follows:[4]

(1) Radloff (1894)

Näŋ jılsaƃ budunka ulармadым (p. 17) (KT E 26)

"Ich erhob mich nicht über das an Habe reiche Volk" (p. 16)

Näŋ jılsaƃ budunta özä ulармadым (p. 57) (BK E 21)

[3] All images of this paper were taken by the author at the Seoul National University Library.

[4] Researchers used different languages and transcription systems. The author tried to give the reading of each researcher chronologically and just as it is.

"Ich erhob mich nicht über das an Habe reiche Volk" (p. 56)

jылсаƃ

(?); 𐰽𐰉𐰖𐰍𐰣𐰃 (K 26,3, X 21,16) нäң jылсаƃ an Habe reich. (p. 121b)

нäң [Uig.]

die Habe; …; 𐰽𐰉𐰖𐰍𐰣𐰃 (K 26,3) нäң jылсаƃ reich. (p. 123a)

(2) Radloff (1895)

"𐰽𐰍𐰖𐰍𐰣𐰃[5] (ṇ̈jjilsg) нäң jылсаƃ (K 26,3). Dieses Wort ist offenbar in нäң+jылсаƃ zu trennen. … нäң jылсаƃ будунқа улармадым, içрä ашсыз ташра тонсыз jабыз jаблак будунда özä улардым ist zu übersetzen: «ich erhob mich nicht über ein an Habe und Vieh reiches Volk, ich erhob mich über ein schlechtes heruntergekommenes Volk, das innen ohne Speise war und aussen ohne Kleidung war», d. h. als ich auf den Thron stieg, war mein Volk in einem elenden Zustande (jetzt habe ich es aufgerichtet). …" (pp. 222-223)

jыл(?) 𐰽𐰍𐰖𐰍[6] jылсаƃ Pferde- (Vieh-) reich. (p. 394)

(3) Thomsen (1896)

n^{ä}ṅ‿ jyłs^{y}γ^{2} bud^{u}nqa oł^{u}rm^{a}d^{y}m (KT E 26)

[…]yłs^{y}y^{2} bud^{u}n̲da özä oł^{u}rm^{a}d^{y}m (BK E 21)

"Je ne régnai pas sur un peuple brillant(?) par sa richesse" (p. 106)

[2] écrit avec S, donc pas *jyłs^{a}γ*, v. p. 36 note 1. (p. 106)

(4) Bang (1896)

näṅ jylsyg budun-ka olurmadym (p. 346) (KT E 26)

"Ich wurde nicht Khan über ein Habe- und Vieh-reiches(?) Volk" (pp. 354-355)

"*jylsyg* ist mir nicht ganz klar." (p. 347)

(5) Radloff (1897)

Нäң jылсаƃ будунқа {X. будунда özä} олурмадым "Ich wurde nicht Chan über ein habe- und *viehreiches* Volk" (pp. 136-137) (KT E 26; BK E 21)

…; 𐰾𐰍𐰖𐰍[7] jылсаƃ (?) statt jылқысаƃ «Vieh habend». (p. 53)

jылсаƃ viehreich (?) 121b, 394, *53*. (p. 173b)

нäң Habe 123 a, … (p. 174a)

[5] Correctly, 𐰽𐰉𐰖𐰍𐰣𐰃.

[6] Correctly, 𐰽𐰉𐰖𐰍.

[7] Correctly, 𐰽𐰉𐰖𐰍.

(6) Radlov & Melioranskij (1897)

Нäң jылсаƃ будунқа {X. будунда özä} олурмадым "Я сталъ ханомъ не надъ народомъ богатымъ имуществомъ *и скотомъ*" (p. 23) (KT E 26; BK E 21)

(7) Vámbéry (1898)

näñ jilsig[8b]) budunda öze olurmadı̊m "Ich wurde nicht gesetzt über ein habe- und volkreiches Volk" (p. 48) (BK E 21)

[b]) *näñ jilsig*[9] 'habe- und volkreich', von *näng* 'Habe, Gut', wie die im Kudatku Bilik häufig vorkommt, *jı̊l* 'Volk' und *sı̊g* 'dicht, voll'. Ich schlage dies blos in der form [sic] einer Hypothese vor, doch hat dieselbe mehr Berechtigung als die Annahme Radloffs, der in *jı̊l* eine Abkürzung von *jı̊lkı̊* entdecken will, die in den türkischen Mundarten nirgends anzutreffen ist. … (p. 48)

(8) Melioranskij (1899)

нäң‿jылсыƃ будунқа олурмадым "Я сѣлъ (на царство) не надъ народомъ богатымъ имуществомъ и скотомъ(?)" (p. 70) (KT E 26)

(9) Radloff (1905)

jылсаƃ [𐰽𐰉𐰖𐰍 (AT., Melioranski liest jылсыƃ), von jыл(?)+саƃ (сыƃ)]

имѣющій (любящій) скотъ (?) - Vieh (?) habend (liebend); нäң jылсаƃ будунқа олурмадым! я не сѣлъ (ханомъ) надъ народомъ богатымъ имуществомъ и скотомъ! – ich bin nicht Chan geworden über ein Habe und Vieh reiches Volk! (K 26,3). (col. 492)

…; нäң jылсаƃ (AT.) богатый имуществомъ и скотомъ (?) – reich an Habe und Vieh (?) (K 26,3); … (col. 677)

(10) Thomsen (1924)

"Ich wurde nicht Herrscher über ein gut gestelltes (?) Volk" (p. 149) (KT E 26; BK E 21)

(11) Orkun (1936)

n^{e}*n* yıls^{ı}g bud^{u}n*k*a ol^{u}rm^{a}d^{ı}m (p. 42) (KT E 26)

.. ıls^{ı}g bud^{u}n̲da üze ol^{u}rm^{a}d^{ı}m (p. 42) (BK E 21)

"Muhteşem bir kavmin üzerine hakan olmadım [I did not become a kagan over a magnificent people]." (pp. 41-42)

[8] Correctly, jı̊lsı̊g.

[9] Correctly, *jı̊lsı̊g*.

yïlsïγ *muhteşem*, *parlak* [magnificent, brilliant] (?)' I D [E] 26, II D [E] 21 (I, 42) (Orkun 1941: 142)

(12) Malov (1951)

Нäң jылс²ыҕ будунка олурмадым (p. 31) (KT E 26)

"Я отнюдь не сел (на царство) над народом богатым (скотом?)" (p. 39)

jylsyγ богатый, зажиточный, KT, 26. Ср. jylqy скот. (p. 391b)

(13) Tekin (1968)

näŋ yïlsïγ bodunqa olurmadïm (p. 160, 235) (KT E 26)

"I did not become ruler over a wealthy and prosperous people at all" (p. 160, 267)

yïlsïy wealthy, prosperous

y. bodunqa KT E26

[y]ïlsïy bodunta üzä BK E21 (p. 403a)

"24°. *-sïy/-sig* (= Mong. particle *siγ* 'similar to, like'): …, *yïlsïy* 'wealthy, prosperous, significant' (KT E 26) < **yïl* (cf. Mong. *yali* 'significant, important', *yali-* 'to be of good quality'); see *-čïγ*." (p. 107)

(14) Nadeljajev *et al.* (1969)

JÏLSÏγ (**jïlqïsïy**?) богатый, зажиточный ($КТб_{26}$). (p. 267a)

(15) Nauta (1969)

"8) … *näŋ yïlsïy bodunqa olurmadïm* "ich wurde keineswegs Herrscher über (eig.: in Bezug auf) ein reiches Volk (Ausdruck des Interesses)." (p. 309) (KT E 26)

(16) Ergin (1970)

Neŋ̄g yılsıġ budunḳa olurmadım. (p. 55) (KT E 26)

[Neŋ̄g] yılsıġ budunda üze olurmadım. (p. 65) (BK E 21)

"Varlıklı, zengin millet üzerine oturmadım [I didn't sit on wealthy, rich people]." (p. 9, 23)

yılsıġ zengin, varlıklı [rich, wealthy] (p. 124)

(17) Ajdarov (1971)

нең йылсыҕ будунқа олурмадым. "Я отнюдь не сел (на царство) над богатым народом." (p. 296) (KT E 26)

(18) Clauson (1972)

E **yılsığ** See **yılışığ**. (p. 932b)

PUD **yılışığ** Hap. leg.; hitherto read **yılsığ**, for which there is no obvious etymology; the word obviously means 'comfortable, prosperous', or the like and might be a Dev. N./A. fr. **yılış-**[10], lit. 'warm'. **Türkü** VIII (Heaven placed me on the throne as *xağan*) **neŋ yılışığ boḍunka: olurmadım** 'I did not mount the throne over a comfortable people' (I mounted the throne over a people who had no food in their bellies or clothes on their backs, in a bad way and wretched) *I E 26*, *II E 21*. (p. 933ab)

(19) Tekin (1988)

n(e)ñ yıls(ı)g : bod(u)nka : ol(u)rm(a)d(ı)m (p. 14) (KT E 26)

[n(e)ñ y]ıls(ı)g : bod(u)nṯa : üze : ol(u)rm(a)d(ı)m (p. 44) (BK E 21)

"(Ben) hiç de zengin ve müreffeh (bir) halk üzerine hükümdar olmadım [I have never been a ruler over (one) rich and prosperous people]." (p. 15, 45)

"79) KT D 26 = BK D 21: *yıls(ı)g* "zengin ve müreffeh". Bu kelimenin anlamı cümle içindeki yerinden ve bunu takip eden cümleden yaklaşık olarak tahmin edilebilmektedir. Ancak, okunuşu üzerinde farklı görüşler ileri sürülmüştür. …

… Ben *yılsıg* kelimesinin farazî bir **yıl* isminden *-sıg* eki ile türemiş olabileceği görüşünü ileri sürmüştüm (1968:107). … Bu görüşümü hâlâ muhafaza etmekle beraber, *yılsıg* kelimesinin Tat. *yılmay-*, Kırg. *cılmay-*, Kzk. *jılmıy-*, Trkm. *yılgır-* "gülümsemek" fiilleri ile, daha doğrusu bu fiillerin kökü ile ilgili ve asıl anlamının "gülümser, güler yüzlü" olabileceği kanısı da taşıyorum. Kelime *yılşıg* da olabilir.

[79) KT E 26 = BK E 21: *yïls(ï)g* "rich and prosperous". The meaning of this word can be approximated from its place in the sentence and the following sentence. However, different opinions have been put forward on its reading. …

… I put forward the view that the word *yïlsïg* may have been derived from a hypothetical noun of **yïl* with the suffix *-sïg* (1968:107). … Although I still maintain this view, I also have the opinion that the word *yïlsïg* may be related to the verbs Tatar *yïlmay-*, Kyrgyz *ǰïlmay-*, Kazakh *žïlmïy-*, Turkmen *yïlgïr-* "to smile", or rather the root of these verbs, and that its real meaning may be "smiling". The word can also be *yïlšïg*.]" (pp. 78-79)

yılsıg zengin, müreffeh [wealthy, prosperous]

[10] "D **yılış-** Hap. leg.; Co-op. f. of **yılı:-**. **Xak.** XI **suvla:r kamuğ yılışdı:** (MS. *yalışdı:*?) 'the waters (etc.) were (all) heated' (*suxinat*) *Kaş. III* 74 (**yılışu:r, yılışma:k**, corrected from *-me:k*)." (Clauson 1972: 933a).

(20) Erdal (1991)

"*yılı-g* signifies 'warm, lukewarm' in DLT, Heik II 4,21 …

The *EDPT* is right, I think, in reading *yılışıg* in KT E26 (fragmentary parallel in BQ E21); I'd agree with Clauson's translation as "comfortable, prosperous or the like". The base *yılı-ş-* is attested in the DLT, mentioned e.g. in the *EDPT*. The passage reads as follows: *näŋ* Y¹IL¹S²G¹ *bodunka* (BQ: *bodun*[11] *üzä*) *olormadım*; *içrä aşsız, taşra tonsuz yavız yavlak bodunta üzä olortum*. …" (p. 218)

(21) Doerfer (1992)

"Zu 79 KT D26, BK D21 Clausons Deutung *yılışığ* 'comfortable, prosperous' < 'warm' wirkt recht ungezwungen und überzeugend; der semantische Wandel 'warm' > 'wohlhabend' bereitet kaum Schwierigkeiten; vgl. etwa die deutsche Redensart 'im warmen Nest sitzen' = 'begütert sein'; Warme hat gerade für nördliche Völker einen positiven Charakter." (p. 13)

(22) Tekin (2000)[12]

näŋ yılsıg bodunka olormadım "Hiç de varlıklı ve mutlu bir halk üzerine tahta oturmadım [I have never ascended to the throne over a wealthy and happy people]" (KT D [E] 26) (p. 113)

näŋ yılsıg bodunka olormadım "(Ben) hiç de refah içinde olan bir halk üzerine hakan olmadım [I have never been a kagan over a prosperous people]" (KT D [E] 36[13]) (p. 148)

[näŋ y]ılsıg bodunta üzä olormadım "(Ben) hiç de zengin ve mürrefeh (bir) halk üzerine hükümdar olmadım [I have never been a ruler over a rich and prosperous people]" (BK D [E] 21) (p. 156)

yılsıg "refah içinde, müreffeh, zengin, mutlu [in prosperity, prosperous, wealthy, happy]" (KT D [E] 26) < **yalsıg* < **yal*; krş. [cf.] *yalıg* "mutlu, güler yüzlü [happy, smiling]"[14] (IB 2) < **yal-ıg*, Yak. *salī* ay. [id.] < **yalıg*; krş. bir de [cf. also] Mo. *yali* "önemli, ünlü [important, famous]", *yali-* "iyi olmak, kaliteli olmak [to be good, to be of good quality]" (p. 85)

yılsıg refah içinde, müreffeh [in prosperity, prosperous] (p. 259b)

(23) Amanžolov (2003)[15]

n^{ä}ŋ jïls^{ï}γ^{u} bod^{u}nqa ol^{u}rm^{a}d^{ï}m (p. 161) (KT E 26)

"Я отнюдь не сел (каганом) над народом зажиточным" (p. 170)

(24) Berta (2004)

näñ yïlïšïγ boδwnqa[16] olormaδïm (p. 155) (KT E 26)

"Nem egy könnyen kezelhető (?jó körülmények közötti) nép fölött uralkodtam [I did not rule over a people easy to rule (?in good circumstances)]." (p. 196)

(25) Geng (2005)

näŋ yïlsïγ bodunqa olurmadïm (p. 128) (KT E 26)

näŋ yïlsïγ bodunqa[17] olurmadïm (p. 157) (BK E 21)

"我统治的完全不是昌盛繁荣的人民 *Wǒ tǒngzhì de wánquán bùshì chāngshèng fánróng de rénmín* [I did not rule a prosperous people at all]." (p. 128, 157)

yïlsïγ 温暖 *wēnnuǎn* [warm] (p. 262)

(26) Tuguševa (2008)

n(e)ng yïls(ï)γ bod(u)nqa ol(u)rm(a)d(ï)m (p. 30) (KT E 26)

"Я не сел (каганом) над народом благоденствующим" (p. 43)

yïlsïy благоденствующий, процветающий KT, B, 39(26) (p. 153a)

(27) User (2009)[18]

n(ä)ŋ yıls(ı)g : bod(u)nka : ol(u)rm(a)d(ı)m (p. 297, 449) (KT E 26)

[n(ä)ŋ y]ıls(ı)g : bod(u)nta : üze[19] : ol(u)rm(a)d(ı)m (p. 297, 457) (BK E 21)

yılsıg zengin, müreffeh [wealthy, prosperous] (p. 182, 297, 537a)

(28) Aydın (2012)

neŋ y²ıl¹s²ıg¹ bodunka olormadım "Refah içerisindeki bir halka kağan olmadım [I did not become a kagan to a people in prosperity]." (p. 54) (KT E 26)

[11] Correctly, *bodunta*.

[12] The same is in Tekin 2016: 106, 136, 143, 83, 315b.

[13] Correctly, 26.

[14] This word is now usually read as *yïlïg* 'warm'. See Erdal 1978: 89 and Erdal 1997: 73.

[15] The text is taken from the second edition in 2010.

[16] Although Berta does not mention his own reading in BK, the next sentence indicates that this is *boδwnda üzä*.

[17] Correctly, *bodunta üzä*.

[18] The same is in Şirin 2016: 402, 625; 402, 633; 264, 402, 748b with *üze* corrected to *üzä*.

[19] Correctly, üzä.

[neŋ yı]ls²ıg bodunta üze olormadım "Refah içerisindeki halka kağan olmadım [I did not become a kagan to the people in prosperity]." (p. 87) (BK E 21)

yılsıg refah içinde (olan) [(being) in prosperity].

y. **KT D** [**E**] 26, **BK D** [**E**] 21 (p. 182, 297, 190a)

(29) Ölmez (2012)

neŋ yılsıg : bodunka : olormadım (p. 84) (KT E 26)

[neŋ yı]lsıg : bodunta : üze : olormadım (p. 127) (BK E 21)

"Kesinlikle refah içerisindeki bir halkın başına geçmedim [I certainly did not become the head of a prosperous people]." (p. 96, 141)

yılsıg refah içinde, zengin [in prosperity, wealthy] (p. 327b)

(30) Uçar (2017)

neŋ yıl sag bodunka olurmadım (KT E 26) (p. 10, 11)

[*neŋ y*]*ıl sag bodunta üze olurmadım* (BK E 21) (p. 10, 11)

neŋ yıl 'herhangi bir yıl, herhangi bir yıl boyunca [any year, during any year]' (p. 10)

sag 'iyi, sağlam, selâmette, güçlü [good, sound, safe, strong]' (p. 11)

III. Discussion

As already noted by Tekin (1988: 78), the meaning of the word Y²IL¹S²G¹ can be approximated from its place in the sentence and the following sentence. The letter group 𐰴𐰃𐰞𐰍𐰃 N²ⅅY²IL¹S²G¹ has been read and interpreted in various ways as follows:

(1) *näŋ yïlsag*
näŋ 'belongings, possessions, property' (Radloff 1894; Radloff 1897; Radlov & Melioranskij 1897)
'movable lifeless belongings, everything that man owns' (Radloff 1895)
näŋ yïlsag 'rich in property, rich' (Radloff 1894)
'rich in property and livestock' (Radloff 1895)
'rich in property and livestock (?)' (Radloff 1897; Radlov & Melioranskij 1897: Radloff 1905)
yïlsag 'rich in horses (livestock)' (Radloff 1895)
'rich in livestock (?)' (Radloff 1897; Radlov & Melioranskij 1897; Radloff 1905)
'having / loving livestock (?)' (Radloff 1905)

(2) *näŋ yïlsïg*
näŋ 'wealth' (Thomsen 1896)
'belongings, possessions, property' (Bang 1896; Vámbéry 1898; Melioranskij 1899; Ergin 1970)
'(not) at all, never' (Malov 1951; Tekin 1968; Nauta 1969; Ajdarov 1971; Tekin 1988; Tekin 2000; Amanžolov 2003; Geng 2005; Tuguševa 2008; Ölmez 2012)
näŋ yïlsïg 'brilliant(?) in its wealth' (Thomsen 1896)
'rich in property and livestock (?)' (Bang 1896; Melioranskij 1899)
'wealthy and populous' (Vámbéry 1898)
'wealthy' ([Thomsen 1924]; Ergin 1970)
'magnificent' (Orkun 1936)
yïlsïg 'brilliant (?)' (Thomsen 1896)
'rich in livestock (?)' (Bang 1896; Melioranskij 1899)
'populous' (Vámbéry 1898)
'magnificent, brilliant (?)' (Orkun 1941)
'wealthy, prosperous' (Tekin 1968; Nadeljajev *et al*. 1969; Tekin 1988; Tekin 2000; User 2009; Ölmez 2012)
'wealthy' (Nauta 1969; Ergin 1970; Ajdarov 1971)
'prosperous' (Amanžolov 2003; Geng 2005; Tuguševa 2008; Aydın 2012)

(3) *näŋ yïlïšïg*
näŋ '(not) at all, never' (Clauson 1972)
yïlïšïg 'comfortable, prosperous' (Clauson 1972; Erdal 1991; Doerfer 1992)
'easy to rule (?in good circumstances)' (Berta 2004)

(4) *näŋ yïl sag*
näŋ 'any' (Erdem 2017)
näŋ yïl 'any year, during any year' (Erdem 2017)
sag 'good, sound, safe, strong' (Erdem 2017)

The letter group 𐰇𐰋 N²ⅅ has been read as *näŋ* by all researchers. Regarding *näŋ*, Clauson (1972) gives the following information:

D **ne:ŋ** has two meanings: (1) Adverbial, with Neg. V.s 'any, at all', and the like, pec. to Türkü and Uyğ.; (2) as a N., 'thing, property', also found in Xak. As both these meanings are also found among the various meanings of der. f.s of **ne:** it seems reasonable to suppose that it is a Den. N. fr. **ne:**. … (p. 778b)

It can be seen that the meaning of *näŋ* has usually been understood as '(not) at all'. The letter group 𐰴𐰃𐰞𐰍 Y²IL¹S²G¹ has usually been read as *yïlsïg* 'wealthy, prosperous'. Three researchers read it as *yïlïšïg* 'comfortable, prosperous'. By the way, no other examples of *yïlsag*/*yïlsïg*/*yïlïšïg* have been found in Turkic languages so far. Therefore, the reading and meaning of this word is still uncertain.

In Turkic "runic" script, there are many characters with similar shapes, and researchers may confuse them with each other, e.g. 𐰀 /a, ä/ ⇔ 𐰁 /ï, i/ ⇔ 𐰆 /ö, ü/; 𐰁 /ï, i/ ⇔ 𐰃 /äs, s/ ⇔ 𐰉 /al, l/ ⇔ 𐰋 /ok, uk, k/; 𐰅 /o, u/ ⇔ 𐰇 /an, n/; 𐰍 /ar, r/ ⇔ 𐰏 /ak, k/; 𐰋 /az, äz, z/ ⇔ 𐰋 /än, n/. The

number of Turkic "runic" characters in the Kül Tegin and Bilgä Kagan inscriptions is about 8,110 and 8,165, respectively. When engraving these two inscriptions, not a few letters may have been misspelled. For the past 130 years, all researchers have overlooked this point and tried to read letter group 𐰸𐰃𐰋𐰍 Y²IL¹S²G¹ of KT E 26 (and 𐰸𐰃𐰋𐰍. [.]IL¹S²G¹ of BK E 21) as it is. Of course, it is one of the most important rules of philology that a text should not be corrected or changed as much as possible.[20] Nevertheless, it may be reasonable to assume that there is something wrong with the spelling itself, because despite almost 130 years of research, this word has neither been read clearly nor confirmed in other literature. Although written as 𐰃 S² in both inscriptions, this letter seems to have been wrongly engraved instead of 𐰉 I. In other words, the author considers 𐰸𐰃𐰋𐰍 Y²IL¹S²G¹ to be a misspelling of 𐰸𐰉𐰋𐰍 Y²IL¹IG¹, i.e. the well-known word *yïlïg* 'warm'.

In the Orkhon inscriptions, the vowels *ï*/*i* of non-first syllables are generally left undesignated.[21] There are about 100 examples of *(ï)g*/*(i)g* in the Kül Tegin and Bilgä Kagan inscriptions, e.g.:

(a)d(ï)nč(ï)g 'extraordinary, wonderful' (BK N 14, 14)

b(a)šl(ï)g(ï)g 'the one who has a head (*acc*.)' (KT E 2, 15, 18; BK E 3, 13, 16)

(e)r(i)g y(e)rtä 'in a reachable place' (KT S 13)

kič(i)g 'little' (KT S 3, 3; BK N 3, E 41)

süč(i)g 'sweet' (BK N 4, 4, 5)

y(a)ŋ(ï)lt(ï)g 'you made a mistake' (KT E 23; BK E 19)

The exceptions, i.e. the examples of *ïg*/*ig*, in the Kül Tegin and Bilgä Kagan inscriptions are as follows:

(a)d(ï)nčïg 'extraordinary, wonderful' (KT S 12, 12)

(e)rig y(e)rtä 'in a reachable place' (KT S 13)

süčig 'sweet' (KT S 5, 5, 6)

y(ï)p(a)rïg 'the scent/musk (*acc*.)' (BK S 11)

If Y²IL¹S²G¹ is a misspelling of Y²IL¹IG¹, this would be another example of *ïg*/*ig*. Clauson (1972) gives the following information regarding *yïlïg*:

D **yılığ** N./A.S. fr. **yılı:-**; 'hot; warm'. S.i.a.m.l.g. w. the same phonetic changes. Uyğ. VIII ff. Civ. (avoid quarrels) **yılığ yumşak bolğıl** 'become warm and gentle' *TT I* 178; a.o. *H II* 34, 21: ... (p. 925a)

yılı:- 'to be, or become, hot'; s.i.a.m.l.g. w. the usual phonetic changes, … (p. 919a)

Yïlïg is found on p. 899a of the Uyghur dictionary by Wilkens (2021) as follows:

yılıg ~ y(ı)l(ı)g sanft, mild ‖ yumuşak; sanftmütig ‖ halim selim; warm ‖ sıcak

yılıg suv warmes Wasser ‖ sıcak su

yılıg yumšak bolmak Weich$_2$sein (Skt. *ślakṣṇatva*) ‖ yumuşak$_2$ olma (Skt. *ślakṣṇatva*)

yılıg yumšak köŋül Sanftmut und Milde, Milde$_2$ ‖ yavaşlık ve yumuşaklık, yumuşaklık$_2$

yılıg yumšak sav milde$_2$ Worte ‖ yumuşak$_2$ söz

yılıg yumšak sav söz milde$_2$ Worte$_2$ ‖ yumuşak$_2$ söz$_2$

Yïlïg is also found in the *Dīwān Luγāt at-Turk* as *yïlïg suw* 'lukewarm (*fātir fī l-ḥarr*) water' (p. 450) and *ïlïg suw* 'lukewarm water' (p. 44). In later materials, examples such as *yïlïg suw* are identified.

An example of 𐰸𐰇𐰛 Y¹L¹G¹ *y(ï)l(ï)g* being used for humans is found in the second omen of the *Ïrk Bitig* ("Book of Omens").[22] The letter group Y¹L¹G¹ or the sentence containing this letter group has been read as follows:

(1) Thomsen (1912)

utru : (ä)ki : ayl(ï)γ : kiši : oγlïn : soqušmïš "He met a two-month-old child of man." (p. 196)

(2) Orkun (1938)

utru : ^{e}ki ^{a}yl^{ı}g : kişi : oglın : so*k*uşmış "karşıda iki aylık insan oğluna rastlanmış [opposite he allegedly came across a two-month-old human being]" (p. 73)

aylïγ *aylık* [… months old]. **iki aylïγ kişi** : *iki aylık insan* [two-month-old man] Ir. 2 (II, 73) (Orkun 1941: 15)

(3) Malov (1951)

utru äki aĭlyγ kiši oγlyn soqušmyš (p. 80)

"Он встретил двухмесячного сына человеческого." (p. 85)

aĭlyy äki aĭlyy двухмесячный (возраст), ThS, 2. (p. 355b)

(4) Nadeljajev *et al.* (1969)

AJLÏγ -месячный (*при определении возраста по месяцам*): utru ęki ajlïγ kiši oγlïn soqušmïš встретил двухмесячного ребенка (*букв*. сына человеческого) (*ThS* II$_2$). (p. 30a)

[20] This is the English translation of the message in Turkish "Bir metnin mümkün olduğu derecede "düzeltilmemesi", değiştirilmemesi filolojinin en önemli kurallarından biridir." from Marcel Erdal in correspondence on September 22, 2016.

[21] See Tekin 1968: 34.

[22] Y¹L¹G¹ is in the third line from the bottom left.



Figure 1: p. 1 (right) and p. 2 (left) of the *Ïrk Bitig*
https://www.turkbitig.com/p/irkbitig.html (retrieved on June 9, 2023)

(5) Clauson (1972)

D **aylığ** P.N./A. fr. **1 ay**; originally with preceding numeral (so many) 'months old'; later, of a woman, 'pregnant'. S.i.a.m.l.g. except SW in both meanings. **Türkü** VIII ff. **eki: aylığ kişi: oğlı:n** 'a two-months-old child' *IrkB* 2: ... (p. 272b)

(6) Erdal (1978)

"THOMSEN'ın *(a)yl(ı)γ* olarak yazdığı sözcük *yılıγ* "ılık" ya da *yıllıγ* "yıllı" diye de okunabilir. Ne iki aylık, ne de iki yaşındaki bir 'insanoğlu' anlatılan olaya uyuyor; buna karşılık TT I 178'deki bir tümce burada yardımımıza gelmektedir: *tütüş käriş qoṭγıl. yılıγ yumşaq bolγıl.* "Kavgayla çatışmayı bırak. Ilık ve yumuşak ol". Buna göre bu iki metinde de sözcüğün anlamı "çekingen" ya da "nazik" olmalıdır. *aylıγ* sözcüğü Eski Orta Asya Türkçesinde hiç yoktur. İlk önce Mühenna ve Houtsma sözlüklerinde rastlanır; bunlarda ise anlamı "gebe"dir.

CLAUSON'ın sözlüğünde bu tümce *eki: aylığ kişi : oğlan :*[23] olarak geçer; bütün yayımlayıcılar ise THOMSEN'la birlikte son sözcüğü *oğlın* diye okumaktadırlar.

[The word written by Thomsen as *(a)yl(ï)γ* can also be read as *yïlïγ* "warm" or *yïllïγ* "years old". Neither a two-month-old nor a two-year-old 'human being' fits the narrated event; in contrast, a sentence in TT I 178 comes to our aid here: *tütüš käriš qoṭγïl. yïlïγ yumšaq bolγïl.* "Stop quarrel and conflict. Be warm and soft". Accordingly, in both these texts the meaning of the word should be "shy" or "gentle". The word *aylïγ* does not exist at

[23] Correctly, *oğlı:n.*

all in Old Central Asian Turkic. It is first encountered in the Mühenna and Houtsma dictionaries; in these, it means "pregnant".

In Clauson's dictionary, this sentence is recorded as *eki: aylığ kişi : oğlan :*[24]; all publishers, along with Thomsen, read the last word as *oγlïn*.] (p. 89)

(7) Tekin (1993)

utru (e)ki y(a)l(ı)g kişi oglın soo̲kuşmiş. (p. 8)

"(This road god) apparently met two joyful human beings." (p. 9)

y(a)l(ı)g joyful, jolly

eki y. kişi oglın 2 (p. 68a)

(8) Erdal (1997)

"j¹l¹g¹ is translated by Tekin (1993) as "joyful", with the glossary adding "jolly". This translation is taken from the Yakut binome *külü: salı:*, for which Böhtlingk (1851) gives the same meaning in his dictionary (Pekarskij 1907-1930), whom Tekin quotes, mentions Böhtlingk as his source for it). Böhtlingk derives the word from *sala:*- 'to lick', < *yalga*-, and Yakut *salı:* by itself has the meaning 'licking'; the special semantic development of the binome is best explained through metaphor. The Yakut word is therefore rather unlikely to throw light on this problem. *(a)yl(ı)g*, proposed before for the *Irk Bitig* passage, fails to give an acceptable meaning. *ya+lıg* 'bow-bearing' would be another possible rendering of the characters. *yïlïg yumşak*, which Erdal (1978: 89) quotes from TT I 178 (in Tekin (1993) wrongly "TT I 14"), is found also in BT II 1260 and in the Yükünç section of the Maitrisimit, 4 a 17 (Geng & Klimkeit 1988: 14). *yılı-g* remains the best reading in spite of the implicitness of the first vowel, for which cf. the reading *t(ı)g* in *ırk* 39. …" (p. 73)

(9) Yıldırım (2013)

utru : (ė)ki : yı̲lıg : kişi : oglın : sokuşmış "(Bu yol tanrısı) yumuşak mizaçlı iki insanoğluna rastlamış [(This road god) allegedly came across two gentle-tempered human beings]." (p. 20)[25]

yılıg yumuşak mizaçlı (Kağ.) [gentle-tempered (Paper)] (p. 341)

(10) Kormuşin *et al.* (2016)

utru : ėki : yılıg : kişi : oglın : sokuşmış "(Bu yol tanrısı) yumuşak mizaçlı iki insanoğluna rastlamış [(This road god) allegedly came across two gentle-tempered human beings]." (p. 415)

yılıg yumuşak mizaçlı (Kağ.) [gentle-tempered (Paper)] (p. 559b)

(11) Ölmez (2017)

Utru ėki yılıg kişi oglın sokuşmış "(Bu yol tanrısı) yumuşak mizaçlı iki insanoğluna rastlamış [(This road god) allegedly came across two gentle-tempered human beings]." (p. 377)

yılıg < *yılı-g* "sıcak, samimi, dost görünüşlü [warm, sincere, friendly-looking]" (p. 377)

(12) Wilkens (2021)

[2]**(a)yl(ı)g** † → *y(ı)l(ı)g* (p. 90a)

[4]**y(a)l(ı)g** † → *y(ı)l(ı)g* (p. 857a)

yılıg ~ y(ı)l(ı)g sanft, mild ‖ yumuşak; sanftmütig ‖ halim selim; warm ‖ sıcak (p. 899a)

(13) Garkavets (2022)

Utru *e*ki yılığ kişi oğlın soquşmış "Двух приятных людей повстречал" (p. 12)

yılığ тёплый, приятный (p. 94a)

Considering the example of *utru (e)ki y(ï)l(ï)g kiši oglïn sokušmiš* "(The road god) allegedly came across two gentle-tempered human beings." in the *Ïrk Bitig*, the author regards 𐰽𐰃𐰍𐰺 Y²IL¹S²G¹ as a misspelling for 𐰽𐰍𐰍𐰺 Y²IL¹IG¹, i.e. a well-known word of *yïlïg* 'warm', and suggests that *yïlïg* here means 'docile, mild, gentle-tempered'.

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[24] Correctly, *oğlı:n*.

[25] The same is in Yıldırım 2017: 34.

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